

LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL YOUTH EXCHANGE

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ABSTRACT:

This paper session will report on a research study of the long-term effects of a high school home-stay experience for German and American students who participated in the Youth For Understanding (YFU) program in the 1950s, 60s, 70s, and 80s. With emphasis on the German sample, the 45-minute session will (1) briefly describe the study's methodology; (2) provide an overview of major findings; and (3) generate audience discussion on future programming and further research in relation to the findings by posing the question: *What Next?*

Introduction

It is natural, and often automatic, for exchange educators to assume that the intercultural experiences they facilitate result in any number of enduring and positive effects, including an enhanced international perspective, greater knowledge of the world, increased personal maturity, improved interpersonal and learning skills, higher foreign language proficiency, and a greater reluctance to perpetuate inaccurate stereotypes and distortions of other cultures. In the interest of the exchange field and its involved constituencies at all levels – K-12, high school, university, scholar, and professional – a constant question for programmers and researchers alike should be whether or not such expectations are justified.

Students of Four Decades (Bachner & Zeuschel, 2009) was a research study spanning 14 years that addressed the question of justifiable expectations at the youth exchange level (i.e., ages 15 to 18). In 1988, with a grant from The German Marshall Fund of the United States to Youth For Understanding (YFU) International Exchange, a bi-national (German and American) research team set out to examine the ways in which both German and American high school exchange students who participated in YFU homestay exchanges between 1951 and 1987 - i.e., across four decades - claimed to have been affected by their experiences in the other country.

Figure 1

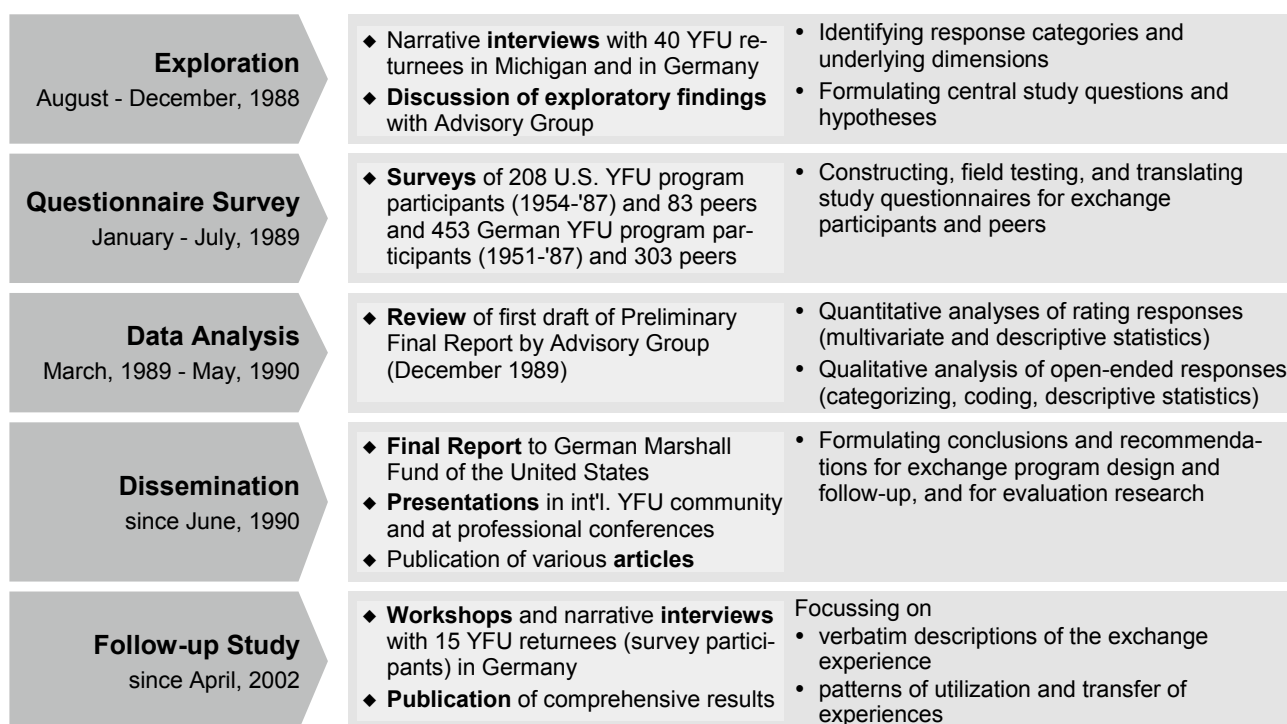


FIGURE 1 Overview of the Study Sequence

The research incorporated two phases. (See Figure 1, *Overview of the Study Sequence*.) In the original study, a large-scale effort conducted in 1988-90, Germans and Americans who participated in YFU programs during the four decades were queried through a combination of in-depth exploratory interviews and a comprehensive survey questionnaire that was constructed in both German and English to be especially sensitive to generational and contextual differences among respondents (Bachner, Zeuschel, & Shannon, 1993). The questionnaire incorporated items relevant to 18 study hypotheses that were derived largely from the exploratory interviews. A total of 1187 returnees received the survey, with 661 responding. This represents a 56 percent response rate, an excellent return for field research going back so many years. The study also included a control group of 384 individuals, each nominated by a returnee, who had not participated in a high school-level exchange but were of the same gender, similar age, and similar educational background as the nominator. (See Figure 2, *Summary of the Study Sample*.)

Figure 2

| Decade | United States | | | | Germany | | | |
|---------------|------------------|-------------|-----------------------|----------------|------------------|-------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | YFU Participants | No. sampled | Participant Responses | Peer Responses | YFU Participants | No. sampled | Participant Responses | Peer Responses |
| 1950s | 74 | 74 | 43 | 21 | 417 | 79 | 46 | 6 |
| 1960s | 84 | 84 | 34 | 15 | 1,888 | 168 | 75 | 34 |
| 1970s | 1,598 | 213 | 76 | 26 | 4,766 | 141 | 114 | 59 |
| 1980s | 2,591 | 179 | 53 | 21 | 6,342 | 249 | 218 | 202 |
| Totals | 4,347 | 550 | 208 | 83 | 13,413 | 637 | 453 | 301 |

FIGURE 2 *Summary of the Study Sample*

The data from the survey were analyzed according to eight criteria which were developed by the research team to assess the success of exchange. The criteria, which will be elaborated upon later in this article, included:

- (1) ***Overall Satisfaction/Success of Exchange***, defined as one's feelings about the experience and the degree to which one assessed the exchange as fundamentally beneficial.
- (2) ***Individual Changes Associated with Exchange***, which refers to self-perceived alterations in one's attitudes, behaviors, and skills induced by the exchange experience.
- (3) ***Ripple Effects and Utilization of Exchange Effects***, the degree to which one actually has applied the results of exchange and influenced others' attitudes and behaviors based on the results of exchange.

- (4) ***Involvement in Exchange-Related Activities Since the Sojourn***, meaning the degree to which one participated in subsequent exchange programs or otherwise involved oneself in international relations and exchange.
- (5) ***Educational and Professional Directions Attributed to Exchange***, which refers to the influence of the exchange experience upon one's academic and career choices and plans.
- (6) ***Bilateral (Germany-USA) Perspective and Involvement Since the Exchange***, which is the degree to which one's orientation since the exchange has been host-country specific.
- (7) ***Globalism: Multilateral Perspective and Involvement Since the Exchange***, defined as the degree to which one's orientation since the exchange has been other than or in addition to a host-country specific emphasis.
- (8) ***Evaluation of the YFU Program***, which refers to participants' assessments of program content and administration.

The study's second phase was the result of a recommendation in the final report on the original study that follow-up interviews of early interviewees be conducted some years later to re-assess their perspectives on the exchange experience from a longer-term vantage point. Accordingly, in April 2002 the original research team convened several two-day workshops in northern Germany to explore further the original findings with 15 German YFU returnees whose exchange experiences were spread across the four decades.

Findings

The survey-based findings from the original study, which were largely reinforced, albeit anecdotally, in the follow-up study with German returnees, lend considerable weight to the notion that the exchange experience contributes to positive and long-lasting attitudinal, behavioral, and cognitive changes in the majority of individual participants. Generally, it was found that:

The host family experience is a singularly important and influential aspect of exchange.

The longer the exchange, the greater its impact.

An exchange experience enhances one's international perspective.

The effects of the experience support prospects for international peace and cooperation.

Former exchange students apply what they learn and influence others.

An overwhelming majority of respondents characterized exchange as both satisfying and successful.

Such effects were claimed by a large proportion of former exchange participants irrespective of nationality, gender, decade of participation, or program auspices, although significant differences do appear among those subgroups as well in a number of instances. In addition, the largely benefi-

cial impact of the exchange experience was reinforced when analyzed in relation to responses from the peer-nominated comparison group.

The findings from the study are summarized below under ten headings, which are presented in a chronology or sequence that roughly reflects an “exchange life cycle” – that is, from the time one first had the inclination to participate through longer term career and other experiences.

Motives for Program Participation

For most respondents, the decision to exchange was primarily their own idea. Parents and teachers were also influential.

The stronger one's motivation was for specific aspects of the exchange prior to the experience, the more one attributed lasting effects in these areas afterwards.

For both Americans and Germans, the most important reasons for becoming an exchange student were a desire for increased independence, a sense of adventure/desire to travel enhanced intercultural understanding, greater foreign language proficiency, the honor of being an exchangee, and an increased sense of uniqueness.

Two specific motives for participation and subsequent ratings of corresponding effects were very clearly related in both samples: Establishing ties with one's family/ethnic heritage and increases in foreign language proficiency. In the U.S. sample alone, a third relationship was found with regard to German language proficiency specifically. In the German sample alone, two additional positive relationships were found with regard to increased interest in international affairs and gaining another perspective on Germany by viewing it from afar.

U.S. and German students who participated in the exchange in order to avoid certain difficulties at home (school and family problems; breaking up with a boyfriend or girlfriend) were less likely to rate the exchange experience as successful/satisfactory. This so-called "escape orientation" was also identified as the single most important negative predictor of program success, and thus should be given special attention in participant selection and in on-program counseling.

Anticipated and Experienced Difficulties

Among both samples, there was a moderate-to-high tendency to experience more difficulty in those areas that one was worried about prior to the exchange: Homesickness, loneliness, inadequate host language ability, inability to make friends, cultural "blunders", and prejudices by host country nationals. Also, in contrast to the Americans, those Germans who were worried about their own feelings of prejudice towards Americans subsequently had more difficulty in this area while in the U.S.

There was some tendency among Americans who evaluated the exchange experience positively nevertheless to have experienced difficulty in Germany with homesickness, loneliness, and making friends. Germans who viewed the experience positively tended to have experienced difficulties in

the U.S. with cultural misunderstandings, homesickness, loneliness, making friends, and their own feelings of prejudice towards Americans.

Host Family Placement

The more positive one's relationship was with the host family, the more one attributed positive impact to the exchange.

A number of specific findings point to the central importance of a close, positive relationship with the host family. As determinants of a successful exchange experience, U.S. respondents identified compatibility with basic interests, values/beliefs of host family members, as well as an interest on the part of the host family in other cultures or international affairs generally and in the U.S. specifically.

Prior host family involvement with exchange (e.g., previous hosting, program participation by host siblings) was not found to affect program satisfaction.

There was some tendency for Germans who had only one host family to view the exchange more positively. Among Americans, there was no significant relationship between the number of host families and their overall evaluation of exchange.

Perceptions of the Host Country

For both Germans and Americans, evaluation of the exchange experience is more closely linked to liking or disliking the host country as a nation rather than to a regard or liking of individual members of the host country.

Americans who agreed that their German peers had a greater interest in world affairs and other cultures than their American peers, tended to view their overall exchange experience positively. Germans who found more opportunities to socialize and make friends in the U.S. than in Germany, and who considered their U.S. peers to be more open-minded and tolerant of differences than their German peers, tended to view their exchange experience positively.

When they were asked to name the most prevalent issues or topics of discussion in the host country during their exchange period, no topics common to both national samples were mentioned with any substantial frequency. For Americans, the most prevalent issues of the day in Germany were east-west relations, life/ events/image of the home country, popular culture, and the economic situation. For Germans, domestic policy, world politics, sports, and boy/girl issues were most prevalent in the U.S.

Both prior to the exchange in the home country and then during the exchange in the host country, a higher incidence of Germans than Americans who exchanged in certain historical eras perceived the issues of the day similarly. The concept of "exchange generations" – i.e., a greater commonality of perspective or shared perception of issues according to the period in which one was an exchange student – seemed more applicable to Germans than Americans.

Overall Evaluation of the Exchange Experience

The large majority of participants in both national samples (approximately 90%) rated the exchange experience positively.

Americans and Germans had in common the five categories of evaluation with the highest frequency of responses. These included student-host family relations; broadening of viewpoint; contacts and friendships; immersion, acceptance, and adaptation during the exchange; and personal growth and maturation.

On the criterion called "Overall Satisfaction/Success", U.S. respondents scored significantly higher than Germans.

As the U.S. sample was composed of participants in three programs of varying length (Academic Year program, two-month Summer program, 4-week Chorale tour), it was possible to make comparisons with program duration as an independent variable. Significant differences between the three groups were found with regard to the item cluster labeled "Overall Satisfaction/Success": Academic Year program participants scored significantly higher than both Summer and Chorale, while Summer students scored higher than Chorale – in short, the longer the program's duration, the higher the overall feeling of success/satisfaction. Academic Year students also scored higher than the other two groups with regards to the criteria "Educational and Professional Directions Attributed to Exchange" and "Bilateral Perspective/ Involvement" and higher than Chorale students on the criterion "Utilization and Ripple Effects".

For Germans, the best indicator/predictor of satisfaction was the degree to which one felt the exchange had a positive effect on one's level of self-development and maturity. For Americans, the best predictor was the degree to which the exchange had a positive effect on one's desire to meet and interact with people from other countries.

Readjustment to the Home Country

Upon returning home from the exchange, approximately 90% of both Germans and Americans claimed that they wished to go back to the host country some day, that they felt thankful for the experience and obligated to do something with what they had gained, and that their natural families were interested in hearing about their exchange experience.

Both Germans and Americans who missed their primary host family and were "homesick" for the host country tended to rate the exchange more positively. Germans also tended to rate exchange more positively if they agreed that they preferred the U.S. over Germany and if they wished to return to America some day. Americans who were also thankful for the experience and felt obligated to do something positive with its results tended to rate the exchange more positively.

Follow-up Contacts with the Host Country

Three-quarters of the Germans and one-half of the Americans currently remain in contact with their former primary host family.

Those who remained in contact with their main host family for more than three years tended to view exchange more positively.

More German (94%) than U.S. (50%) participants tended to have contact with people in the host country other than their host family, and also currently remain in contact with those others (60% Germans vs. 21% Americans).

Although nearly all American participants (99%) indicated their desire to return to Germany some day, only 53% actually had done so at the time of the survey; a relatively large number (26 = 13%) had returned in connection with university studies. Among German participants, 83% wished to return to the U.S. some day, and 68% had already done so at the time of the survey, the large majority (58%) as tourists, while only 19 Germans (4%) had returned to study at U.S. universities.

German respondents scored significantly higher on a cluster of items called "Bilateral Perspective/Involvement" than on the contrasting cluster called "Globalism: Multilateral Perspective/Involvement", while the reverse was true for Americans. This means that Germans remain more exclusively interested and involved with their former host country than is the case for their U.S. counterparts.

The last-mentioned difference was demonstrated particularly with regard to utilization of the host country language: Nearly all (99%) Germans reported studying/using English and reading English literature – as opposed to 71% Americans who studied/used the German language, and 55% who read German publications. Similarly, more Germans (74%) reported to have assisted visitors from their former host country with difficulties than did Americans (48%). On the other hand, sending one's own children on exchanges to the former host country and to other countries was much more common among U.S. respondents than among Germans (to the host country: 46% vs. 28%; to other countries: 50% vs. 21%).

Involvement in YFU and Other International Exchange Organizations

Mostly due to the organizational structure of YFU in Germany, which heavily relies on volunteer involvement of former program participants, nearly half of the German respondents claimed to have been active as YFU volunteers, for an average of 3 years. Employment in international organizations, on the other hand, was much higher among U.S. respondents (17%) than among Germans (4%).

About equal rates of U.S. and German alumni have been in contact with YFU, periodically or regularly. YFU in the U.S. relies more heavily on newsletters, while YFU in Germany keeps in contact primarily through notices of events and telephone calls. As to the reasons for contact, German

returnees were more than three times as likely to be called upon to host students or to volunteer than returnees in the U.S. (69% vs. 21%), and a much higher percentage of German returnees (59% vs. 7%) were called upon to give presentations.

Generally speaking, German respondents reported a significantly higher degree of exchange-related activities after their sojourn, which points to their more longitudinal view of the exchange experience going beyond the exchange year itself.

Perceived Effects of the Exchange Experience

Well over 90% of both Germans and Americans said that the exchange experience was valuable in the sense that they acquired abilities or traits that were subsequently useful to them.

The large majority of respondents attributed significant and positive personal changes to the exchange experience. This attribution applied overall, as well as by nationality, decade of exchange, gender, duration of exchange, and type of scholarship support.

Approximately 85% of all respondents indicated that the exchange experience caused an attitudinal change, as a result of which they began to individualize people, versus categorize or stereotype them by nationality.

The large majority of respondents claimed effects from the exchange experience that would seem to have positive implications for international peace and cooperation. This claim was constant when broken down by nationality, gender, decade of exchange, program duration, and type of scholarship support.

For Germans, decade of exchange/"generation" was a significant differentiating factor on the effects criteria of "Individual Changes," "Educational or Professional Directions," "Multilateralism," and "Program Evaluation". Americans varied by decade of exchange on "Educational or Professional Directions," "Overall Satisfaction/ Success," and "Bilateralism".

More than half of both national samples claimed instances in which they influenced a person or situation because of what they themselves had learned during the exchange experience.

Educational Directions and Professional Careers

A majority of all respondents did not attribute current and future educational and occupational directions to exchange. However, approximately 60% of those Germans and Americans who actually attended, were attending, or planned to attend university said that their choice of major was influenced by their YFU exchange experience. Similarly, slightly more than 50% of those Germans and Americans who actually attended, were attending, or planned to attend graduate/ professional school said that their choice of specialization was influenced by their YFU exchange experience.

Statistically, U.S. respondents claimed significantly stronger educational and professional directions as a result of exchange than did German respondents.

Those Germans and Americans who, prior to the exchange, expected that the experience would be helpful when they eventually applied for a job, generally felt that the exchange was a positive influence in that regard.

Evaluating the Success of Exchange

As noted in the introduction, the research findings reported here are the results of a multi-year study meant to address the question of justifiable expectations, in this instance, whether or not the long-term effects of international educational exchange experiences for teen-agers are what the organizers had in mind as outcomes. In other words, was the program successful?

To help answer this question, the research team conducted a cluster analysis of the study's various survey questions and derived the eight "Criteria for the Success of Exchange" introduced earlier. Principal findings associated with each criterion, which were tested for internal consistency and construct validity (Bachner, Zeuschel, & Shannon, 1993), are summarized here.

Criterion 1: Overall Satisfaction/Success of Exchange

This is defined as one's feelings about the experience and the degree to which one assessed the exchange as fundamentally beneficial. Key findings for this criterion were that:

Approximately 90 percent of both samples rated the exchange experience positively.

The best predictor of success/satisfaction for Americans was the extent to which the exchange helped them to meet people from other countries.

Exchange's effect on self-development and maturity was the best success predictor for Germans.

As one participant in the follow-up interviews put it in illustration of this criterion, "*I was not an independent person of my own. And I thought, this is the chance to get rid of this and to develop my own personality. And I'm sure this is what this exchange experience did.*"

Criterion 2: Individual Changes Associated with Exchange

This refers to self-perceived alterations in one's attitudes, behaviors, and skills induced by the exchange experience. Key findings showed:

Increased self-confidence, independence, and sense of personal responsibility.

Increased ability to differentiate in one's perceptions of others, as well as between one's own and others' perspectives.

As described by one interviewee, "*Before, I was concentrated completely on myself and very egotistic. Afterwards I was very caring for other people, whenever there was a person who had trouble in any sense and I would get to know about it – I had developed some sort of help-syndrome.*"

Criterion 3: Ripple Effects and Utilization of Exchange Effects

This is defined as the degree to which one actually has applied the results of exchange and influenced others' attitudes and behaviors based on the results of exchange. An extensive discussion of the findings associated with this particular criterion can be found in Bachner & Zeutschel (1994). For present purposes, those findings essentially indicated that more than half of both the German and American samples claimed instances in which they influenced a person or situation because of what they themselves had learned during the exchange experience.

According to one respondent, *"It is a kind of match-making approach: when there is a new team member you think 'Who could be of interest to that new person?' and you try to get them together. This is something I think is not very German, but it must have come from my year in America – to get people into good company and see that they have a good start."*

Criterion 4: Involvement in Exchange-Related Activities Since the Sojourn

This is the degree to which one participated in subsequent exchange programs or otherwise involved oneself in international relations and exchange. The main finding here was that Germans reported a significantly higher degree of exchange- and internationally-related activities after their sojourn than Americans.

"A group of us doctors got the idea to train Russian doctors," said a German returnee. *"It was very important to America to give some ideas about democracy and whatever to young people in Western Europe, especially to Germans, and what we are trying to do now is to do that on a more elevated level."*

Criterion 5: Educational and Professional Directions Attributed to Exchange

This refers to the influence of the exchange experience upon one's academic and career choices and plans. Key findings associated with this criterion were that:

A majority of respondents did not directly attribute educational and occupational directions to exchange.

However, 60 percent said their choice of university major and/or graduate school specialization was at least influenced by the experience.

Many said it influenced their attitude or approach to their job.

As an example of the third item, one returnee reflected that *"In my profession I use a lot of things that I probably developed or that started to develop in the States, such as positive thinking, seeing the good things in very nasty situations in order to make the best out of them."*

Criterion 6: Bilateral (Germany-USA) Perspective and Involvement Since the Exchange

This is defined as the degree to which one's orientation since the exchange has been host-country specific. The principal finding here was that Germans remained more interested in and involved with their former host country than was the case for their U.S. counterparts.

One returnee described the bi-lateral perspective this way: *"I got a very strong feeling of being European, and the longer I stayed in the USA, the more European I got. And when I'm a longer time in Germany, then I'm getting more German. ... But on the whole I have a very, very strong feeling even today about the USA."*

Criterion 7: Globalism: Multilateral Perspective and Involvement Since the Exchange

This is the degree to which one's orientation since the exchange has been other than or in addition to a host-country specific emphasis. Main findings were that:

Germans indicated a significantly lower degree of globalism than the American returnees.

However, the experience in the U.S. eventually led to the development of a more global perspective.

The global perspective, as defined here, was captured by this returnee: *"Exchange to me is much more than my stay in the United States, as we have been hosting many exchange students. We belong together no matter where we live. This personal connection is so strong that it is something that is beyond any cultural or political or whatever differences."*

Criterion 8: Evaluation of the YFU Program

This refers to participants' assessments of program content and administration. Key findings were that:

The pre-departure orientation seminars in Germany were mentioned often and were generally seen as the starting point for a conscious reflection and learning process that helped to set the frame of reference for later impressions and experiences.

The selection process and counseling services during the exchange were positively contrasted to other exchange organizations' practices.

Regarding the first item, one German returnee recalled that *"Before the orientation it was just a combination of adventure, fun, and language, 'I just want to get over there'. And suddenly you see all areas of intercultural experience – what is culture, how to integrate into a culture, how to interpret a culture... Well, tough stuff!"*

Conclusions

International educational youth exchange is a clearly consequential and positive experience in the estimation of the majority of study respondents. Particular findings, however, require interpretation so that both their generalizable and unique characteristics are recognized. In *Students of Four Decades* (Bachner & Zeutschel, 2009), the most comprehensive compilation of the research findings, certain areas of findings are posited as conclusions of the research, and the implications of each are discussed at length. It will be useful to summarize and provide some interpretation of eight of those conclusions here.

Conclusion 1: Exchange is a multivariate and complex reality.

Exchange is frequently considered in monolithic, under-delineated terms. More accurately, it is a complex matrix of activities and circumstances which requires differentiation among types of programs (e.g., homestay), program goals, sponsorship (e.g., government), length of program, nationality, gender, historical time period, and the like.

This study attempted such differentiation in order to interpret reported exchange effects in their proper context. For example, one of the pivotal variables to emerge from this analysis, one which must be considered a key element in differentiating the effects of exchange, is program duration – i.e., the longer the sojourn, the better in terms of the depth and quality of impact. A second example is nationality, which seems to be a consequential variable on several exchange effect dimensions, including “Overall Satisfaction/Success”, “Individual Changes”, “Professional or Educational Directions”, and “Exchange-Related Activities”. (The last dimension seems most readily explainable, insofar as YFU in Germany encourages a longer range perspective on exchange and offers more opportunities for alumni involvement than does YFU in the USA.) A third example is decade of exchange, which constitutes an important variable as well. For Germans, decade of exchange was a significant differentiating factor on four effects criteria (“Individual Changes”, “Professional or Educational Directions”, “Multilateralism”, and “Program Evaluation”); Americans varied by decade of exchange on one of those criteria (“Professional or Educational Directions”) and on two others (“Overall Satisfaction/Success” and “Bilateralism”).

Conclusion 2: Contact and relationships between students and their host families are singularly important aspects of exchange.

Studies on inter-group relations from social psychological, communications, and cross-cultural perspectives have consistently maintained that contact which occurs between groups under favorable conditions will enhance understanding and positive attitudes between those groups. In the exchange literature, Amir’s (1969) argument that favorable contact should be defined, at least in

part, as intimate rather than casual contact has been reinforced in studies by a number of researchers (see Van den Broucke, *et al.*, 1989).

Findings from the current study corroborate the expectation that intensive, positive contact with members of the host culture will result in positive views of the exchange experience and, by inference, positive views of the host culture. The primary source of this contact, however, should be specified as the main host family with whom the student lived during the exchange period. This volunteer host family is perhaps the most essential, irreducible feature of the YFU exchange. A number of the study findings illuminate its importance for the individual exchangeee, and also imply its importance as a vehicle for improving inter-group relations.

Conversely, intensive student-host family contact which is negative in nature holds the potential of resulting in an exchange experience which is deleterious to inter-group relations. Student-host family selection and matching, therefore, should be emphasized as priority responsibilities for exchange programs.

Conclusion 3: Exchange typically results in personal changes that can be characterized as significant, demonstrable, positive, and enduring.

The findings from this study were unequivocal in corroborating the contention that exchange is an undertaking of favorable, useful, and long-lasting consequence in the estimation of most returnees. A multitude of specific cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral effects were claimed by the large majority of respondents. The practical applicability of exchange learnings, both in one's own activities and in influencing others in positive ways, was also claimed by the majority.

Such findings are both predictable and gratifying. At the same time, however, it is important to note, as was discussed earlier in this section under Conclusion 1, that exchange effects should be differentiated so that the experience of subgroups of participants can be more fully understood. This is especially true for that minority of exchangeees whose sojourn may have been problematic, and in some cases harmful.

Conclusion 4: Educational and professional directions are not a significant result of exchange for most participants.

This result is problematic, in that the literature on exchange as reviewed by Van den Broucke *et al.* (1989) indicates that returnees may be more inclined than non-exchange participants to study foreign languages, and that their greater interest in world affairs and other cultures may also be influenced by their exchange experience. Van den Broucke and his colleagues also found evidence as a result of their own research that exchange influences the subsequent professional careers of returnees as well.

It should be noted, however, that among certain subgroups of American respondents in the present study an actual majority (Congress-Bundestag alumni) or near-majority (1980s Participants and Academic Year Participants) did attribute professional and career directions to exchange. This would reinforce the discussion of the first conclusion, which is that exchange effects are variegated depending on subgroups.

Conclusion 5: Involvement with exchange after the sojourn is not typical.

Many youth exchange organizations, YFU certainly among them, rely heavily upon involvement of volunteers in the full range of programmatic activities, including screening, selection, orientation, and logistical and counseling support of exchange students and families. Given the high proportion of returnees who evaluated the exchange period positively (92%, inclusive of both national samples) and who felt both thankful for the experience and somehow obligated to reciprocate (95% all-inclusive), it would seem logical to assume that the majority of alumni would become involved in exchange-related activities after their own sojourn.

This was not the case. Neither nationality, nor any other subgroup, was excepted. German alumni, however, were significantly more involved in post-program exchange-related activities than their American counterparts. Even though the German involvement still did not constitute the majority of cases, its higher incidence probably reflects the operational philosophy of YFU in Germany, which inculcates a longer range view of the exchange experience than holds true in America.

Conclusion 6: An international perspective is a significant result of exchange.

Reductions in ethnocentrism and corresponding increases in internationalism, or worldmindedness, have been posited as results of exchange by a number of researchers, and specifically at the high school level by Detweiler (1984), Kagitcibasi (1978), and more recently by the AFS "Educational Results Study" (Hansel, 2005).

The findings from this study corroborated their results, indicating that the entire range of subgroups felt that the exchange experience had positively influenced their level of tolerance, respect for other nations, sense of cultural relativism, attitude of universal brotherhood, desire for peace and cooperation, desire to interact with foreigners, interest in international affairs, and level of social or political involvement. Moreover, both nationalities' alumni claimed an exchange-induced attitude of internationalism, which was evidenced either bilaterally (i.e., focus on German-U.S. activities for Germans) or multilaterally (i.e., focus on activities other than or in addition to those involving Germany and the U.S.).

Conclusion 7: Problems which participants expected to experience occurred, but these did not have a negative effect on the perceived success of exchange.

The notion of the “self-fulfilling prophecy”, which states that imagined possibilities will be brought to realization chiefly as a result of having been expected or predicted, is lent some credence by the findings of this study. For example, the pre-program anxieties of both Germans and Americans with respect to language proficiency, cultural *faux pas*, loneliness, making friends, managing the demands of schoolwork, and experiencing prejudice (either towards themselves or from themselves towards host country nationals) largely came to pass: In other words, the potential problems they worried about beforehand were the problems they actually experienced during the exchange.

A related, quite interesting finding was that those participants, both Germans and Americans, who in retrospect tended to view the exchange more positively claimed to have actually experienced most of the difficulties they had been most anxious about before the sojourn.

Conclusion 8: Specified variables can be used to predict satisfaction with the exchange experience.

A growing body of exchange and sojourn research has focused on the topic of overseas effectiveness by attempting to identify those characteristics in individuals which will predict success in another culture and (less frequently) by attempting to establish adequate criteria for measuring such success. This study contributes to the prediction of success by focusing on perception, expectation, and social relations. Using multiple regression analysis, a number of variables (17 for the overall sample, 14 for the Germans, and five for the Americans) were found to correlate significantly with respondents’ evaluations of their general satisfaction with the exchange experience and, in their perception, its success.

Generally speaking, the single best predictor, or indicator, of satisfaction/success is the extent to which one felt the exchange had a positive effect on one’s level of self-development and maturity. Interestingly, however, when key variables were examined by national sample, the prediction of satisfaction/success was totally different for German and U.S. participants: of 14 specific predictors identified for Germans and five for Americans, none was common to the two nationalities. This would seem to reinforce a key hypothesis/tenet of the study, which was discussed earlier under conclusions 1 and 4: namely, that exchange effects can be extremely variegated, with nationality being a fundamental source of variation on certain dimensions.

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