

Finnish exchange students' culture shock

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<p>This bachelor's thesis is written about culture shock experienced by the exchange students from Finland. It is commissioned by an international students exchange organisation located in Finland. The aim of the research was to find out how much the host country affects the culture shock and to identify aspects that affect the adaptation of the students. The goal is to provide the future exchange students with advise on coping with culture shock.</p> <p>Theoretical framework consists of defining what is culture and culture shock. The theories of culture include Geert Hofstedes cultural dimensions on national culture and the iceberg metaphor.</p> <p>The questionnaire was done by using webpropol. The local organisation distibuted the questionnaire to their exhchange students via email during April-May 2015. Students had four weeks to answer the questionnaire.</p> <p>The aim of the research was reached as the author was able to indetify fact that affected the culture shock and the adaptation.</p>	
Keywords Culture shock, cultural communication, adaptation, cultural differences	

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1 Introduction

1.1 Research problem

This research focuses on the effect of culture shock and ways to adapt during exchange year. Exchange year is an option for young students to gain cultural and international experiences at young age. The idea is that students move into a new country for an academic year. During this period they live with a local family and go to a local high school. Typically the students are from the age of 15 to 18 at the time of the exchange.

The issue discussed in this research is to see how the culture effects exchange students depending on the destination. Under the scope there will be the effect of communication to home, language skills and information given on culture shock. An aim is also to identify what are the facts that help students to adapt to the new host country.

Culture shocks are common among the high school exchange students as they go and live with a local family and experience the culture closely. The issue is that everyone faces culture shock but are not always aware what behaviour it may cause even many months after the arrival. The aim is to find out those behaviours that it may cause and see in how the culture shock differs in different countries. It is to be also researched that how the culture differs from Nordic cultures and how this difference affects the culture shock of the student.

Has the culture shock effected the adaptation of the exchange student? It is to be researched that how the language skills has helped them to adapt. It also is seen if the students have received information about the country before and upon arrival and how this has affected the culture shock.

1.2 Aims and objectives

The objective of this thesis is to provide a study that will inform the leaving exchange students and their families about the effects of culture shock and ways to cope with it. The main aim of the research is to find how culture shock differs depending on the

country. The aim is also for the exchange organisation to see if there is a need for more information to be provided to the exchange students as they are going abroad. It is to be seen what factors decrease and increase the culture shock.

The aim of the research is to gain knowledge on how to inform the leaving exchange students of the facts of culture shock. The facts and behaviour of culture shock is to be solved in aim to ease the effect of the culture shock.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The first part of the thesis will focus on the theory of culture and culture shock. First we will define what culture actually is. Then a few different theories on culture will be discussed. I have chosen the theories of Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions and the iceberg metaphor. These theories will be used when the collected data is analysed.

The second part of the thesis includes the research. The questionnaire has been discussed under seven chapters. These include information about the respondents, preparedness before the exchange, expectations, social connections, homesickness, reverse culture shock and the experience in general. At the end of this thesis there is a conclusion to summarize the subject and to provide the commissioner with recommendations.

1.4 Year abroad

The exchange year is an option given to students in different stages on their education. In this thesis the focus is on the exchange period that is done on high school or senior high, between the ages of 15 and 18. Exchange periods popularity among young adults has increased. European countries are the most popular destinations along with US. Women are more actively going on exchange than men. (Maailmalle, 2015)

The exchange period is normally half or one academic year. During this period exchange student is studying in a local school and living with local host family. Normally

the studies done during high school exchange do not entirely replace the studies back at the home institution. (Maailmalle, 2015)

There are several different exchange programs and organizations available to choose from. Exchange organizations have different levels of age and language requirements that are also dependent on the host destination. The costs of the exchange year depend on the length and destination of the exchange. Some organizations are granting financial aid to leaving students. Students going on exchange with an exchange organization are not reliable on paying the tuition fees. (Maailmalle, 2015)

The idea of student exchange started after the Second World War when it was made possible for German students to spend a school year in USA. This was made possible by the Church of the Brethren and the Ministry for foreign affairs for USA. The aim of this was for youth to build better relations after the war. In Finland the student exchange started at the 1950's. After this the industry has grown and becoming more popular. The field is filled with several different types of organizations. Part of the organizations are commercial, some are NGO's and some work on voluntary basis. (Maailmanvaihto Ry, 2015)

2 Theoretical approach: Cultural adaption

2.1 Definition of culture

All of us are part of several different cultures such as age, work and gender cultures. In this thesis the focus is on national culture. National culture is often identified as being within borders of a country. Even when we as human beings are unique people within the same country we do share the same values, beliefs and history. (The Hofstede centre, 2015)

The word culture has many different meanings. It can mean the finer things in life such as literature, art, dance, music and theater for example. Word culture is also used when described a group of people that share the same values, beliefs, behavioral patterns, institutions and history. National culture is referred when talked about a group of people living in the same country or geographical area. (Ferraro, 2010, 19-22.)

Culture is not in our DNA but it is learned. Culture is shared among other people. National culture is shared with people living in the same geographical area. People with the same national culture often share similar beliefs, history, religion and values. Same behavioral patterns and way of life is shared among the same culture. Culture develops along time. Certain national culture develops as generations change. Globalization and new developing technology have changed each and every culture. Current political situations and conflicts will affect the future generations and culture. (Ferraro, 2010, 19-22.)

Culture has been defined by many. There are several hundred definitions of culture created by anthropologists. The similarity on all is that they aim to conclude the different aspects of culture such as its inheritance, shared history and values. A famous anthropologist Geert Hofstede defined culture as “software of the mind”. This definition defines the facts that culture is a certain mindset that we each one have. It affects our behavior and thinking processes. (Hofstede centre, 2015)

There are several layers of culture in all of us. This is depending on our place and way of living. Some particular layer being: national culture, regional culture, gender culture, generation culture, social class and for those that are in working life, corporate culture. As there are so many different levels of culture there are some conflict in our mental programming for example our religious views may be in conflict with our values. (Hofstede, 2010, 17-26.)

2.2 Stereotypes, prejudice and generalization

Stereotypes are used by all of us. They are often being used without realisation of it. Stereotype is defined as being an oversimplified image or an idea of a person or a nation. This image is not based on any facts or personal encounters but the image received from media, friends and society. Stereotypes of a certain nation can either be viewed as negative or positive but they are primarily negative. People tend to produce negative stereotypes more easily than positive ones. Most often stereotypes are unfair, problematic and over generalised. Stereotyping other people and nations is seen easy and often comes automatically.

(Nelson. 2009, 2, 27-29, 86.)

All human beings have a need to belong to a certain group of people. People who don't belong to the same group as one are often seen as an undifferentiated. Attitudes towards other groups are shaped by the stereotypes one has. These stereotypes are often shared and learned from our own group and culture around us. Stereotyping other is an automatic process where there is no realisation of stereotyping others. There is a focus that people today should be seen as individuals rather than a part of a certain group. Researches claim that stereotyping can be weakened by affecting the automatic process. People ought to respond to negative stereotypes and change their behavior when stereotypes or prejudice are being used. With enough motivation a person can change the way they use and feel about stereotypes.

(Psychology Today. 2015)

Prejudice is opinion or judgment of a person or a group before knowing any facts. It can be an unfair feeling or dislike. There are no real reasons why a person feels prejudice towards others. Prejudice can be toward to a group or an individual. Prejudice includes discriminating behavior which will lead to unfair treatment of the person. This may cause mental and physical damage to the person.

(Merriman-Webster, 2015) (Nelson 2009, 2-7.)

Generalization is an opinion that is formed about the entire group of people based on one or a few people from that group. Generalization does work the other way around as well. An entire group can be identified by the look and behavior of one individual when he meets the characteristics to fit into it. Generalization does not happen if the group does not seem united together. (Merriman-Webster, 2015)

Having prejudice towards people and stereotyping them may lead to many problems in the society if not acknowledged by the person using them. When people are stereotyped we tend to see the negative aspects first. This may lead to discrimination for example in job hiring. There is a tendency to use stereotypes and categorize people when feeling lazy or unfocused. This is because stereotyping is a norm and often used without realizing it.

(Merriman-Webster, 2015) (Nelson 2009, 7-9, 183-184, 191.)

2.3 Hofstede's cultural dimensions

Geert Hofstede is a Dutch anthropologist. He has created the cultural dimensions theory that will let us look at cultures through six different dimensions. The study that the national cultural dimensions are based on was done between the years of 1967-1973.

The data was collected from IBM; employees with over 70 different nationalities.

(The Hofstede centre, 2015)

The first four dimensions are: Power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity and uncertainty avoidance. The fifth dimension: Long term orientation was added to the list of dimensions in 1991. The latest dimension indulgence vs.

restrained was added in 2010. These dimensions are looking at the different aspects of a national culture. (The Hofstede centre, 2015)

2.3.1 Power distance

This dimensions focuses on the degree that the people expect and accept how the power is distributed. It indicated the level that people accept the fact that power is distributed unequally in institutions. Such institutions include family, workplace, school and community. (Hofstede, 2010, 53-60.)

In countries that rank low on the power distance scale are not dependant on the leader and they are preferred to be consulted. In these cultures bosses are easily approached. People are very friendly among each other and not dependant on the hierarchy for example teachers and students are on a first name basis. These countries prefer more autocratic leadership. In low power distance countries the subordinates are given an option to voice an opinion and that opinion is also valued by the bosses. (Hofstede, 2010, 53-60.)

Countries with high power distance the subordinates are more dependent on the opinion and tasks given to them by their bosses. Subordinates prefer and need to be told their tasks by their bosses. Emotional distance between the boss and the subordinate is large. They are very unlikely to be directly involved with one another. People in high power distance countries either prefer to be dependent on higher opinion or then totally reject the idea. There is a large gap between these two ways of opinion. (Hofstede, 2010, 53-60.)

2.3.2 Individualism vs. collectivism

Societies can be seen either being individualist or collectivist. Collectivist society can be defined as a society where the interest of the group is greater than the interest of the individual. In most collectivist countries the immediate family does not only consist of parents and sibling but also grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins. Children from these societies often learn the concept of being part of a group. Groups are dependent

on one another and great level of loyalty is shared among themselves. The relationships are built for life. Majority of the people in the world belong to a collectivistic society. (Hofstede, 2010, 89-102.)

Minority of the people belong to an individualistic society. In these societies the individual's interests are greater than the society's. Families normally only consist of parents and their children, these families are referred as nuclear families. Other relatives are often visited only occasionally and not on a daily basis. Children grow up learning to think themselves as "I" rather than a part of a "we". The emphasis of an individual and individuality is greater in these societies. Children often move away from home in a very early stage and are not dependent on their families support. Relationships are seen as short term. (Hofstede, 2010, 89-102.)

2.3.3 Masculinity vs. femininity

The dimension of masculinity and femininity is based on gender roles and aspects that are related to the other gender. Typically men are seen as assertive; strive for success, strong and competitive. Women on the other hand are seen as caring, cooperative and modest. This dimension is the most controversial of them all. It shows that nations do differ greatly on their values. Wealth plays no role in the dimensions. Countries that score high or low in masculinity can either be poor or wealthy; it is not determined by which side they belong to. In other dimensions the more wealthy nations tend to be more individualistic, have low power distance and weaker uncertainty avoidance level. (Hofstede, 2010, 135-145.)

2.3.4 Uncertainty avoidance

This dimension calculates in which level the society is comfortable in the unknown future and at the same time threatened by the uncertainty. The level of accepted uncertainty defines whether the society feels the need for written rules and restrictions. The question here is whether the society feels that need to control the future or let everything happen at its own pace. How the uncertainty of the future is handled is a great

part of any society. Societies have developed several ways to minimize the feel of uncertainty such as religion, laws and technology. Religion helps us to understand the uncertain facts that cannot be explained for example the life after death. Technology is the most advanced of them all. Technology helps us to minimize the uncertainty set up by nature. Laws are made so we are able to protect ourselves from other human beings. (Hofstede 2010, 187-190.)

Modern and traditional societies are very similar on the ways they handle uncertainty. The focus is on the fact that how people handle and feel about uncertain situations. People in same society have similar feelings towards uncertainty. This is mainly because of the shared values and beliefs. As culture the feelings towards change and unknown are learned. People within the same culture share the same coping mechanism towards uncertain situations. (Hofstede, 2010, 195-197.)

Countries with high score in the uncertainty avoidance dimension are also proven to have high anxiety levels. These are normally countries where people talk and express themselves with their hands and it is seen acceptable to talk loudly, show emotions and talk over one another. Low uncertainty avoidance countries loud expressions and show of emotions are disapproved. In these countries stress and anxiety cannot be relieved in activity put is kept inside. It is evident that in these countries the cause of death often is coronary heart disease. Life in these countries may be seen as dull which results in people searching stimuli's such as coffee and tea. Low uncertainty avoidance countries have high consumption in tea and coffee. Alcohol consumption on the other hand is lower in these countries.

(Hofstede, 2010, 195-197.)

2.3.5 Long term orientation

This dimension was listed along the original dimensions in the year 1991. The issue with adding this dimension was that there were fewer scored involved that in the original four. The list of countries examined was only half of the original. The two ends at this dimension are long term orientation and short term orientation. Countries that are long term oriented are more focused on the future rather than the past. They have very

little focus on the history and tradition in the country. Countries scoring highest in this dimension are China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Short term oriented countries are exactly the opposite. They are focused on the traditions of the country and preserving the face on their culture. On top of short term oriented countries there are Nigeria, Pakistan and Canada. (Hofstede 2010, 238-239.)

Long term orientation can also be seen as how the society considers virtue. It has been shown that Western cultures see that the truth is greater than virtue as in Eastern cultures the search for the virtue is the reason for everything. The logical thinking originates from the view of the virtue. As in Western cultures the truth is the ultimate reasoning. In Eastern cultures they do not see matters in so black and white. There is no true and false. The both opposites of a fact might as well be true. They also believe there is something that is superior to true and false. (Hofstede 2010, 238-239.)

These two different dimensions have very different views on family values and education. In short term oriented countries the opinion and acceptance of the family matters and affects the youth. These societies also have more belief in luck and traditions. In long term oriented countries the ideas and beliefs differ between family members and people have the possibility and willingness for independent opinions and behavior. These societies also rely on education and knowledge rather than witchcraft and wisdom as short term oriented countries. (Hofstede 2010, 238-239.)

The future is mainly the issue of long term oriented countries. The fact that these societies do worry about is their actions consequences to the future generations. There is also a desire for constant development and growth as human beings and as a society. These societies have proven to have larger economical growth both in poor and wealthier countries. Although now the long term oriented societies need to come to a conclusion on the fact that there is no infinite economical growth. The current growth has taken its toll on natural resources and the economy. (Hofstede 2010, 238-239.)

2.3.6 Indulgence vs. restrained

This dimension is the latest that has been added to the cultural dimensions theory. It was added in 2010. It includes data from 93 different countries and is based on analysis by Michael Minkov. Cultures that are more indulgence allows their society and people to have more fun as to more restrained cultures the fun and gratification are more regulated. (The Hofstede centre, 2015)

Comparing indulgence vs. restrained to the country's wealth it can be identified that often wealthy countries tend to be more indulgence as poor countries are restrained. There is a difference in birth rates for well-educated people. In indulgent countries the birth rates tend to be high as in restrained countries the birth rate is low. Societies living in high indulgence countries have higher percentage of very happy people and people who feel healthy. These societies see that people have control of their personal lives and they put free time and time with friends into high standard. Time with friends is seen as entertaining and fun which is why in restrained countries time spent with friends is not seen important. (Hofstede 2010, 277-298.)

In restrained societies people tend to be cynics and they are not likely to remember positive emotions. They also have the believe of something higher that controls their happiness, they are unable to affect their own happiness. Thriftiness is important. The living conditions in more restrained countries may be the effect as for example intensive agriculture requires more focus and allows less time leisure and entertainment. (Hofstede 2010, 277-298.)

2.4 The iceberg metaphor

Anthropologist Edward T. Hall created the iceberg metaphor. The metaphor was developed in 1976. It shows that in every single culture there are some aspects that can be seen. This is shown in the metaphor as the top of the iceberg. In icebergs the top part is only a tiny part of the entire iceberg. Most of the actual iceberg is under the ocean. This explains that in the culture there are only a small amount of things people from other cultures are able to see and identify for example architecture, art, music,

dance, greetings, behaviour and language. Under the ocean there are aspects of the culture such as beliefs, values, assumptions, prejudices, norms and attitudes. These aspects are often the reason that affects the visible part of the iceberg. The part that is under the ocean cannot be seen. This identifies that in culture there are many things that are larger part of the culture that we cannot see. Others will make their assumption only by the top of the iceberg which is only a small part of the culture. Understanding a certain culture properly people ought to see and understand what is underneath the surface. Edward T. Hall suggest that the way is to communicate and spent time with people that are part of that culture.

(Edward T. Hall, 2015)

2.5 Culture shock

Oxford dictionary defines culture shock as “The feeling of disorientation experienced by someone when they are suddenly subjected to an unfamiliar culture, way of life, or set of attitudes” Culture shock is faced by everyone entering a new culture. Depending on the person, length of the stay and destination country the culture shock is felt independently and it varies every time a new country is entered. (Oxford dictionary, 2015)

Culture shock is experienced when a person from a certain culture enters another. Losing all the familiar signs, patters and surroundings effect the reactions of culture shock. Culture shock is normal and unavoidable process that is gone through in order to adapt to a new culture. Often culture shock is seen as an unpleasant experience. Culture shock is affected by the expectations not meeting the reality. (Marx 1999, 5.)

Culture shock is by no means sign of weakness. Everyone goes through the different stages of culture shock when moving into a new culture. In the end culture shock can be seen as a positive sign and as gone through it results in better understanding and adaptation to a new culture. Culture shock is often assumed of being a short term experience. The effects of culture shock may rise several months after arrival to the new country. (Marx 1999, 5.)

2.6 Cultural adaptation project

There are certain identified stages of culture shock that everyone goes through as they enter a new culture. The time and length of certain stage differentiates depending on the person.

The first phase of culture shock is called the honeymoon phase. This is the phase where everything in the new culture is still new, positive and exciting. The culture entered is seen in positive light. In this stage a person is curious and interested about the new culture. When coming across some unpleasant and new situations at this stage those feelings are suppressed by the positive aspects of the new culture. (Marx 1999, 7-9.)

The second phase of culture shock is called rejection. This is the stage where a person clearly notices the different aspects of the culture in negative light. This is the stage where people start to feel frustrated and annoyed by the new ways of behavior and manners. Behavior changes dramatically compared to the honeymoon phase. A person may feel uneasy and new situations are felt as uncomfortable. The reason behind these feelings is the fact that a person feels unsure in a new environment and is unsure on how to handle things. The feelings of belonging into a certain culture, familiar social context and everything familiar is taken away. It is also common to compare the own culture to the new culture and feel that their own culture is superior to other cultures. (Marx 1999, 7-9.)

The third phase of culture shock is called recovery. This is a stage a person starts to see the difference in a more positive light and feels more comfortable with the new culture. The phase normally starts with accepting the fact that we have hostile feelings towards the new culture. The phase also includes the willingness to work through those negative feelings. (Marx 1999, 7-9.)

Adjustment is the last phase of culture shock. At this stage a person has adjusted to the new culture. New patterns of behavior do not seem so strange and start to make sense. At this stage a person accepts the way the new culture works and starts to respect it. Depending on the length of the time spent in the new culture people may also become

fully comfortable in the new culture. This may lead to a person being bicultural if staying long enough in a new culture. (Marx 1999, 7-9.)

2.7 Reverse culture shock

Reverse culture shock is experienced upon arrival back from the host country to home country. Reverse culture shock may even be more difficult than the actual culture shock. The elements that normally are the reason for reverse culture shock are that home country has been idealized during the exchange period and that changes back at home were not expected. Coming back home is normally not what is expected. Students normally forget that time has not stopped while they have been away. Their friends and family have lived their daily lives for several months without them. It may be hard to fall back into the old patterns. Dynamics among friends may have dramatically changed during that period. (Students Abroad, 2015)

The better the cultural adaptation to the host culture is the harder the re-entry back into the home culture will be. People will often go through the same feelings as in culture shock. There are the feelings of frustrations, alienation and misunderstandings. (Students Abroad, 2015)

2.8 Summarizing discussion

It can be concluded that all of us are part of many different cultures. Normally when talked about culture it is referred to the national culture. We all have stereotypes about other national cultures. These stereotypes are most often negative. We are able to come up with positive stereotypes as well. Although most often they are also perceived as negative as people come up with negative aspects more easily. Stereotyping and discriminating people is included in prejudice behaviour. All of us have prejudice towards certain groups of people. In order for us to learn not to stereotype others we need to understand when stereotypes are used and minimize the use of them. Nowadays people are more likely to be seen as individual rather than as a part of a group. Groups can be generalized by an individual. When we come across a person that see belonging into a certain group we instantly assume the entire group behaves like that one individual.

Culture itself has been defined and researched by many. Geert Hofstede defined it as “Software of the mind”. As we grow up we learn a certain set of rules and ways of behave. We are surrounded by people who have similar behavioural patterns and who share the same values. Culture shock occurs when a person with a certain mind-set enters a different culture. In the new country they have totally different mind-set. Entering a new culture all that is familiar is lost. Often even the most normal things such as street sign are different. After the initial culture shock begins the adaptation process. Culture shock is effected by everyone entering a new culture just the stages differ depending on the individual. Stages must be gone through in order for the adaptation to the new culture to be possible.

Adapting into a new culture may trick a reverse culture shock when returning home. All that was familiar may now seem strange. Learning and understanding culture is vital. Internationalisation has had a large effect on new cultures coming and working together. Many companies nowadays are working in different cultures. It is important to take into consideration the different cultures and their habits in the working environment as they have different values, beliefs and ways of working.

3 Research approach and methods

3.1 Research methods

The data gathered can be either qualitative or quantitative depending on the characteristics. Both types of data have different ways to be collected, analysed and reported. Quantitative is used when the general opinions, feelings and experiences are researched. It relies to the opinion of the mass. The results of quantitative research will be more reliable as the amount of data increases. The data is also considered to be more easily analysed as it is mostly focuses on numbers. Opinions can also be measured in quantitative research in case of given different variety of options to answer. The answers and questions in quantitative data are straight forwards and leave less space for exploitation. (Walliman, 2010, 7-10, 69-75.)

Peoples ideas, believes and values are variables that are not researched by numbers but rather with words. This is when the qualitative research will be more appropriate way of approach. (Walliman, 2010, 7-10, 69-75.)

Quantitative method is used in this research. The aim is to collect as many responses as possible. Experience of culture shock is an individual experience. Receiving more responses will result in more reliable outcome.

3.2 Data collection methods

Data collection is process in which information is gathered on a certain topic. There are several ways of collecting data. The survey can be sent out to the target audience, collected face to face or outsourcing the task. In this case the survey was distributed by the exchange organization due to privacy laws. The data of the questionnaire will be collected on a web based research. (Walliman, 2010, 7-10, 69-75.)

Collecting data may be problematic when the researcher is not present at the situation. For example the situation and time spent on filling the survey may vary dramatically.

Often it is best when the researcher is able to supervise the filling of the survey. This will minimize the likelihood of the data being invalid. Often people may misunderstand the questions at the survey. If there is no one present supervising misunderstandings are not straightened. (Walliman, 2010, 7-10, 69-75.)

The collected data is one of two forms. It is either primary or secondary. The data that is directly collected from the source either by observing or with a questionnaire is called primary data. Secondary data is taken from sources such as books, articles where the data has been interpreted. Primary data is more reliable than secondary data. (Walliman, 2010, 7-10, 69-75.)

3.3 Data analysis methods

The data analysis can be either quantitative or qualitative. Most of the surveys are quantitative. In these the emphasis is on numbers. This method requires a larger number of data gathered. It works well when the general opinions and reasons for a large number of people want to be researched. (Walliman 2009, 128-129)

In qualitative research the emphasis of the research is on understanding certain phenomenon. The emphasis is not on numbers and there is no need for a large number of data gathered. The aim of this research method is to understand the deeper meaning of some phenomenon. This method is popular in social sciences. The focus is on feelings, perspective and experiences that people have.

(Walliman 2009, 128-129)

In this research quantitative method is used. The goal is to find out different aspects of how the culture shock varies depending on the destination country. The aim was to include as many as possible answers from exchange students from certain destination countries. For this research 200 responses were received. This gives a general idea on the matters that are wished to research. Data gathered was analysed by comparing the destination countries of the exchange students. The aim was to find out how the destination affects the experience of the students and if there are some matters that affect the

culture shock. Reasons for the negative experiences were to be identified and to find out results on how to minimize them.

3.4 Reliability and validity

There are a few factors that might affect the data's reliability and validity. These factors are listed below. The questionnaire is distributed by the national organisation. This may lead into the directions being misread and different ways of distributing the questionnaire. This may effect for the gathered data not being reliable.

The questionnaire is distributed to former and current exchange students. Those currently on exchange have very fresh memories. Still they have not managed to distance themselves from the experience which may be the reason for unreliable data on their behalf.

On other half students been on exchange several years ago shall be sent the questionnaire as well. The concern here might be the fact that the time has made them to forget the negative and unpleasant sides of the experience. Their answers may be affected by time and only remembering the positive memories. Some of the memories may have been faded and even changed slightly. On the positive note time may have lead the students to look at the whole picture from distance which may have given them a better understanding of it.

The questionnaire is distributed in English. English language is not the native language for any of the students going on exchange. In some cases it is not the language in the host country. This may lead to misunderstanding the questions which will result the data being invalid. Research is not supervised as it is done which may affect that data is not answered with the time and focus needed. It can be done in many different type of circumstances that we are unable to control.

Over half of the respondents were on exchange in USA. It leads to the issue that the data is not valid in cases when comparing answers as the data will show in every case a

large percentage for USA. There have been only a handful of students in certain destinations. This means that the data does not equal to large enough segmentation in order to show reliable data.

4 Key results and discussion

4.1 Respondents

The questionnaire was sent by the exchange organisation via email. Respondents had approximately one month to answer to the questionnaire. Altogether 200 responses were gathered in that time period. All the respondents were Finnish exchange students.

Out of all the respondents 89.5% were female. The remaining 10.5% were male. The most popular destination country among the Finnish respondents was USA where 67% went on exchange; the second most popular destinations were Australia and New Zealand were approx. 7% of the respondents went. The most popular destinations in Europe were France and United Kingdom. There were also a few respondents who had gone to Norway, Ecuador, Ireland, Canada and South Africa. In conclusion English speaking countries are the most common and most popular destinations for exchange semester.

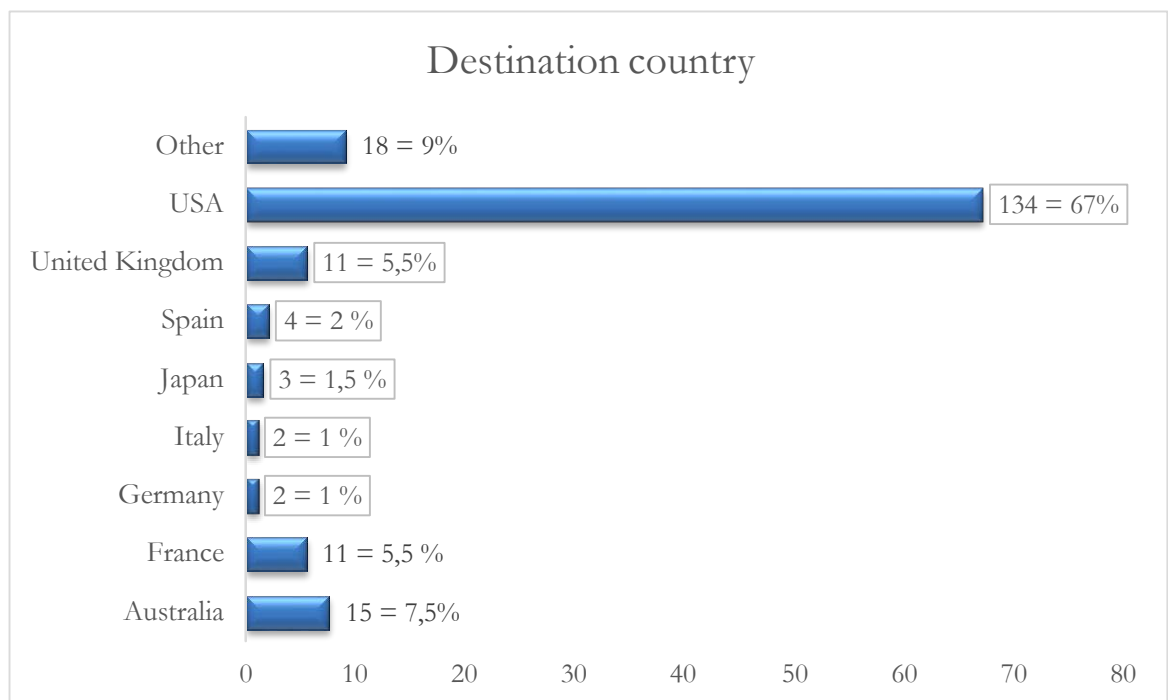


Figure 1. Destination country (N=200). Other destination countries include New Zealand (4.5%), Ecuador (1%), Norway (1%), Canada 1.5%, Ireland (1%) and South Africa (1%). Numbers in the chart are percentages.

The majority of all the respondents (64.5%) were at the age of 17 when leaving for exchange. 26% were 16-years of age and 8% were 18-years of age. There were 3 respondents who were 15 when leaving for exchange. No one was older than 18. Almost all of the respondents had left for exchange in year 2013 and 2014. There were two respondents who had left in 2015. 92% of all respondents stayed 10 months in the host country. 4% of the respondents did not stay either of the offered time periods. Out of those 4% two stayed longer than the official program period is and others left before their original departure date.

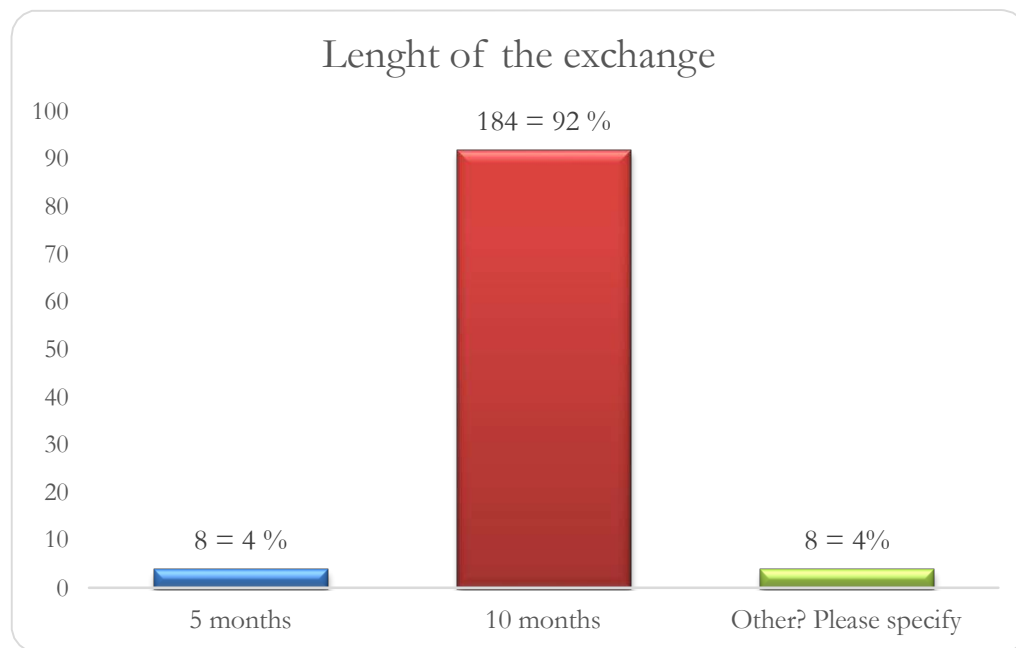


Figure 2. Length of the exchange. N= 200. Other lengths include answers such as 2 months, 6 months, 7 months, 9 months, 11 months and 12 months.

4.2 Preparedness before exchange

In order to find out how prepared the exchange students were before their exchange a few questions were made. Respondents were asked how many times before exchange they had travelled in certain countries and what was level of knowledge in certain languages and especially in the language of the destination country.

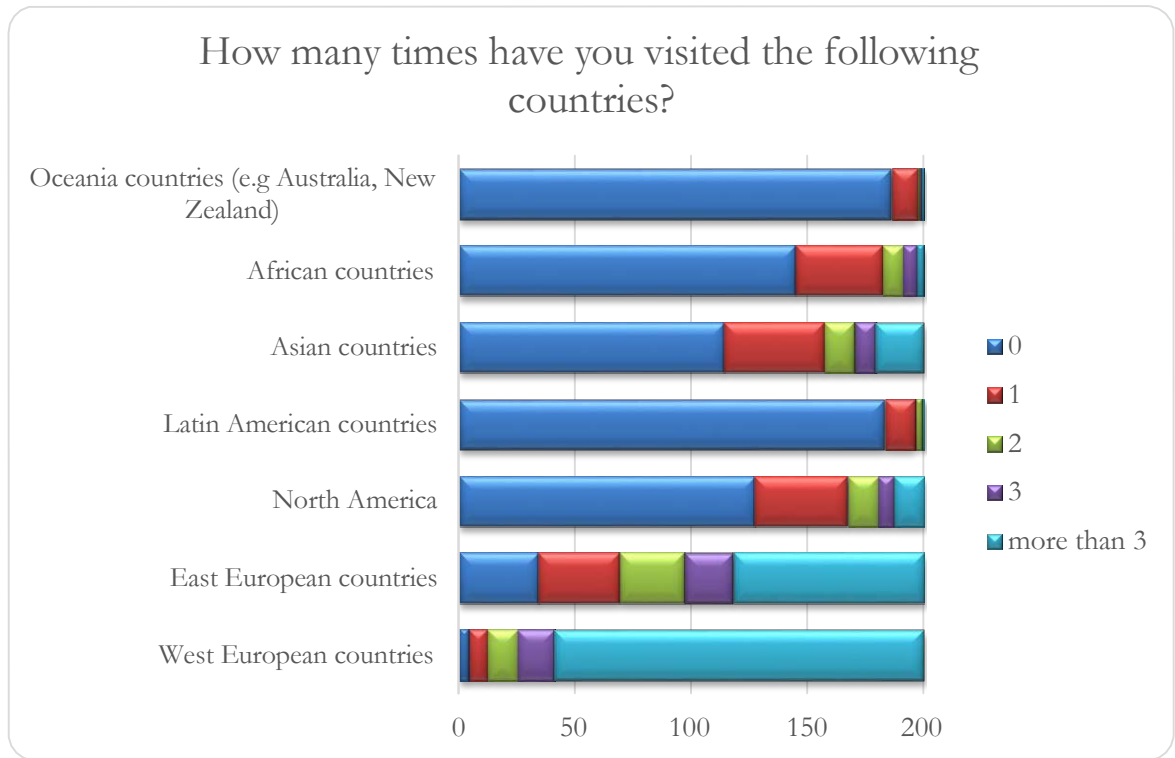


Figure 3. How many times have you visited the following countries? (N = 200)

Most exchange students had visited Western countries several times before going on exchange. Nearly half had also visited Eastern European countries in more than three occasions. There was one person who had never visited any countries before the exchange. The third most visited countries were the Asian countries where nearly half of the exchange students had visited at least once. The least visited countries were Oceania and Latin American countries. Although a few respondents had visited those destinations as well.

Majority of the exchange students who travelled to USA had not visited North America before but majority had visited European countries more than three times. Those that decided to go for a non-English speaking country had generally more travel experience than those going to an English speaking country. They also did assess their language skills a bit higher than others. Most of the students going to non English speaking destination indicated of having knowledge of the language at the destination country.

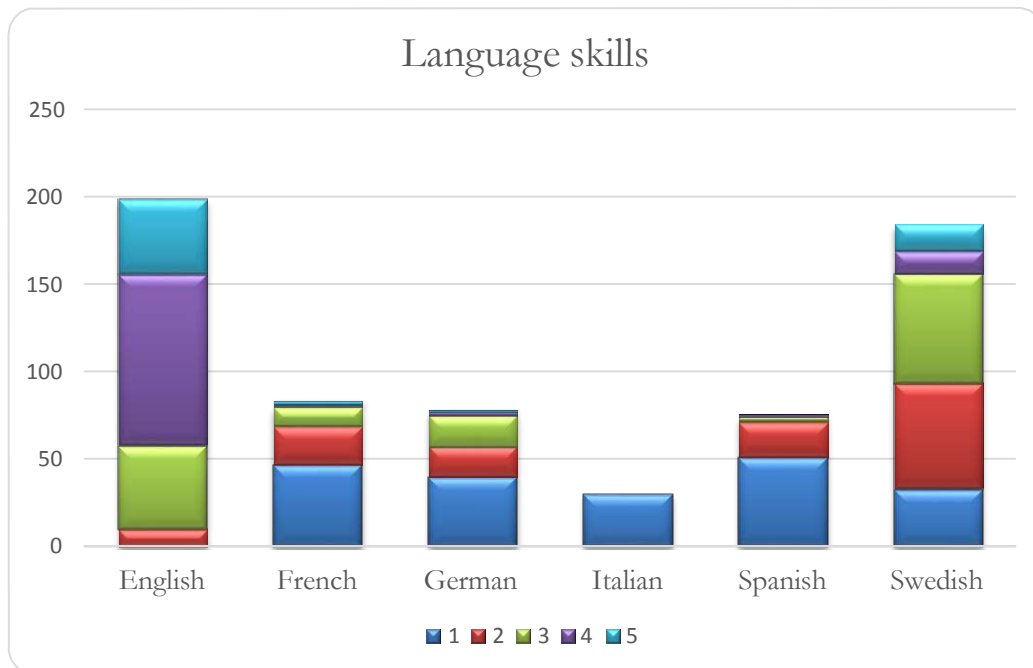


Figure 4. Level of language skills. (N=200). Scale 1-5. Fluent in language is 5 and 1 is very little knowledge.

All Finnish exchange students identified that they were able to communicate in English and no one indicated of having poor knowledge. Among all the languages English was the most well spoken language. Most commonly spoken languages among the exchanges students were English and Swedish. French, German, Italian and Spanish were also spoken by a few. Respondents indicated of having little knowledge on these languages.

One of the questions was about how well the organizations was able to prepare the exchange students for the exchange. Finnish respondents felt their home organization had better orientation than their destination country. Only 3 respondents in Finland felt that orientation was not useful at all. In destination country 51 people choose that the orientation in the destination country was either not useful or had very little use for them. Majority of those unhappy with the orientation where on exchange in the USA. There were also several from United Kingdom, France and Australia.

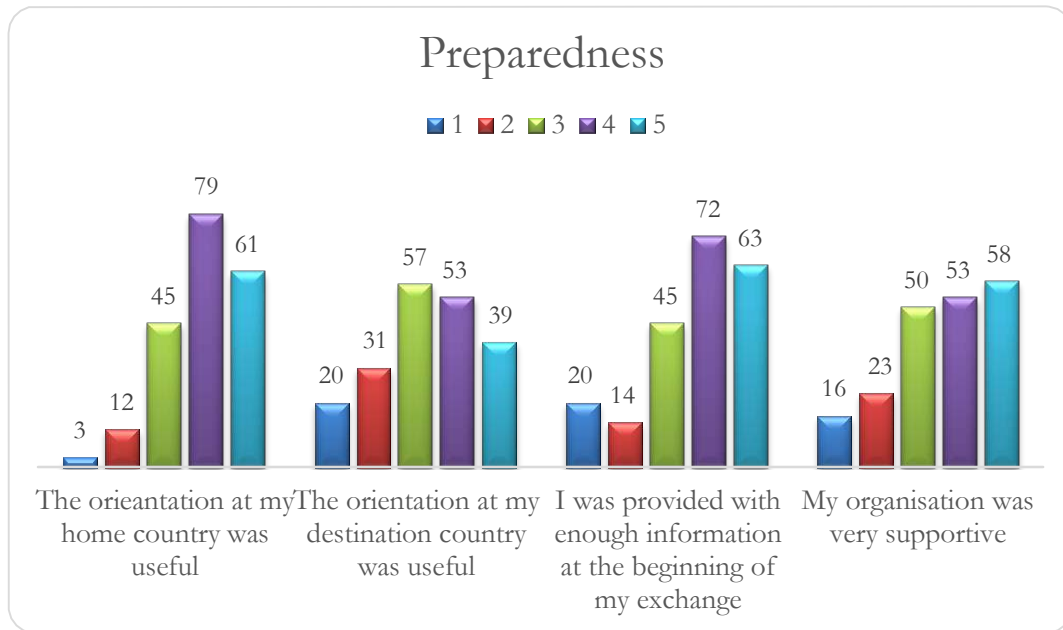


Figure 5. Preparedness before the exchange. (N = 200). The scale is 1-5 where 5 is agree strongly and 1 is disagree strongly.

Majority of the respondents felt they were given enough information regarding their exchange. The only section where there is little dispersion is when asked if their organization had been supportive. 19.5% said that the organization was not supportive or showed very little support. Although 29% felt that the organization was very supportive.

Looking into and comparing answers between all the respondents and those who felt that they not given enough support from the organization a few differences can identified. 50% of those who did not receive enough support felt that the host country was not as expected. Negative feelings among them ranked higher comparing to other respondents. The greatest difference was that 54.1% felt angry as the number among all was 33, 7%. 10% of all the respondents felt that they were not given enough information at the beginning and 61% of them felt the destination country was not as they had expected. This 10% answered of having stronger negative feelings than others. They generally felt more unhappy, uncertain and insecure in the new host country.

4.3 Expectations and arrival

Respondents were asked if the destination country met their expectations. 26.5% of the respondents answered that the destination country was better than expected. They were mainly on exchange in USA, Australia and New Zealand. 66.7% of those who were on exchange in Australia said that the destination country was better than expected. 80% of them said they were very excited to upon arrival. Exchange students in Australia were also happier to be in a new environment compared to the average of all destinations.

We have earlier noted that majority of the exchange students decide to spend their exchange period in United States. They scored a little higher than average on the destination country being either as expected or not being as they expected. They did score higher than average to having high enthusiasm levels and feeling excited about the new environment. 2% answered that the destination country was the complete opposite of what they had expected. They were on exchange in USA and New Zealand. None of them had visited North America, Oceania, Asian countries, Latin America or East European countries before. They also showed very little language skills.

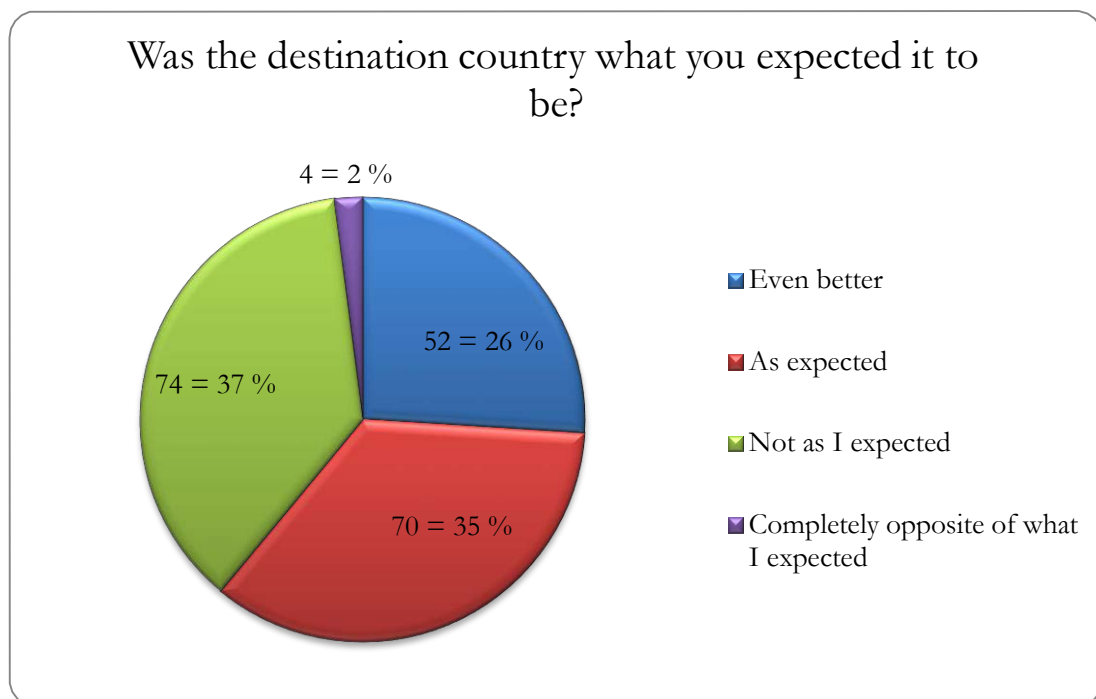


Figure 6. Was the destination what you expected it to be? (N = 200)

37% answered the destination country not being as expected. Out of them 70% were on exchange in United States. Majority of them had not visited North America before. They also answered of not have travelled as much as the average. They evaluated their skills in English language to not be as good as the average did. 54% said of being very excited about being in a new country. Enthusiasm upon arrival was high among 43.2%. It could be concluded that those with lesser language skills and those who have travelled less may have higher expectations that do not necessarily meet the reality.

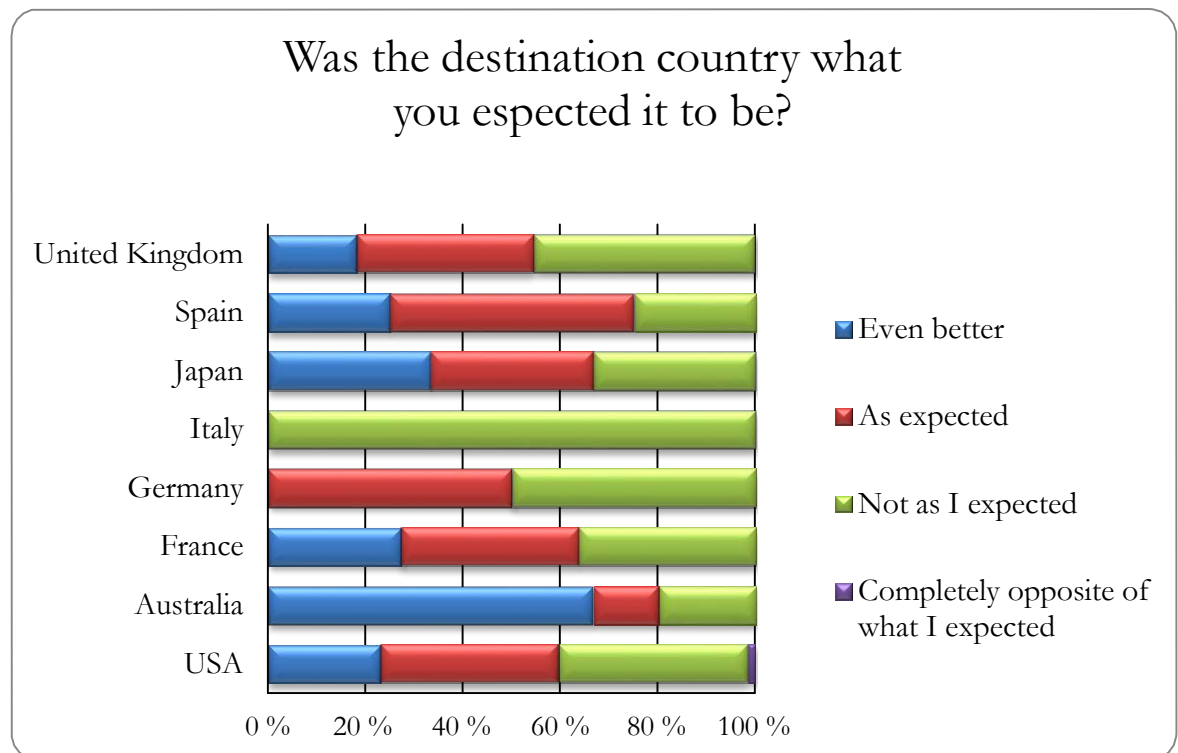


Figure 7. Expectations on destination country divided by the destination. (N = 200)

Looking at the answers by the destination the difference can be seen. The destination that was perceived better than expected was clearly Australia. On average Italy and Germany were countries that were commonly seen not as expected. All the respondents on exchange in Italy answered the destination not being as they had expected. Most of the destination countries show diversity between the three options; even better, as expected and not as I expected. In most cases these answers are divided to similar percentages in each destination country.

Respondents were given statements to agree or disagree with. Majority stated having high enthusiasm levels, feeling happy and excited about being in a new environment. The first statement, I felt confused in the beginning, the answers were quite diverse. The answers that most disagreed with was being angry more often than usual. 64% answered of strongly disagreeing with the statement.

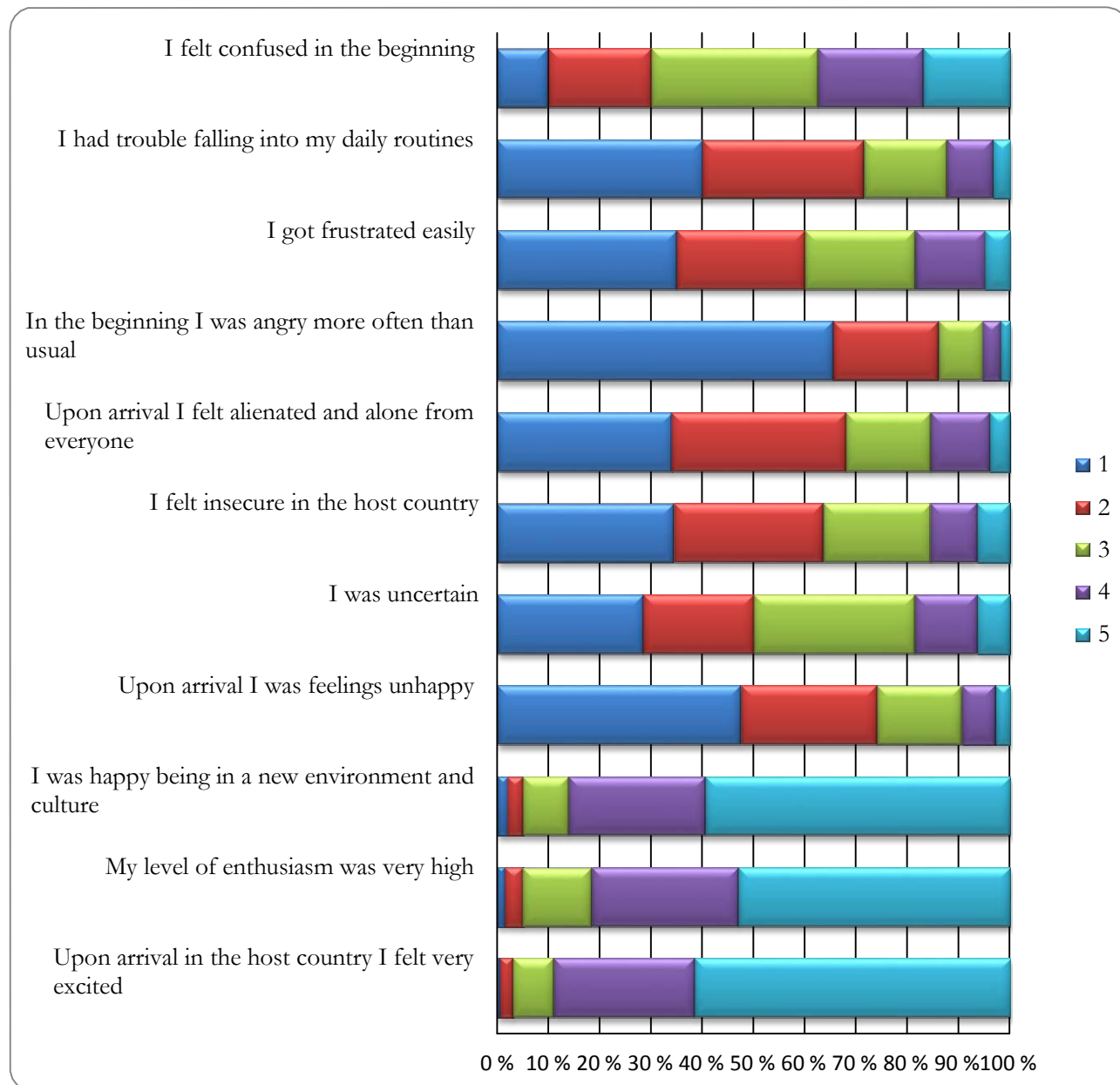


Figure 8. Indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements. (N = 200). The scale is 1-5 where 1 would be disagreeing strongly and 5 agreeing strongly.

Mainly all the negative statements like being uncertain, insecure, feeling alone etc gained more answers of disagreeing. The more positive statement gained more agreeing answers. We can conclude that the exchange students have more positive thoughts rather than have negative feelings or troubles during their exchange semester. 15.5% answered that they felt insecure among arrival. Majority of them were staying in USA. Out of those that felt insecure 58% answered the destination country not being as expected. There is diversity on the scale when asked if the students felt confused in the beginning.

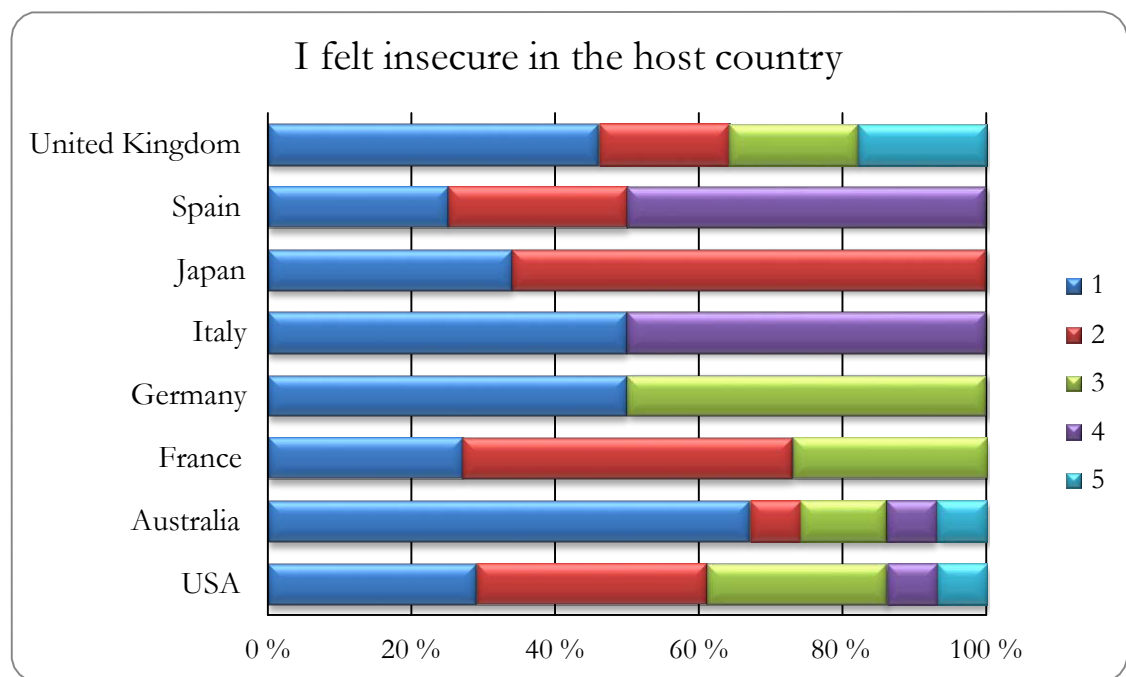


Figure 9. I felt insecure in the host country. (N = 200). The scale is 1-5 where 1 in disagree strongly and 5 agree strongly. Numbers are percentages.

There are three countries where respondents have strongly agreed of feeling insecure in the new host country. These countries are USA, Australia and United Kingdom. Nearly 20% of students staying in United Kingdom answered of feeling insecure. Generally respondents disagreed with the statement of feeling insecure. Exchange students who were on exchange in Spain and Italy were more likely to agree with the statement.

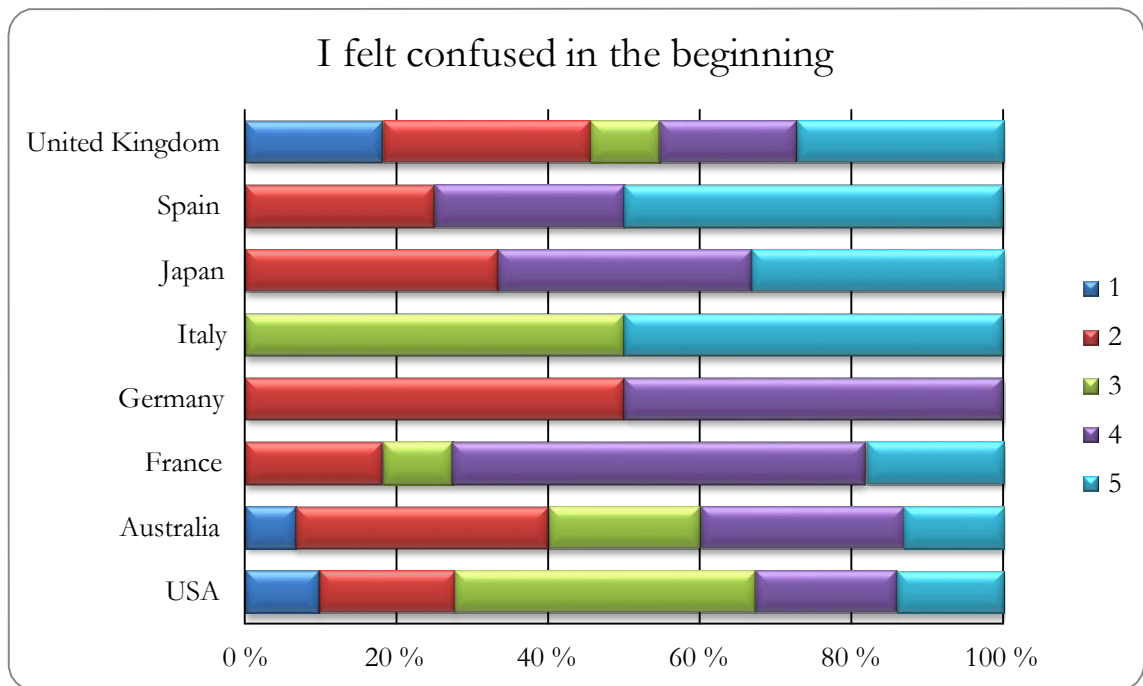


Figure10. I felt confused in the beginning. (N = 200). The scale is 1-5 where 1 in disagree strongly and 5 agree strongly. Numbers are percentages.

There is a great diversion with the answers when asked if the students felt confused in the beginning of their exchange period. Germany was the only destination where no one strongly agreed of feelings confused. These who strongly agreed of feeling confused in the beginning were on exchange in Italy, Spain, Japan and France. It can be concluded that in the non-English speaking destination the exchange are more likely to feel confused. This is doubt linked to the fact there at the beginning the exchange students are not fluent in the destination language. Exchange students in the USA also gave a diversity of answers.

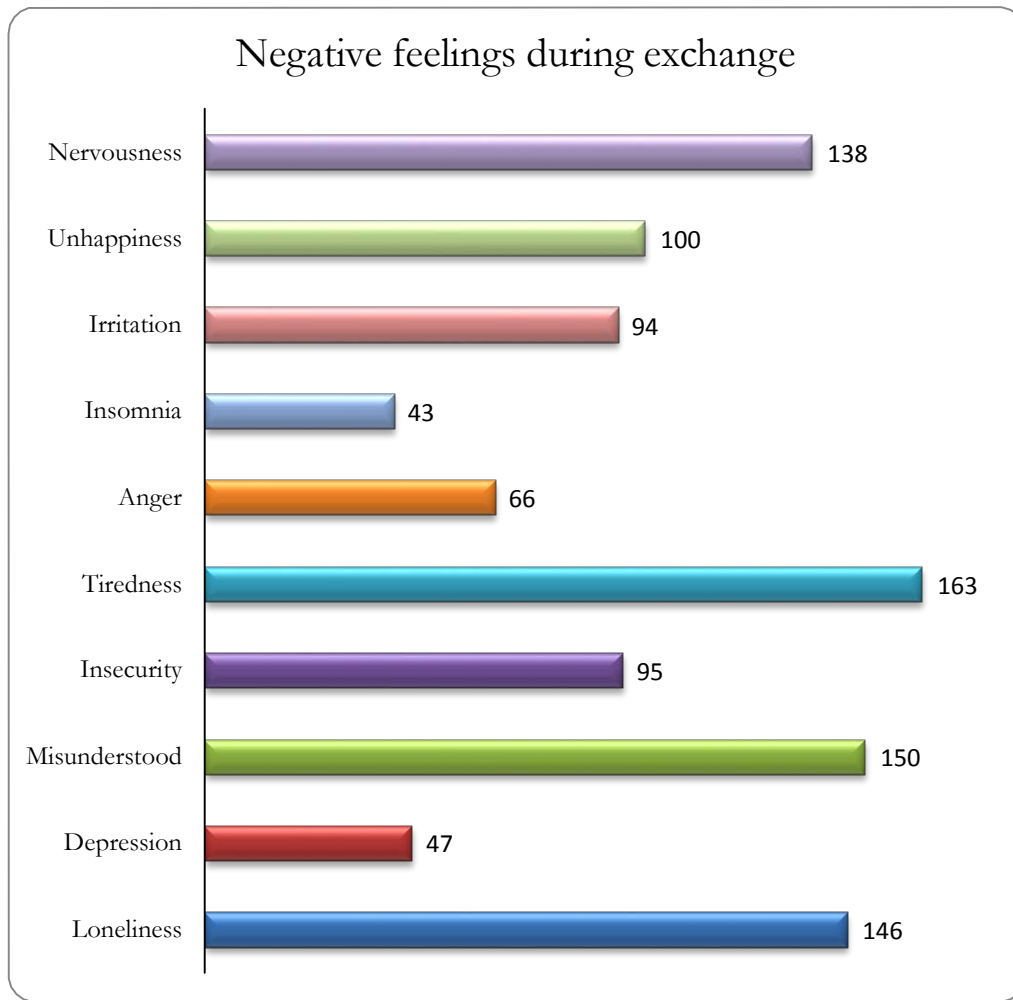


Figure 11. Negative feelings during the exchange. (N = 200).

When asked if they felt any negative feelings during their exchange there were four that rise above others. Almost every single one identified of feeling tiredness. The other three that gained many answers were loneliness, misunderstood and nervousness. When comparing the non-English speaking host countries to English speaking host countries a few point about negative feelings were noted. 100% of the students who stayed in non English speaking country felt misunderstood and tiredness. 90.9% of them felt lonely where in English speaking destinations the percentage was 75,6%. Students staying in non English speaking country answered of having more negative feelings in most areas than those staying in English speaking country.

There were two feelings that received more answers from those whose host country was English speaking, these were: insecurity and depression. In English speaking countries 48.8% felt insecure where as in non English speaking countries the percentage

was 40, 9%. Some of the biggest differences between these destination countries were that in English speaking countries 20, 9% suffered from insomnia compared to non English speaking countries where the number was 31, 8%. The level of unhappiness varied between these two. 68, 2% of the students staying in non-English speaking host country said that they were feelings unhappiness. In English speaking host countries the percentage was 52, 7%.

4.4 Social connections

86.5% the exchange student had sibling in the host family. Comparing the destination countries, in Australia exchange students were more likely to have a sibling and in United Kingdom the numbers were the opposite. The fact that whether they had or hadn't siblings didn't affect the fact whether they managed to make friends easily or if they had trouble making friends. Those that did not have siblings were slightly easier to make friends with the locals. Those students that had siblings were more likely to have spent time with the host family as to those who did not have siblings. They answered that they would mostly spend time with new friends. It can be concluded that there are no major differences in the experience whether the exchange student has or hasn't siblings.

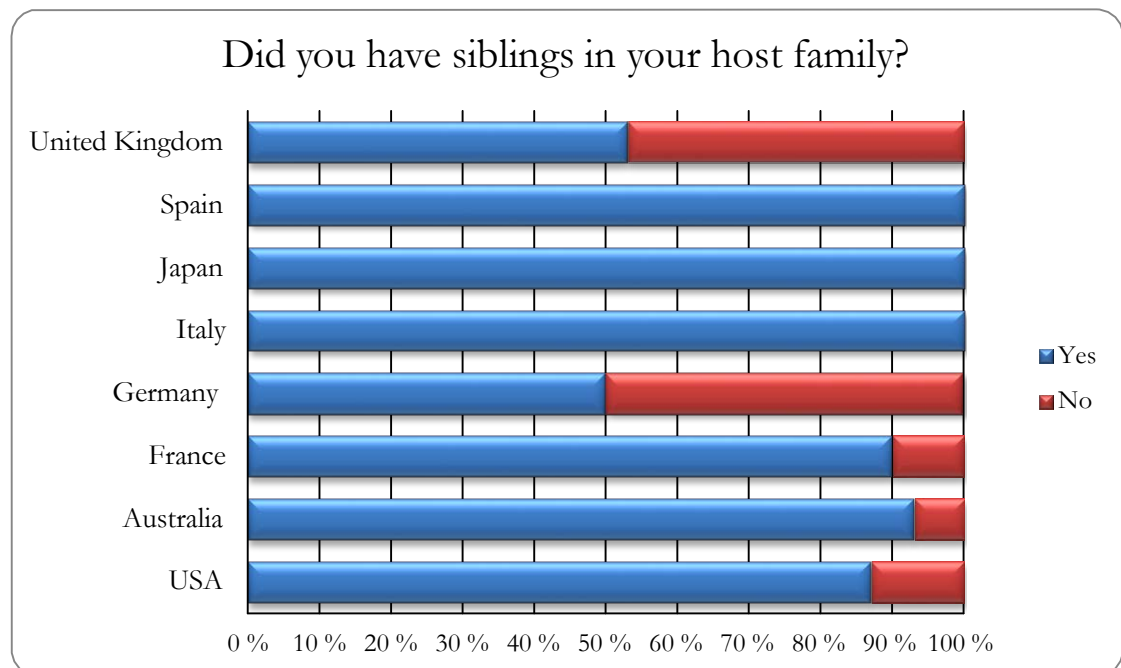


Figure 12. Did you have siblings in the host family? (N = 200)

In 52.5% the exchange student was the first exchange student that the host family had. In other cases the host family had had one or more exchange students before. There were a few issues that could be seen where the fact of whether family had had exchange students before affected. In those families where there had been exchange students before the exchange students was more likely to make new friends easily rather than those who were the family's first exchange student.

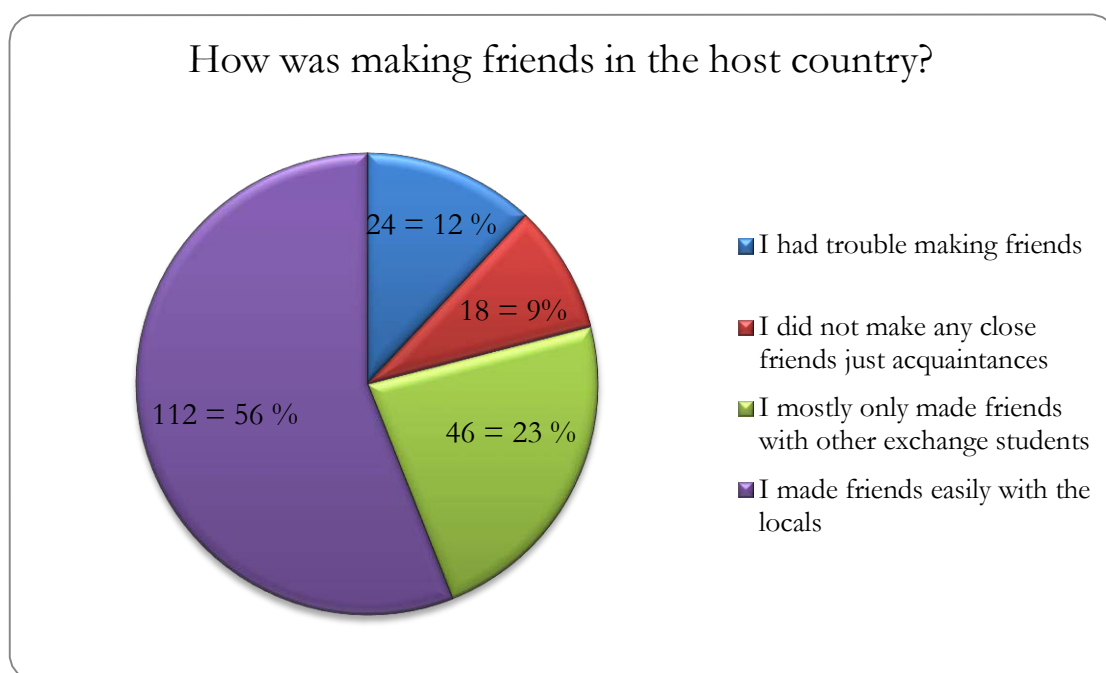


Figure 13. Making friends in the host country. (N = 200).

Majority of 56% said that they made easily friends with locals. These students were mainly on exchange in USA. Students in Australia, New Zealand and United Kingdom also made friends easily with the locals. It can be concluded that in English speaking countries where the level of local language skills is high the exchange students make friends more easily which eases the adaptation to the new culture. 75% of those that made friends with locals responded of not thinking of leaving early where the general percentage was 65%.

12% of the respondents said that they had trouble making friends. These respondents were mainly from the USA, Japan, Spain, France and Germany. 84% of them also answered of mainly spending time with host family rather than with friends or in hobbies.

It should also be noted that out of those 12.5% none left before their actual departure date. Almost all of them excluding a few would recommend exchange for other people.

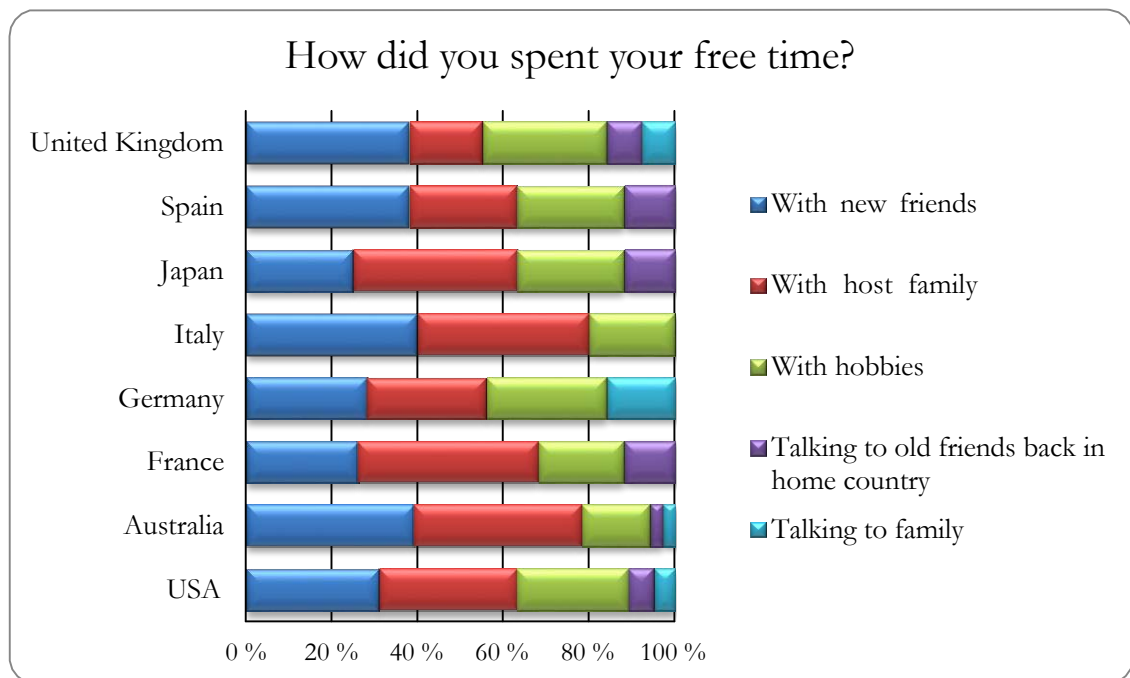


Figure 14. How did you spend your free time? (N = 200).

Generally in all of the destination countries students ought to spend their spare time either with their new friends or with their host family. Talking to their family back at home received the least amount of answers. When comparing the answers between spending time with friends or host family it can be seen that in Japan, Italy, France and Australia students were more likely to spend more time with their host family rather than their new friends. In Australia and USA the percentage of students talking to their family or friends back at home was significantly smaller than in other destination countries.

4.5 Homesickness and early departure

Mainly the respondents did not experience the need to depart early. The reasons behind some felt the need to before actual departure date were diverse. There were a few main reasons for the early departure. Some wished to come to home early in order to enjoy the summer season at home or to be able to start working during the summer.

Another reason was that there was a feeling that exchange year was not something for them. Respondents felt that they were not the type of a person to be an exchange student in the end and it just was not their thing. Problems with the host family were one of the main reason people thought to leave early. The reasons why there were problems with the host family included strict rules, behavior was found strange, communication was different, unable to talk about their feelings to anyone. Quite a few students also indicated that they felt lonely and especially during holidays such as Christmas. The fact that they had trouble making friends affected as well. It was seen that locals were nice and friendly in the school environment but it was hard making actual friends to spent time with after school hours.

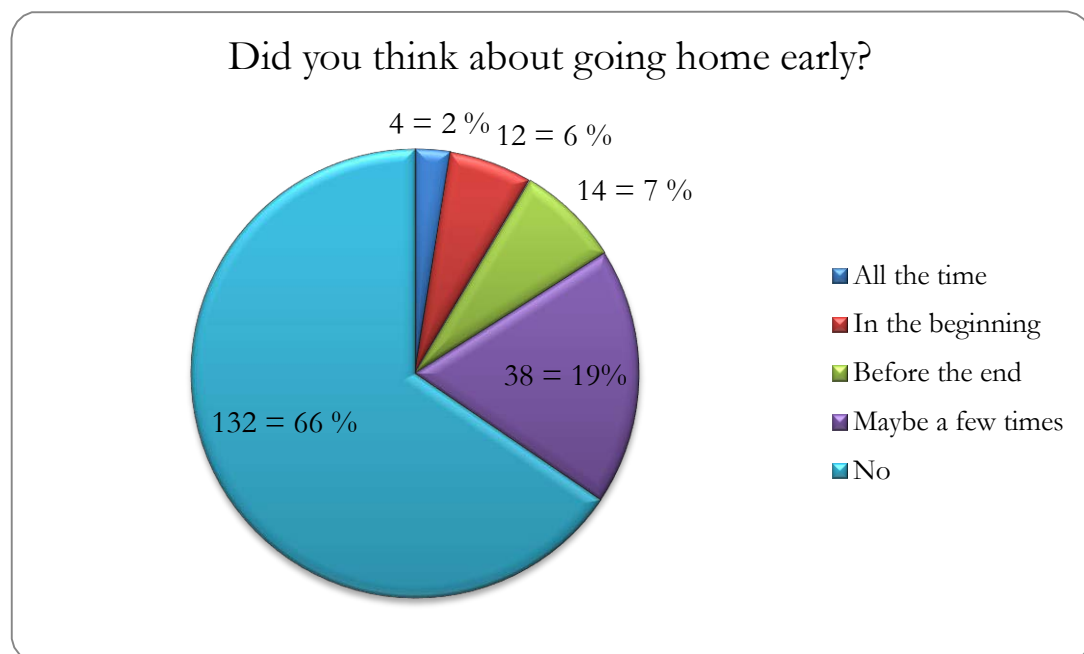


Figure 15. Did you think about going home early? (N = 200).

66% of the respondents did not think about leaving early at all. 19% thought about a few times. Only 2% thought all the time about leaving early. Those exchange students that actually came home before their actual departure date answered very diverse answers if they felt about going home early. 23% said they did not think about going home at all. 23% answered of all the time thinking about going home. Options: maybe a few times and in the beginning also received 23% each, of the answers among those that left before their actual departure date.

Below is the similar chart as above. Here the difference between countries has been separated. Numbers are percentages.

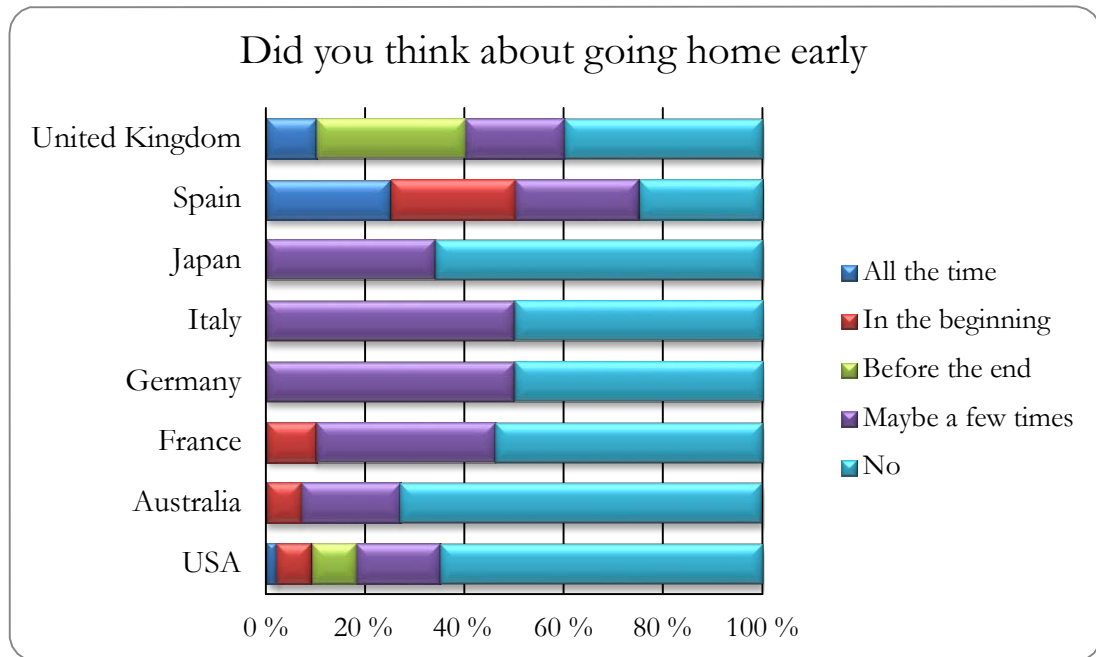


Figure 16. Did you think about going home early? Answers by the destination country. (N=200).

Majority of the exchange student (66%) did not think about coming home early. This number is the greatest when the destination country has been either Australia or United states. 19% of the respondents' answers that they were think about going home early a few times. This number is largest in Italy and Germany. Only a few answered that they thought about going home in the beginning of the exchange. These students were on exchange in Spain, France, Australia and USA. There were a few students who felt all the time that they wished to go back home. They were at USA United Kingdom and Spain. It can be clearly seen that the percentage for Spain is greatly larger than for United Kingdom and USA.

6.5% of the respondents came home before their actual departure date. Their length of the stay varied between 2-9 months. These exchange students mainly stayed in families where they had siblings and the family had had more than one exchange student before them. 69% of them answered that he destination country was not as they had expected it to be. The reasons behind the early departure included not getting along with the host family or not adapting to their way of life, lack of activities and the feelings that they had already gotten everything out of the exchange experience. Some answered that they wished to come home for summer jobs or to have a vacation with

their family. The actions that helped to cope with the homesickness mainly included talking either friends or family back at home, spending time with new friends and starting new hobbies. The feeling of homesickness mainly occurred halfway through the exchange period. In cases where they had left early almost all of them would still recommend exchange to other people. Those who came back early had been on exchange in USA, United Kingdom, Spain, France, Norway and Ecuador. Majority of them had stayed either in USA or United Kingdom. Those who left early choose more negative feelings than other. 70% of them choose that they felt loneliness, misunderstood, insecurity, tiredness, unhappiness and nervousness.

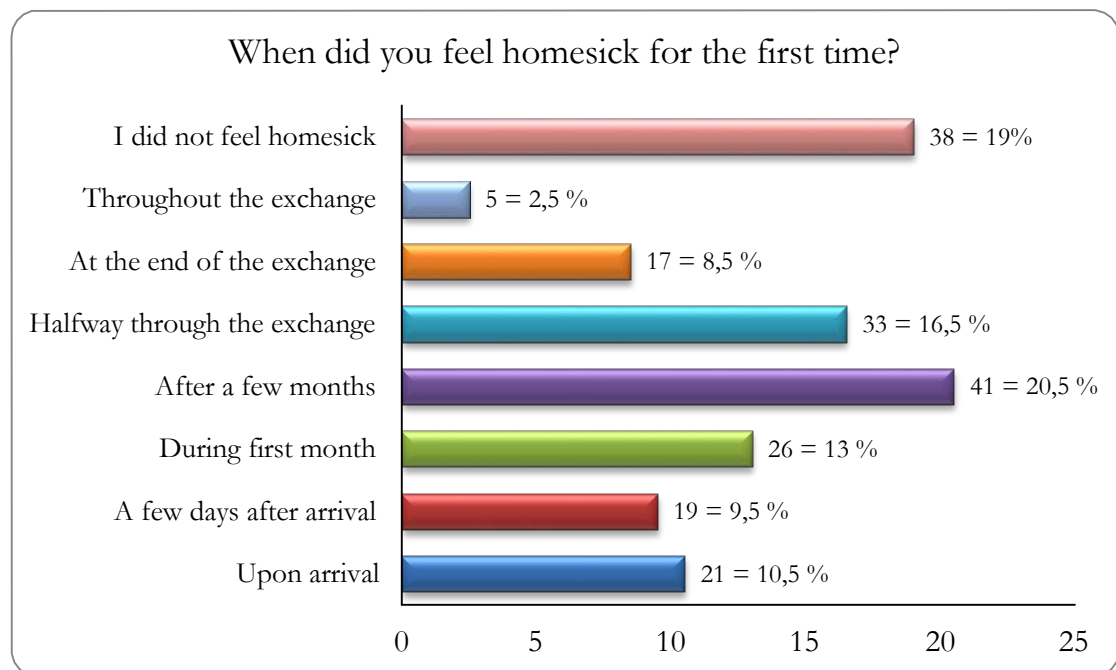


Figure 17. Feelings homesick for the first time. (N=200)

The respondents were asked when they felt homesickness. The answers were diverse and a few options rose above others. For most people (20.5%) the feelings of homesickness came after being on exchange for few months. This after the honeymoon phase is over and everything is no longer new and exciting.

Quite a few felt homesick halfway through the exchange. Only 2.5% indicated that they were homesick throughout the exchange. 20% felt home sick right upon arrival or after a few days. 19% answered that they did not feel home sick at all.

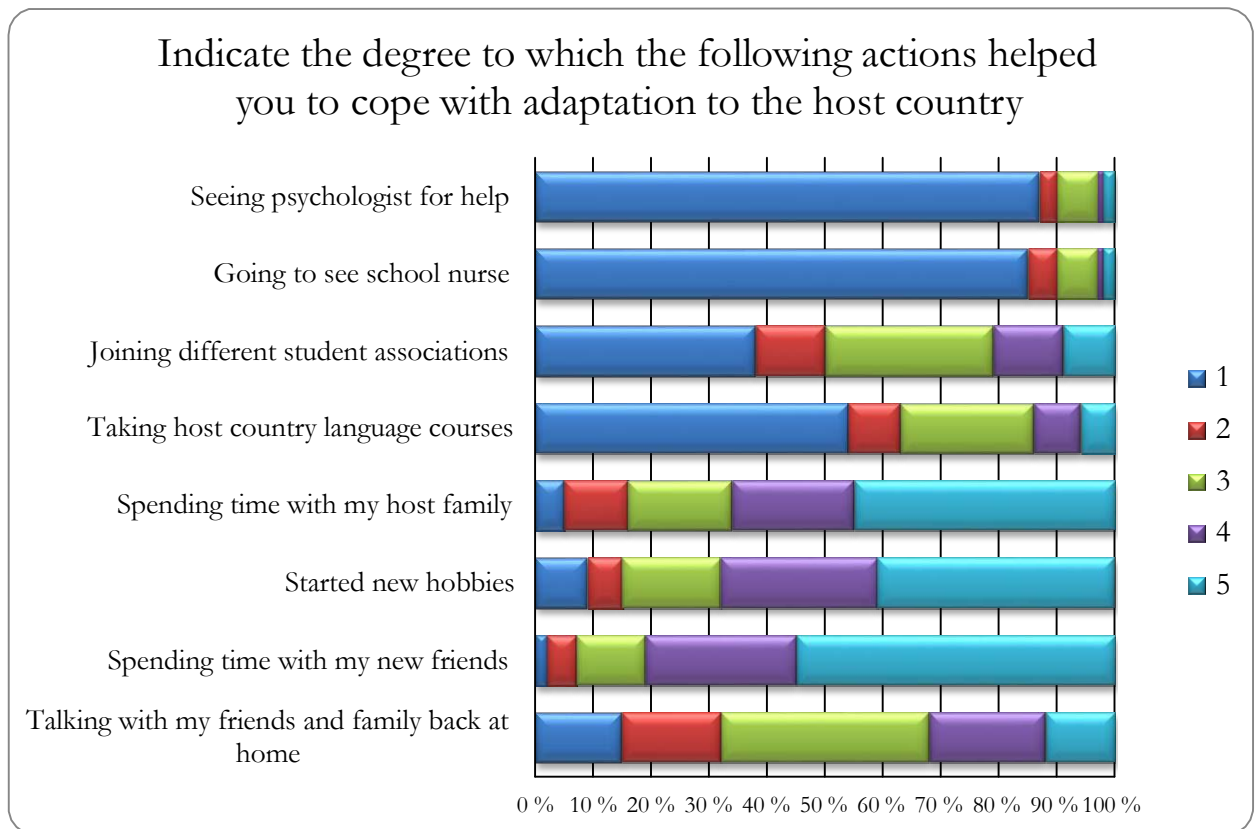


Figure 18. The degree to which the listed actions helped to cope with adaptation to the host country. (N = 200). The scale was 1-5. Where 1 stands for the fact that it was not helpful at all and 5 that it helped a lot.

There were a few most popular actions that helped the exchange students to cope with adaptation to the new host country. The action that was seen as most helpful was to spend time with new friends. Over half of the respondents found it very helpful. Other helpful actions were: starting new hobbies and spending time with the host family. There were two options that were not seen helpful. These were seeing a psychologist for help and going to seeing the school nurse.

The respondents were able to write down their own actions that helped them to cope with the adaption. The actions they wrote down were for example: writing down feelings, writing a blog and talking to a closest teacher. It is a concern that a few wrote that eating or eating and throwing up helped them to cope with the adaptation process. We can conclude that the main actions that help exchange students to adapt to the new host country are spending time with locals, making friends and having hobbies in their spare time. Writing down feelings or daily happening and talking to someone helps as

well.

4.6 Reverse culture shock

Reverse culture shock is often experienced when returning to your home culture after being in a new culture. Sometimes the reverse culture shock can be even stronger than the actual culture shock. Most often their friends from home have gotten used to not having them around as they have been away for such a long time. It may be hard for the exchange student to understand and see that life hasn't stopped while they have been away.

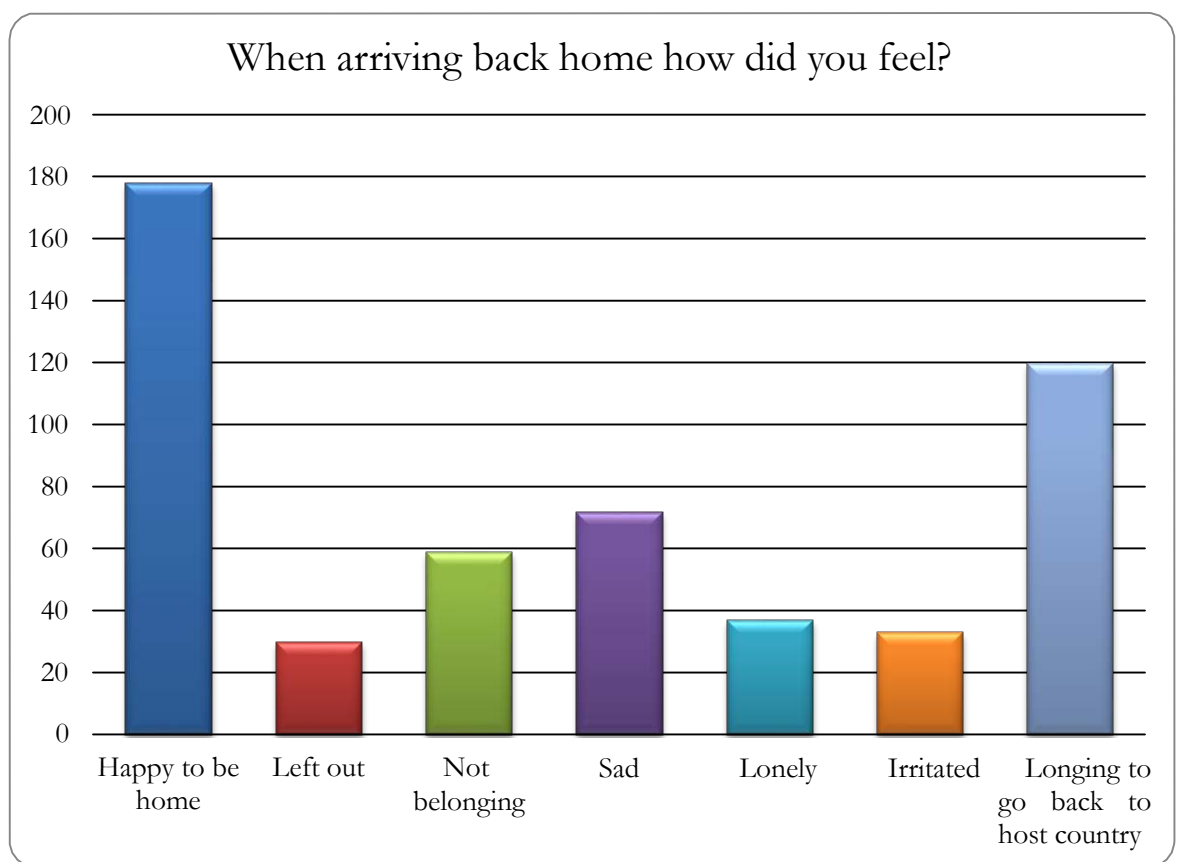


Figure 19. Feelings when arriving back at home. (N = 200).

The respondents were asked about their feelings when they arrived back to their home country. They were able to choose more than one option. 89% were happy to be back at home. Yet 60% were still longing to go back to the host country. As we can conclude from the data the feelings when arriving home are quite divided. 80% of them who were still longing to go back to the host country were also happy to be at home.

29.5% had the feeling of not belonging when arriving home. 15% felt left out. These are feelings that might trigger reverse culture shock as exchange students realize that life back at home has not stopped while they have been on exchange.

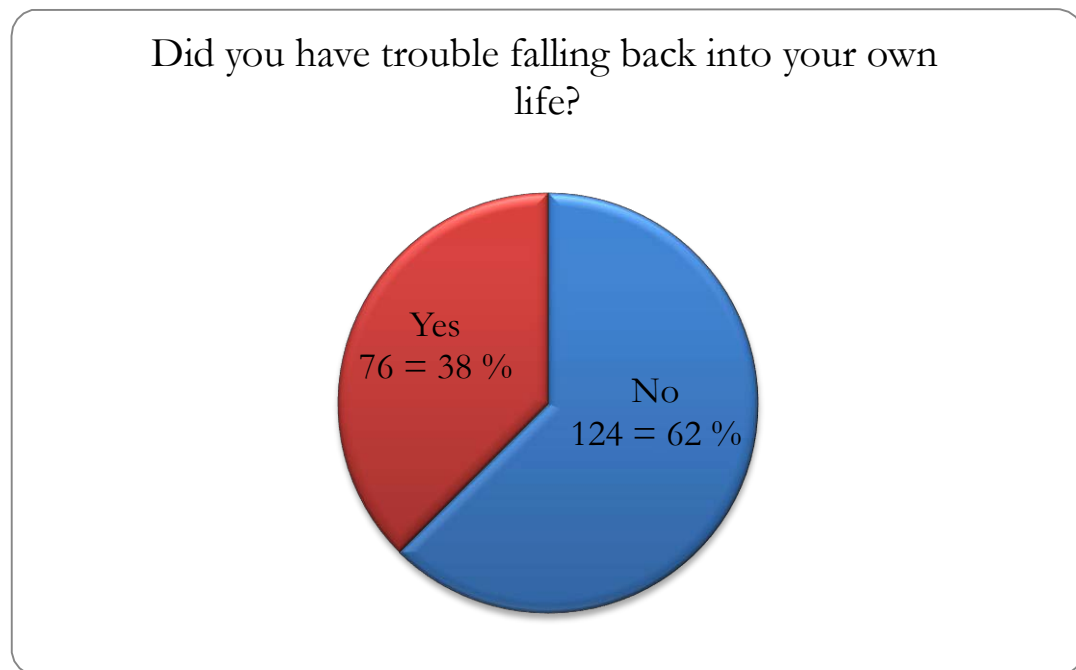


Figure 20. Did you have trouble falling back into your own life after the exchange? (N = 200).

38% out of all the respondents admitted that they had trouble falling back to their own life after the exchange. 50% of them had spent their exchange period in USA; other countries were Australia and New Zealand. In the results it shows that these people who had trouble falling back to their own life were generally more excited upon arrival, the destination was better than expected, they were happy in the new environment. They spent more time with their new friends and less time speaking to friends and family back at home. They also answered that when back at home majority of them felt like not belonging, sad and longing to go back to the host country. It can be concluded that those who spent more time with the locals and are enjoying the experience are the ones that are affected by the reverse culture shock the strongest.

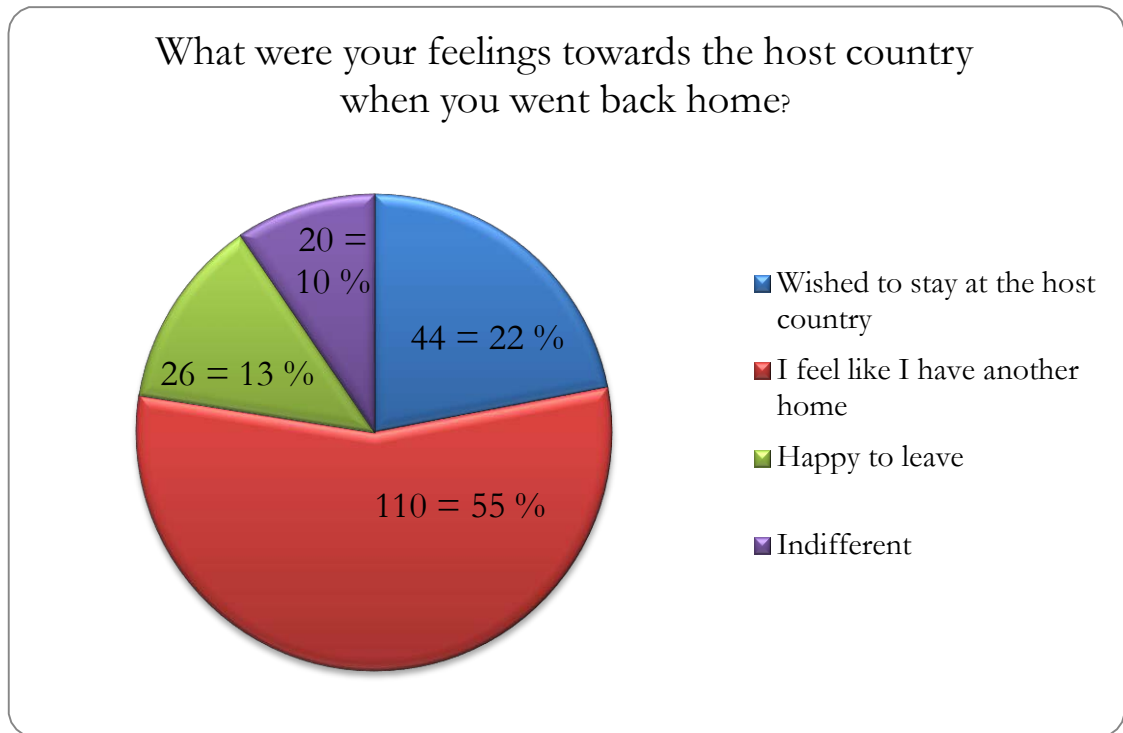


Figure 21. Feelings towards the host country after coming back home from the ex- change. (N = 200).

Feelings towards the host country after returning home were asked. Clearly the most popular answer by 55.5% was that they felt like they now have another home in the host country. Only 13% were happy to leave. Out of that 13% only 7.6% left before their departure date.

4.7 The experience

There are a few factors that point out when looking at the difference between those that had a successful exchange year and to those who feel that it was not what they wished for. Those that identified that the exchange was not what they wished for had mainly similar feelings as others. They show that slightly spent more time with other exchange students rather than locals. They also seemed to have more trouble making friends with the locals. Majority of these exchange students also had been in a host family that hadn't had any or just one exchange student before. When arriving to the host country those who did not have the experience they wished for scored highly in

that upon arrival the destination country was not as they expected. The negative feelings during exchange such as loneliness, misunderstood, tiredness and unhappiness scored significantly higher among those unhappy with the exchange.

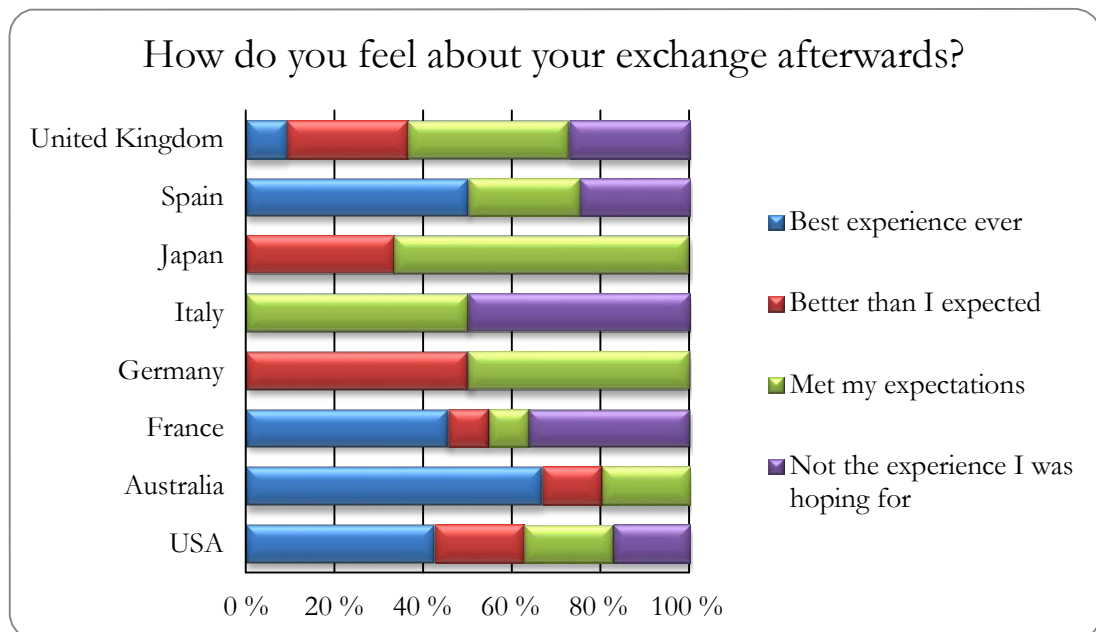


Figure 22. Feelings about the exchange afterwards. Answers divided by the destination country. (N = 200).

Majority of all the respondents said of having an either best experience ever or better than expected. The statistics show that they made friends more easily. Over half of them also said to have spent more time with the locals rather than other exchange students.

Over 60% of the exchange students who spent their exchange semester in Australia answered of having the best experience ever. This is the highest percentage this option had. The second highest percentages are France and USA which received a bit over 40% each. There were three destinations that did not receive any answers for the exchange being the best experience ever. These countries were: Japan, Italy and Germany. Five destination countries received answers of the experience not being what the students had hoped for. These countries were USA, France, Italy, Spain and United Kingdom. Highest percentage in was in Italy, where the percentage was 50%. In France 36% answered of the exchange being not the experience they were hoping for.

Generally 90% of the exchange students would recommend exchange to other people. 5% answered to maybe recommending exchange to others. These students were on exchange in USA (50%), United Kingdom (30%), France (10%) and Spain (10%). Looking at all the answers between those who answered of maybe recommending exchange and others a few points can be made. Looking at the social connections they answered of having harder time making friends than the general. 20% of them answered of not making any close friends just acquaintances where as the general percentage was 12, 5%. 70 % of those who would maybe recommend exchange answered of not having the experience they expected. The remaining 30% answered the exchange of being as expected.

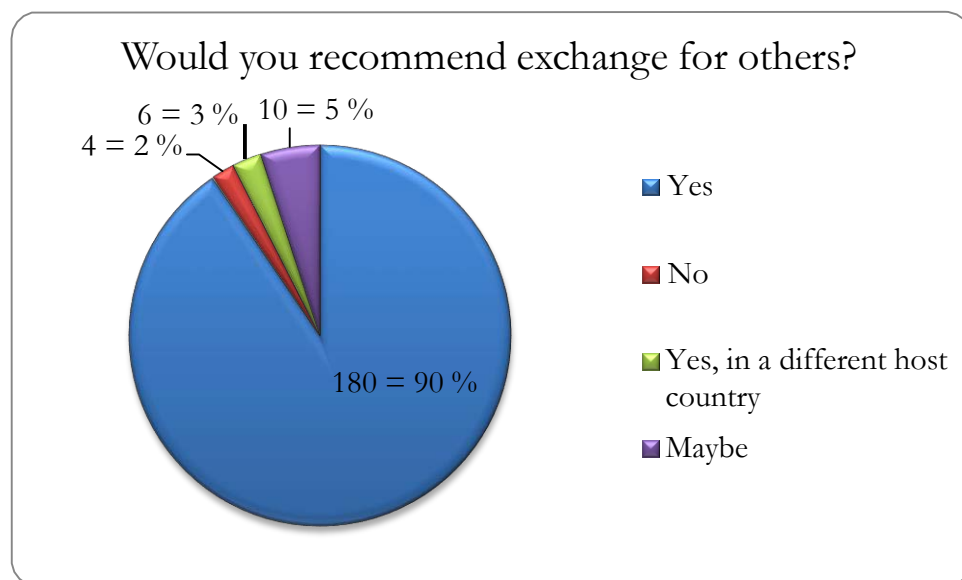


Figure 23. Recommending exchange to others. (N = 200).

Looking into the 2% who answered of not recommending exchange for others a few conclusions can be made. They were on exchange in USA (75%) and United Kingdom (25%). None of them did leave before their actual departure date. Although a few of them thought about coming home early, at the beginning and at the end of the exchange. These students answered of making friends easily with the locals and none of them indicated of having any trouble having or making friends. All of them also had siblings in the host family. All of them answered that the destination was not what they had expected it to be. Looking into to the preparedness of these students it can be noted that the issue of why they would not recommend exchange to others might lie there. As 75% answered of the organization of not being supportive. 50% answered

they were not provided with enough information at the beginning. Looking into the orientations given at home country and destination neither of them received good scores among them. Orientation at home country was given a bit better marks, where 50% disagreed with the statement that the orientation was useful. The orientation at the destination was seen as not useful for 75% of them who would not recommend exchange for others. We can conclude that the preparing the exchange students properly plays a huge role on how they perceive the entire experience.

Taking a closer look at the 3% who would recommend exchange in another host country a few points can be made. These students were on exchange in France (20%), Italy (20%), United Kingdom (20%) and USA (40%). Looking into the social connections of those who would recommend exchange in another host country it can be noted that they had more trouble making friends than the general. 60% answered of spending more time with other exchange students rather than locals. 20% had trouble making friends. The remaining 20% made friends easily. Between all respondents 56% answered of making friends easily. 60% of them who would recommend exchange in another destination country answered that the destination was not what they had expected. 60% also answered that the experience was not what they had expected. When asked about going home early among all 18,5% answered that they had thought about going home for a few times as where those who would recommend exchange in another country 60% had thought about going home a few times.

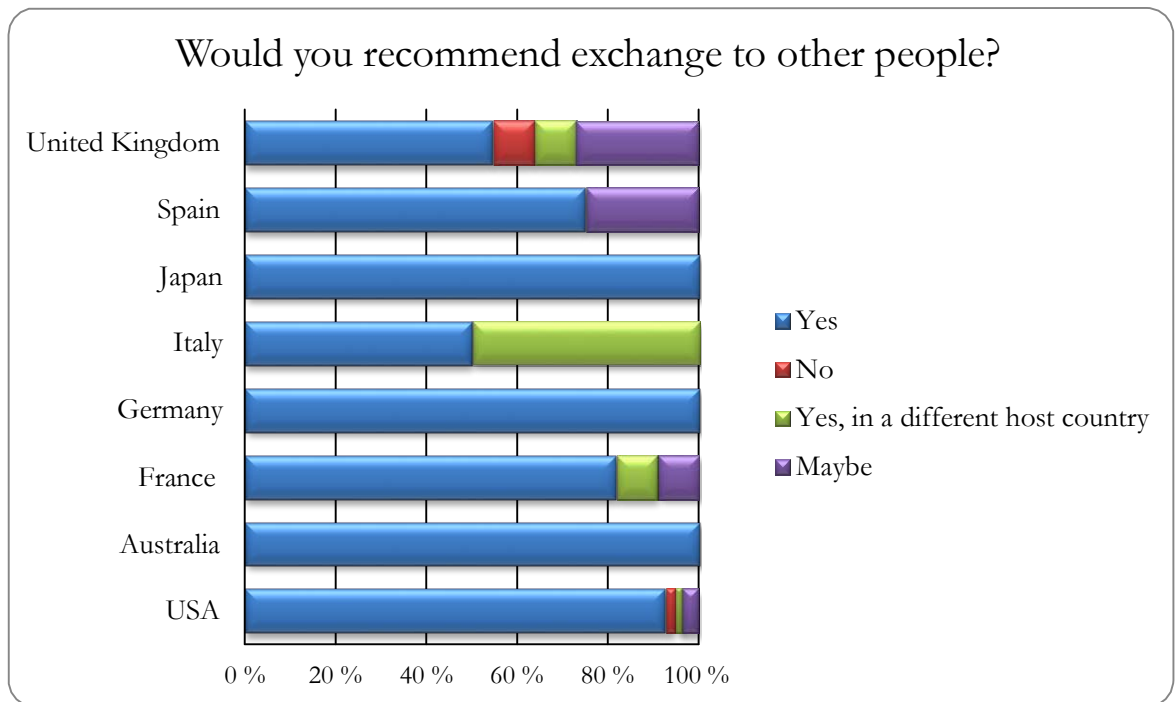


Figure 24. Recommending exchange to others by the destination country. (N = 200).

There were three countries where all of the exchange students would recommend exchange for other. These countries were Japan, Germany and Australia. 92% of the exchange students in USA would recommends exchange for others. As noted earlier there were two countries where there were students who would not recommend exchange for others. These countries were United Kingdom and USA. In USA this is 2,2% of all the exchange students the percentage among the exchange students in United Kingdom was 9%.

In France, Italy and United Kingdom a few exchange students answered of recommending exchange in another host country. This percentage in Italy was 50% but this percentage does not give precise picture of the reality as the questionnaire was submitted by two exchange students residing in Italy.

5 Conclusion and recommendation

Preparing the students before going on exchange is vital. This is start of their experience. It is important to provide them with enough vital information. This information and support given will affect the entire experience. As stated earlier in the thesis those who were unhappy with the information and support given often felt the destination was not what they had expected. In order to avoid this students should be given enough information about the destination country in order to make sure they do not possess any unreal expectations about the destination. Those that were unhappy from the beginning were also likely to not recommend exchange for others.

Students with more travel experience had more realistic idea of the destination country. It can be noted that those with lesser language skills and less travel experience tend to go on exchange to English speaking country. Students who have chosen non-English speaking country possess more travel experience. They also graded their language skills higher. In case the exchange organisations is able to affect the destination country the student wishes to choose they ought to look at the skills and experience mentioned above. Students should be provided with a destination suitable for them in order to make their experience as pleasant and successful as possible.

It is important that the exchange students are comfortable and get along well with their host family. Students that had host siblings were more likely to spend time with their host family. It is an advantage for the adaptation of the exchange student if the host family has had exchange students before. These students showed to have a tendency to make friends more easily which effected them being more comfortable in the new host country. Those students that were able to make friends easily also did not think about going home early as much as those who had trouble making friends. Suggestion would be to provide the first time host families with enough information in order for them to be able to support and understand the exchange student. Students should be encouraged to make friends in order for them to adapt.

Language skills have link to how well the students manage to make friends. Those students that are fluent with the host language also indicate of making friends more easily. In order for the students to adapt they should be provided with the option of learning the local language if necessary.

There were several reasons why students wished to depart early. Some of them were not linked to not adapting or not getting along with the host family. Some wished to come home for example to start a summer job and enjoy the summer back at home. Major reason for students to come home early were problems with adapting. Reasons mentioned were for example different ways of communicating and strict rules. These are reasons that could be avoided by providing enough information to the students about the new culture and culture shock. Some students mentioned they felt they were not able to talk and communicate with the host family. Organizations ought to check in with the students and the host family in order to make sure things are working well among both parties. Host families should be encouraged to look into the culture and ways of the exchange students in order for them to understand their way of communicating.

Feeling home sickness is common among exchange students. In the survey they identified that spending time with the host family and new friends did help. Writing down their feelings should be encouraged even throughout the exchange. Keeping in touch with the exchange students is advised in order to minimize any harmful behaviour. Concern is that there were a few who indicated of having an eating disorder which helped them to cope with the culture shock. This sort of behaviour should be looked into and noticed if seen happen.

Coming back home from the exchange students showed mixed feelings. They were happy to be at home and yet missing to go back to the host country. Most of them did not have trouble falling back into their own lives. Often there are not too many people back at home who have had the same experience as them. In order to minimize the reverse culture shock it would help if the students would be able to meet and talk about their experience with other exchange students. It would be encouraged if the exchange

students would be able to continue the international experience back at home for example by spending time with the exchange students coming to Finland. This would even help the adaptation of the students coming to Finland when they have someone who has gone through the experience.

Mostly the experience of an exchange year is recommended. Only a few would not recommend it and some would recommend in a different host country. The reasons behind this were often the trouble of having friends or the fact that the host country and the experience was not what they had expected it to be. This is why it is important to be able to provide the exchange students with enough information. If possible old exchange student from the same destination should be encouraged to talk to the future exchange students in order for them receive first-hand information.

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Appendix 1. The survey



HAAGA-HELIA

Nordic exchange students culture shock

Hi,

I am a third year tourism student from HAAGA-HELIA University of applied sciences, Porvoo Campus. For my thesis I am making a research regarding Nordic exchange students culture shock. With this survey we are gathering information in order to improve student exchange services.

Taking part in this questionnaire is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time.

We encourage you to use 30-40 minutes to complete this questionnaire.

In case you have any questions regarding the questionnaire please feel free to contact me:
karoliina.pekkala2@myy.haaga-helia.fi

By filling the questionnaire you can take part to the lottery and win some of our 20 great prizes (5 prizes for each Nordic country). Please leave your name and contact information at the end.

1. Gender *

☐ Female

☐ Male

2. Home country *

☐ Finland

☐ Denmark

☐ Norway

☐ Sweden

Appendix 1. The survey

3. Destination country

- ☐ Australia
 - ☐ France
 - ☐ Germany
 - ☐ Italy
 - ☐ Japan
 - ☐ Spain
 - ☐ United Kingdom
 - ☐ USA
 - ☐ Other? Please specify
-

4. Age when leaving for exchange *

- ☐ 15
 - ☐ 16
 - ☐ 17
 - ☐ 18
 - ☐ Older? Please specify
-

5. The year when leaving for exchange *

- ☐ 2010
- ☐ 2011
- ☐ 2012
- ☐ 2013
- ☐ 2014
- ☐ 2015

Appendix 1. The survey

6. Length of the exchange *

- ☐ 5 months
☐ 10 months
☐ Other? Please specify

7. How many times had you visited foreign countries before going on exchange? Tick where appropriate *

	0	1	2	3	more than 3
West European countries	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
East European countries	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
North America	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Latin American countries	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Asian countries	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
African countries	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Oceania countries (e.g Australia, New Zealand)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. Indicate your level of knowledge of the following languages before going to exchange

Scale: 1= basic; 5 Excellent; incase of no knowledge, leave empty

	1	2	3	4	5
English	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
French	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
German	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Italian	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spanish	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Swedish	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other foreign language, specify (please choose level before typing)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. How well did the organisation prepare you for your exchange? Tick where appropriate *

Appendix 1. The survey

use scale 1-5 where 1= Disagree completely 5= Agree completely

	1	2	3	4	5
The orientation at my home country was useful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The orientation at my destination country was useful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was provided with enough information at the beginning of my exchange	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My organisation was very supportive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Did you have siblings in your host family? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

11. Had your host family had exchange students before you? *

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, once
- ☐ Yes, more than once

12. How was making friends in the host country? *

- ☐ I had trouble making friends
- ☐ I did not make any close friends just acquaintances
- ☐ I mostly only made friends with other exchange students
- ☐ I made friends easily with the locals

13. Was the destination country what you expected it to be? *

- ☐ Even better
- ☐ As expected
- ☐ Not as I expected
- ☐ Completely opposite of what I expected

14. Indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Appendix 1. The survey

1= disagree completely 5 = agree completely

	1	2	3	4	5
Upon arrival in the host country I felt very excited *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My level of enthusiasm was very high *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was happy being in a new environment and culture *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Upon arrival I was feelings unhappy *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was uncertain *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt insecure in the host country *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Upon arrival I felt alienated and alone from everyone *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the beginning I was angry more often than usual *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I got frustrated easily *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had trouble falling into my daily routines *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt confused in the beginning *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If something else, please specify (choose level of agreement before typing)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. Did you experience any of the following feelings during your exchange? You can choose more than one

- ☐ Loneliness
- ☐ Depression
- ☐ Misunderstood
- ☐ Insecurity
- ☐ Tiredness
- ☐ Anger
- ☐ Insomnia
- ☐ Irritation
- ☐ Unhappiness
- ☐ Nervousness

16. When did you feel homesick for the first time? *

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- ☐ Upon arrival
- ☐ A few days after arrival
- ☐ During first month
- ☐ After a few months
- ☐ Halfway through the exchange
- ☐ At the end of the exchange
- ☐ Throughout the exchange
- ☐ I did not feel homesick

17. Indicate the degree to which following actions helped you to cope with adaptation to the host country

1 = Disagree completely; 5 = Agree completely

	1	2	3	4	5
Talking with my friends and family back at home *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spending time with my new friends *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Started new hobbies *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spending time with my host family *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taking host country language courses *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Joining different student associations *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Going to see school nurse *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seeing psychologist for help *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If something else please specify (please choose the level before typing)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. How did you mostly spent your free time in the host country? You can choose more than one *

- ☐ With new friends
- ☐ With host family
- ☐ With hobbies
- ☐ Talking to old friends back in home country

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☐ Talking to family

19. Did you spend more time with locals or other exchange students? *

- ☐ Locals
- ☐ Other exchange students
- ☐ Both as much

20. Did you continue your hobbies or did you start new ones during your exchange? *

- ☐ Continued old ones
- ☐ Started new ones
- ☐ Both above
- ☐ Neither

21. Did you think about going home early? *

- ☐ All the time
- ☐ In the beginning
- ☐ Before the end
- ☐ Maybe a few times
- ☐ No

22. Did you leave before your actual departure date? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

23. Please describe why you wished to leave early?

500 characters remaining

Appendix 1. The survey

24. If you chose any of the above (questions 21-23) when do you feel these feelings were the strongest?

- ☐ Right after arrival
- ☐ After the first few weeks
- ☐ About halfway through the exchange period
- ☐ Towards the end
- ☐ Throughout the exchange

25. What were your feelings towards the host country when you went back home? *

- ☐ Wished to stay at the host country
- ☐ I feel like I have another home
- ☐ Happy to leave
- ☐ Indifferent

26. How do you feel about your exchange afterwards? *

- ☐ Best experience ever
- ☐ Better than I expected
- ☐ Met my expectations
- ☐ Not the experience I was hoping for

27. When arriving back home how did you feel? You can choose more than one *

- ☐ Happy to be home
- ☐ Left out
- ☐ Not belonging
- ☐ Sad
- ☐ Lonely
- ☐ Irritated
- ☐ Longing to go back to host country

Appendix 1. The survey

28. Did you have trouble falling back into your old life? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

29. Would you recommend exchange to other people? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Yes, in a different host country

☐ Maybe

30. By leaving your name, phone number and e-mail address you can take part to the lottery and win some of our 20 great prizes (5 prizes for each Nordic country).

First name _____

Last name _____

Phone number _____

Email address _____