Social adjustment and friendship patterns of international students

A study of Norwegian students studying abroad

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Acknowledgments

Preface

My supervisor, Floyd Rudmin, and I discussed my vocational goals. My primary goal is to live and work outside of Norway, so we tried finding a topic which would make this feasible. I have studied abroad (Cuba, Hungary), so international students seemed like a relevant topic. The underlying idea of the study was my own experience of how many Norwegian students tend to socialize with only co-nationals when abroad.

The first semester was spent finding literature and reading up on the topic. In the second semester I designed the questionnaire. Floyd Rudmin suggested using the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (Ward & Kennedy, 1999) and I made the Success Scale, the Co-national Scale and the Openness Scale. My supervisor made me aware of the excellent site SurveyMonkey.com, which I have used a lot. The study was conducted late in the second semester. The third semester was spent analyzing the data, and my supervisor provided significant help with the statistical analyses. Most of the actual writing of the thesis was done this last semester.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of friendships in the social adjustment of international students, in particular to explore the role of preference for co-nationals/co-culturals as opposed to a preference for befriending people belonging to other cultural groups. Information was gathered by a psychometric, self-report survey questionnaire. A modified version of the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (Ward & Kennedy, 1999) was used. For the purpose of this study, a Success Scale, a Co-national Scale and an Openness Scale were created. The sample consisted of 265 students studying abroad. The most important results showed that a preference for co-nationals was related to a higher amount of experienced difficulties and a lower level of success.

Keywords: exchange students, foreign students, friendship patterns, international students, Sociocultural Adaptation Scale, social adjustment, sojourn.

Introduction

Each year numerous students embark on the adventure of studying abroad. Many universities are now encouraging students to take a semester or two abroad. This encouragement is shown in such ways as providing information about exchange programmes, sending out emails about the possibilities for foreign studies and by hosting lectures on the topic of specific foreign universities/colleges or courses. Most universities also welcome international students, some because they believe it fosters global understanding, others because of the financial boost international students provide. This is especially the case in universities where there's a high tuition fee.

Definitions

When using the term "International students" it is referred to students who leave their home country for a prolonged period of time, in order to study in another country. "Co-nationals" refers to people who are of the same nationality as the subjects. A similar construct; "co-culturals" refers to people who are not necessarily of the same nationality, but share other cultural criterion, such as linguistic or religious background. For instance, for a Norwegian student, other Norwegians are co-nationals, whereas Swedes and Danes can be said to be co-culturals. When referring to "native students", "domestic students" or "locals" it is referred to people who are indigenous to the country in which the international student is studying. Furthermore, the country of the sojourn is referred to as the host country.

According to Statistisk Sentralbyrå (Økning, 2009)11 746 Norwegian students (excluding PhD students and part-time students) studied abroad in 2006, with slightly more female (58,3%) than male students choosing this.

There are many reasons why students may choose to study abroad. According to the "Push-pull" model of student mobility (Davis, 1994) there are both the factors of the country sending students out (push factors) and the factors of the country receiving students (pull factors). A push factor could be creating an interest in foreign studies. Push factors can be political, cultural or financial in nature. Pull factors are the factors that make a specific country attractive as a host country for international students. Again, the factors can be political, cultural or financial.

To be more specific about the reasons, some students choose to study abroad simply because the field they wish to study is not readily available in their home country. In particular this is true for students from developing countries who want to educate themselves about new technology and scientific advances that are not available in their home country. Some of these students intend to return to their countries after achieving their degree in order to help develop their country. Others stay in the host country permanently, contributing to the so-called "brain drain" which has become a problem for some nations (Altbach, 1991).

The reasons for studying abroad can be very different. A study of Norwegian students (Wiers-Jenssen, 2003) found that two of the most prominent reasons for the students to choose studying abroad were that they thought it would be "interesting to study in a foreign environment" and because they had a "love of adventure". Langley and Breese (2005) found that positive recounts from other students were a major influence in the choice to study abroad. While still in the native country, listening to positive tales of foreign study, told by co-nationals, had a tremendous impact on students' desire to travel.

Others choose it for far less enthusiastic reasons. Norwegian students, especially in Eastern Europe and in developing countries, comprise a large group of students who chose to study abroad for the rather unfortunate reason that they were unable to get the desired education in Norway. Their grades were not good enough for the Norwegian university standards, and this particularly applies to medical schools. So they applied to foreign universities (Wiers-Jenssen, 2003). Many universities in Eastern Europe have high tuition fees combined with easier access to studies. A student who failed to get into medical school in Norway, may still have a fairly good change to succeed abroad. For various reasons, some countries have lower admittance criteria than others for certain fields of study, especially for international students who some times pay even higher tuition fees than the domestic students. Altscher (1976) pointed out the economy's need for international students who offer financial inflows. No doubt this is true for a lot of countries welcoming international students; they need the boost the students can offer the economy.

Other reasons reported for studying abroad are more personal, such as having a boyfriend/girlfriend who studies abroad, having an interest in a specific culture, wanting to reconnect to one's roots, not trusting the educational system in the home country, or wanting to learn another language. The reasons are probably as diverse as the students are. Whatever the reasons, many students leave their families and friends behind and travel to another country to study, some staying away for years. These students face many exciting and interesting endeavours, but also many challenges. They must learn and abide by news rules and immigration laws, perhaps learn a new language, make friends, pick up the proper etiquette for the new culture and find their social place within a new environment, all this in addition to coping with academic challenges.

Making friends in a new country is difficult. It can of course be argued that making friends is always difficult, but when you are all alone in a foreign country, things are different. There may be language barriers or cultural differences that make it very hard to get to know new people. Several studies have suggested that the bigger the difference between the host culture and the home country, the worse the culture shock is, and the more trouble students have adapting (Forstat, 1951; Furnham, 2004; Graham, 1983; Wehrly, 1986).

It is especially difficult to make the transition between a collectivist society and an individualistic one (Sam, 2001; Sandhu, 1994; Sümer, Poyrazli & Grahame, 2008). One of the reasons for this is probably that the education systems differ greatly regarding the expectations and demands facing the students. In many collectivist societies, the focus is on rote learning. The students memorise the material to be learned and the reproduce it at a later time. Most Western societies on the other hand, focus on individual contributions such as production of new material and critique of material. These differences in teaching style can cause problems and anxiety (G. Bradley, 2000) as students try to get used to a whole new set of academic expectations.

It has also been argued that the student's country of origin is relevant to a larger extent than merely affecting the cultural distance between the host society and the home society or the academic demands (Church, 1982; Rosenthal, Russell & Thomson, 2007; Sam, 2001). It seems that some national/cultural groups adapt more easily to new cultures (Altbach, 1991). Hambrick, Canney, Davison and Snow (1998) and Trice (2004) suggest that nationality is an important factor when adapting to a new culture because nationality inevitably becomes part of a person's behaviour. Every culture has a unique set of attitudes, values, cognitive

schemas, etiquette, language and appropriate social behaviours. All this would naturally affect how a person relates to strangers, how they make friends and how they respond to social stimuli and thus have a great effect on adapting to other cultures.

Humans are social animals and a supportive network is vital, especially when coping with stress and problems. International students are in a peculiar situation, as they have left their social support networks behind. This makes them particularly vulnerable. They need to build a new network in their new environment. The importance of sojourners' available social networks in mediating stressful circumstances has been shown repeatedly (Brein & David, 1971; Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen & Horn, 2002; Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004). Being a university student is stressful for everyone, but domestic students do not have to deal with the same problems as international students. In addition to being deprived of their social network, international students may face language barriers, immigration difficulties, culture shock and homesickness (Sümer et al., 2008). Many researchers have highlighted the fact that international students encounter more, and other, difficulties than domestic students do (L. Bradley, Parr, Lan, Bingi & Gould, 1995; Forstat, 1951; Furnham, 2004; Kaczmarek, Matlock, Merta, Ames & Ross, 1995; Sandhu, 1994).

Sümer, Poyrazli and Grahame (2008) found that international students with better social support are less depressed. They also found that depression and anxiety are interrelated among these students. Khawaja and Dempsey (2007) name social isolation as a contributor to the psychological distress of the international students. Thus we see that a lack of adequate social support networks is correlated with depression and anxiety.

Coping strategies

Some students feel more comfortable around people from their own country; people who speak the same language and share the same cultural and historical frame of reference (Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998; Antler, 1970; Bochner, McLeod & Lin, 1977). To rely on the presence of countrymen is a strategy that is dependent on the number of compatriots who are around. Many universities around Europe have a large population of Norwegian students, so it's perfectly possible to form cliques consisting of Norwegians only, including other Scandinavians; the odd Swede or Dane. In the author's experience, such social groups do not make an effort to learn the local language or get to know people who are not Norwegian (or at least Scandinavian) and they may hang out at bars/pubs that are targeted at Scandinavians. Such places are common in many European countries, catering to expatriates from different nations. These venues often serve Norwegian drinks and food and even provide Norwegian newspapers. In other words; the students are doing their best to find a tiny version of Norway abroad, in which they can feel safe and at home, socialising only with co-culturals.

Al-Sharideh and Goe (1998) observed that many international students establish social relationships with people who share the same (or a similar) cultural, national, ethnic or religious background. They contended that social relationships with locals only occurred when the international student was unable to form such relationships with others from the same or similar background. Forming ethnic communities within the university context provides international students with social networks that can help them with problems they have in the host society. Of course what can easily happen, is that if there are enough people of the same background, they can form an adhesive ethnic community and then they have no incentive to get to know the locals.

Al-Sharideh and Goe (1998) suggest that international students experience difficulty when trying to interact with locals because they are unfamiliar with the local customs and etiquette. This accidental ignorance may cause social faux pas' and misunderstandings. Another problem frequently mentioned in the literature (Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998; Bochner, McLeod, & Lin, 1977; Church, 1982) is the sudden loss of status experienced by international students. All of a sudden they find themselves in a new environment in which their previous status may not be recognised. This can be a blow to self-esteem and confidence. Not all societies and cultures share the same standards so even if a student enjoyed high social status in his or her home country, this status may not be retained in a new environment. This loss of status can cause emotional stress; thus seeking out social relationships with people of a similar background makes it easier to reclaim the social status that the student was used to in the home country. Marion (1986) contended that co-national groups offer a temporary surrogate for the society the student has left behind and thus alleviate feelings of loneliness, isolation, alienation and homesickness.

As Khawaja and Dempsey (2007) pointed out, some international students are not motivated to interact with the locals of the host country and this could arise because they (the international students) know that they are residing in the host country for a limited period of time. It is a temporary situation so they are not prepared to expend too much time and effort on getting to know the locals. One could speculate that it might seem easier to merely get acquainted with co-nationals who can provide social support and also be a network that the student can keep even after returning to the home country.

International students are often frequently reminded that they are outsiders (Hendricks &

Skinner, 1977). Language barriers, cultural differences, financial and legal situations, lack of ties with the host society and many other factors are clear signs that they do not really belong. This constant emphasis on the fact that they are merely transients, that they do not belong in the society where they currently reside, could very well be an important contributor to seeking the company of con-nationals. Such milieus create an atmosphere of "us and them" instead of the more ideal "we".

Another, related, reason for international students to prefer the company of their own kind, is that when abroad they can become insecure about the value of their own culture (Bochner et al., 1977). This insecurity then prompts defensive feelings and a need to maintain their cultural/ethnic/national identity, thus students seek the companionship of co-nationals and/or co-culturals. It is especially the case when the home culture is less affluent or in other ways may seem to be devalued by the host society. Such tension can contribute to international students forming national/ethnic/cultural cliques.

Antler (1970) found that those who interacted most with co-nationals were characterized by a more nationalistic attitude. In his study, students who spent more time with co-nationals were less well adjusted to the host country and also performed less satisfying in their training program. On the other hand, the subjects who had more interaction with the locals, reported themselves to be more active, self-assured and assertive. Naturally, there is a question of causality here. It could be the case that less assertive people would seek out co-nationals because they are not confident enough to approach the locals. It is also plausible to hypothesize that braving the cultural and linguistic barriers by interacting with the locals, could build confidence and assertiveness.

<u>Contact strategies</u>

The opposite strategy of socialising only with co-nationals or co-culturals, would be to focus on the host country. Norwegian students doing this, would want to get to know the locals, to learn the language and the culture of the host country. They would not be very keen on mingling with the other Norwegians in the area. They might ask themselves; what is the point of travelling at all, if you only intend to hang out with your countrymen? Using this strategy, they will be eager to integrate and prefer to make friends with the locals/domestic students, as opposed to with other international students or co-nationals.

This strategy would not be easy in a country where the locals are hostile, either to foreigners in general, or to the student's nationality in particular. Marion (1986) asserted that mingling with the locals is most successful at small colleges/universities where there is a smaller population of international students. Al-Sharideh and Goe (1998) also stated that there has to be a sufficient number of co-nationals or co-culturals present in a university to potentially create a separate ethnic community, thus it follows logically that a smaller institution would offer less possibilities for co-national communities within the university context. As such the international students would have more incentive to befriend domestic students. Ying (2002) found that willingness to befriend domestic students was directly related to limited availability of co-nationals on campus.

Sandhu and Asrabadi (1994) pointed out that the relationship between international students and domestic students is two-way. International students may seek out co-nationals while the locals feel no reason to reach out to the foreigners. As long as neither group reaches out, forming friendships will be complicated. Volet and Ang (1998) also highlighted the role that domestic students play in affecting integration of international students. Their study showed

how many negative attitudes and stereotypes are harboured by both the domestic students and the international students, complicating the integration. Many students (both domestic and international) felt no desire to interact with the other group. Spencer-Rodgers (2001) found that stereotypical beliefs were related to social avoidance of the group, thus keeping international and domestic students apart.

Familiar and safe as it may seem to remain close to co-nationals, this may not be the most adaptive strategy. Several researchers (Li & Gasser, 2005; Perrucci & Hu, 1995; Sandhu, 1994; Ying & Han, 2006) have found positive correlations between interacting with the locals (and in some cases international students who are not co-nationals or co-culturals) and being well-adjusted to the host society. So it may seem that for those students who can brave the gap between their own and the host culture, the leap of faith will have positive repercussions. There is no need to choose between spending time with co-nationals and locals. Using a cosmopolitan strategy, the international student can make friends with people from several different places. Student using this strategy do not focus on avoiding neither the con-nationals nor the locals. They will make friends with international students from various countries, domestic students and co-nationals, resulting in having a group of friends of diverse nationalities and ethnicities. This strategy might be quite dependent on the cultural mix in the university settings. If the class consists of international students, all from different parts of the world, a cosmopolitan approach would be natural, especially if there are few co-culturals in the setting at all.

<u>Sojourners</u>

There is an extensive research and literature base on the topic of the sojourner, although the focus of sojourner research has shifted through the years. In the 1950s, Eastern European, and particularly Russian, students who came to the United States to study, were subjects of much interest. Bearing the Cold War in mind, it was of interest to American scholars not only why these students came, but what kind of attitudes they brought back to their home countries. The United States was not popular back then, and in the interest of peace it was crucial that these international students could bring favourable reports back to their nations. Kiell (1951) speculated that students from non-democracies, studying in the United States, will bring home their impressions of how a democracy works, or does not work. Students are the leaders of the future and the experiences they have during their sojourn may be vital in later attitudes and decision-making. Studying in another country does not automatically promote global friendship and understanding. It can do the opposite.

Some researchers have given attention to what exactly is the result of international student sojourns: do they promote global understanding or reinforcing pre-existing prejudices? Molinsky (2007) asserted the importance of successful communication across cultural boundaries, and Volet and Ang (1998) stated that the goal of making higher education internationalised is to prepare students to work in an international and inter-cultural context, something which would be difficult to avoid in today's increasingly internationalised work market, especially in academia.

It has been shown (Stangor, Jonas, Stroebe & Hewstone, 1996) that more contact with host nationals reduces international students' pre-existing negative attitudes and stereotypes towards host nationals. It is reasonable to expect that this is a two-way street (Volet & Ang,

1998) and that the domestic students' negative attitudes are also reduced by interaction with international students. In an exclusively European perspective, it has been found that international students sojourn predicts later migration to other European countries and contributes to a European identity, as opposed to a national identity (King & Ruiz-Gelices, 2003).

Businesses have been sending employees abroad for multiple purposes and a lot of the sojourner research is focused on how to most cost-effectively integrate workers in a job-context abroad. Also important are reducing prejudice and stereotypes. Much of the research is concerned with the high rates of premature return of people who work abroad. Apparently this is a severe problem for multinational corporations; the premature return of expatriate workers is a waste of resources (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985). The premature return rate has been as high as 40%. Needless to say, this is a financial problem for many companies, and thus research has been focused on training and selection for expatriates.

All of the results achieved in this area of research are not directly applicable to exchange students, but some of the basic ideas are transferable. Mendenhall and Oddou (1985) focus on different dimensions of coping in a new culture and some of this might be valid in a student setting as well. In particular their discussion of the social dimension of coping. They found that having close friendships with locals was very important and prevented premature return. This was also linked to the expatriates' willingness to communicate with locals in their own language or at least on their terms.

Brein and David (1971) also found that the extent of social contact between exchange students and locals was significantly related to the students' adjustment and to how content

they felt about their stay in the other country. Students who felt that they had successfully interacted with locals in the host country, were more satisfied with their sojourn.

Meintel (1973) asserted that so-called culture shock is more a shock of self-discovery than shock of another culture. She argued that when entering a foreign culture and adapting to a new way of life, one will inevitably learn new things about oneself. This self-discovery may be shocking and upsetting, but the shock lies more in us than in the new culture. She said, "the most important 'shocks' to be encountered by those who enter another culture or subculture are those of self-discovery. Revelations about oneself may become clear only upon return home; moreover they may also be engendered by everyday social experiences in one's own cultural setting." (Meintel, 1973, p. 47)

Purpose

Keeping in mind the different strategies for fitting in socially, it should be noted that a person is not entirely free to choose any strategy. Since it is a social context, the individual will undoubtedly be affected by others. If international students opt for the strategy of mingling with the locals, they may have trouble utilizing this strategy if the locals dislike foreigners and are strongly opposed to fraternizing with them. Other people's attitudes affect our choices and how we are able to fit in or not fit in. Graham (1983) showed that different groups of international students hold stereotypes and prejudices against other groups of international students. Thus it might be difficult for a student to adopt the cosmopolitan strategy if the other international students already hold negative stereotypes of the student's race/ethnicity/nationality. As Graham (1983) mentioned, acculturative stress does not only occur between the international students and the domestic students; there is also plenty of acculturative stress between different cultural groups of international students, especially

those who are traditionally hostile to each other. Furthermore, an international student's attitude to the host nationals may be as much determined by interaction with other international students as by direct contact with domestic students (Antler, 1970). Thus choosing a strategy is dependent on lots of factors and the internationalisation of a university is a dynamic structure affected by both the domestic and the international students (and employees) and their pre-existing cultural biases.

The purpose of this study is to explore how international students make friends and adjust socially when studying abroad. What are the consequences of socialising only with co-nationals? What is the best predictor(s) of a successful stay abroad?

Method

<u>Instrument</u>

Information was gathered by a psychometric, self-report survey questionnaire (see appendix). The 36-item questionnaire consisted of seven parts. The first part was of a demographic nature, asking for age, gender, nationality and how long the respondent had been studying abroad.

The second part was an adaptation of the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). The original scale has 41 items, but was for this study shortened to 18 items (see Table 1). 26 of the original items were removed, three new ones were added and some items were rephrased. This was done to make the questionnaire shorter and also to make the items more applicable to students studying abroad. Respondents were asked to indicate how much difficulty they experience in 18 different areas, using a five-point scale (1-5: *no difficulty, slight difficulty, moderate difficulty, great difficulty, extreme difficulty*).

The third part of the questionnaire asked how much of their spare time that was spent with others did the respondents spend a)with co-nationals, b)with foreign students from other countries than their own or c)with local people of the host country. The answers were given in percentages.

The fourth part of the questionnaire asked for the reasons of the respondents' friendships; in other words the basis for why they would choose to be friends with someone. The options were a)*common interests,* b)*ethnic group/nationality,* c)*financial reasons,* d)*shared religious beliefs* and e)*shared political beliefs.* In addition respondents could add other reasons under a

point marked *Other (please specify)*. Answers to this question were also given in percentages.

The fifth part of the questionnaire was comprised of two brief scales created for the purpose of this study (see Table 2). The Openness Scale consisted of four items asking about positive attitudes to local people and their language. The Co-national Scale consisted of three items asking about preference for people of one's own nationality. Respondents were asked to respond on a five-point scale (1-5: *completely untrue, somewhat true, neither true nor untrue, somewhat true, very true*). The sixth part of the questionnaire was a Success Scale, developed for the purpose of this study (see table 3), with a four-point scale (1-4: *not at all, a little, quite a bit, very much*).

The seventh part consisted of two open-ended questions. One asked how the respondents would describe their own strategy for finding friends in the host country. The other one asked respondents to add any further remarks or comments on the topic or on the survey.

Distribution

Data were collected through SurveyMonkey. A link to the survey was added to newsletters sent out to international students who are members of ANSA (Association of Norwegian Students Abroad, with more than 8400 members across more than 60 countries). Data were collected in November 2008.

Sample

The sample consisted of 265 students (aged 16 to 33, mean= 23,27, Std. deviation= 2.82) who are studying abroad. Most of the sample is Norwegian, with only four respondents stating

other nationalities (all of them half Norwegian, half other nationality). The majority of the respondents (70,9%) were female.

Norwegian students studying abroad were the focus population for this study mainly for the opportunistic reasons that the author is Norwegian and has studied abroad. That is, Norwegian students are an accessible sample. However, Norwegian students might also be considered a "best-case" sample because they have financial support from the government, have relatively good access to health services, and thus have few complications arising from poverty or ill health or racism. Furthermore, Norway has not been a colonial or geopolitical power, such that Norwegian students are less likely to provoke political antagonisms when travelling abroad. On the downside, in the author's experience, the relative wealth of Norway and its relatively good geopolitical behaviour may result in Norwegian students seeming to be smug or feeling superior about themselves.

The students had been studying abroad an average of 23, 2 months (std. Dev 19.20) so there was a wide range, with some students having just recently left their home and others having studied abroad for years. The questionnaires were distributed through email via a third party, so the base rate/response rate is unknown. It is not possible to report a response rate because it is unknown how many students received the newsletter and read the notice.

Results

Sociocultural Adaptation Scale

The Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (Ward & Kennedy, 1999) can be seen to be a measure of how successful students are since it measures the amount of difficulties they are experiencing. It should be noted, however, that it measures the perceived difficulty experienced by the student, and it is thus a score influenced by personal characteristics, for example different people can judge the same problem to pose more or less of a difficulty.

The Sociocultural Adaptation Scale has relatively high reliability for this sample, as it had a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .87$. The inter-item correlation matrix for this scale showed only one negative correlation. This correlation (r=-.03) was between '*Making friends with the locals*' and '*Following rules and regulations*'. The item-total correlations were all positive; and the lowest one was r=.35. High alpha and high item-total correlations suggests that the items are measuring the same underlying construct.

As shown in Table 1, the scale mean was 1,95 (SD = 0,57), which is a collective report of "slight difficulty" for this sample. Looking at the items, most difficulty was reported for dealing with bureaucracy, then services, and then friendships. Least difficult were issues of bathing, worship, and obeying regulations.

Table 1: Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (rank ordered from most problematic to least)

	Mean	SD
Total scale (α = .87)	1,95	0,57
Dealing with bureaucracy.	2,87	1,16
Making friends with the locals.	2,49	1,12
Dealing with unsatisfactory service.	2,41	1,15
Understanding jokes and humour.	2,36	1,05
Making yourself understood.	2,21	1,05
Understanding host country's political system.	2,09	0,98
Dealing with people in authority.	2,05	1,11
Being comfortable with levels of noise or silence.	1,88	1,02
Using public toilets.	1,88	1,2
Finding food that you enjoy.	1,79	0,96
Talking about yourself to others.	1,79	0,89
Dealing with pace of life in host country.	1,78	0,95
People staring at you.	1,63	1
Enjoying social gatherings.	1,6	0,87
Following rules and regulations.	1,57	0,81
Finding a place to worship.	1,55	1,08
Using showers.	1,54	0,93
Communicating with people of a different ethnic group.	1,53	0,76

Openness Scale and Co-national Scale

The Openness Scale can be seen as a measure of the degree to which students are willing to socialize with locals and the extent to which they are open to experiencing the host culture and language. The Openness Scale had acceptably high reliability for this sample, as it had a Cronbach's alpha of α = .73. All the inter-item correlations and item-total correlations were positive. This suggests the items are measuring the same construct.

The Co-national Scale can be seen to measure the opposite of the Openness Scale, that is; it measures the preference for one's own nationality. A high score on the Co-national scale implies that the respondent prefers speaking their own language and spending time with co-nationals. The Co-national Scale had a Cronbach's alpha of α=. 75. Just as with the Openness Scale, all inter-item and item-total correlations were positive.

Table 2: Items that form the Co-national Scale and the Openness Scale

	Mean	SD
OPENNESS SCALE (α = .73)	4,09	0,81
Getting to know local culture is important when abroad.	4,50	0,93
I enjoy getting to know the locals when I travel.	4,21	1,05
I'm making an effort to learn the local language.	4,15	1,17
The locals in my host country are very hospitable and welcoming.	3,51	1,20
CO-NATIONAL SCALE (α = .75)	2,85	0,95
I prefer spending time with people who speak my language.	3,52	1,04
I feel safer and more comfortable with people of my own nationality.	3,25	1,20
It is easier to make friends with people of my own nationality.	2,68	1,24

Success Scale

The Success Scale can be seen as a measure of how successful the students' sojourns were. Presumably a person who does not regret it, would do it again, and would recommend it to others, has successfully adapted to life in a different country. Of course it is entirely possible to not regret it, want to do it again, but yet not recommend it to others. A few of the respondents commented that even though they are very happy with their stay abroad, they would not recommend it to others due to all the practical problems, such as the financial toll. However, the Success Scale had a Cronbach's alpha of α=.50, which is not bad considering that the scale consists of only three items. The inter-item correlations are all positive, the

lowest one being r=.22 and between '*How much do you regret studying abroad*' and '*How much would you consider studying abroad again*'. This is probably because due to finances and time, it might be impractical to study abroad again, even though you do not at all regret it. Corrected item-total correlations for the success scale are all positive, with the lowest one being between r=.32.

Table 3: Success Scale (ordered highest to lowest)

	Mean	SD
Total scale (α = .50)	2,70	0,45
How much do you regret choosing to study abroad? (reverse key)	2,82	0,46
How much would you recommend foreign exchange study to someone else?	2,76	0,59
How much would you consider studying abroad again?	2,52	0,83

Correlations

Table 4: Significant (p<.05) Interscale Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Adaptation Scale	--	-.15	.21	.18	-.27	.23			.19		.23		
2. Success Scale	-.15	--		-.19				.19					
3. Openness Scale	.21		--	-.16	.23	-.24			-.16				
4. Co-National Scale	.18	-.19	-.16	--	-.29	.54			.47	.17			-.20
5. Local socializing	-.27		.23	-.29	--	-.47	-.35	.13	-.22				.16
6. Co-national socializing	.23		-.24	.54	-.47	--	-.13		.55				-.18
7. Foreign socializing					-.35	-.13	--						
8. Friendship - interests		.19			.13			--					
9. Friendship - nationality	.19		-.16	.47	-.22	.55			--	.26			-.16
10. Friendship - money				.17					.26	--	.15		
11. Friendship - religion	.23									.15	--	.21	
12. Friendship - politics											.21	--	
13. Months abroad				-.20	.16	-.18			-.16				--
Mean	1.95	2.70	4.10	2.85	.37	.38	.40	.73	.29	.06	.03	.67	23.19
SD	.57	.45	.81	.95	.30	.33	.29	.22	.30	.15	.11	.15	19.17

The Sociocultural Adaptation Scale was found to be significantly negatively correlated with the Success Scale (r=-.15, n=215, p<.05). Out of the 18 items on the Sociocultural Adaptation

Scale, six were significantly negatively correlated with the Success Scale. These six items were '*Making friends with the locals*' (r=-.21, n=215, p<.05), '*Making yourself understood*' (r=-.19, n=215, p<.05), '*Enjoying social gatherings*' (r=-.18, n=215, p<.05), '*Talking about yourself to others*' (r=-.20, n=215, p<.05), '*Dealing with unsatisfactory service*' (r=-.17, n=215, p<0.05) and '*Dealing with the pace of life in the host country*' (r=-.12, n=215, p<.05). Thus, out of the 18 items on the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale, these six seem to best predict the score on the Success Scale. The remaining 12 items of the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale were not significantly correlated with the Success Scale.

Open-ended questions

215 (about 81,13% of the sample) respondents answered the question about what kind of strategies they used to make friends in the host country, describing various ways of making friends in their new environment. 50 of these (18,87% of the sample) emphasized the importance of initiative, 39 (14,72%) felt that openness was vital, 37 (13,96%) meant that being friendly was all it took and 35 (13,20%) preferred engaging in university activities in order to socialize. The remaining answers were spread across a wide variety of suggestions. 9 (3,40%) claimed not to use any strategy at all.

61 (about 23,02% of the sample) answered the last question, making general comments on the topic of the study or remarking on the survey itself, commenting on items they had found hard to understand or issues they felt should have been addressed in the survey. 25 of these mentioned the importance of which country they studied in. The remaining comments were regarding confusing questions or just general comments on the topic of foreign studies.

Discussion

<u>Caveats and problems</u>

This study was conducted with Norwegian students and the narrowness of this sample means that conclusions may not generalize to other nationalities. Norwegians may be different from other nationalities in ways that are significant for the outcomes of this study.

There are more Norwegian females who study abroad than men, but not as many as in this sample (70,9%). The sample consisted of significantly more females than males, and therefore may not be representative.

There are unknown self-selection effects. The study may be biased for people who had time to spare, or for people who were interested in the topic of the survey. It is impossible to know how many decided not to reply and the exact reasons for why they chose not to.

The timing could have been better, since the study was conducted late in the fall semester, meaning many students were busy studying for exams and did not have the time to respond. It is reasonable to assume that if the questionnaire had been distributed early or in the middle of a semester, a higher number of students would have responded.

The concept of preference for one's own nationality as measured by the Co-national Scale may be too narrow. A higher number of items could make this scale more interesting. The questionnaire was kept as brief as possible in order to increase the number of students who could find the time to respond.

A lot of respondents complained about the religion item (number 15) of the Sociocultural adaptation scale since they were not religious and found it irrelevant. Most young Norwegians are not religious (at least not openly practising) these days, so the item should probably have been left out. Some respondents took offence to being "assumed religious" and others were confused about what to answer since it was not relevant to them. Future researchers might want to delete this item unless the study is conducted with a cohort from a culture in which religion is a lot more important.

The finances "Money available" item was poorly phrased, as it turned out somewhat ambiguous. This can be seen by the lower n in all significant correlations between this item and any other items. Since some students found the item confusing, more people skipped this item.

The questionnaire did not ask what the students were studying. The topic of their study might be relevant, as social science students may differ from engineering students in ways that are socially significant.

Because of these problems the present study is not definite. Further research is necessary to provide more in-depth knowledge and conclusion that can be generalized to a wider population of international students.

<u>Interpretation of results</u>

Not all of the correlations in Table 4 will be discussed because a) even though they are statistically significant, they are too small to be "significant" meaning "important". Also, b) the large number of significance tests ($p < .05$) in a correlation matrix, means that 5% of the correlations appear significant by chance.

Essentially, there are two outcome measures; two measures of success. One is the Sociocultural Adaptation scale and the other one is the Success Scale. The correlation between these two makes perfect sense. If students experience many difficulties in the host country, they are likely to regret the sojourn, not consider doing it again and would not recommend it to others.

Out of the 18 items on the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale, six were significantly negatively correlated with the Success Scale. These six items were '*Making friends with the locals*', '*Making yourself understood*', '*Enjoying social gatherings*', '*Talking about yourself to others*', '*Dealing with unsatisfactory service*' and '*Dealing with the pace of life in the host country*'. In other words; out of the 18 items on the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale, these six are the most important for a successful sojourn. All these items are of a social nature, except 'Dealing with pace of life' which is only borderline social in nature. This shows the importance of the social aspect of the sojourn as opposed to experiencing practical difficulties, which to most of the students did not seem to have the same impact on satisfaction with the stay.

The sample has a gender imbalance, but two items on the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale were found to be negatively correlated with being male. These items were 'Dealing with

unsatisfactory service' and 'Understanding the host country's political system'. Due to the nature of the study, it is impossible to know the reason(s) behind these correlations. One can speculate that Norwegian males are raised to be more assertive and less polite than females, thus it would presumably be easier for them to deal with unsatisfactory service and it follows logically that this ability would make them experience less difficulties with the bad service. Females might feel significantly more uncomfortable when dealing with bad service. It is also possible that females feel bad service is somehow worse than males do, and thus their experienced difficulty with this would be more severe. As for 'Understanding the host country's political system' it would be merely speculation as to the basis of this gender difference. Males might care more about politics and thus make more of an effort to learn about the system in the host country.

The correlation between the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale and the Openness Scale was negative. In other words; the more difficulties a student experienced with the items on the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale, the less openness they exhibited toward a new culture. This is understandable as it seems logical that when a student is suddenly plunged into a new culture, experiencing a lot of problems and difficulties, they would start feeling hostile towards the environment and sceptical about exploring new cultures.

According to the frustration-aggression hypothesis (Atkinson, Atkinson, Smith, Bem, & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2000; Gazzaniga & Heatherton, 2003) whenever a person's efforts to reach a goal are blocked, an aggressive drive is induced, in turn causing hostility and potentially aggressive behaviour that can be directed at the person(s) perceived to be blocking the goal or even at random targets. This can also apply on group level, not just on an individual level (Carlson, Martin, & Buskist, 2004), predicting that collective frustration may contribute to

hostile intergroup relations. So perhaps this is some of the reason behind the correlation between the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale and the Openness Scale; perceived difficulty and experienced frustration in the host society causes hostility which in turn leads to a decrease in the openness to the experience of other cultures.

The Sociocultural Adaptation Scale was positively correlated with the Co-national Scale showing that a high level of experienced difficulties was related to a high level of preference for co-nationals. The causality could go either way here; with a high number of problems causing a preference for co-nationals, or a strong sense of national belonging causing a fair amount of trouble. It is also conceivable that there could be a third, unknown, variable that causes both a high score on the Co-national Scale and a high score on the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale. The Sociocultural Adaptation Scale measure the student's perceived difficulties with the various items, not the objective amount of problems encountered. Thus there is a real possibility that a student who scores high on the Co-national Scale is predisposed to be critical of other cultures and eager to find fault with the host country, and thus would also score high on the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale.

The positive correlation between the Co-national Scale and the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale may suggest that people who are very nationalistically oriented may well have to face a lot of problems when studying abroad. Of course that does not necessarily mean that nationalistically oriented people should not study abroad. However, it might mean that they need to be better prepared before leaving their home country so that they do not expect everything to be the same way as "back home".

The positive correlation found between the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale and the amount of time spent with co-nationals shows that students who spend a lot of time with co-nationals, experience more problems with the issues from the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale. As with most of the correlations, there is an issue of causality here. It could be that spending a lot of time with co-nationals directly or indirectly increases the amount of experienced difficulty. A group of co-nationals, presumably nationalistically minded to a certain extent as there was a correlation between the Co-national Scale and the amount of time spent with co-nationals, might rehearse their own cultural norms and criticize the host culture, reinforcing their own cultural identity at the cost of respecting the host culture. This might lead to a heightened sensitivity to trouble, as the students are eager to find flaws in the host culture. It could also be that there is a third variable that causes students to be both nationalistically oriented and leaves them prone to problems. It is also plausible that it is the other way around, like already mentioned; that students who encounter more problems, seek out the help and support of co-nationals.

There was a negative correlation between the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale and the amount of time spent with the locals. A higher score on the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale is related to less time spent with the locals. This could be because a lot of problems in the host country might lead to frustration and hostility, thus avoiding the locals. It could also be because students who experience a lot of trouble, prefer turning to their co-nationals for help instead of the locals. A third explanation could be that if a student has a lot of problems, it follows that they spend a lot of time trying to solve the problems and this might not leave much time to try to get to know the locals. Or it could even be that a nationalistically oriented student avoids the locals and refuses to learn the rules and etiquette of the host country. This behaviour would reasonably lead to a lot of problems.

There was a negative correlation between the Success Scale and the Co-national Scale. The more nationalistically oriented, the lower the score on the Success Scale. Clearly there are issues with causality here as well. It could be that students who are very nationalistically minded do not have as successful sojourns. Perhaps they are very nationalistically oriented already before leaving the home country and when abroad they see more problems with the host culture than other students do. However, it is also possible that a student who encounters a lot of problems and has an unsuccessful stay in the host country, seeks out their co-nationals to have some sense of belonging and that this in turn makes them more nationalistically oriented.

The correlations found between choosing friends based on nationality, finances or religion, could possibly be explained by the fact that if group belonging is important to a person, it will be so in more than one context. A person who prefers spending time with people who share their cultural belonging, might reasonably be expected to prefer similarities in other areas as well, such as social status, religion, available finances, political beliefs etc. Birds of a feather flock together, so to speak. Based on the results of this study, it seems to be a clear disadvantage to socializing with co-nationals only. There could be several reasons that students choose this strategy.

According to Ying (2002) the predictors of willingness to form friendships with domestic students are to a large extent based on personal attributes such as communication and language skills and limited access to co-nationals. A person's level of preference for co-nationals and level of openness can no doubt be said to be part of their personality and since these two traits are clearly essential to adjustment in a foreign country, one can say that the

individual student's personality is an important factor contributing to adjustment. Previous research has also shown the importance and effect of personality on adjustment in a foreign country (Shaffer, Gregersen, Harrison, Black, & Ferzandi, 2006; Swagler & Jome, 2005; Colleen Ward, Leong, & Low, 2004; Ying & Han, 2006) thus it should be accepted that some individuals are simply better suited for education abroad than others. Also, some cultures have a longer tradition of sending students abroad and therefore young people may feel more prepared for it. Support has been found for the theory that students from some countries simply adapt better than students from other countries when studying abroad (Altbach, 1991; Forstat, 1951; Sam, 2001; C. Ward & Kennedy, 1999).

There is also the issue of whether students choose it themselves or whether their parents choose it for them. In some countries it is common for parents to decide to send their children abroad for education. It seems reasonable to assume that students who chose the sojourn themselves might differ in significant ways from students who were just sent abroad. Students who have to study abroad because they could not get into a school at home have been found to be less satisfied with the sojourn (Wiers-Jenssen, 2003), presumably because they were less motivated and/or because it might feel like some sort of defeat to study abroad because you are not "good enough" for domestic educational institutions.

To sum up the results of the study; it would seem that being too nationalistically minded is a bad idea when studying abroad. A preference for co-nationals is associated with a high number of experienced difficulties and a lower level of success. Students might benefit from interventions that seek to break up co-national cliques. There is of course the issue of causality, but in sum a cosmopolitan group of friends might broaden students' world view in a more positive way than sticking to co-nationals and co-culturals.

<u>Open-ended questions</u>

Of the total respondents, 215 answered the question '*What was your strategy for finding friends in the host country?*'. This high response rate (81,13%) shows that almost everyone had something to say about this. The majority of the replies (167) were centred around being friendly, open-minded and participating in social events. Also, 50 (18,87%) of these students emphasized the importance of making the first move instead of waiting for others to contact them. They felt that it was more efficient to initiate conversations and ask people about their interests. As one student remarked, "People often like talking about themselves" (female, 21 years old). Another said, "Don't wait for others to take the initiative, they are as shy as you" (male, 25 years old).

Some students referred to alcohol, smoking or food as ice breakers. This included spending time in restaurants, cafés, drinking venues, using alcohol to facilitate social interactions and meeting people by initiating conversations with other smokers.

Nine students felt that it was very important that one starts any strategy as soon as possible in the semester. They thought it would be harder the longer they waited, and that other students were more receptive to befriend new people early in the semester.

Thirty-five (13,20%) of the respondents thought that the university they attended offered the best opportunities for finding friends. These students felt that class activities and dormitories were good places for finding friends. Not all universities offer dormitories, but there are usually campus clubs or gatherings. Students using this strategy recommended talking to people in classes and on campus to make friends.

Thirty-five students (13,20%) made comments to the point of seeking out people who shared their interests. They mentioned activities such as joining a sports team, a choir, a religious group or other special interest groups. Many universities have many such groups on campus.

Most of the strategies mentioned seem to be aimed at co-nationals or other international students. Only 24 students (9,06%) recommended a strategy focused on befriending locals or domestic students. These students emphasized the importance of learning about the culture and the language of their host country, showing respect for the host culture and living among locals instead in dormitories or with other international students. A strategy of avoidance was mentioned by 6 students. These respondents said that they actively avoided co-nationals and co-culturals in order to make friends with the domestic students or with international students from cultures different from their own. It would be interesting to know in what ways students using this assimilation strategy may differ from the majority of the students.

A couple of the respondents pointed out that some students don't travel alone. They bring their spouse/partner or a friend. This hinders them in making new friends, and/or sets the basis for a co-cultural/co-national clique. In the author's experience there is definitely something to this. In a class of about 35 students, there were three Norwegian couples (two of them married, one co-habiting) and these couples seemed to socialise exclusively with co-nationals.

Of the total respondents, 61 students (23,02%) answered the last open-ended question, commenting on the survey itself or the topic of sojourn. Twenty-five of these felt that the host country would be an interesting variable. Some of them had studied in more than one country and commented that there were significant differences between the two countries that affected their strategy for making friends. This makes sense as some cultures might be easier for

Norwegian students to adapt to than others. Presumably a more similar culture would be easier. Several studies have shown the importance of the host country and the difference between cultures (Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen & Horn, 2002; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Sam, 2001; Wehrly, 1986). As one respondent remarked, "It was easier to adjust to my current studies (in the Republic of Korea) because of previous studies in a similar country (Japan)" (male, 26 years old).

Some students mentioned that there are both positive and negative experiences when studying abroad. It transpired that for some, academic demands and socialisation were entangled. A respondent said, "The most difficult for me is to hang out with people enough to become friends. My studies are very demanding and take up a lot of my time. Having a social network is extremely important to me, but the desire to complete my studies, hinders me in adequately fulfilling my social needs" (female, 20 years old). Another student said that, "The social aspects of an exchange student are greatly restricted by the academic lifestyle" and speculated that lack of adequate social adaptation strategies may be the reason some international students don't finish their studies abroad (male, 26 years old).

Suggestions for improving international students' social adaptation

Pre-departure preparations

To encourage students to study abroad, one might do well to keep in mind Langley and Breeze's study (2005) that found the influence of other international students to be very important. International students could, on their return to the home country, be encouraged to speak in schools/universities about their positive experiences as international students, functioning as ambassadors. As Hansen (1982) alludes to, it might be a good idea to prepare

students for the social and cultural climate that they are about to enter into before they leave their home country, preparing them for both the academic performance and the social behaviour that will be expected of them once in the host society. This might help alleviate symptoms of culture shock.

Brown and Holloway (2007) showed that the first stage of the sojourn is characterized by negative symptoms of culture shock to a greater extent than by positive symptoms such as excitement and curiosity. To remedy this one could make brochures about etiquette, social appropriateness and culture in the host country. These brochures could be distributed to students before departure. Lectures on the topic might also be a good idea, especially in cases where the culture of the host country and the culture of the home country differ greatly.

Li and Kaye (1998) showed that language problems cause homesickness and depression in international students. The study being described in this paper also showed that being able to make yourself understood is important for a successful stay abroad. Based on this it may be a good idea to give students a brief course in the language of the host country, even if it is just the basics.

Due to the findings of this and other studies, it might be wise to encourage students pre-departure to avoid forming exclusive co-national/co-cultural cliques. Having a network of co-nationals and/or co-culturals to rely may be nice, but relying solely on this would be a mistake. To fully enjoy the sojourn, students should make friends with domestic students and with other international students with whom they do not share culture or nationality.

Internet is a tremendous resource these days and can also be very useful for international students' coping in a new country. Through the internet international students may stay in touch with friends and family in the home country, thus allowing maintenance of cultural/ethnic/national identity and giving the perception of having the same network of social support (Cemalcilar, Falbo, & Stapleton, 2005). Universities and student organizations can help by giving international students precise information and instructions about where and how they can access internet when in the host country.

Practical issues

Brown and Holloway (2007) found that arrival at the airport in the host country is a source of considerable stress. One can easily imagine this would cause anxiety, especially at large, confusing airports and in particular for the student who does not speak the language of the host country. Students in Brown and Holloway's study described the airport as an important stressor in that they did not know how or where to retrieve their luggage, how to get the correct transportation to where they were going etc. In some cases it may be prudent to have the presence of university staff at the airport to meet international students. If this is not possible, information about the airport should be included in the pre-arrival information, along with information about culture and etiquette. Airport information which includes directions about picking up luggage and finding the correct transportation, would greatly alleviate the anxiety students build up prior to the actual arrival and also considerably lessen the distress of the experience.

Student counsellors who deal with international students should keep in mind that this student population is different from the native students. According to Hamilton (1979) there are many differences that are relevant for university administrators' dealings with the international

students. For example international students were found to perceive professors as more demanding than the native students did, and they internalize the press of a vocational orientation to a greater extent than the native students do. Counsellors should take into consideration these and other differences and not assume that international students and native students have the same problems and resources as the domestic students.

Khawaja and Dempsey (2007) found that dysfunctional coping was a significant factor contributing to psychological distress in international students. Ying and Han (2006) more specifically noted that a coping style which entailed significant mixing with co-nationals was correlated with worse adjustment.

Based on this, it therefore seems like it would be useful to instruct international students on how to cope with different kinds of stress in adaptive ways. More specifically, there is problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping (Carlson, Martin, & Buskist, 2004).The former entails dealing with the source of the stress directly, trying to change the situation in a way that would presumably eliminate or reduce the stress. The latter coping method is directed towards changing one's feelings about the situation, instead of changing the actual situation, such as using relaxation techniques, trying not to think about the stressor etc. Needless to say, if the stressor can be removed or reduced with reasonable means, a problem-focused coping response is far more adaptive than an emotion-focused coping. If the problem can not be dealt with directly, emotion-focused coping is of course better than nothing. The problem with this way of coping however, is that many emotion-focused coping techniques can be rather unhealthy, such as smoking, excessive drinking or rumination. Students could be instructed on more adaptive ways of dealing with problems that can not be dealt with directly,

such as exercise, relaxation techniques, cognitive restructuring or relying on a social support network.

Although international students (as well as domestic students) suffer from a number of mental and physical health problems, several studies have found that they do not seek help as often as they probably should (Russell, Thomson, & Rosenthal, 2008; Mori, 2000). Failure to obtain medical help may be detrimental to academic achievements and may also be dangerous. One of the main reasons that international students do not seek help, is as simple as lack of information (Russell, Thomson, & Rosenthal, 2008). They do not know where or how to get help. If the university has a counselling service or a health service, the international students should be informed about this regularly. Vital information includes where the facilities are located, whether it is free of charge, opening hours, issues of non-disclosure and privacy and descriptions of what sort of problems they should seek help for. It is also important for personnel treating international students to keep in mind that they may differ from the domestic student population in ways that affect their health and attitudes towards seeking help (Ebbin & Blankenship, 1986).

Social issues

Sümer, Poyrazli and Grahame (2008) suggested social support groups for international students, instructions on stress-management techniques and peer programs. Many universities have "buddy" programs that are based on pairing international students up with domestic students. In this way the international student gets to know a domestic student who can show them around, provide help and support in addition to being a social contact.

Based on the findings of this study, the above mentioned "buddy" programmes may be a very good idea. Other measures should also be taken to make it harder for students to form co-national cliques and easier for them to socialise with domestic students or international students from cultures that are dissimilar from their own. The author would suggest that universities make sure classes are mixed. If twelve Norwegian students are placed in the same class, it will be too easy for them to form a co-national group that excludes other nationalities. This does not benefit anyone. Therefore, universities should, whenever possible, mix as many nationalities as possible in every class. If this is combined with "buddy" programs and social gatherings involving the domestic students as well, the international students will find plenty of opportunities to befriend others who are not co-nationals. Students might also benefit from receiving information about clubs, sports teams etc that are off-campus, in order to socialise with locals.

Re-entry

The return to the home country after the sojourn can also be difficult for many students, especially if they have been abroad for a significant period of time. This is why it might be an idea to prepare students for the return as well, as culture shock may occur (Christofi & Thompson, 2007; Meintel, 1973; Sussman, 2000). Christofi and Thompson (2007) contend that international students may idealize their home countries while studying abroad. This often causes disappointment and alienation upon return to the home. Sussman (2000) asserts that upon return to the home country the sojourner may be surprised to find that they no longer fit in the society they left behind. This makes sense as the sojourner inevitably would pick up habits and etiquette in the host country, especially if abroad for a substantial period of time, and these quirks may not be approved of in the home country, leading to alienation. In a study on this topic (Davis, 1960) the students themselves felt that they should not stay in the

host country for too long as this would make them outsiders when they returned to the home country.

Future research

The study should be replicated with people who arrived from an assortment of countries into one country. For example, a study of foreign students in Norway. Such studies of departing students and arriving students should be examined in a variety of nations from different geo-cultural contexts, for example, African nations, Asian nations, South American nations, and North American nations.

It would be interesting to determine the causality of some of the correlations found in this study, especially the ones regarding the Success Scale, the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale and the Co-national Scale. If indeed it transpires that being nationalistically minded diminishes the chances of a successful sojourn, measures could be recommend to prepare students better. Future studies of a similar kind should ask which country the respondents are currently studying in. There might be significant differences regarding which strategy works best in different cultures. According to many researchers, adaptation might be easier in some countries than others. Keeping that in mind, there are also rather big difference between cultures even in nations that are geographically close. Some cultures simply feel more welcoming to the international student.

It would also be interesting to ask why they chose to study abroad instead of in their home country, as this may or may not be correlated to the chosen strategy. A person who chooses to study in Hungary because they are fascinated by Hungarian culture, language and history, might reasonably be expected to want to make friends with the locals. On the other hand, a

person who goes to Hungary to study simply because they did not have good enough grades to get into the desired course in a Norwegian university, might very well prefer to keep to Norwegians as friends, creating a Norwegian clique and making it seem like they are almost still at home. There is a bias in the fact that people choose to study abroad for different reasons. This is likely to influence their social patterns. As Bardis (1956) suggested; students may be more or less internationally minded and more or less open to other cultures. This would naturally influence their choice of social strategy.

 It would also be desirable to conduct research at different intervals during the international students' stay in the host country, in order to see if anything changes significantly with time. The author would propose an experiment to try to confirm the conclusions of this study, that is to examine the effect of having a domestic student as a friend, as opposed to socializing only with co-nationals. This could be done using Norwegian students going to for example Hungary to study. Students would be randomly assigned to three groups. One group, the placebo group, would get something that can reasonably be assumed to have no significant effect; such as a guidebook or history book about Hungary. The experimental group would get a domestic student as a friend. These mentors would be assigned to be friends with a Norwegian student, show them around and socialize with them. The last group, the control group, is left to their own devices. A pre-test about a month after arrival in Hungary, and a post-test around the departure, would be necessary. The Success Scale and the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale could be used as measures to see the effect of having a local friend. The analysis would be a between subjects ANOVA.

Despite the problems and stress encountered by international students, studying abroad can be encouraged. According to Marion (1986) studying abroad results in "a broader, less

nationalistic view of the world, increased self-confidence" and more realistic perceptions of both the home country and the country of the sojourn. We can only hope that such sentiments may be the basis for unprejudiced global understanding.

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Appendix

Thank you very much for taking the time to respond to this questionnaire.

*1   Age

…

*2   Gender

Male   Female

3   Nationality

…

4.   How long have you been studying abroad?

…

Sociocultural adaptation

Please indicate how much difficulty you experience in … (host country) in each of these areas.

Use the following scale:

1 = no difficulty

2 = slight difficulty

3 = moderate difficulty

4 = great difficulty

5 = extreme difficulty

*1   Making friends with the locals

1   2   3   4   5

*2   Finding food that you enjoy

1   2   3   4   5

*3   Following rules and regulations

1   2   3   4   5

*4   Dealing with people in authority

1   2   3   4   5

*5   Dealing with bureaucracy

1   2   3   4   5

*6   Making yourself understood

1   2   3   4   5

*7   Understanding jokes and humour

1   2   3   4   5

*8   Being comfortable with levels of noise or silence

1   2   3   4   5

*9   Using public toilets
1   2   3   4   5

*10   Using showers
1   2   3   4   5

*11   Enjoying social gatherings
1   2   3   4   5

*12   People staring at you
1   2   3   4   5

*13   Communicating with people of a different ethnic group
1   2   3   4   5

*14   Dealing with unsatisfactory service
1   2   3   4   5

*15   Finding a place to worship
1   2   3   4   5

*16   Understanding … (host country)'s political system
1   2   3   4   5

*17   Talking about yourself to others
1   2   3   4   5

*18   Dealing with pace of life in host country
1   2   3   4   5

Social life

*1   How much of the spare time that you spend with others, do you spend with…

People of your own nationality
0%   10-20%   30-40%   50-60%   70-80%
                90-100%

Foreign students from countries other than your own
0%   10-20%   30-40%   50-60%   70-80%
                90-100%

Locals in the host country
0%   10-20%   30-40%   50-60%   70-80%
                90-100%

*2   What are the reasons for most of your friendships?

Common interests

0%	10-20%	30-40%	50-60%	70-80%
	90-100%			

Ethnic group/nationality

0%	10-20%	30-40%	50-60%	70-80%
	90-100%			

Money available

0%	10-20%	30-40%	50-60%	70-80%
	90-100%			

Religious beliefs

0%	10-20%	30-40%	50-60%	70-80%
	90-100%			

Political beliefs

0%	10-20%	30-40%	50-60%	70-80%
	90-100%			

Other (please specify)
…

Please indicate how true the following statements are

1 = Completely untrue
2 = Somewhat untrue
3 = Neither true nor untrue
4 = Somewhat true
5 = Very true

*1   I enjoy getting to know the locals when I travel
1   2   3   4   5

*2   I prefer spending time with people who speak my language
1   2   3   4   5

*3   Getting to know local culture is important when abroad
1   2   3   4   5

*4   It is easier to make friends with people of my own nationality
1   2   3   4   5

*5   I feel safer and more comfortable with people of my own nationality
1   2   3   4   5

*6   The locals in my host country are very hospitable and welcoming
1   2   3   4   5

*7   I'm making an effort to learn the local language
1   2   3   4   5

*1   How much do you regret choosing to study abroad?
Not at all   A little   Quite a bit   Very much

*2   How much would you consider studying abroad again?
Not at all   A little   Quite a bit   Very much

*3   How much would you recommend foreign exchange study to someone else?
Not at all   A little   Quite a bit   Very much

*4   The purpose of this study is to determine the social adaptation strategies of foreign exchange students. In your own words, what was your strategy for finding friends in your host country?
…

*5   Do you have any comments to this questionnaire?
…