

Meeting the Other and Oneself

Experience and Learning in International, Upper Secondary Sojourns

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Studies**
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To My Family

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to investigate into and characterise students' experiences of learning from their having taken part in an international upper secondary sojourn. Focusing on educational and intercultural dimensions, the thesis contributes knowledge of the implications of increasing internationalization and student mobility in education. The study builds on audio-recorded qualitative, in-depth interviews with Swedes and Chileans who respectively sojourned in Chile and Sweden as secondary students. The analysis of the narratives draws on theories regarding qualification, socialization and subjectification – the three educational functions or processes identified by Biesta (2010) – and learning from experiences, particularly experiences of disjuncture leading to feelings of disturbed harmony and experiences from encounters and engagement with others (Jarvis, 2009; Biesta, 2010; Hansen, 2011). As extracurricular activities, with 'recreational' elements, upper secondary sojourns are often not taken into account in formal grading by students' educational institutions. However, the results from this study show that sojourners experience transformative changes and extensive learning related to qualification, socialization and (particularly) subjectification. Furthermore, they perceive the learning as different, more holistic and complete than learning in other contexts. When leaving the familiarity and comfort of the home environment and engaging with the relative unfamiliarity of everyday activities in an international, intercultural context the sojourners commonly confront perceived limitations and cross both physical (geographical) and conceptual boundaries. Such confrontations and crossings often lead to experiences of disjuncture and disturbed harmony. The complex processes of resolving difficulties, understanding and meaning-making are sources of learning that infuse a sojourn with potential to foster learning as a 'bildungsreise'. There are notable potentials for transformations of sojourners' views of both the other and themselves, involving increases in self-confidence, personal growth, connectedness and feelings of being qualified, capable and empowered, which promote synergistic developments in all three educational functions. Notably the homestay, communicative situations and interpersonal interactions provide such situations of potent learning opportunities that boost personal growth. In sojourner' engagement and interest in the other, and willingness to consider other perspectives and modify one's own there are apparent potentials for further development of an intercultural and cosmopolitan attitude and outlook. A major conclusion, based on the presented evidence, is that even short stays (potentially less costly than longer stays) provide extensive learning rooted in social and subjective transformations (in addition to their value for qualification *per se*) that may have benefits extending well beyond upper secondary school years. Furthermore, they may also have prolonged benefits for wider society through the enhanced understanding of others and other perspectives. Thus, they appear to have high educational value, beyond recreational pleasure.

Keywords: Sojourn, international, intercultural, experience, learning, Sweden, Chile, upper secondary.

1. Introduction

The focus of the thesis is on the experiences and learning of Swedish and Chilean students whose time in upper secondary school included an international sojourn¹.

A study abroad is one out of many activities representing the work with internationalization in organized education and has a long history, extending at least as far back as medieval times. The purpose of the study abroad, both its form and content, has varied in different times and places, but there has been a consistent conviction that academic development should be complemented with inner personal growth through fostering of the individual (Rantatalo 2002:29-30). In recent decades studying abroad has become an increasingly popular educational practice and internationalization is a timely concept affecting educational policies in numerous countries. Numbers of international exchanges that are arranged within formal education have since the 1990s increased and annual numbers of students who go abroad for studies are expected to continue to rise.² The USA, the UK and Australia attract particularly many international students and numerous students from these countries participate in exchange programs. Furthermore, at the beginning of the 21st century international students accounted for almost a third of the total fees collected by universities and Higher Education colleges (Brown, 2009a). In addition, in some countries, for example the USA and Australia, international participation is taken as an indicator of overall institutional quality and such activities are promoted by the governments and various policy formulations (Stroud 2010:494, Knight, 2004). However, participation is much weaker in some other countries, such as the Latin American nations, in terms of both foreign students attracted and native students sent out.³

Numbers of students participating in international educational exchanges are expected to increase from ca. 3 million in 2007 to ca. 8 million people in 2025 (Jackson, 2010:20; OECD, 2012:360-381). Clearly, this could potentially have a major impact on the development of huge numbers of people, but we know little about the educational impacts of these activities in students in compulsory and upper secondary education. Much of the investigation on internationalization in education to date has focused on

¹ An international sojourn is defined in the thesis as a temporary stay shorter than a month. The concept and its application in the study are described in more detail in the *Sojourns* section.

² Statistics presented by the OECD (*Education at a Glance*, OECD, 2012:360-381) concerning higher education verify this trend. For information about activities in the primary and secondary education consult statistics presented by Programkontoret, (abbreviated IP), the Swedish *International Programme Office for Education and Training*, www.programkontoret.se, which since the 1 January, 2013 forms part of the government agency the *Swedish Council for Higher Education*, www.uhr.se/sv/Information-in-English/. No Chilean equivalent to the Swedish IP has been found.

³ OECD, *Education at a Glance*, OECD, 2012:360-381.

higher education programs, associated policy issues, and structural, organizational and political aspects of the activities. Far fewer studies have focused on internationalization in compulsory and upper secondary education and themes related to experiences of study abroad activities, the major concerns of this thesis and the study it is based upon.

1.1 Aim and Research Questions

The aim of the study⁴ is to investigate into and characterise students' experiences of learning from their having taken part in an international upper secondary sojourn in an intercultural context. To meet this aim the following questions were formulated and addressed:

1. How can the students' experiences be understood in terms of the educational functions of qualification, socialization and subjectification?
2. What is the role of 'disturbed harmony' in learning in intercultural contexts?

The intercultural context is an important dimension and a premise that comes with the activity of an international upper secondary sojourn and that premise can be assumed to influence the focal experience and learning. With this focus, aim and research questions the thesis contributes knowledge of the implications of increasing internationalization and student mobility in education from a student perspective.

The research project was initiated in February 2010 and builds on qualitative in-depth interviews conducted in 2011 and 2012. Eight Chileans and nine Swedes who participated in school-arranged exchanges between the respective countries during their upper secondary school years shared their experiences of being on a sojourn and how they relate to those experiences in their present lives. This approach provided opportunities to obtain rich and varied information encompassing both the particular and more general patterns. Four to six years had passed since the students' sojourns at the time of the interviews. This retrospective approach is assumed to have allowed long-term implications to surface in the individuals' narratives, and their reflective accounts of their experiences embedded in an intercultural context are analysed in relation to educational theories concerning learning from experiences.

An educational practice is defined in the thesis, following Biesta (2010), in terms of serving three functions: qualification (such as its contribution to development in subjects or activities); socialization (integration of

⁴ Hereafter referred to as the study, this study or the research project.

individuals into a collective of particular social, cultural and political “orders”); and subjectification (the process of individuation, i.e. an individual’s development as a unique person or subject). The intercultural context of the sojourns involved physical, interpersonal meetings between people who represent different nation cultures. Another intercultural dimension is the students’ experience of leaving the relative harmony of the home environment and exposure to a less familiar situation and context. In the analysis of the intercultural dimensions of learning I apply theories regarding learning from experiences of disjuncture (Jarvis, 2009) and the development of a cosmopolitan attitude to learning from experiences of meetings (Hansen, 2011). These theoretical approaches by Biesta (2009), Jarvis (2010) and Hansen (2011) form the analytical framework applied in the thesis and the underlying study. Focusing on the educational functions and the implications of the intercultural context, the thesis contributes to an understanding of experience and learning in and from international upper secondary sojourns.

This introduction and presentation of the aim and research questions is followed by a presentation of the background of the research topic and previous relevant research. I close the chapter by describing the disposition of the thesis.

1.2 Background

Firstly some terms and concepts that are relevant to the study, and frequently used in the thesis, are described.

Sojourns

A study abroad, an exchange, a study trip, a cross-border or international exchange, an educational travel or tour, and a sojourn are some of the many words used to describe the activity of going to another country for studies. The word ‘sojourn’ has already been used several times when referring to a study period abroad, but in the following paragraphs I explain in more detail how the word is applied in the thesis.

A sojourn is defined as a temporary stay away from one’s home.⁵ The word can denote many kinds of stays and a sojourner is a visitor, but not necessarily a student going away for studies. However, it commonly applies to students studying abroad and it is a common form for students at upper-secondary level to spend some time studying in another country.⁶ Since the

⁵ The definition on *sojourn* was derived from Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionaries, www.oald8.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/dictionary/sojourn.

⁶ Statistics on school funding by the IP, The Swedish *International Programme Office for Education and Training*, www.programkontoret.se, show that many Swedish students study abroad for short time and are

1990s the number of higher education students who study abroad for a short period is growing, and their interest in staying for longer periods appear to have declined (Chieffo & Griffiths 2004: 165; Dwyer 2004:151; Allen 2010:453; Jackson 2011b: 167; Stroud 2010: 493).

In this thesis the word 'sojourn' is applied to frame the duration and nature of participants' study activities abroad. The length of a sojourn is commonly defined as being at most two months long and often shorter than one month. (Jackson 2010:20) Jackson's definition is applied in the thesis. The sojourns of the interviewed students were all shorter than one month and arranged as educational activities abroad. In some cases the sojourners were given assignments to perform during their time in the host country and some were expected to share their experiences with other students following their return. Although the word sojourn is generally used in the thesis, on some occasions synonyms are applied, particularly in references or quotations.

When referring to the participants in the study they are usually named by their pseudonyms they chose themselves, or referred to as sojourners, interviewees or the participants. Sometimes they are also referred to as the individuals or by their nationalities. When addressing students in general rather than the participants in particular the word 'student' or 'students' are applied. The participants' sojourns were all arranged by educational establishments in Chile or Sweden, and fully financed, partly by the educational establishments they attended in their native country, but mainly by external sources following applications by the establishments. All participants stayed with host-families and the only expenses that the sojourners had to cover themselves were the costs of engaging in extra or optional activities.

All of the sojourners had personal aims for their sojourns, mostly linked to expectations related to learning a second language⁷, (L2), social interaction with hosts and personal development from the intercultural meetings. This is consistent with higher education students' aims that commonly relate to one or several of those three (Jonsson, 2003:99). All the sojourners in this study took L2 courses. In Chile those courses were compulsory studies in English. Other language courses were only extracurricular and optional at the time of the sojourners' studies. All the Swedish sojourners took courses in both English, which was (and is) compulsory, and Spanish, which at upper secondary level was an elective curricular course. However, there were no formal criteria to meet during the sojourns, none yielded formal study

used in the thesis as indicators of the kinds of study abroad upper-secondary level students most often experience.

⁷ The abbreviation L2 is in the thesis used when referring to language that is not defined as one's mother tongue.

merits, and none of the sojourners were in any way graded in relation to the sojourns or their learning from associated activities.

In both countries the teachers involved in organizing the activities informed the students at their schools about the possibility of going on a sojourn and the selection criteria. They were also informed that in return for going they had to agree to host a visiting sojourner if necessary. Furthermore, it was assumed that the absence from ongoing educational activities at home during their sojourn could adversely affect their formal studies, thus candidates opting for a sojourn could not have missed many lessons before going or be in risk of failing courses. In other respects the selection processes differed between the countries. The exchange programmes between these two countries and the schools attended by the participants developed between 2004 and 2008. In Chile numbers of students who expressed interest in sojourns and met the selection criteria exceeded the numbers covered by available funds, and the teachers involved in organizing the sojourns decided who could go. In Sweden it was decided that the sojourners should be final year students in Spanish. They had then reached lawful age and were assumed to have gained language skills enough so as to being able to deal with many of the potential challenges. As the number of students in Spanish was few during the years that are observed the external funding covered for all the Swedish students who announced an interest in participating and who also met with the criteria.

The Upper Secondary School Context

In both Chile and Sweden primary and secondary education lasts 12 school years, but in Sweden there are three years of non-compulsory upper secondary education while in Chile there are four years of compulsory upper secondary education. The Swedish and Chilean upper secondary curricula at the time of the participants' sojourns were formally expressed in the *Curriculum for the Non-compulsory School System* from 1994, abbreviated Lpf 94, and the Chilean equivalent *Objetivos Fundamentales y Contenidos Mínimos Obligatorios de la Educación Media* from 1998, abbreviated OF-CMO, respectively.⁸ The two national curricula are similar in that they include a general section applying to all upper secondary education and then

⁸References to curricula are in relation to this study made to these two, the Swedish Lpf94 and the Chilean OF-CMO 1998. The Chilean OF-CMO, which includes course syllabi, has since 1998 been revised. The Swedish educational reform, Gy11, in 2011 imposed some changes in the curriculum, including the introduction of new course syllabi, reforms of the level of directions of study programmes and changes in the grading system. The Chilean curriculum for upper secondary education, OF-CMO, and later reformed versions are available in Spanish at the Chilean Ministry of Education, Mineduc, www.mineduc.cl/index5_int.php?id_portal=47&id_contenido=17116&id_seccion=3264&c=1. The Swedish upper secondary curriculum Lpf94 is available in English at Skolverket (1994) *Curriculum for the Non-Compulsory School System - Lpf 94*, www.skolverket.se/publikationer?id=1072.

there are programme-specific curricula for academically- and vocationally-oriented studies. The curricula also specify syllabi for each formal school subject. The Chilean course syllabi include instructions regarding areas and specific content the students have to learn in each school year, while the Swedish course syllabi is more general and open to interpretation.

A Chilean reform in 1981 opened the sector for competition and profitmaking in the organization of formal education. Similarly, but later, reforms in Sweden, in 1992 for compulsory, primary education, and upper secondary education in 1994, facilitated the establishments of subsidised, independent so-called free-schools. Since the reforms, questions about the arrangement of education, its quality, results and management have been debated in both Sweden and Chile. In the case of Sweden this is reflected in the media and the political reception of Swedish results in international testing.⁹ In the case of Chile the interviews with the Chilean participants, carried out in 2011-2012, coincided with a national crisis stemming from the heavily criticised profitmaking in the organization of education and other areas of the welfare system. The crisis was peaking at the time for the interviews and all over Chile there were frequent student protests.¹⁰ The topical focus on education in the Chilean public debates might be reflected in the participants' comments on issues they were asked about in the interviews.

The Chilean sojourners all studied at a subsidised upper secondary school, the Swedes at a state-funded municipal school, and all of the participants were enrolled on academic rather than vocational study programmes. All of the Chilean participants except one went directly from upper secondary studies into higher education, while the Swedes took a sabbatical period and spent some time travelling, studying part-time or working either abroad or at home. By the time of the interviews all participants had moved into higher

⁹ Various sources report on these issues related to education in Sweden. See for example, Regeringskansliet (the Government Offices of Sweden, <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/18279/a/231852>, Skolverket (<http://skolverket.se/statistik-och-utvardering/internationella-studier/pisa/kraftig-forsamring-i-pisa-1.167616>, and Henrekson (2013) <http://www.dn.se/debatt/de-sju-viktigaste-atgarderna-for-att-losa-skolans-kris/>.

¹⁰ This criticism started already in 2006 and in terms of publicity peaked in 2011 and 2012. The protests and take-overs of educational establishments developed into wider social protests against other social changes also other areas of society. People from all age groups and social strata became involved and it was estimated that about 80% of the Chilean population supported the movement. Profit making was identified as one of the most serious and acute problems with the Chilean system of education at all levels. There are many media references to the Chilean student movements and the protests. Consult for example the Sveriges Radio (SR) website (<http://sverigesradio.se/sida/gruppsida.aspx?programid=3304&grupp=6403&sida=1>) for an overview of the reports or Strandberg (2011), *De protesterar för att nästa generation ska få en god utbildning*, <http://www.ergo.nu/reportage/20111004-de-protesterar-foer-att-naesta-generation-ska-fa-en-god-utbildning> for specific references to the cited years, 2006, 2011, 2012 and the percentage of support for the student movement. A possible source of information in English is Long, Gideon (2011) BBC News Latin America & Caribbean. *Chile student protests point to deep discontent*. www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-14487555. A source in Spanish is *Educacion 2020*, an independent foundation with publications at www.educacion2020.cl.

education. In Chile entry into higher education requires sufficient grades from upper secondary education and the final PSU exam, *Prueba de Selección Universitaria*. In Sweden the system of entry takes into account both grades and results from an optional entrance test, *Högskoleprovet*, if taken.

Internationalization in Curricula

Chilean and Swedish policy documents differ in some respects in relation to the topicality of internationalization. In Sweden, an emphasis on international perspectives since the beginning of the 1990s has had some influence on educational practices in the country, which is reflected in Swedish policy documents¹¹ and the Lpf94 curriculum. It is also reflected in European policy documents in which the European Parliament, for example, suggests eight key competences that future generations need to be “equipped” with and favour lifelong learning that is assumed to be of particular importance to future societies.¹² It is argued that international experience promotes language development, networking, and individuals’ competitiveness in the labour market. Thus, cross-border mobility for studies abroad should be supported. Two Swedish governmental reports, published in 1992, SOU 1992:93 and SOU 1992:94, mirror the emphasis on internationalization that was assumed to characterize future societies and people’s living conditions more than previous times when Lpf94 was passed. Further reforms of Swedish education in 2011 included changes in formulations and emphasis in the upper secondary curriculum, modifications of course syllabi and the introduction of a new grading system. With regard to internationalization this (Gy11) reform did not lead to any changes in formulations or emphasis. As there were no changes relevant to the foci of this thesis and the underlying study, and no English translation of Gy11 published until 2013, all references to formal aspects of internationalization in the Swedish upper secondary school context at the time of the sojourns are based on the English translation of Lpf94. I have found no Chilean documentation corresponding to the European or Swedish policy documents, and in the Chilean upper secondary education curriculum, OF-CMO from 1998, there are only a few formulations related to internationalization.

The few formulations on international perspectives in the Chilean curriculum are mostly present in specific course syllabi and relate to

¹¹ SOU 1992:93, *Svensk skola i världen, The Swedish School in the World* [my translation] and SOU 1992:94, *Skola för bildning, A School for Bildung* [my translation].

¹² Europaparlamentet (2006),

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?language=SV&type=IMPRESS&reference=20060922IPR10878>. The European Parliament. Ref.: 20060922IPR10878, press release from 2006-09-26.

political, economic and organizational aspects of interaction across nations or cross-cultural cooperation. The emphasis is more explicitly on fostering a national identity and national perspectives. Internationalization understood as reflecting an intercultural or multicultural society or intercultural and international perspectives being desirable educational outcomes is absent in the Chilean upper secondary curriculum. References to such matters are mostly related to learning content in subject matters. For example, the specified learning content linked to a theme in the social science and history syllabus, “Chile in the world”, covers: foreign relations; cooperation among countries; economic international relations; international treaties, charters and declarations, such as the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights; gender equality; preservation of the environment; and overcoming world poverty (OF-CMO 98: 112). This is not to say that there are no international or intercultural perspectives in Chilean teaching or that no educational study trips are arranged by Chilean schools. However, the national curriculum does not explicitly promote such activities as educationally desirable.

In comparison the Swedish curriculum explicitly regards internationalization as educationally desirable, expressing a shared responsibility of teachers and headmasters to ensure that “international contacts, co-operation and exchange in education are stimulated” (Lpf 94:18). Such activities have recognized importance, *i.a.* for national concerns related to political relationships, migration and commerce and rapidly changing social and economic conditions.

The internationalization of Swedish society and increasing cross-border mobility place great demands on people’s ability to live together and appreciate the values that are to be found in cultural diversity (---) It is important to have an international perspective to be able to see one’s own reality in a global context in order to create international solidarity and prepare pupils for a society that will have closer cross-cultural and crossborder contacts. (Lpf 94: 3, 6)

Interpersonal cross-cultural and cross-border relations are highlighted as experiences that can develop empathy and improve people’s understanding of not only others but also themselves. This is further emphasized in formulations about cultural heritage, value systems and identity:

A secure identity and consciousness of one’s own cultural heritage strengthens the ability to understand and empathise with others and their value systems. The school shall contribute to people developing an identity which can be related to and encompass not just Swedish values but also those that are Nordic, European and global. International links, education exchange with other countries and working experience in other countries shall be supported. (Lpf94:4)

As shown in this extract, the curriculum stresses the importance of a sense of being secure in one's "identity" and "cultural heritage" in encounters with perceived differences in other cultures.

The full implications of differences in approaches and emphasis in the two countries' curricula are beyond the scope of this thesis, but this overview serves the function of situating the research topic before presenting of previous research in this field.

1.3 Previous Research

Much previous research concerning study abroad and associated activities primarily focuses on educational aspects, including intercultural and linguistic dimensions (notably their effects on students' learning and development of proficiency in foreign languages), programme evaluation, learning outcomes in general, and attitudinal and dispositional changes in particular (Stroud 2010:494). However, there appear to have been few studies on students' experiences, and learning from those experiences, in educational international sojourns.

Before discussing research on internationalization linked to educational study abroad and associated activities, I will comment on the kindred theme of globalization. Much research on this theme has addressed globalization's effects on trade and economic factors, but some has focused more on its implications for culture and identity, for example its effects on people's living conditions, perceptions of themselves, relationships to others, and views of nationality and strangers (Bauman, 2004, 2010/1998; Thörn (ed), 2005; Giddens, 2009/1991, 2010/1999; Segolsson (ed.), 2010). The relevance of these works for the present study is in the relationships of the focal phenomena with educational aspects of globalization. Examples of questions raised in such research relate to implications of borderless digital societies and associated homogenizing changes for the teaching profession, people's identities and views of knowledge, learning and purposes of education. Research that addresses both educational aspects and globalization is relevant for this study as it may facilitate understanding of the relationships between macro level processes and micro level implications. In the case of this study it may help, for example, to foster understanding of the implications of global trends for people's learning from experiences in their day-to-day living.

Educational study trips have been organized throughout the history of formal education, as described by Rantatalo (2002). Their ideological, philosophical and pedagogical settings have varied and they developed from mostly religious Medieval European pilgrimages to activities intended to foster all-round education. Such activities, based on ideas about the effectiveness of learning outside of the classroom, involving meetings with

other people, other cultures and other geographical regions, were referred to as “bildungsreisen” (Rantatalo 2002:34). The cited analysis of the historical background also shows that early educational study trips were partly based on the perceived value of intercultural learning. In the early 20th century the reform-pedagogy, with a focus on observation and experience, became an important ideological frame for the pedagogical purpose of school-trips (Rantatalo, 2002:36–38, 49-51, 59, 77-90). Rantatalo argues that from the 1940s the practice lost some of its pedagogical foundation as it became more associated with pleasure. However, recent formulations in Swedish policy documents resonate with the early philosophical, ideological, pedagogical and intercultural ideas that framed the educational study trips before the 1940s. Formulations about internationalization in education that are found in Swedish policy documents from the 1990s and onwards do not support the argument that the study abroad activities have become more associated with diversion.¹³

In the following sections I present an overview of relevant previous research related to the focal interest in sojourns and the experience and learning they provide (most of which has addressed these phenomena in higher education contexts).

Research on Sojourns

In higher education the arrangement of international education has become a “major export industry” for some countries (Brown 2009a:502). Research based on the USA, Australian and UK higher education contexts shows that at a macro level of institutional and political intentions there is often a national focus on associated financial benefits and future gains (Knight, 2004; Altbach and Knight, 2007), and little interest in other aspects, such as individuals’ personal development or interpersonal and intercultural elements (Matthews, 2002; Stroud, 2010). Studies on various forms of exchanges and their effects are often linked to national interests and rarely focus on the intercultural effects of study abroad on the hosts or power relations in intercultural meetings (Espinosa-Cortez & Ysunga-Ogazón, 2007; Brown 2009b:219). However, some studies address wider social questions regarding equality in the arrangements of travels in general and study abroad activities in particular. Such studies problematize, for example, associated aspects of status, elites, access, privilege, diversity, democracy and power structures. For instance, Jonsson (2003:72) argues that travels have in different times served as a marker of status and, for example, among the middle class the Interrail travels were considered a wise educational

¹³ This reasoning is supported by discussions about the role and importance of internationalization reflected in governmental reports, such as the SOU 1992:93, *Svensk skola i världen*, SOU1992:94, *Skola för bildning* and Högskoleverket, 1999. *Utlandsstudier – till vilken nytta? En utvärdering av effekter av utlandsstudier*.

investment for the future, a kind of fostering of the individual in the becoming of an independent, self-supporting person. Research on such matters show that young people's travel projects may serve certain functions at the moment and as time passes it may develop and come to represent other things and serve other functions. Matthews (2002: 382) claims that today "international students comprise a highly mobile privileged elite" that may influence political trends and policy, and may contribute to "new ways of imagining their nation" following their return. However, internationalization may instead contribute to exclusionary experiences and the development of an "international bourgeoisie". Building on the argument that "education tends to advantage the already advantaged unless it is explicitly committed to reducing inequality and privilege" (Mathews 2002:376) it is hypothesized that such activities as study abroad may tend to "widen the poverty gap" (Matthews, 2002:373). Hence, it has been suggested that in order to promote, rather than diminish, equality attempts should be made to engage with questions of equity and involve both more students and more diverse students in international and intercultural educational activities (Stroud 2010: 504). In the following two sections I present findings of studies focused more specifically on the experiences and learning from sojourns.

Experiences from Sojourns

There have been increases not only in numbers of international exchanges, but also in studies on various aspects of internationalization in education (Brown 2009a:503; Stroud 2010:493-494). Titles of those published in two are prominent outlets (the journals *Frontiers: Interdisciplinary Journal on Study Abroad* in 1995-2013 and *The Journal of Studies in International Education*) indicate that they all focused on conceptualizations, and economic, marketing and organizational aspects, in higher education contexts.¹⁴ There have been far fewer published studies on educational dimensions of internationalization and empirical studies on students' experiences from internationalization, especially at lower educational levels.

Studies on upper secondary sojourners' expectations, experiences and needs are particularly scarce. Matthews argues that there is a "literature gap" and based on an overview of literature claims that there is "virtually no literature that looks specifically at the internationalization of government schools". The few relevant studies that have been published are often based on data drawn from small samples, implying that there is little knowledge

¹⁴ Jane Knight's numerous publications on internationalization exemplify this group of publications. See for example Knight (2004) and Altbach and Knight (2007).

about why students from different countries desire a study abroad, their experiences and what they learn (Matthews 2002:372).

Some (of the relatively few) studies on experiences from sojourns focus on the interactions of sojourners with people in the host country (Brown, 2009a, 2009b; Allen, 2010; Ellenwood & Snyders, 2010; Stroud, 2010; Jackson, 2010, 2011a, 2011b). These studies have shown that positive international encounters foster developments in the self that may be reflected in increased tolerance and more ethnorelative value systems. Brown (2009b:209) argues that in such cases the experiences can contribute to the sojourners becoming “human bridges between cultures upon their return home”, thereby promoting intercultural understanding and counteracting prejudices and racism (Brown 2009a: 504-505). Thus, interactions may be important determinants of how sojourns unfold. However, studies on students’ experiences from sojourns in higher education show that there is often limited host contact, interaction and cross-cultural exchange, hence the potential positive effects are not always realized. This is attributed to perceived “indifferences towards international students on the part of domestic students” and incidents of racism (Brown 2009b:210). It has been reported that the most common reason to discontinue a sojourn in advance are family and social reasons (Högskoleverket, 1999). Negative experiences of encounters, unmet expectations, perceived disinterest or contact with hosts who are disrespectful of the sojourner’s culture, might lead to rejection of the host nationals and a strengthening of identification with ‘we’ (the individuals’ own in-group) that increases ethnocentrism (Jackson 2010:26-27). Such negative experiences, or a lack of host contact, can be sources of deep disillusionment and discontent (Brown 2009b:218). However, host receptivity (Jackson, 2011a:92), social networks providing contact with other international students, homestay coordination, counselling and other supportive elements can counter such negative developments (Matthews 2002:377-378). Furthermore, an understanding of one’s own cultural norms and values as well as sensitivity to those of others, host receptivity and attitudes of openness, respect, and curiosity are highlighted as necessary for a positive outcome, in terms of “an ethnorelative perspective, empathy and a flexible mindset” (Jackson 2010: 37). Thus, there are known problem areas related to experiences that sojourners are likely to face that can be improved or avoided by examining how they are dealt with in other exchanges, for example in primary and secondary schools that often include homestays and close interpersonal interactions. For example, more research on upper secondary international sojourns and sojourners’ experiences could potentially contribute valuable knowledge that could also help efforts to improve the higher education context. The indications that interaction is vital for learning outcomes from a sojourn illustrate this and

provide educational institutions guidance for maximizing the learning in exchanges (Brown 2009b:210).

The experiences from sojourns are strongly related to dealing with situations that cause stress and anxiety, the resolution of which often contributes to positive personal development (Adler, 1975; Taylor, 1994). Similarly, experiences of intercultural meetings during international sojourns reportedly have substantial transformative potentials (Stephenson, 1999; Brown, 2009a).

Learning in Sojourns

In a study based on students' learning from study abroad experiences Norris & Dwyer (2005) also present an overview of research on exchanges. Regarding learning in sojourns they argue that their overview shows that the "vast majority of research on the impact of study abroad focuses on language skills gained" (Norris & Dwyer 2005: 123). Some of the surveyed studies on language skills were designed with a focus on quality in learning, comparing outcomes attained during a study abroad and in studies at home (Allen 2010: 452; Menard-Warwick & Palmer, 2012). Allen (2010) also argues that comparative studies often show that study abroad enhances language development, *inter alia*, more effectively than traditional classroom teaching in the home-context, but in an analysis of two American students' experiences Allen finds that this does not always occur. Instead, students' motives and relational aspects of meetings may strongly influence their language development during a study abroad. In a narrative analysis of students' language development and intercultural learning in study abroad, Menard-Warwick & Palmer (2012) found that students' improvement in the foreign language was boosted during study abroad and argue that the students' language skills and grammatical structures would improve and become more established over prolonged time periods. They further argue that even if this can take place in diverse contexts it "will be easiest in contexts in which learners' development is accelerated through intensive language immersion as in a [study abroad]" (Menard-Warwick & Palmer, 2012:409). Other authors have focused less on linguistic competence and more on development of intercultural sensitivity (Gill, 2010; Jackson, 2010, 2009). Gill builds on in-depth qualitative narrative interviews, while Jackson draws themes and conclusions from an ethnographic study of students' experiences in short-term sojourns. In a research overview Stroud (2010:495) argues that previous studies show that a "study abroad experience [enhances] personal development and global mindedness. She also presents results from a large-scale survey showing that various social factors influence intentions of students at a large American university to study abroad. Students who are less likely than average to have such an

intention include members of minority groups, male students, those with a disability and non-traditional aged students.

Two aspects of sojourns related to learning are particularly emphasised in previous research: that it evolves from a confrontation with new culture into an encounter with the self, contributing to self-reflection and potential change (Adler 1975:18); and that it increases cross-cultural understanding (Brown, 2009a: 504-506). Brown (2009a: 505) argues that when leaving the “comfort of the familiar” sojourners undergo self-discovery as they are “forced to test and stretch their resourcefulness and to revise their self-understanding”. The processing of experiences from sojourns is described in these studies as promoting cognitive, affective or behavioural change. Furthermore, it has been shown that students have such learning experiences also in the short sojourns (Brown, 2009a, 2009b; Ellenwood & Snyders, 2010; Jackson, 2011a; Stroud 2010:494). According to Jackson (2011a) agency (in experiential learning, critical reflection and being receptive to personal expansion) and host receptivity are significant elements for how a sojourn unfolds. Furthermore, it is in relation to the idea about the leaving of the “comfort at home” argued (Brown 2009a:504; Ellenwood & Snyders 2010:550) that such distancing from home culture, and exposure to and engagement with people from other cultures promotes the change (personal growth and development). In another study, Stephenson (1999:1) claims that the “exposure to these often quite different cultures and living conditions promotes a more positive understanding of the “other”” (Stephenson 1999:1). Stephenson argues that there is little analysis of impacts of experiences upon participants’ cultural perceptions and personal values, and effects of interactions with host nationals on the students’ views of both themselves and the other. Again, the transformative developments are according to such studies not dependent on the length of the stay (Jackson, 2011), although it has also been claimed that impressions gained in longer stays are more likely to become embedded and have long-lasting significance for individuals’ later choices and attitudes to life (Gill, 2010).

There are some indications that more focus on agency is needed to improve understanding of sojourners’ learning from study abroad. It is argued that the ways sojourns unfold depend to some extent on the participants themselves and their personal characteristics (Allen 2010:454; Matthews, 2010). Sojourners have been found to “struggle to integrate into the social networks that afford learning abroad” (Allen, 2010: 454), suggesting that the reception by the other and the sojourner’s own personality can strongly influence his or her engagement, interactions and (hence) learning opportunities. In relation to such findings Jackson (2010) argues for the importance of pre- and post-sojourn guidance for alleviating difficulties during sojourns, because according to such studies positive

developments from sojourns do not just happen or come with the activity (Jackson 2008:357; Root and Ngampornchai, 2013). Others show that students themselves prefer to spend more time engaged in interactions (understood as joining together and exchanging experiences in meetings) than in structured activities (Ellenwood & Snyders 2010:563).

Brown (2009a) shows that out of a necessity to relieve stress and anxiety sojourners often try to adapt and in those processes adopt new perspectives that reflect transformative changes in themselves, and changes in cultural outlook that may incorporate increases in tolerance, acceptance, and the capacity to cope with other stressful situations. Furthermore, the resolution of disorientation this entails can foster feelings of strength, capability and empowerment, with potent implications for future choices. The experiences may also lead to changes in life philosophy and outlook via the distancing from accustomed and first socialization cultures. Brown argues that (depending on environmental receptivity) an international sojourn has the power to generate life-enhancing change and growth in intercultural competence together with a shift in self-understanding, and that those changes take place when the sojourner re-enters his or her home context. The learning that leads to change thus occurs in reflection and meaning-making of the experience (Brown 2009a:517). As argued by Mezirow (1991), in contrast to, for example, formative learning in early childhood, learning later in life is characterized by questioning, revision and reflection upon previous learning.

In relation to such early formative learning that may be understood in terms of representing a more or less smooth acceptance and inclusion of ways of thinking and doing, there are differing views regarding the potential educational value of 'difficulties'. Allen (2010) argues that there is a risk that difficulties may hinder learning, suggesting that experiences should ideally cause no emotional disturbance. However, Stephenson (1999) conversely argues that challenges may be difficult and stressful, but also transformative, so optimal learning situations should incorporate difficulties and challenges.

Although change and the development of intercultural personhood when sojourning abroad has been clearly documented in higher education contexts (Gill, 2010; Jackson, 2010), it is strongly associated with adult learning theory. In Chapter 2, *Experience and Learning in Intercultural Encounters – Theoretical Perspectives*, I return to these aspects of transformative learning and describe how experience and learning from sojourns are theoretically framed in the thesis.

Summary of Previous Research

The above overview shows that much research on internationalization in education is based on studies of the phenomenon in higher education

contexts, and largely focuses on policy issues and comparative analyses of aspects related to competition and the increasing commercialization of international exchange as a lucrative “export industry” for some countries (Brown, 2009b). Research on international exchanges of higher education students shows that numbers of students who opt to study abroad, particularly for short periods, have increased recently. Some studies have also categorized students who go abroad (or intend to do so), and problematized related issues of inequalities and privilege. It is argued that sojourners are often represented by people who can be defined in terms of capital as representing cultural, economic and socially privileged elites.

The studies on higher education students’ experiences show that they often experience cognitive, behavioural and affective change as a result of encountering various unfamiliar situations. It is also claimed that it is not the experiences in themselves that lead to changes, but the reflection and meaning-making that the individual develops in relation to the experience. Sojourns are therefore argued to be catalysts for self-exploration and change that occur in the distancing from comfort in the familiar. Such situations often force people to revise their self-understanding and they then discover things about themselves. The degree and quality of interaction with host-nationals has been shown to strongly influence higher education students’ experiences and learning in unfamiliar situations, but disinterest and/or a lack of interaction with host nationals often lead to feelings of discouragement. Thus, the potentially positive educational and intercultural developments from the meetings (in both long and short stays) are not always met.

As outlined above, there have been numerous studies on several themes related to internalization in education, many addressing policy issues, international competition in educational markets, and formal learning outcomes such as communication skills. However, most of this research has focused on higher education contexts, and much less attention has been paid to formative and relational aspects of experiences and learning in sojourns, particularly upper secondary sojourns. This is a lacuna addressed in the thesis and the study it is based upon.

1.4 Disposition of the Thesis

In Chapter 2 I introduce the theoretical approaches applied in the analysis of experience and learning in and from international sojourns presented in the thesis, based largely on concepts presented by Jarvis (2009), Biesta (2010) and Hansen (2011).

Chapter 3 focuses on methodological aspects of the study, including preparatory work, delimitation of the study, data acquisition techniques and analysis of the empirical material.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 present and analyse the empirical results. More specifically, Chapter 4 focuses on findings regarding sojourners' experiences of transition from their home environment, arrival in and first impressions of the host country, initial meetings and the unfamiliar exchange context. The analysis centres on contributions of experiences from these situations to the sojourners' learning. Chapter 5 focuses on the participants' experiences during their time in the host-environment, and their encounters with people and a different school environment. Chapter 6 addresses changes resulting from experiences that seem particularly significant to the sojourners in retrospective reflections, and the experiences' relationships to their present lives.

In Chapter 7 I summarize the results from the study and discuss the findings.

2 Experience and Learning in Intercultural Encounters – Theoretical Perspectives

As stated above, this thesis is based upon an investigation of students' experiences of learning from their participation in an international and intercultural upper secondary exchange. The theory applied in the analysis is derived from the part of the educational field that emphasizes learning as a process of meaning making from experiences and as something that develops as both individual and social processes in interaction (Jarvis, 2009; Biesta, 2006, 2010; Hansen, 2011).

Experience and learning are two central concepts in the thesis and together with a cosmopolitan attitude to learning they are described in section 2.1. In section 2.2 I introduce Jarvis's model of learning from experiences of disjuncture. In section 2.3 Biesta's three functions of education (qualification, socialization and subjectification) are introduced. In section 2.4, before closing this chapter I briefly summarize the theoretical perspectives.

2.1 Experience and Learning

The word 'experience' is defined as "the knowledge and skill you have gained through doing something for a period of time; the process of gaining this". Experience also refer to "things that have happened to you that influence the way you think and behave", "an event or activity that affects you in some way", or "events or knowledge shared by all the members of a particular group in society, that influence the way they think and behave".¹⁵ 'Learning' is defined as both "the process of learning" and the "knowledge that you get from reading and studying".¹⁶ Both experience and learning generally refer to processes that may lead to cognitive, behavioural or affective change.

The concepts experience and learning are central to educational theory and philosophy. A significant contributor to the field, John Dewey (1997/1938, 2009), argues that experiences become educative when they provide openings for further experiences and thus enhance growth in an "experiential continuum". Furthermore, according to Dewey an experience is not only subjective but also situational.

¹⁵ The definition of 'experience' is from the on-line version of the *Oxford Learner's Dictionaries* at <http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/learning>. *Oxford Learner's Dictionaries*. Hereafter, all lexical definitions are from this source, unless otherwise stated.

¹⁶ *Oxford Learner's Dictionaries*.

An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment. (Dewey 1997/1938:43)

Thus, an experience is related to both understanding developed from transactions with events in the outer world and a subjective process that occurs in a person (Dewey 1997/1938:27-29, 37, 51).

Dewey also reasoned as that new experiences continuously add to understandings of previous experiences, and contribute to learning becoming lifelong processes:

As an individual passes from one situation to another, his world, his environment, expands or contracts. He does not find himself living in another world but in a different part or aspect of one and the same world. What he has learned in the way of knowledge and skill in one situation becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively with the situations which follow. (Dewey 1997/1938: 44)

According to Dewey, experiences of being in “situations” enrich people with more perspectives that help them deal with future situations.

More recently Jarvis (2009) has developed an understanding of the relation between experience and learning focused on how experiences of disjuncture contribute to learning. Jarvis argues that in order for experiences to become enriching people need to develop an understanding of them and meaning needs to be added because experiences in themselves have no meaning (Jarvis 2009:55).

[T]here is no intrinsic meaning in matter itself (...) [only] meanings given by individuals, peoples and cultures in their quest to understand existence (...) it is always relative and to be discovered within the socio-cultural world. (Jarvis 2009:71)

Jarvis claims that an experience only gains importance when it has been interpreted, understood and added meaning. Jarvis stresses that experiences develop in the socio-cultural world together with others but experiences are at the same time subjective (Jarvis 2009: 102-103).

Experience itself has no meaning (...) but our meanings stem from our relationships with other people in our life-world, from our own interpretations of our experiences. (Jarvis 2009:70)

This is how people develop their understanding of their “being in the world” and learn to be themselves as persons in society (Jarvis 2009: 81, 197, 208). Although these are subjective, inner processes they also have a social dimension. Jarvis argues that the flows of experiences that add to current meanings contribute to a structuring of the world in people’s narratives, and to a development of self, life-world and biography. People are therefore the

result of their own learning (Jarvis 2009:3). According to Jarvis meaning is thus what people place in an experience, and it is dependent on relations with others. It is both a socio-cultural construct and a personal construct as the individual incorporates an understanding of society into his or her biography and life-world. Jarvis states:

We tell our stories and embody our sense of meaning; indeed it is in and through the process of articulation that we refine our meaning system as we organise our memories of events to expound our meaning system – or our world-view (...) the stories we tell and the sense of self that we construct are a result of this process of meaning making. (Jarvis 2009:76)

This view suggests that people develop their narratives from experiences, meaning making and learning processes that are both personal and social. The results of an elaboration of experiences reflect how the individual is socialized into the dominant culture as well as into his or her own life-world (Jarvis 2009:72-74).

Jarvis further argues that learning can be intentional or incidental, and it may occur in the moment but it does not always follow instantly upon a new experience. Sometimes people notice their experiences and learning immediately, while on other occasions experiences are sub-consciously registered and their importance and meanings may develop in later reflection, when sharing their narratives with others or when new experiences occur.

[Narratives] help people to reflect on the past to try to capture a little more of the reality (...) [and] thinking about the past generates learning experiences for the authors of the stories (...) it is a continuing process of learning as individuals account for the past in terms of the present. (Jarvis 2009:193)

In telling our story we are imposing, or constructing, meaning – or reflective meaning – on these past experiences. (Jarvis 2009:159)

Jarvis's line of thought points at an interdependent relation between experience and learning. If so, learning processes involve iterative interactions between experience and meaning-making, implying that understanding is constantly negotiated and in the making. In the lifelong project of experiencing and learning every process becomes a new learning experience. These iterations of developing understanding, interpretation and meaning-making are ongoing processes understood as hermeneutical stages of learning development (Jarvis 2009: 159-163). Jarvis claims that the state of temporality together with the condition that some learning occurs retrospectively implies that when speaking from memory some aspects of experiences are lost and the recalled is never as complete as the primary experience (Jarvis 2009:56). Narratives “may not be precise recollections of events and what we remember may actually be only an interpretation – and from those we construct our story” (Jarvis 2009:158). This reasoning echoes

both a narrative approach to how people create an understanding of themselves and the world, and a hermeneutic view of understanding as always in the making. In Gadamer's view those processes of understanding develop as reproductive interpretations into which new aspects are constantly added (Gadamer 2002:110, 143). Dewey (1997/1938:68) argues that when people face something unfamiliar they consult their prior experiences, they reflect and look for what is similar in them, look for significance and then make a judgement about what may be expected in the present situation. Thus, according to Dewey (1997/1938:79) new insights become "the ground for further experiences in which new problems are presented. The process is a continuous spiral". Following this line of thought, understanding of meaning and learning from experiences develop via iterative processes built on linkages between the past and the present. In Jarvis's words people learn to become the ones they are, they are the results of their own learning processes that are social and built on both primary and secondary experience (Jarvis 2009:3, 56).

In summary, experience is both personal and social, it may be intentional or incidental, occur in the present or in retrospect, and it always involves processes of meaning-making and subsequent learning. The learning processes are life-long and contribute to our narratives which are subject to constant change. In the thesis learning is regarded as resulting from the processes of meaning-making of experiences. The attributed social and personal meanings are stored as memory, which contributes to life-world development and the individual's biography. These are iterative processes that reflect a constructivist and narrative approach to learning from experience. Following this approach, there is no intention to test sojourner's memories, to assess how well they correspond to actual events. The focus of attention in the thesis is not on veracity, and there are no concerns that events may be wrongly reconstructed because of poor memory. Instead the focus is on attributed meanings and how the participants relate to memories of experiences associated with their sojourns in the present.

Experience and Learning in Intercultural Contexts

Intercultural theory regarding learning often focuses on questions about the diversity of people and their relations, and learning from interactions that imply a transition from a mono-cultural to an intercultural frame of reference (Jackson 2010:29). Differences in cross-national intercultural contexts can be found in views of others as not being fully part of an in-group or a majority group, and those people may be referred to in terms of being strangers, intruders, foreigners, outsiders, newcomers, immigrants, unknown or unfamiliar (Gudykunst & Kim 2003:22-23). Although intercultural theory is a difference-based theory it also pays attention to

aspects that unify people and cultures (Bennett 1998: 1-3). Intercultural learning is not only about differences and similarities, but also defined as something in between. Some researchers define this as an ability to adopt a position of “third space” or to “produce thirdness”, requiring the ability to perceive and understand one’s own and other cultures (Gill 2010:361) or what occurs in between the self and the other (Jackson, 2011a:89). The mutuality and interest in interaction that the intercultural approaches to learning present are addressed by Hansen (2011) in terms of an attitude of a cosmopolitan-minded attitude to learning.

In intercultural studies there is often a focus on the competences people develop in interaction and communication across cultures (Root and Ngampornchai 2013:514). Although difficulties in assessing educational outcomes from experiences of study abroad have been noted (Ryan-Bengtsson, 2008) and it is argued that these experiences cannot be fully quantified (Jackson 2005:165), a few models based on intercultural theory have been designed with the aim of assessing outcomes. For example, Jackson (2009) and Ellenwood & Snyder (2010) have applied the DMIS-model¹⁷ for assessing competence and developments from intercultural experience. The applied models do not conflict, but vary in level of specificity, principal focus, and/or the specification of different stages of intercultural development. Generally they approach experience and learning in intercultural contexts as a linear process that starts from a relatively ethnocentric understanding and progresses to a more ethnorelative understanding of cultures (Bennett, 1998; Gudykunst & Kim, 2003; Jackson, 2010). Intercultural models of assessment are not applied in the present study, but terms drawn from intercultural theory have been applied in communication of observed processes of experiences and learning.

Studies based on intercultural theory often emphasize how intercultural contexts may either develop competencies or contribute to personality formation. Jackson (2010:27-29) links reasoning about competencies and formative aspects of learning to concepts proposed by Bourdieu, arguing that people who enter new fields, as when going on a sojourn, bring their habitus with them, that is, their ways of doing and thinking, for example their communication styles or worldviews. Thus, instead of merely considering potential outcomes (competencies or formative aspects of learning), this view emphasizes the potential importance of previous knowledge and the individual self for the experiences and learning that develop in an intercultural context. This kind of reasoning corresponds to a cosmopolitan

¹⁷ Bennett’s (1998) DMIS-model, Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity is applied and frequently cited in intercultural studies. Bennett developed this model in the 1980s (Bennett, 1998) and it does not appear to have been revised, adapted or refined since then. The DMIS-model has however been further developed by others and an example of that is Mitchel Hammer and his IDI-test, Intercultural developmental inventory, that aims at assuring validity and reliability when studying intercultural development.

view of learning as a process involving responses in different situations that develops via oscillations between the known and the new.

Cosmopolitan Experience and Learning

According to Hansen (2011), several categories of cosmopolitanism can be distinguished, including political, economic, moral or cultural cosmopolitanism, and in *The Teacher and the World: A Study of Cosmopolitanism as Education* (2011) he adds a fifth category: “educational cosmopolitanism”. Hansen also combines a cosmopolitan-minded educational approach to teaching and learning with philosophical, ethical and educational theory. He defines this approach as being most closely linked to moral and cultural cosmopolitanism, which is reflected in what he calls an attitude of being “open reflectively to the new and loyal reflectively to the known” (Hansen 2011:10-12). According to this view, learning from other ways of doing and thinking should not be interpreted as an abandonment of everything known and a blind adoption of new ways (Hansen 2011:8). A cosmopolitan educational approach is instead an attitude of interest in learning from what is different and involves allowing one’s previous thinking and doing to “take on new qualities” (Hansen 2011:60). In this attitude of openness to learning it is stressed that cosmopolitanism is not primarily about general agreement and consensus, but rather about realizing that even when disagreeing with the other there is a potential for learning (Appiah 2007:97, 144-146; Derrida (2009/1997). This line of thought thus reflects a central cosmopolitan ideal based on solidarity, hospitality, forgiveness and interest in the other. Hansen’s (2011) cosmopolitan-minded approach to education departs from an idea of people being rooted in the “comfort” of feeling acquainted with things around them and holds that education should strive to open avenues for them to step out of that comfort zone and stimulate interest in learning from others. This view stresses that an engagement with the other has potential to enhance processes that Hansen describes in terms of a leaving and a staying at home.

[p]ersons are always leaving and remaining at home (...) a cosmopolitan outlook implies leaving home in the closed, walled in sense of the term. This movement entails an ongoing loss of a certain innocence and comfort (...) dissolving the mystique of the given, that “the way things are” is the way they must be – or is the way in which others must see them (...) cosmopolitanism presumes the permanence of change. (Hansen 2011:57)

Hansen argues that in order to develop a cosmopolitan outlook people should not remain stuck by a single strong root in their well-known home culture. They should also develop “rhizomatic” roots that extend into the world and in interaction with others learn through absorbing different ways

of life (Hansen 2011: 57). This is, in Hansen's view, a "cosmopolitan learning" process (2011:1), that is, a "reflective openness" to the larger world and a "reflective loyalty" to the known, to local concerns, commitments and values. This way of thinking about learning assumes that there is interest, attention and willingness to not only passively tolerate or accept the other as being strange or different, but a view of this other being someone that one can learn from. Hansen's cosmopolitan outlook, with an emphasis on interest and openness to mutual learning in meetings with other ways of thinking and doing reflects an intercultural dimension of learning. In the idea of a "leaving of the home in the closed, walled in sense of the term", and the "ongoing loss of a certain innocence and comfort" Hansen also stresses that cosmopolitan learning is about personal enrichment that develops from experiences of having engaged with others whose ways of leading a life may differ from one's own accustomed ways. In such situations people get to know each other and develop a growing awareness of singularities that in some sense make them feel more apart. Nevertheless, a deepened knowledge of each other also makes people connect and become in their singularities more together in a sense of fellowship. Hansen (2011:3) captures this process by stating that in cosmopolitan learning people move "closer and closer apart and further and further together".

Hansen argues that experiences from interactions influence people's views not only of the other(s) but also of themselves because "there is an ongoing transaction with the world that can be marked by broader awareness and deepening insight into conditions and possibilities" (Hansen 2011: 60). The experiences of such transactions between the individual and the surrounding world foster development of the "rhizomatic roots" mentioned above that is, broader awareness and deeper insights.

The hypothesis that people never get to know the other completely implies that communication is always to some extent communication between strangers (Gudykunst and Kim 2003). Similarly, Ellenwood & Snyders (2010:557) argue that when people engage in new situations they are challenged to step out of a familiar "level of comfort". Such stepping out of one's level of comfort and engaging with others (by the interviewed sojourners) is analysed in this thesis in terms of a leaving of one's comfort zone, which implies leaving a certain harmony in the home context.

2.2 Disturbed Harmony

Many studies on life-long learning have focused on the transformative potentials of learning and how experiences and learning may be understood differently during the course of a life-time (Mezirow, 1991; Taylor, 1994; Jarvis, 2009). Jarvis's (2009) model of learning from experiences departs from the idea that some level of disjuncture is required for all learning

processes. He argues that disjuncture occurs when “our unthinking harmony with our world is disturbed and we feel unease” (Jarvis 2009:21) and defines it as the gap between the perceived and the expected in an experience of the world (Jarvis 2009:29).

[w]hen discord occurs (...) we can become aware that we are not in harmony – we are faced with a situation that we cannot take for granted and we have to stop and think and learn. It is this that I have called disjuncture. (Jarvis 2009:83)

The idea is that when an individual’s harmony is disturbed he or she stops and reflects, and learns in the processes of formulating resolutions and meaning making he or she learns. It is the distancing from one’s comfort zone or state of harmony in the home environment and the accompanying experiences of disjuncture that open people’s minds and lead to learning.

In his model of learning from disjuncture Jarvis (2009:77) describes how experiences need to be processed, tested and how a chosen resolution not only closes the process but also contributes to the individual’s wider meaning system, life-world and biography. The ‘life-world’ concept refers to an idea about the person in society. It relates to both the individual’s internal and external worlds, and when there is harmony in the taken-for-granted within the familiarity with the practical living in the everyday those worlds are congruent as there is a sense of “unity” (Jarvis 2009:8, 11-12). He uses the word biography to refer to “our understanding about ourselves as we pass through time” (Jarvis 2009:61) and as such the biography is significant to identity building (Jarvis 2009:62). In the process of dealing with the disjuncture the individual elaborates an understanding, recreates and rediscovers a sense of belonging and as a result harmony is restored when he or she feels at home again. If the individual fails to resolve the disjuncture he or she lives on in a new state of “person in the world”. In a changed and more experienced life-world the person continues meeting with new learning cycles (Jarvis 2009:28). The experiences have then contributed to life-world development and the individual’s biography and personal narrative.

Jarvis’s model of learning from disjuncture is focused on the individual’s development, but he also argues that although individual learning processes are personal they take place in the context of the wider society (Jarvis 2009:19).

[w]e live in a state of change all the time and that means that, unless we disengage from social living we are constantly having potential learning experiences throughout the whole of our lives. (Jarvis 2009:48)

Hence, according to Jarvis change is a constant condition and it is built on individual learning from having engaged with others.

When stepping outside of a familiar home context people meet other contexts, in which it may be difficult to predict, decode, interpret and respond to situations and others' behaviour. This shift from the fairly well known to an unfamiliar situation may be experienced as stressful, and Jarvis (2009) describes such processes in terms of cognitive and/or emotive disjuncture. I refer to these processes of disjuncture as situations of disturbed harmony. According to Jarvis disjuncture is part of living and engaging in society so people constantly deal with processes of re-establishment of comfort, harmony and control. In addition to the cognitive and behavioural implications of resolution processes, and effects the resolutions themselves may have on an individual, Jarvis also stresses that there may be affective implications. He reasons that an awareness of "our emotional state can help us understand the experiences that we have and also how to transform them in learning episodes – self-awareness is then at the heart of many of our learning experiences" (Jarvis 2009:141). Accordingly, it may be argued that reflection is essential to the model of learning presented by Jarvis.

Jarvis's concept of disjuncture is linked to another important element of the conceptual framework of this thesis: the "pedagogy of interruption", as presented in *Beyond Learning: Democratic Education for a Human Future* (Biesta 2006), and further developed in *Good Education in an Age of Measurement: Ethics, Politics, Democracy* (Biesta 2010). In these publications Biesta draws on a complex web of philosophical thought propagated by John Dewey, Hannah Arendt, Martin Buber, Alfonso Lingis and Emmanuel Levinas. Building on this web and his own theories about the purposes of education, Biesta (2010:40) argues that a teacher should not always act as a facilitator who supports and contributes to a "smooth process" of learning. Instead he argues that learning may be favoured in situations in which transactions between the individuals and their environment is "interrupted". In accordance with Hansen's (2011) cosmopolitan attitude to learning, Biesta reasons that it is when engaging with the unfamiliar or strange that people come into being as distinct individuals.

[i]t is only in and through our engagement with the other community, that is, in and through the way we expose ourselves to what is strange and other, that we come into the world as unique and singular beings – and not as instances of some more general "form" of what it is to be human. (Biesta 2006:67)

In that sense, and in Levinas's words, people come into being in the face of the other (Kemp, 1992). Furthermore Biesta (2010:87-89) claims that this occurs when people's harmony is disturbed and as a result they develop individual voices instead of retaining a representative voice of the community that they have been socialized into.

2.3 Educational Functions

Biesta (2010) presents a framework for dealing with the question of purpose in education claiming that “educational processes and practices generally work in three different areas and thus can be said to serve three different functions” (Biesta, 2010:5). He calls these “areas”, “functions” or “dimensions”: qualification, socialization and subjectification. Biesta reasons that in the arrangement of an educational situation it may be the case that only one of these is targeted. Nevertheless, any educational situation will always to a varying degree address all three. He argues that qualification is one of the major functions of organized education and that it is related to national interests of economic development and growth, political literacy, active citizenship and cultural literacy more generally.

It lies in providing them with the knowledge, skills, and understandings and often also with the dispositions and forms of judgment that allow them to “do something” – a “doing” that can range from the very specific ... to the much more general”. Biesta (2010:19-20)

Qualification is thus defined as the provision of knowledge, skills, understanding, and dispositions to make judgements and becoming sufficiently equipped to be able to take action. Socialization refers to how individuals are “inserted” and become part of a collective such as a society. Biesta states:

[Socialization] has to do with the many ways in which, through education, we become part of particular social, cultural and political “orders” (...) [socialization through education therefore] plays an important role in the continuation of culture and tradition. (Biesta 2010:20)

The focus in socialization is thus primarily on the development of a collective, and subjectification is in comparison to some extent the opposite, as it refers to individuation, the process of becoming a subject or people’s development as distinct individuals who are “more autonomous and independent in their thinking and acting” (Biesta 2010:21) and accordingly it is not about insertion into existing orders but rather about how individuals may develop independence from such orders. All three functions or dimensions are both processes in which education has “effects”, and three areas in which education can aim to operate, that is, three potential roles of education (Biesta 2010:10-27). Accordingly, the three functions can be applied as tools for analysing educational practice, but they can also be applied programmatically with the aim of opening discussions about aims and ends in educational contexts (Biesta 2010:73). In this thesis the three functions, or processes, are used as analytical tools. In his arguments advocating a “pedagogy of interruption” Biesta addresses the purpose of

education and the relations between socialization, qualification and subjectification. He argues that all three functions are essential and “composite”. Education should therefore explicitly strive to promote developments within all three. However, as formal education plays a pivotal role in producing and reproducing culture by promoting qualification and socialization, and thus a repertoire of representative voices, Biesta (2010:75) claims that it is particularly important for educationalists to actively promote subjectification. A pedagogy of interruption is an example of how that may be achieved. Such an approach to education provides potential to engage with other ways of thinking and doing, and thus for individuals to develop unique and responsible voices, which are key elements of subjectification.

[keeping] the possibility of interruptions of the “normal” order open. It is first of all a pedagogy committed to the possibility of interruption and perhaps also a pedagogy that itself will interrupt (...) its place [is] in the domain of subjectification, not qualification or socialization – although it may work “through” these domains as well (...) it is not a “strong” pedagogy; [it] is not a pedagogy that can in any sense guarantee its “outcomes”. It rather is a pedagogy that acknowledges the fundamental *weakness* of education vis-à-vis the question of subjectification. This ontological weakness of education is at the very same time its existential strength because it is only when we give up the idea that human subjectivity can in some way be educationally produced that spaces might open up for uniqueness to come into the world. This is what is at stake in a pedagogy of interruption. (Biesta 2010: 91)

Thus, according to Biesta education should primarily focus on subjectification as a way to develop uniqueness through situations that interrupt the “normal”. As I read Biesta there are strong intercultural nuances in the argument that individuals need not only familiarity and “normality” but also otherness in order to develop in the three educational functions. This line of thought also comes through in Hansen’s advocacy of a cosmopolitan attitude to experience and learning, and in Jarvis’s model of learning from experiences of disjuncture.

Following this framing of uniqueness, familiarity, the “normal” and “otherness” I will close this overview of the theoretical perspectives by commenting briefly on some aspects of us-and-them dichotomies. Postcolonial studies (Said 1993/78; Fanon 1997/71; Mignolo, 2005, 2010, 2011; Loomba, 2008) provide a general theoretical understanding of past and present historical and contemporary political, economic and social hierarchies and tensions of power relations in these dichotomies. Postcolonial theory has been a guiding element of the theoretical framework of both this thesis and the underlying study. However, Jarvis (2009) and Biesta (2010) and Hansen (2011) frame conceptualization of the us-and-them dichotomy within a more philosophical outlook on the interpersonal I – You relations. In such conceptualizations they draw on thinkers such as Buber (1993/29), Lévinas (2003) and Derrida (2009/97) and their

philosophical contributions to the understanding of the dependency in the I - You relation. Biesta (2006:148) reasons that what makes people unique and allows them to speak in their own, singular voices lies in the ways in which they respond to the other and the otherness of the other. According to Biesta this is why it is important for organized education to provide situations in which students encounter pluralism and thereby develop their subjectivity. Although postcolonial aspects of power relations and hierarchies are considered important standpoints, the I-You relation as expressed by Biesta is more applicable to the analysis in this thesis. This is because it focuses primarily on educational and intercultural aspects of interpersonal interactions and meetings in sojourns, rather than macro level social phenomena.

2.4 Summary of Theoretical Perspectives

As this thesis primarily addresses learning that develops from experiences from meetings in international sojourns I largely apply educational theory in the analysis. However, the intercultural context is an inherent element of an international sojourn and the intercultural field of research contributes terms that are applied throughout the discussion of the presented findings.

In activities carried out during sojourns the individuals often experience numerous challenges arising from a perceived unfamiliarity with people and situations they encounter. Such experiences are analysed in the thesis in line with the idea that learning develops from experiences of disturbed harmony that occur when people step out of their comfort zone in the home environment and engage with other contexts.

According to Jarvis learning occurs through disjuncture when people engage with the unfamiliar, i.e. when people's feelings of familiarity with norms, values, formal laws and other cultural codes for interaction are disturbed. He argues that the resolutions that are elaborated in relation to the experiences of disjuncture lead to personal growth and behavioural, affective and cognitive change. It is these processes of disjuncture that I refer to as situations of disturbed harmony. Such situations are analysed in the thesis in relation to how they may contribute to learning.

As I interpret Biesta's view, a pedagogy of interruption builds on the idea that situations of what I call a disturbed harmony have potential to foster learning. He argues that in such a pedagogy teachers should strive to create learning situations in which thinking as usual proves to be insufficient. In such situations people have a potential to develop individual, responsible voices in addition to representative voices. The learning that develops from such situations can in Biesta's terminology be understood as serving three functions (or promoting three processes) that he calls qualification, socialization and subjectification. I apply Jarvis's model of learning from

experiences of disjuncture, and Biesta's three functions of education, in the analysis and interpretation of the learning that experiences associated with sojourns foster.

In his advocacy of a cosmopolitan attitude to learning Hansen stresses that interest and mutuality in sharing promote learning and expansion of individuals' understanding of themselves, the other and the world.

Building on the thoughts of Jarvis (2009), Biesta (2010) and Hansen (2011), in the following text I analyse experiences and learning associated with intercultural international sojourns, paying particular attention to experiences of disturbed harmony and how they contribute to learning in terms of the educational functions, and processes, of qualification, socialization and subjectification.

3. Materials and Methods

In this chapter I describe how the study underlying the thesis was planned and carried out. I first present the background of the sample selection, then describe the qualitative interview method applied, the interviewees, the interpretation and analysis of the empirical material acquired, and the ethical considerations related to the study, writing the thesis and my role as a researching subject. The chapter is divided into two main parts. The first presents the qualitative interview method and the empirical material obtained. The next section focuses on the interpretation, coding, identification of themes and analysis of the empirical material. Before ending the second section and closing the chapter I discuss ethical aspects that have been considered in relation to the research project.

3.1 A Study Based on Qualitative Interviews.

The word 'interview' has been defined in various ways. The first meaning of the word given by the *Oxford Dictionaries* website¹⁸ is "A meeting of people face to face, especially for consultation". According to the same source, it derives etymologically "from the French *entrevue*, from *s'entrevoir* 'see each other', from *voir* 'to see', on the pattern of *vue* 'a view'." Thus, an interview is a situation of "inspection". Further, considerations at the *Oxford English Dictionary* website¹⁹ state that the word may refer to meetings providing a "mutual view" or participants "having a glimpse of" each other. Kvale (1996:14) defines an interview as "an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest". All these definitions point at an interview being built on interest and a mutual and cooperative approach to understanding and meaning-making (although there are major exceptions, often for instance when the police interview suspects). The addition of the word 'qualitative' to the word interview denotes an interpretative approach to interviews as empirical material (Ryen 2004:14-15; Kvale & Brinkman 2009:39), intended to "obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena" (Kvale 1996:5-6; Kvale & Brinkman 2009:17). A literal definition of the word 'interview' stresses a meaning of that being a meeting 'between faces', and more developed it is "an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest" (Kvale 1996:14). A qualitative research interview can thus be understood as a professional conversation that is assumed to contribute information about people's life worlds and it supposes cooperation, mutual interest, as well as

¹⁸ www.oxforddictionaries.com.

¹⁹ www.oed.com.

attentive interaction of listening, telling and questioning. As a professional conversation the interview has a structure and a purpose, and the researcher controls and directs the conversation by introducing topics and deciding when to stop and when to move on. The ways in which this is done will influence the meeting and hence the conversation and the information that can be drawn from the interview. Thus, it is important to consider aspects of roles and relations when planning, organizing and conducting interviews. The challenge is to develop trust and an appropriate, professional relationship with the interviewee, which facilitate valid data collection (Ryen, 2002:337).

As this study focuses on upper secondary sojourners' experiences and learning from sojourns, which were expected to be complex and diverse, a qualitative approach based on semi-structured in-depth interviews was deemed appropriate. Key objectives were to develop a profound and robustly grounded understanding of the uniquely individual and particular, as well as complexity and diversity of these phenomena. Further objectives were to allow general and shared experiences to surface, and voices from both Chile and Sweden to be equally represented and heard. Thus, it was assumed that collection of several accounts, from both Chilean and Swedish sojourners would be essential to obtain sufficient depth of understanding and allow recurrent aspects to surface.

Pilot Study

As part of the planning and organization of the main study, I conducted a pilot study in 2011 to assess whether the interview questions would lead to conversations about topics that met the overall research aim and adequately addressed the more specific research questions. The pilot study involved separate interviews with three Swedish participants, two of whom had been on a sojourn and one who had hosted a sojourner. Two of the interviews were individual face-to-face meetings and one was carried out by means of the ICT-based system *Skype*.

The questions in the interview guide²⁰ followed a temporal, before, during and after the sojourn scheme. They were semi-structured and general in order to open up for and invite the participants to express their thoughts on their experiences as they surfaced in the conversation. This open approach was adopted because the portrayals of their experience were expected to be complex and diverse, and a key objective was to develop deep understanding. It should be noted that the questions the participants were asked were not

²⁰ See the interview guide is included in the thesis as appendixes in Swedish (Appendix 2a), English (Appendix 2b) and Spanish (Appendix 2c).

always identical. These interviews lasted were audio recorded and transcribed into printable text.

As a first step towards processing the empirical material obtained from the pilot study, recorded responses of the participants were initially decoded with regard to their names and gender to minimize potential risks of the participants being identified. However, this strategy was subsequently abandoned and pseudonyms were used instead. The rationale for this is that it would still maintain participants' confidentiality while allowing use of pronouns and personal names in reports and facilitating fluent communication of the analysis and results. In the main study the participants are thus referred to according to their chosen pseudonyms. Fictive or genderless pseudonyms, such as Tintaglia or Kim, have been gendered in accordance with the respective participants' genders.

Three randomly picked candidate participants from the list of potential participants were contacted by e-mail and asked if they would like to participate by being interviewed about their experiences. As all three accepted they received more detailed information about the study together with a letter of informed consent²¹. They were asked to read the documents and ask questions if they had any doubts or uncertainties. The participants were invited to suggest a time and place for our meeting and we met at public places or institutions in accordance with their choices. Each interview began with some small-talk about the study and the letter of informed consent. None of them expressed doubts or raised questions about the study or their participation, either on that occasion or later. The interviews then began by asking the participants to provide some general information such as their name, age and family background. I also raised questions about their time as an upper secondary student and what they had been doing since graduating from school. This approach was intended to make them feel comfortable and relaxed in the situation of being interviewed and recorded. It also helped them to recall memories of being an upper secondary student, and the sojourn as one of their activities during that period (about 4 – 6 years before being interviewed). In the second part the questions were directed to their experience as a sojourner, the events leading to their sojourn, what it was like, and their impressions from their meetings with people and education in another country. In the third and final part of the interview the questions related to what it was like to return home after the sojourn, the participants' retrospective assessment of the sojourn, and how they related to that experience in their present lives.

The three interviews in the pilot study lasted about an hour, two hours and two and a half hours. Before the interviews it was decided that I would

²¹ *The Letter of Informed Consent* is included in the theses, in Swedish (Appendix 1a), English (Appendix 1b) and Spanish (Appendix 1c).

strive to arrange physical face-to-face interviews, due to a belief that they are more holistic than other forms. However, assessment of the two forms of meeting (physical and Skype interview) yielded no immediate impressions of obvious differences in the quality of the conversations that developed. In the Skype interview the interviewee was communicative and gave the impression of feeling confident and relaxed about the situation and the technology. The results led to the decision that if arranging a physical meeting for some of the subsequent interviews proved to be difficult, Skype would be used as a backup.

The overall impression was that the direction of the study, the focus, and the interview guide were all generally appropriate, and no doubts had been raised that gave reason to make changes. However, it was decided that the main study would concentrate solely on the sojourners' perspectives, rather than covering both sojourners and host perspectives, as in the pilot study. This was done to enhance the depth of understanding of the complexity of the focal phenomena, and stringency of the study. Apart from that change, the main study was based on the same procedure and same focus of interest as the pilot study.

Sample Selection

Several premises guided the sample selection. When the study was initiated it formed part of a research milieu at Umeå University with a pronounced interest in developing north-south perspectives in research. This, together with the facts that I speak Spanish, have temporarily spent much time in Latin American countries, particularly Chile, and that during my time as an upper secondary teacher I had developed contacts with professionals in schools and university environments in both Chile and Sweden, were all aspects that were considered in the geographical delimitations for the sample selection. It was assumed that such factors would facilitate contact with and access to potential participants.

As already indicated, school exchanges statistics ²² show that in Sweden the sojourn is a common form of exchanges in both compulsory and non-compulsory education, and projects supported by the IP have been developed between Sweden and Chile. Lacking more precise information about the situation in Chile, it was decided that the investigation of study abroad would be restricted to sojourns, as they were a typical form of exchange in the Swedish context.

To meet the research interest of exploring long-term implications of sojourns it was decided to limit participants to those whose sojourns had

²² Statistics on the geographical distribution and information about the different kinds of exchange projects are facilitated by the IP in Sweden, www.programkontoret.se.

been sufficiently long ago (4-6 years) for them to have reflected upon their experiences and express potential long-term implications. Thus, there is a retrospective approach in the study, but no intention to verify whether events are recalled accurately. As previously stated, the focal interest is instead in developing an understanding from the perspective of the participants, that is, from the meaning they attribute to the experiences.

The geographical north-south dimension, the potential access to groups of participants, the representative form of sojourns, the retrospective approach and potential long-term implications are all important elements of both the study's delimitation and sample selection. The formal process of selecting the sample group is described below.

Formalizing the Sample Group

The upper secondary exchanges identified through the IP proved to have been much longer than the typical sojourns, and they included no Chileans who had been to Sweden, only Swedes who had been to Chile. A possibility that would allow the inclusion of voices from both countries was to assemble a sample of sojourners from students I knew of from my time as an upper secondary teacher whose sojourns I had personally helped to organize. Thus, as it seemed difficult to find others who had experience of both Swedish and Chilean sojourns I decided to start with those that I knew of from my own teaching background. Eight of each nationality were selected. If the sample group had proved to be too limited I would have considered broadening the study by including other nationalities.

As the participants' accounts were expected to be complex and diverse, it would have been difficult to determine in advance the number of participants that would be needed to meet the research aim and rigorously address the research questions. However, since the pilot study appeared to address the aim and research questions adequately and no changes were made to the interview guide following it, the two sojourners who participated in the pilot study were included in the main study to increase the sample size. The sample group then consisted of 18 potential participants: eight Chileans and eight Swedes to be interviewed in the main study and the two Swedes from the pilot study. The eight Chileans and eight Swedes that were to be invited to participate in the main study were contacted and informed in accordance with the procedure used in the pilot study. All of them responded positive to the project and agreed to participate.

When meeting for the interviews the participants were again encouraged to express any doubts but they made no adverse comments related to the documents, the interviews or the study, either at that time or later. There were no changes or adjustments and all participants signed the letter of informed consent, thereby assenting to participate in the study. Attempts to

arrange a meeting with one of the Swedish participants were unsuccessful, but there were no apparent reasons to suspect that this was due to the candidate being unwilling to participate or critical of the study. On the contrary, this person expressed eagerness to participate. We scheduled a meeting that had to be cancelled and exchanged several e-mails in attempts to identify a suitable time for an interview. However, this proved impossible as the person was living abroad and working irregular hours, while I was interviewing people in Chile at the time. Eventually, attempts to schedule an interview with this individual were abandoned. Thus, the final formalized sample group consisted of eight Chileans and nine Swedes who had been on a school-arranged sojourn to the respective countries when they were upper secondary students, 4-6 years before they were interviewed. Including 17 out of 18 potential, known participants was considered satisfactory and the impression after interviewing them was that the sample size was sufficiently large to meet the research aims and rigorously address the research questions. Thus, broadening the sample group by including sojourners from other projects and other nationalities was not deemed necessary.

The Participants

To strengthen the participants' confidentiality all 17 were asked to choose a pseudonym, which was subsequently used throughout the work, when referring to, quoting, informally speaking about the study in conversations with others, in seminars, and when presenting texts as part of the research process. The participants were assured that their true names would not appear in any texts or oral presentations generated in or related to the study. Some of their chosen pseudonyms are gendered, some gender neutral and some fictive. Some are perhaps thought of as typically Chilean or Swedish names while some are internationally recognized. This may have caused some uncertainty for readers since it may be difficult to tell, for example, if Maria and Sol are Chileans or if they are Swedish and if Kim or Tintaglia are male or female. Some might think of Gonzalo as a typical name for a boy in the Spanish-speaking Chile, while others might think that Gonzalo may be a Swedish boy who has an immigrant background. This illustrates how names also carry connotations that become social markers and carriers of added meaning that are consciously and unconsciously registered. As a researcher it is important to be attentive to one's interaction with the empirical material and I asked the participants to choose their pseudonyms as part of attempts to avoid adding meaning myself. However, the nationalities and genders of the pseudonyms students are listed below, to facilitate understanding of the results.

In order to give both national groups equally strong voices I have striven to balance the number of references and quotations between the Swedes and

Chileans. In some cases one of several sojourners who have commented about an issue or phenomenon may be quoted or referred to because he or she has illuminated it particularly vividly. For example, Alexander, one of the participants, uses the illustrative metaphor of “peeling off one’s skin” when describing his experience of becoming involved, a phenomenon that others have also commented upon. There are no intentions to quantify findings *per se*, but recurrent experiences are highlighted and similar thoughts are at occasions denoted by a reference to several participants, but most often by a quotation of a specific, illustrative extract from the participants’ narratives. If Swedes and Chileans expressed a particular reasoning there are references to both. Words like ‘some’, ‘several’, ‘a few’, ‘many’, or ‘most’ are used when denoting that a particular phenomenon or a particular aspect of something has been interpreted as being shared or recurrent.

The eight Chilean participants chose the names Sol, Madi, Gonzalo, Elias, Sara, Mia, Pelusa and Cami. Gonzalo and Elias are names of male participants and the other six are female. At the time of their sojourns they were all between 16- to 18-years-old students at a subsidised upper secondary school. They describe their upbringing and their neighbourhoods as fairly mono-cultural. They did not mix with or meet people of other nationalities in their neighbourhood or schools and the mother tongue of everyone in their homes was Spanish. They did not think of themselves as experienced in languages, travel or intercultural relations. Several of them had never previously travelled by air and those who had been abroad had only travelled to a neighbouring Spanish-speaking country. None of them had been on an exchange before, so the sojourn provided many new experiences. After finishing their upper secondary studies all but one continued into further education and by the time of the interviews all of them were students within continuing education. None of them had at that point in time worked, travelled more or studied abroad, and most of them still lived at their parents’ or a relative’s house.

The nine Swedish participants chose the names Håkan, Maria, Tintaglia, Karin, Lisa, Kim, Bettan, Alexander and Sofia. Håkan and Alexander are male participants and the other seven are female. At the time of their sojourns they were 17- to 18-year-old students at a public upper secondary school. All the Swedes had opted for studies in languages, and in addition to the compulsory English courses they also studied Spanish. Most of them had travelled before, but on the whole they do not describe themselves as particularly experienced travellers. Mostly they had travelled within Europe and two of them had been on an exchange within Europe (when they also stayed with host-families) before the sojourn. To one of them the sojourn involved first flight experience as well as a first experience of being abroad. Only two of the Swedish participants, Bettan and Alexander, describe their upbringing, living areas, schools or social networks as having provided

intercultural experiences and few of them had made friends with people who had a non-Swedish ethnic background. In intercultural terms they describe their upbringing and school experiences as fairly mono-cultural. After their upper secondary studies the Swedes took a sabbatical period to work, move abroad for studies or work, or travel. Several of them also returned to Latin America and some chose to continue studying Spanish. At the time of the interviews all of them were students within continuing education and they had moved out from their parents' houses.

The Interviews

The empirical material gathered in the main study was obtained from separate interviews with the 17 participants described above, between late 2011 and January 2012. Two of them were carried out by means of the ICT-based system *Skype*, and all the others were face-to-face interviews conducted in Sweden and Chile. All interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed into printable text. In one of the first interviews there were problems with the recorder, so all interviews thereafter were recorded using both the audio-recorder and a mobile phone. The durations of the interviews ranged from about 1,5 hours to 3 hours. The recordings were stored on an external disk, temporarily saved on my personal computer while they were transcribed and interpreted, then deleted from my computer after saving a single copy of the audio files and a copy of the transcripts on an external disc securely stored at the *Department of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies* at Umeå University.

The Transcripts

The Swedes were interviewed in Swedish and the Chileans in Spanish and, hence the transcripts are in both Swedish and Spanish. In total the transcribed audio files generated approximately 650 pages or, about 1,2 MB of digital data.

The interviews were transcribed in entirety, word for word, as dialogues including all expressions voiced both by me and the interviewees. In addition, the transcripts include notes, in parentheses, recording occasions when the participants emphasized a point, spontaneously laughed in response to something, expressed moods in some other way, gestured or communicated non-verbally in any other identified manner. On a few occasions it was difficult or even impossible to hear a particular word or sentence in the recording by the audio-recorder because of noise. In some such cases the missing words were obtained from the back-up recording. However, in a few cases neither of the recordings helped to identify missing words, which are thus marked by XX in the transcripts. There are only a few

examples of this problem and usually only single words were lost and it was still possible to follow the line of thought or argument. Generally, the recordings and transcriptions are complete and clear.

Language

The abundance and quality of information that can be gathered from qualitative interviews, or other kinds of interpersonal meetings and communication are inevitably dependent on multiple linguistic factors (Kvale, 1996; Ryen, 2004). In cross-cultural interviews there are further reasons to reflect upon particular implications of custom, language, and intercultural dimensions of the meetings (Bennett 1998: 12-24; Ryen, 2002, 2011), particularly in studies such as this, when aspects of nationality, culture and language are primary concerns. The medium is another factor that may influence communication. The audio recordings were transcribed into printable text. This involves not only a change in the medium, *per se*, but also possible losses, modification or 'filtration' of some information.

Furthermore, information may have been lost or distorted during the transcription, translation and interpretation of the recordings. The interviews and transcripts are in Swedish and Spanish, but the thesis is written in English. When quoting the participants I have translated extracts into English. I believe that my insights into both Swedish and Chilean culture, and linguistic constructs, are well grounded, and I have not felt linguistically limited or that communication failed in the interview situations, during the transcription, or during subsequent interpretation of the accounts. However, this does not mean that I understood all the interviewees' communications as intended. As already mentioned, many filters may potentially modify a transferred message, including the language used to communicate, the media, translation and interpretation. I strove to be consistently, attentive, reflective and aware of the potential difficulties in communicative situations, and I hold it to be possible that such an approach minimizes the risks of potential communicative problems. However, it should also be acknowledged that such problems cannot be eliminated.

3.2 Working with Interviews

Understanding and meaning are created in several phases of a research project, including the initial phases when scanning the research field and considering the aims, research questions and methods in relation to thoughts about anticipated results (and providing scope to identify and address unanticipated results, as far as possible). The preparations, reflection, interpretation of results, meaning making and analysis underlying the thesis are all part of that ongoing process of creating understanding and

meaning.²³ Language, interaction and communication are three factors that are highly important in the process of creating understanding and meaning. According to lexical definitions: 'language' is "the use by humans of a system of sounds and words to communicate"; 'interaction' is defined as "communicat[ing] with somebody" and in such interaction "things have an effect on each other"; while 'communication' is "an exchange of information, sharing of ideas/feelings".²⁴ Hence, an interaction can in accordance with these definitions be described as an exchange of information, ideas and feelings through language that has an effect on the communicating individual and another individual. This summarizes the processes and the purposes of interviews, in which there are exchanges of information, ideas and feelings through language and the activity is likely to have some effect on both the interviewer and interviewee. Furthermore, interaction, communication and language were also central topics in the participants' narratives and thus have been considered in the coding and development of themes.

An interview is a situated communicative event, characterized by interaction, in which numerous factors, including the interpersonal relationship(s), communicative situation and language may affect the situation and outcome. When interpreting and meaning-making a person relies on previous knowledge and his or her linguistic competence, and the results from those elaborations also depend on how certain knowledge has been developed. Thus, it is important for the researcher to consider his or her choices of methodology carefully (Kvale, 1996; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007; Ryen, 2004).

The interpreter needs not only knowledge of grammar, but also sufficient semantic and pragmatic understanding to interpret meaning and relate context to that meaning (Reyes 2000:53-54). Analysis and interpretation are close concepts that are sometimes used interchangeably when referring to the process whereby knowledge is generated from the construction of meaning. However, when Kvale defines interpretation he stresses that it is characterized by "extensive and deeper interpretations of meaning, inspired by hermeneutical philosophy" (Kvale, 1996:201). From this perspective the researching subject is involved in the interpretation, understanding, and creation of meaning, that is, someone who brings perspectives into an understanding. This is also how I regard the relations in the interview situation and the processes of interpretation and analysis of those interviews as empirical material.

²³ Literature on interview methodology emphasizes these aspects to varying degrees. Kvale (1996) considers such aspects of understanding and meaning-making at length when emphasizing the different phases of interpretation. See for example Kvale, 1996: 12, 87-89.

²⁴ Definitions of the words interaction, communication and language were obtained from *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* at www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/.

A Narrative Approach

Qualitative interview methodology was chosen for this study, assuming that it would facilitate interpretation of individual narratives due to its recognized potential to contribute to in-depth understanding of focal phenomena and the perception of diversity and complexity when multiple narratives are considered (Kvale 1996:7). This implies that individual narratives may be able to communicate something beyond individual experiences. Thus, although there is no attempt to generalize or quantify *per se* in the thesis, the subjectivity does not exclude the possibility to detect recurrent aspects. The individual narratives examined were communicated through qualitative interviews to me as an interviewer, then subjected to several stages of interpretation, meaning-making and analyses. This is analogous to the processes involved when individuals modify their system of meaning in order to make sense of and understand their world (Rudestam & Newton 2007:35). From this perspective knowledge is considered temporary, relative and incomplete; an iterative process in which new knowledge is constantly created as new experiences and meanings are added to previous understanding. In addition to subjective aspects of experience, the context or what the person having the experience at that moment in time embraces is also important for the understanding that is developed (Gadamer 2002/1960: 149-150). An individual's narrative is thus built on experiences that are given meaning before they are stored as memory and as such they are part of the individual's life-world and contribute to his or her biography (Jarvis, 2009).

The position adopted in the thesis is that people are “narrative beings” who are constantly negotiating and recreating identities through narrative actions. Although there are several tracks within narrative theory there is generally an emphasis on interpretation, recognition of subjectivity and the idea that humans structure their experiences through narratives (Robertson 2010:224). This implies that the stories people tell are subjective, selected, situated and socially constructed, and they not only reflect the actions in themselves, but identities also come into being through the constructed narratives (Robertson 2010: 220-222). Nevertheless, as they are parts of a larger collective society the individuals' narratives also communicate something more about culture and society beyond that subjectivity (Robertson 2010:225). In line with Robertson's description, narratives are understood in the thesis as people's ways of interpreting and structuring their understanding of the world (Robertson 2010: 230).

When sharing one's narrative in an interview situation, as the participants in the study have done, there is both an assumed intention and an assumed mutuality of interest. However, those situations are highly dependent on language and communication. One example of that is found in how the

participants in the telling of their narratives have strived at communicating the many dimensions of their individual experiences. Those communicated experiences have been attentively listened to, interpreted and analysed in relation to the research aim and questions addressed in the thesis. In the process they have inevitably passed through multiple 'filters', or modified in attempts to surmount various communicative challenges, before being communicated and subsequently included in new narratives.

Within the linguistic and semantic field of pragmatism it is argued that linguistic and grammatical competence in a language is not sufficient for using language to communicate. This is because an expression also needs to make semantic sense i.e. when making meaning an individual is dependent on a pragmatic capacity that either allows or hinders a construction of meaning in expressions (Reyes 2000:24-25). Pragmatism thus illuminates how language and context-dependency act as filters in the making of meaning in communicative situations. The processes of meaning-making become recreations and as such reflect a constructivist approach to knowledge. Thus, understanding is considered in this thesis to be constructed, situational, temporary, incomplete, subjective, and developed through iterative processes of oscillations between the known and the new. Gadamer (2002/1960: 143) alludes to this constructivist dimension of knowledge when claiming that the way a text speaks to the interpreter will vary and we "understand differently, to the extent we understand at all". Understanding is thus provisional, in a constant state of becoming, and everything that aims at an understanding is in itself a reproductive interpretation that leads to something new (Gadamer 2002/1960:110; 128-129, 143). In line with this reasoning it is not possible to completely communicate all the dimensions of an experience. What remains possible is one's own understanding of the interpreted and recreated. However, that incompleteness and subjectivity is not necessarily problematic. They can also be considered sources of information that enrich understanding of the diversity and complexity of people's experiences.

Interpretation and Analysis

Recognition of the incompleteness and subjectivity in the exchange of information and development of understandings implies that there are inevitably some blank spots in communicative situations. The position taken in this thesis is that the considered communications represent reconstructions of experiences as they were recalled and communicated by the participants in narratives. The interpretation of the accounts and the further analysis in relation to the aim and research questions are also to some extent dependent on the researcher, who as a researching subject becomes part of the construction of new information. However, after critical

examination of one's potential biases the subjectivity may not necessarily impair the research project. Instead, a researcher with a rich insight into the contexts of the study may contribute to enrichment of the created understanding. These aspects are further discussed in the section *Insider and Outsider*.

In the process of identifying and coding themes for interpretation and analysis three major temporal phases surfaced in the empirical material, related to the order of questions in the interview guide, following a before, during and after the sojourn scheme. When the participants spoke of the preparations for their sojourn and recalled their arrival in the host-country, their reflections are characterized by first impressions of being overwhelming and accompanying feelings of disorientation and sudden disjuncture due to being unable to read or decode the surroundings. Their time in the host-country, during their sojourns, was also characterized by challenges in everyday activities and situations that appeared as new or unfamiliar. Both disjuncture and challenge refer to impressions that to some degree disturb harmony, but I use them here to distinguish different phenomena. Disjuncture is applied when referring to the participants' descriptions of the sudden impact of their first impressions (see Chapter 4 for more details). The word challenge is applied in the thesis when referring to experiences during the stay that are described as more prolonged processes (Chapter 5). For example, communicative problems in the first meetings caused shocking disjuncture while communicative problems during the stay were described as interaction challenges that they addressed over time. Questions regarding the participants' experiences of returning home prompted responses regarding aspects of change, potential long-lasting effects and how the participants relate to the experiences in their present lives (Chapter 6). There were also examples of disjuncture in the reflections on the homecoming, but the focus of analysis presented in Chapter 6 is on the contributions of the sojourners' experiences to changes in more general terms and their implications on understandings of self and the other.

Coding and Themes for Analysis

The semi-structured questions in conjunction with the open, collaborative approach to the interviews generated empirical material that encompasses complexity and diversity in examples and speech-topics but there are also recurrent aspects and associated themes. All the themes for analysis are empirically derived and some were chosen due to their topicality, some because they were recurrent and others because they reflect diversity.

Themes related to the three distinct temporal phases (before, during and after the sojourn) clearly emerged in a first round of coding. It was not surprising to detect this pattern, as it mirrors the scheme used in the

interview guide. However, the experiences the participants referred to also clearly differed in some respects during the three phases. These three phases, together with the research aim and questions, were considered in subsequent preparation of transcripts and throughout the process of coding and choosing themes.

Several keywords, such as worry, uncertainty, fear, distant, unexpected, different and shock were denoted as significant in the participants' recollections of preconceptions, arrival in the host country and first impressions of meetings during the initial ('before sojourn') phase. The codes showed that this phase was highly disjunctive, due to preconceptions based on ideas about strangeness, unfamiliarity or otherness, loss of comfort, and steps toward the resolution of associated problems.

Three major themes were identified in accounts of the 'during the stay' phase, many of which described experiences about everyday routines and reflections on differences and sameness, and how the participants experienced such situations as challenging. One of these themes related to experiences of meetings with people, what it was like to communicate and interact, and experiences from the homestay. Another related to the experiences of participating in education and a third to comparisons in us-and-them terms. However, this third theme proved to be present in accounts of experiences at multiple levels in all phases, so it was not singled out as a specific theme but was dealt with as an integrated component of other themes.

Keywords associated with the third phase, 'after the sojourn', related to descriptions of sojourners' perception of themselves as different or changed, or to the importance of the experience. Topics that related in some way to feelings of being different and changed, having discovered new ways of being and doing, as well as new ways of thinking about one's future and possibilities in life, were coded as examples of transformative experiences.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were not confined to a particular phase of the research project. In the thesis there were clear reasons to be continuously aware of and reflect upon ethical issues throughout the project as an integral part of the research process.

Since this study concerns relatively young people, focusing on aspects of experiences and learning that may be intimately involved in identity making and cultural implications of intercultural meetings, there were clearly elements that called for thorough ethical review, and constant sensitivity. An example of this was the potential risk of turning the participants into representatives of ethnicity and culture, thereby contributing to a stereotyping of people, nations and culture.

At all stages the applied procedures were consistent with relevant clauses of the *Swedish Law 2003:460*, concerning ethical aspects of research involving humans,²⁵ and regulations that apply to Sweden published by the *Swedish Research Council*²⁶. The planned research was reviewed by the local *Regional Ethical Research Board* in Umeå²⁷ which announced on the 18th of November 2011 that the study did not breach the *Ethical Review Act*, or require any further ethical consideration (although the Board noted that it took no account of the part of the study involving Chileans in Chile). The Board suggested that all participants should be given clear, distinct information about what to do if they decided either to participate or not to participate. In Chile there are no equivalents of the *Swedish Ethical Research Board* that vet planned research projects.²⁸

In the following sections the ethical considerations related to the study are described in more detail, paying particular attention to the implications of the intercultural context, north-south relations, interview situation and insider-outsider perspective.

The Intercultural Context

A meeting between people is always to some extent a meeting between strangers, who in intercultural theory are defined as being simultaneously physically near and remote due to perceived differences in values and ways of doing things (Gudykunst & Kim 2003: 22-23). The intercultural context is an inherent aspect of an international sojourn and the meetings in sojourns are meetings between strangers that, to varying degrees, are positioned in situations outside of their comfort zones. In the meetings with the unfamiliar values, norms, attitudes, and opinions about normality and the deviant may lead to reflection and questioning not only of the new and unfamiliar, but also of one's own accustomed ways of doing and thinking.

This study was carried out in two national contexts, which raised several ethical issues to consider early in the project, regarding for example: how the participants would see themselves and the other, how they would relate to identity and culture, and how they would express values, opinions and attitudes that could potentially be ethically significant.

²⁵ Svensk författningssamling, (Sfs 2003-460) http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/Dokument-Lagar/Lagar/Svenskforfattningssamling/Lag-2003460-om-etikproving_sfs-2003-460/, and Vetenskapsrådet (2011:22) *Good Research Practice*. www.vr.se/download/18_3a36c20d133af0c1295800030/1340207445948/Good+Research+Practice+3.2011+webb.pdf.

²⁶ Vetenskapsrådet, www.vr.se.

²⁷ Etikprövningsnämnden, <http://www.epn.se/sv/start/startside/>.

²⁸ Information on issues that relate to ethical regulations concerning research in the Chilean context was communicated in 2011 by the Faculty of Education at the University of Concepción.

In addition, it was recognized that power-relations could influence the meetings, the arrangements of exchanges and people's access to activities associated with the focal north-south sojourns. These aspects clearly warranted careful attention. It was also imperative to maintain awareness that intercultural aspects could influence me both as a researcher and in the writing of the thesis.

North-South Relations

The use of pseudonyms was one strategy that was applied to strengthen the participants' confidentiality. Ethnicity could have been treated similarly, for the same reason, since the total population of potential participants proved to be relatively small. Thus, replacing their nationality by invented names of nations could have further strengthened confidentiality. It may also have freed the text from connotations associated with specific nation names and the associated north-south relations, which may have influenced both me as a researcher and readers' responses. In the terminology of postcolonial theory, as expressed for example by Edward Said (1993/78) and Frantz Fanon (1997/71), Chile and Sweden can be understood as representing opposite geographical, economical and perhaps to some extent cultural poles (oriental South and occidental West, respectively). Some of those connotations in interpreting the data could have been avoided by using fictive names of nations when interpreting the data. However, I consider such aspects of power in international and intercultural relations to be important and it was reasoned that the potential implications of the north-south dichotomies could be dealt with by maintaining this awareness and a critical postcolonial perspective. Thus, it was decided that there were minimal risks of openness about ethnicity causing research problems. However, attempts were made to minimize potential risks associated with the north-south dichotomy by constantly maintaining an open, reflective and critical approach to the implications of power aspects at all times when collecting and processing the empirical material, writing the thesis, and speaking about the work, the participants and the results.

The Interview-Situation

When considering the topics that the participants would be invited to comment upon – their personal impressions of experiences, feelings, values, attitudes and opinions about themselves and the other - it was assumed that there was a risk that they might experience them as troublesome. This was addressed by striving to maintain awareness of the potential problem, attentiveness, sensitivity to moods, a humble and open approach, and sincere interest in getting to know the participants' points of view during the

interviews. In addition, as mentioned, semi-structured questions were used to invite the participants to engage in and develop the conversation, thereby minimizing risks that they would feel uncomfortable. This approach also allowed the participants to reflect upon and reconsider aspects of their experiences while being interviewed. For example, when opening with a general question such as, “How would you describe the meeting with your host-family?” the participants could choose the aspects to bring up for conversation. Several of them said that they felt comfortable and good about recalling their memories and speaking about their experiences. Hence, there have been no reasons to suspect that anyone felt uncomfortable in the interview situation or about having shared his or her thoughts. After finishing the interviews the interviewees were again reminded that they should feel free to contact the researcher and report if they subsequently regretted something, wanted to modify their accounts, or withdraw completely. None of them did, and there are no apparent reasons to suspect that any of them would have felt intimidated or hindered from doing so if they had wanted.

In a professional research interview the interviewer and the interviewee are in different, unequal positions. There is a risk that the interviewee will strive to be obliging and respond in ways that he or she assumes that the interviewer would appreciate, and according to Forsman (2002:27) this risk is greater when the interviewee is in some way in a position of dependence or when the interviewer is understood as having more status. I reflected upon such aspects of the meetings when I was planning the study. I thought about my role in the meetings, how I would appear in the eyes of the interviewees, and the potential implications of, for example, appearances and backgrounds. I particularly considered the potential effects of my personal characteristics as a white, western, middle-aged woman on the interview situation and the meetings with the young Swedes and Chileans. In the meetings with the Chileans I considered it possible that differences in ethnicity and nationality could lead to undesirable associations with historical power relations that often reflect unequal and oppressive relations. It thus seemed important to consider how to act to avoid the most obvious risks of unequal positions. Whether or not those efforts were successful is difficult to ascertain, but I have maintained awareness of the risks and aimed to counteract them to avoid such inequalities or associations impairing communication or biasing the conversation.

As both the Chileans and Swedish participants used jargon and colloquial phrases without seeming to think that it would disturb the communication or my understanding, they signalled that they were not bothered by an age, cultural or linguistic gap. This also indicated that the participants regarded the distance between us as fairly short, possibly at least partly because I had worked for 12 years in upper secondary education, during which I had

developed relations with numerous young adults. This may have facilitated the development of relaxed interactions, communication and trust in the interview situation. After the interviews several participants confirmed that it had been enriching to speak about their experiences, stating for example, “I have never actually spoken about my experiences at this length before” or, “It was actually very nice to recall all these memories”. It is possible that being paid full attention and met with sincere interest is a positive sensation, and recalling one’s memories and developing in-depth thoughts about the experiences might be experienced as enriching to one’s personal self. If so, the interviews may have been valuable not only for the research project, but also for the participants as individuals and their continuing subjectification.

The Insider-Outsider Perspective

Cross-cultural interviewing and potential implications of being an insider and an outsider in intercultural meetings are discussed in literature on interview methodology (Ryen, 2002). Ryen argues that when entering an unfamiliar culture, and meeting with the other, oneself becomes strange, or the stranger/the Other. She discusses how the interview situation (and meetings with the Other generally), may be influenced by social positions, and more specifically the degree to which interviewees regard the interviewer as an ‘insider’ or ‘outsider’. Differences in position may be visibly manifested through reactions to people’s ways of dressing, haircuts, gestures and speech, but also less visibly manifested in hierarchical status signals, the use of pauses, and cultural impressions (Ryen 2002: 338-339; Ryen, 2004). Ryen emphasises the importance of reflection on implications of melting in, doing as the other, being like them, and acting like them. She reasons that it is valuable to ask oneself questions such as the following. What are the insider and outsider positions like? What are the presumed pros and cons, and the potential problems associated with the positions? Being perceived as either an insider or outsider has potential pros and cons for interviewees, and people are always to some extent both insiders and outsiders in the eyes of the Other. For example, the sojourners may have seen me as an insider to some degree, because of my teaching background, having taught some of them, and my involvement in arrangements of the sojourns. However, other characteristics (not having been on a sojourn myself, and the differences in age, culture and language) may have placed me more in an outsider’s position.

Anderson & Herr (1999) also discuss potential problems related to insider/outsider positions. In their view it is essential to reflect upon one’s insider bias and strive to become an outsider, to establish a distance from one’s pre-knowledge. The position taken in the thesis is that any reconstruction of experiences is built on incomplete and subjective

messages, and as the researching subject is part of the interview situation and brings his or her own pre-knowledge into the interaction he or she can only become a distanced outsider to a limited (and unknowable) extent. Furthermore, the researching subject is considered in both qualitative research interview theory (Kvale, 1996) and this thesis a valuable resource that contributes rich insights into the focal matters. The potential biases in the thesis are addressed, as fully as possible, through transparent reflection on the biasing factors and ethical dimensions. The stance taken in the thesis is that complete distancing from bias or insider positions as expressed in pre-knowledge and subjectivity is impossible. It can even be questioned whether the outsider position is necessarily advantageous. For example, being much older than the participants positions me as a researcher as an outsider, which could potentially complicate the interactions, and both communications and their interpretation in subsequent analysis. It could, for instance, 'filter' the topics raised and ways in which they are both expressed and understood. There is also a risk that the age gap and having taught some of the sojourners could trigger accustomed student-teacher patterns of behaviour, reflecting previous assessed-assessor power and status relations. Eliminating such risks was regarded as difficult, but attempts were made to minimize them, including emphasising the sincere interest in the participants' unique and individual accounts of experiences.

Implications of expectations were also considered in relation to the insider/outsider positions. Having met some of the students as their teacher in courses, having been involved in organizing some of the sojourns and having met with all of them at some point before or during their sojourns together with my present research interest in internationalization and study abroad experiences could potentially make the participants think that they were expected to speak in positive terms about their experiences and exchanges, and about meetings in international sojourns in general. To counter such risks I emphasized my outsider position, for example by informing them about my critical approach to the research field, that I was no longer working as a teacher, and that I was no longer involved in developing exchanges. Emphasizing the importance of criticality and objectivity, and stressing my sincere interest in getting to know their unique experiences were some of the ways in which I actively strove to become the outsider. I encouraged the participants to feel free to bring up any topic or aspect, positive or negative, and that in their recollections of their memories there could be no wrong answers. I cannot be certain that they never felt pressed, forced or indebted to give information that would potentially please me due to previous teacher-student relations. However, the participants appeared to take note of the encouragements to be critical and honest, stressing that positive remarks were their personal opinions rather than statements made to please me. My comments on these issues were intended

to establish trust and confidence in the sojourners to express any thought they may, and invite them to lead the way and thus cover as many angles as possible.

4. Disjuncture in First Impressions

Chapter 4 is divided into three parts. Section 4.1, *An Imagined Otherness and Sameness*, centres on the participants' preconceptions, how they imagined the other and the other's context before their sojourn and possible influences of such ideas on the initial meetings. Section 4.2 *Experiencing a Loss of Comfort*, focuses on their experiences from the first meetings while section 4.3, *Experiences of Leaving and Arriving*, summarises the results and the analysis presented in the chapter. As many of the initial situations that sojourners encounter are in various ways new, unexpected, strange or demanding they are experienced as difficult. In my interpretation the concepts disjuncture, harmony and disturbed harmony (see Chapter 2) are used to describe the experiences of the students.

4.1 Imagined Otherness and Sameness

Sweden and the Latin American countries are referred to by the sojourners as geographically and culturally distant places. For example, one of them (Tintaglia) states that people generally have little awareness of such places so, they need a reason to visit them. For the participants, the reason was a sojourn.

All the participants have described expectations they had prior to their sojourn. They imagined the other's context as different and they looked forward to encountering that difference. For example, several of the Chileans had a stereotypical idea of the Swedes being cold and aloof. Cami recalls that the physical meeting was different and less "piel"²⁹ than she was used to in her Chilean culture. However, most of the sojourners noted that their stereotypical images of the other were contested and proved wrong soon after arrival in the host country. Sara recalls that on her arrival at the airport her non-Spanish speaking host hugged her and greeted her in Spanish. She explains that these acts made her feel welcome and they were not only unexpected but also collided with her preconception of the Swedes being cold and remote. Elias also recalls being surprised by the unexpected reception.

[o] ne has to consider that the European is hard-headed, like very cold and, not so much piel. So coming to a country you have never been to and they receive you like that, it was a very good impression, from the start. (Elias)

Swedes and Chileans alike recall how they were surprised by being expected, welcomed and well received. This was contrary to their preconceptions of

²⁹ The Spanish word 'piel' means 'skin' but several of the Chilean sojourners use the word when addressing a feeling of being personal, emotionally close and affectionate.

how the other would interact, thus their stereotypical images were contested very early in the sojourn. In these examples of a positive shift, the participants show to they were receptive to that change and some adopted a new point of view of the other or a different attitude to the meetings.

The study of the initial meetings also shows that the stereotypical images were not all about the other. Madi, for example, expressed stereotypical images of her own background.

I had that impression that they would receive us like, because it is like in Europe we are known to be thievish, so I wanted to break with that idea (--) [i]n Europe they say that we, Chileans, we are thievish, and things like that, but in fact [the Swedes] thought that way about [other cultures]. (Madi)

Madi further comments on how such ideas about a Chilean character stem from comments by Chileans who have been abroad and then returned.

[t]hey say that, for example in Spain, when my parents went there for vacations they saw a sign saying; - if you see a Chilean robbing, just leave him, it is part of his culture, something like that (...) and in Stockholm too, the Chileans have a bad reputation. So I told myself that in Sweden they will also think like that, or, I mean, in the town where I will stay, but, no, no it was nothing like that. (Madi)

The negative stereotype of her own culture made Madi wonder about how she would be received by the Swedes and those feelings of uneasiness made her want to contest the negative image. Once in Sweden she was surprised to find that the Swedes she met were not familiar with that stereotypical image of her culture. However, at the same time she learned that there were others that the Swedes thought of in such terms. The participants' fairly vague preconceptions of the other, together with negative stereotypes, appear to have caused worries before meeting and uneasiness in the initial meetings. As many of those stereotypes and worrisome preconceptions were soon contested and proved invalid there were generally few examples of experiences of disturbed harmony due to disjuncture related to such experiences.

The participants' rucksacks of previous experiences, including stereotypes, were contested in the actual meetings at various levels. The Swedish and Chilean participants' experiences are separately considered in more detail below.

Swedes about the Chileans

The Swedish sojourners said that before their sojourn they knew little or nothing about Latin America and that it was difficult for them to distinguish Chilean culture from Latin American culture in general. Most of them tried to picture what they were about to meet and recalled that to a large extent

limited and mostly negative news coverage and films were the principle sources of their knowledge about the Latin American region. They tell that their quite limited, negative and generalized picture was mostly built on images of violence, drugs and dangers. But some also stated that they pictured people as being welcoming, open and nice. One way of understanding the conflicting perceptions based on negative media reports and the positive counter-image of a welcoming people was, as Kim explains, to reason that there must also be room for some kind of “normality”. That is, a harmony and an assumed sameness in everyday middle-class life.

I mean, you always have some kind of picture of what things might be like but it was a quite negative image, the one you get from media with all the drug dealers and gangs and FARC [a revolutionary guerrilla group], among all other things, so, well, I thought that it is probably quite dangerous, so, I guess that was my immediate picture (...) but I had like an image of people being much nicer and more open than what they are in Sweden, a bit more laid back. But I had no, like, no idea of what the cities would be like or the societies, or how they lived their lives, because I guessed that not everyone would live like those poor, badly nourished children that appear on TV or, those drug dealers who blow up people, there must, hopefully, also be some normal, middle-class. But I had no idea about how they lived, I mean, their lives, their everyday life, not a clue.
(Kim)

In Kim’s reasoning the normality was built around an image of what was known or most familiar. In her case that normality was a society in which people live normal, middle-class lives. The conditions of that life could possibly be somewhat different, but following Kim’s reasoning, difference is on the whole attributed to small groups. Kim links her experience of a middle-class life to safety and includes most Swedes in that context. Thus, the assumed dangers in the Chilean context were not assumed to be representative of how people in general live their everyday lives. Instead it was reasoned that most people would not be very different from herself and the assumed dangers would be associated with certain marginalized groups in society. Looking for sameness, the sojourners appear to have worked on overcoming pre-sojourn worries and uneasiness, and replacing those feelings with harmony in comfort, trust and familiarity. Generally the Swedish participants did not seem to fear that they would meet the negative media images of Latin American societies. A possible interpretation of this reasoning is that the participants’ normative stereotypes were not firmly grounded in them. That might have allowed them to reason about the imagined society and culture from an in-group position, projecting their own reality upon the other. It then became possible for them to argue, in line with Kim’s reasoning, that there must be some kind of normality, that is, an everyday life reminiscent of their own. Thus, in these early encounters they appeared to apply their own life-world as a norm and reference point, interpreting the difference in the other in relation to their own culture.

As already mentioned, some anticipated differences, related to dangers and fears, were attributed by the sojourners to small and marginalized groups in society, while other cultural differences were imagined to be represented by the majority group and often attributed to nationality. In the Swedish sojourners' references to differences there is an othering³⁰ that coexists with reasoning about normality and sameness. The othering of the Chileans is found in descriptions of imagining people in a distant place living a totally different reality, and Tintaglia tells that the thought of going there and getting to know them was interesting. Bettan also recalls that, "[Chilean culture] seemed so far away from Swedish culture and that was interesting enough in itself". Thus, while the participants found sameness in the ideas about normality and a shared experience of being human they also expected those everyday lives to be very different. This illustrates a general risk that when relying on one's own culture as a norm some superficial differences may be recognized while some differences may be overlooked through being interpreted in relation to one's familiar categories and assuming that fundamentally all people are essentially the same, that is, just humans. As Bennett (1998:27) states, some aspects of values might then be mistaken for universal desires. Kim's understanding of a middle-class life representing a majority, safety and the "normal" is an example of how one's own context may be projected on an understanding of the other, and the other's context, and as such taken to be universally shared. The contradictory image of people and their contexts being simultaneously alike and totally different might reflect a moral and socio-politically accepted or 'correct' idea that all humans have equal value so all people are essentially the same, regardless of their situation. On the other hand, it might also reflect the participants' personal interest in having the intercultural experience and their expectations about the transition into a different culture in another country.

In addition to discussing cultural dimensions of expected differences and sameness the sojourners also reflected on differences and sameness stemming from the large geographical distance between the countries.

What one knows, that is like, things that are in Europe and the USA and, well a little about Asia too, some about Africa, the Middle East but, South America! That, we know nothing of (...) [And] some of the world's largest cities are to be found in South America, at the same time as there is such a limited interest in that part of the world in our [Swedish] culture. (Alexander)

This extract reveals some important aspects of what is considered remote and close. Sweden and Chile are geographically far away from each other, but the Swedish participants did not perceive other equally faraway places as being equally distant. Alexander asserts that this was due to the Swedes

³⁰ The word 'othering' is here applied with when addressing how difference is attributed to for example another person or culture.

having little interest in the Latin American region. An interpretation of Alexander's and others' reasoning is that the perceived distance of a place is influenced not only by geographical distance but also, in line with cosmopolitan thinking interest in the other. Karin reasons in a similar way about distance.

It was very exciting, because it is so extremely, (...) I knew so very little about South America, and it just seemed so, well there is so very little about that in the media, I don't know, it is just so very distant and separate. In a way it is like a world of its own. So, that made it very interesting, to get to know more and see something totally new (...) But also because nowadays everyone goes to Asia, now even families with children travel to Asia, Australia and New Zealand, and it is so extremely popular that it feels extremely exploited. Well, that is also a reason why I chose to go back to South America, well partly because I want to do something that not everyone else does. (Karin)

Compared to other equally distant places, such as Asian countries, Chile (and South America generally) not only seemed more distant and different but also "like a world of its own" and going there implied venturing into the unknown. Karin's comments illustrate that thoughts about accessibility and the frequency of people travelling to a certain place may influence people's perceptions of places as either distant and different or close and alike. They also indicate that a place may seem more distant and different if it is not exploited by tourism. Conversely, a place that is strongly associated with tourism and regarded as generally easy to visit may be regarded as less unfamiliar and described more in terms of closeness and sameness.

Chileans about the Swedes

Similarly to the Swedes' preconceptions of Chile, the Chileans described perceptions of Sweden as being distant, different and peripheral to the rest of Europe. For example, Elias comments that like Scotland and Russia the Nordic places are rarely considered when Chileans plan a trip abroad. When people visit Europe, he says, they instead go to more southern parts.

The Chileans indicated that geographical distance and travelling far was an important aspect of the whole experience for them. In addition to the facts that Sweden was geographically far away and not a common place for people to visit Elias commented that being young and inexperienced also contributed to the significance of the experience.

Like the Swedes, the Chileans said that they knew little about the other and they also based their preconceptions on mediated sources such as others' experiences abroad, media reports and generalized images of those other people, who the participants occasionally called gringos, Westerners or Europeans.

When imagining the Swedish context several of the Chileans started by looking for sameness in things they felt familiar with, in terms of culture, geography or buildings. For example, German settlers in Chile have had a significant cultural influence, which contributed to a generalized image of Europe, Europeans, Westerners and gringos. Being geographically close to Germany, some imagined that the Swedes and Sweden would remind them of their stereotypical image of Germans and Germany. If so, Sweden would, as summarized by Gonzalo, be pretty, orderly and nice. Others, for example Pelusa, imagined that they would encounter the mediated image from films reflecting modernity in the western, busy cities with modern buildings, hectic people and heavy traffic. There are also recurrent references to Sweden being thought of as a safe and highly developed country, wintry and cold, and the Swedes as orderly, blond, not very hospitable, serious, aloof and rigid. Due to these images, several of the participants thought that they would perhaps not be very well received in Sweden.

[P]erhaps they would be less hospitable, because, I don't know, more rigid or more grave because foreigners here are surprised about how we frequently touch and hug, greet each other with hugs and kisses or our closeness when speaking to each other, those are all examples that make a difference, and we thought that perhaps they would be, perhaps we would not be so very well received when we were there (Sol).

Physical interaction is described as common in Chilean culture and it was not thought of as being a custom in Sweden. Thus, the Chileans feared that such differences would hinder them from connecting to people and developing feelings of being included. Before going they had been advised not to be too affectionate and physical in their interaction with Swedes. Elias expected that not being very “piel”, keeping a distance and perhaps not using much body-language would impair conversation and make them less fluent.

I asked several of the [Chilean] teachers and, basically, what they told me was that they, [the Swedes] are not much piel, that they are a bit xx, and that they are distanced and that they keep a distance when having a conversation, it is not a very fluent conversation. (Elias)

Following Elias's reasoning, the degree of closeness or distance in the meeting and the conversations are examples of factors that might either facilitate or complicate interaction, and not knowing what it would be like caused uneasiness.

[H]ere they told us that over there people are different. Here in Chile (...) people are affectionate and loving, they hug each other, friends and others and, even if we do not know each other we tend to be more like that. And they told us that there [in Sweden] we should try not to be so much like that. Because they are different. So we went wondering, what will they be like? What will happen and we were also like, worried, because we thought that over there they would be like, more orderly. (Mia)

This example shows how uncertainty about the communicative situation and the different thoughts about oneself and what the other would be like contributed to uneasiness about how to behave and what to expect from the meetings. Gudykunst & Kim (2003:362) argue that when "thinking-as-usual" does not work it puts the stranger, in this case the sojourner, in a state of uncertainty that is accompanied by anxiety. That is, disturbance of harmony and an experience of uncertainty caused by disjuncture may lead to feelings of anxiety. This is reflected in Mia's questions "What will they be like?" and "What will happen?". She worried about the difficulties that the imagined differences could lead to. Her uneasiness and anxiety based on uncertainty about the implications of the assumed differences indicate that even anticipation of the transition from the harmony in the home environment to the unfamiliar can create disjuncture.

There are no signs of the sojourners having questioned or had any doubts about the accuracy of their stereotypical images before going. However, in some cases the stereotypes were contested as early as at their arrival.

[T]hey had told us about a few things. That they don't greet with a kiss and that they are cold, so they painted a kind of picture for us, a picture of what people are like over there. But then we arrived and, actually it was not like that picture, of them being cold. (Sara)

This quotation shows how Sara's preconceptions of the other had developed from common perceptions of the other held by people in her home environment, interpreting the other in relation to themselves and their own context. The Swedes were portrayed as different, through being less physical in interactions and less close than Chileans. In such an interpretation the other is not understood on its own terms but rather in relation to what is familiar to oneself. Before going to Sweden the Chileans intended to act in accordance with what they had been informed about Swedish culture, but the Swedes proved to be both close and affectionate, and not at all as aloof and different as imagined. Thus, like some of the Swedes, some of the Chileans argue that humans have a shared identity, and people are just people. Both Mia and Sol reasoned that societies may differ, but if there is interest in interacting there is a good chance to establish fruitful interaction. These references to pluralism and interest reflect a cosmopolitan attitude to the encounters, recognizing and embracing diversity, and enabling interaction and learning from the encounters through mutual interest.

The Chileans worried to some degree about not being well received in Sweden, but most of them were not very anxious about the quality of the interaction, even if connecting and interacting with the Swedes had been difficult. Despite carrying some stereotypes based on negative images of

what they might face in Sweden, such thoughts do not seem to have weakened their interest in sojourning there.

4.2 Experiencing a Loss of Comfort

The participants said that they were not particularly experienced travellers and few of them socialized with people from other countries. For most of them the sojourn involved not only going to an unfamiliar place but also immersion in unfamiliar situations, and numerous novelties. It may therefore be argued that the sojourn involved a shift away from their accustomed everyday life, that is, away from the familiarity of their home environment, i.e. comfort zone, to a zone of uncertainty in an unfamiliar context. The sojourners frequently referred to their experience of the transition from one extreme of the planet to another and as described by Mia and Sara confusion from not knowing what was going to happen or what to expect. Analysis of such aspects may contribute to an understanding of the impact of the concrete, physical transition, thus it is important to consider carefully the participants' descriptions of their diverse meetings with the unfamiliar. Hence, the focus of attention in this section is on the sojourners' reflections on the experience of a loss of comfort, how they faced the new situation and how they resolved the many unexpected difficulties that arose in various situations.

Making a Good Impression

When asked about their first impressions the sojourners recalled various aspects of the transition and their arrival and presented an emotional and detailed description of their arrival. To a large extent these first impressions are related to the initial meetings with people and how linguistic and communicative uncertainty caused great anxiety and confusion when trying to make a good first impression. Most of the sojourners recall an impression of the arrival as characterized by exhaustion from the long flight and the overwhelming, energy-sapping shock of not knowing how to respond in interactions when arriving in the new and unfamiliar contexts. In that state, and nervous about meeting with the host-family, several of them describe how they tried to pull themselves together in order to make a good first impression, to be polite and behave appropriately in the situation.

It was all so strange. It was such a strange situation, to be thrown into a family like that. I don't know but, partly, this thing about being able to behave and, then it was a different language and, many other things as well, one wasn't sure whether one was impolite or polite and nice or what the situation was like, no matter how one behaved one was unsure about how it would be interpreted (---) I thought that was very important. I wanted them to, or I wanted to behave, like,

I wanted them to think that I was good, or (...) nice, so that they wouldn't regret having me in their home. (Håkan)

The unfamiliarity and communicative challenges appear to have made Håkan uneasy, feeling that he was not in control, and not confident that he would manage to make the desired first impression of being an agreeable person. It is perhaps not particularly surprising that a person wants to make a good first impression, but despite preparing to meet some difficulties in the meetings these situations seem to have been experienced as more complex and difficult than expected. Gonzalo explains why he had tried to prepare himself to make a good first impression in that situation.

Before [going] I wanted to know what it would be like. In order not to just pop up there like a strange creature, like some wishy-washy person. (Gonzalo)

The comments by Håkan and Gonzalo illustrate the sojourners' concerns about how they would appear in the eyes of the other in the first meeting. Alexander comments on pictures of himself from the first meetings that portray these feelings of arriving and facing the difficulties related to the first meetings.

I looked totally shocked, like disconnected, because I didn't understand anything that was happening and suddenly there were a lot of Chileans and all of them speaking Spanish that I didn't understand, and I just nodded and, like, well, yes, yes, yes (...) and I tried to be polite but, it didn't work out so, instead I was just like, grunting, saying (...) thank you, thank you, thank you, like that, and they used to make fun of me because I didn't know how to be polite [in Spanish] so, instead when the host-mother had prepared breakfast in the morning I said thank you 10 times. (Alexander)

Alexander appears to have been confused and stressed about being put to the test in the initial meetings. The example illustrates what it was like for the participants to leave their comfort zones at home and be "thrown into" a new environment, in Håkan's words. They felt limited by their lack of knowledge about how things work, and their linguistic limitations hindered them from making a good first impression. The sojourners related that they had tried to imagine what the initial encounters would be like but several of them seem to have been surprised about this confusion being a major part of their first impressions. Alexander's comment on how he looked "totally shocked" in the pictures from those initial meetings can be interpreted as his way of communicating that these situations were confusing and unexpected.

The reflections on attempts to make a good first impression clearly show that exhaustion and frustration about the language barrier influenced the first meetings, or at least the participants' recollections of the meetings. The uncertainties about the situation appear to have aroused feelings in the sojourners of stress, uneasiness, anxiety, linguistic frustration and doubt about whether their behaviour would correspond with expectations. These

self-reflective examples also illustrate interesting aspects of the highly interactive nature of the three educational processes, functions and effects discussed by Biesta (2010): qualification, socialization and subjectification. Clearly, the participants felt that they were insufficiently qualified linguistically to communicate effectively. This limited and perhaps impaired their interactions, thereby adversely affecting their socialization, and ability to express their individuality (and hence subjectification). Furthermore, their exhaustion, disjuncture and anxiety (all subjective elements) had strong feedback effects on their ability to communicate and hence both their linguistic qualification and socialization. Thus, the examples vividly illustrate the strongly intertwined nature of the processes and their effects on the studied functions.

Language Disjuncture

Several of the participants have said that they thought that their learning from the sojourn would depend on whether they managed to interact with people. Many worried that they had insufficient language and communicative skills to interact as they would have liked. These communicative problems led to disjunctive feelings of discouragement, anxiety and frustration. Pelusa recollected all these feelings, together with a sense of no longer seeing the projected potential of the sojourn and being very different from the communicative person she was used to being at home. Initially this caused much frustration:

I speak so much and I have so many things to say (...) [i]t was terrible. And we went to the car and I was very nervous, I didn't know what to do, I felt a bit ill (...) I was afraid of speaking, of everything, I didn't know how to pronounce the words, everything just jammed up in my head (...) I had blocked myself so I didn't understand anything, I just wanted to go to bed and sleep (...) and I even cried a little saying to myself, "God please help me, now that I have come here, with so much eagerness and intentions to learn so many things and also to teach and show things about me and Chile and a lot of other things too and, now I cannot do that because of the language, so please", and there I was, till I fell asleep. (Pelusa)

Pelusa seems to have been perturbed both physically and emotionally by the initial experiences during her sojourn, particularly the communicative problems. For example, she mentions that she was nervous, could not think clearly and felt ill. Pelusa's account of how she perceived herself at arrival, how she felt and the sudden reactions to the impressions indicates that she was unprepared for something like that becoming her first impressions. By saying that she "even" cried she emphasizes that she did herself find the reactions as strong and somewhat surprising. The uneasiness that this situation caused can be interpreted as an example of a disturbed harmony caused by disjuncture.

In addition to the situational circumstances and communicative skills, personal characteristics appeared to influence the development of the communicative situations. Several other sojourners also spoke of feeling unsure about themselves and nervous during the first meetings, and some felt that these situations changed them. Such references indicate that personal characteristics can have complex effects on situations (and *vice versa*) that can be interpreted in terms of qualification, socialization and subjectification. Pelusa's statements also highlight how personal expectations and aims may influence experiences. She vividly recalled the frustration she felt when she was suddenly overwhelmed by the feeling of "losing it all" because of the limitations in her communicative skills and knowledge of customs and norms for interaction. Such situations of communicative disjuncture seem to have significant effects on all three educational processes. A perceived inadequacy in qualification, for example language skills, may result in discouragement accompanied by a shift in self-image. This may be uncomfortable, including for instance some loss of self-esteem, and impair socialization (in the immediate context as well as future situations) through the inability to interact in a way one is used to and wants to. Pelusa's responses clearly show that sojourners might not only react cognitively and physically but also affectively to the situations they face at arrival. They also show that communication can strongly influence how the sojourn unfolds, with significant, interactive effects on individuals' qualification, socialization and subjectification. As discussed in the following section, these effects are highly complex and the loss of harmony and discomfort accompanying the disjuncture may be key steps towards rapid advances in terms of all three functions.

The sojourners' testimonies indicate that the experiences of disjuncture caused by communicative problems were also influenced by their reception by the other. Notably, interest and inclusion proved to be important for overcoming uneasiness caused by disjuncture. This is reflected, for example, in Håkan's perception (see above) that it was difficult and challenging to decipher the codes for interaction and express himself politely in Spanish and behave correctly. Others' impressions of him were important to him when interacting, as reflected in his comments about his attempts to fit in and become included. These examples indicate that the ways the other responds and cooperates in meetings and communications are important. Thus, it may be argued that developments in terms of the educational functions are also to some extent dependent on the other's response and interest.

All participants experienced disjuncture related in some ways to communication and there are several similar examples to Håkan's experience of a transition from feelings of disjuncture and frustration to an enriching and positive experience of successful intercultural communication.

In fact, only one participant, Karin, did not manage to turn initial communicative frustration into a positive experience. Instead, the experience of not being able to establish the relations and conversations in a way she had projected strongly discouraged her. Karin describes self-reflectively how this situation affected her views of herself and her ways of acting in the communicative situations so much that she as a result of the communicative problems withdrew from some social situations. Thus, in this case the problems related to qualification (linguistic and/or other communicative skills) had major effects on her socialization (limiting her interactions), and subjectification (impairing her self-image and ability to express her individuality). It mattered little how the other received her because her door was already closed and she tells that during her stay she never overcame those communicative problems. Having been unable to develop her skills in Spanish and interact with people, she felt that she had failed in her aims. However, in the many other examples of having succeeded, other sojourners show that discovering new ways of dealing with problems and unfamiliar situations contributed to personal growth. Furthermore, even if Karin did not experience personal growth or successfully interact during her sojourn she may have developed subjectively from the experience of not having succeeded, as it may have taught her things about herself that may be useful for her when dealing with communicative disjuncture later.

In conclusion, when harmony is disturbed by linguistic disjuncture individuals in sojourns often seem to experience themselves and others in new ways. The processes of resolution appear to have potential to promote development in the educational functions as well as expanding intercultural insight. As Jarvis (2009) argues, a non-resolved disjuncture such as Karin's may also contribute to pre-conscious learning, resulting in the individual concerned living on with the disjuncture in a new state of "person in the world". Thus, there is not only conscious learning but also pre-conscious, and both resolved and non-resolved disjunctures may be educational in that they imply learning that contribute to developments in qualification, socialization and subjectification.

The Reception

It has been shown how the sojourners' first impressions and loss of comfort were accompanied by feelings of unfamiliarity and disjuncture. In general the participants recalled that positive reception by their hosts helped them pass through the initial phases of disjuncture. The hosts are generally described by the sojourners as having been attentive and inclusive. They also describe how gradually growing insights into ways in the new environment alleviated some of the difficulties. So, most sojourners experienced inclusion

and a growing feeling of being safe and taken care of. The first meetings were thus characterized by both difficulties and a warm, hospitable, affectionate, and welcoming reception. The participants had anticipated some of these things, but most of them seem to have been surprising and unexpected. The participants describe how people's interest, curiosity, and openness to invite the sojourners into their groups significantly enhanced the positive impressions of the first meetings. Some of the Swedes remarked that they appreciated the inclusion but, as Maria recalls, responding to it was also challenging sometimes. When recalling the first moments of interaction the sojourners frequently described how they tried to adjust to the new and unfamiliar situation.

I was received with such incredible warmth, and then I felt that I can take a chance and dare more. And I realized that I would probably have to do that if I wished to make myself understood, but I felt that here the atmosphere is so relaxed and welcoming, they are happy about me being here. Yes, well then I can try to find my way, it was very fun and liberating, and something that I hadn't really done that way before, and it was as if I could try out a new side of myself and be a bit less shy and that soon made me feel safe. Then everything went very well. (Bettan)

This quotation shows that the experience of her reception strengthened Bettan's self-esteem (which can be considered a key subjective element), and being met with openness made her less shy and sufficiently confident to try to communicate more, thereby enhancing her socialization, in those first experiences of a new situation. As previously mentioned, the participants seemed to have experienced the language barrier as a mayor problem. Conversely, when discovering that they could actually communicate and make themselves understood they appear to have experienced a turning point. Some remarked that mixing Swedish, Spanish, English and body language helped them to gain confidence, which helped them develop relations that soon made them feel more relaxed and at home (Mia, Pelusa, Elias, Sol). Gonzalo explains how the initial reception contributed to overcoming feelings of being out of place:

Something that surprised me was that in their home they treated me so well, I thought they were going to be more cold but no, the host-mother hugged me and drove me to all places, they were like, I do not know, more "piel", than I had expected, because one goes there thinking that people are not like that [in Sweden] (...) And when they receive you like, in the same way as we do here [in Chile] it is like, I do not know, like unexpected. And it makes you feel good (Gonzalo).

The reception is described here as unexpected, since the Swedes' attentive and affectionate response surprised Gonzalo as it conflicted with his stereotypical images of how Westerners generally interact. Gonzalo's initial outlook departed from his own culture as a norm for understanding the other. Having had his thinking contested, Gonzalo explains that this

experience of inclusion not only changed his thinking about the other but it also made him “feel good”. His testimony illustrates how socialization developed in the discovery of being able to connect to others, and may have contributed to a subjective change, as in his revision of a stereotype of Westerners.

Feeling Safe

When the sojourners recalled their meetings with the host-families several of them remarked that the interactions and homestay contributed to feelings of being safe and taken care of. The participants indicate that the reception played a major role in overcoming the initial difficulties.

When Kim recalls her meetings with people in Chile she thinks of her host-family and without hesitation says that they were, “[i]ncredibly warm (...) and one felt safe there”. The “warm” reception thus contributed to the feeling of being “safe”. Tintaglia, Gonzalo and several others also recall their host-families as being caring and affectionate and in a reflection upon inclusion, closeness and care, Karin and Lisa say that the Chileans’ embracement of others reflects an understanding of family as something larger than the nuclear family and the inclusion communicates care and recognition that others are important. According to Karin, Swedes are generally more individualistic and her impression of the Chileans being inclusive made her feel safe in her host-family. Thus, an inclusive reception seems to have a potential to contribute to feelings of closeness, which appears to foster feelings of being safe. In a notable example, Karin felt ill for several days in Chile, which she says could have resulted in severe homesickness or anxiety, but the host-family’s care prevented that and their concern made her feel safe even when she felt vulnerable. In summary, the welcoming, inclusive and warm reception seems to have contributed not only to overcoming the disturbed harmony in the initial disjuncture but also to a transition to feelings of being safe and comfortable.

Some participants expressed expectations of such feelings of being safe before going. For example, Sol recalls that her family had a notion of Sweden being a safe place with very little delinquency and she says this was comforting to her parents when letting her go to such a distant place as Sweden. Gonzalo also comments on feelings of being safe.

It is like, when you see pictures, it looks safe. It is as if you can feel it from far away (...) Yes, like the things you see from there, the things that you hear, that over there it is much safer than here. (Gonzalo)

The mediated pictures transmitted feelings of safety, so even before going Gonzalo expected to feel safe in Sweden. Others Chileans have commented on how this feeling of being safe developed from observations of everyday

life and actions of the Swedes. Madi and Mia commented on Swedes not locking the doors of their houses, that there are no security systems or alarms, that visitors knock and enter without waiting for someone to let them in, and that people leave possessions in their gardens with no apparent fear that they might be stolen. Such observations of everyday acts were contrasts that they noticed and regarded as evidence of Sweden being a safe place. The Chileans commented on safety in relation to structural or societal aspects of life in Sweden and the Swedes mostly commented on the interpersonal interaction, the hosts' concerns about them and how that contributed to feelings of being safe.

In the sojourners' narratives there were few references to situations that disturbed their overall feeling of being safe. However, in one example Maria recalled how she began to take notice of herself as different, standing out from the majority because she was blond and blue-eyed. In such situations she perceived people's looks as if she represented a "rich westerner". She reasoned that such thoughts might have been totally unjustified, more in her head than realistic threats or reasons not to feel safe. Nevertheless, she felt more vulnerable when moving around on her own than in company, because she was more aware than of standing out physically from the majority. It is possible that normative stereotypes building on white, wealthy, westerners' meeting with the poor and unreliable people in other countries gave way to fear and insecurity. Another possible interpretation is that the feeling of vulnerability made way for mediated images of Latin America being dangerous and troubled with violence and crimes. When in familiar situations, together with the hosts or accompanied by others, for example in the homes or school, such fears or feelings of difference appear to have been dispelled.

In the interviews there are numerous references (direct and indirect) to the importance of feeling safe. To a large extent that feeling seems to have developed from successful interaction and a perceived inclusion, suggesting that a cosmopolitan attitude of interest and mutuality in meetings can foster positive interactions and hence experiences of closeness, care and safety. In conclusion, contacts between visiting students and host-families appear to be key factors that may either enhance or impair the experience of the meeting.

Gaining Insights

The development of connectedness and fellowship through inclusion and having felt welcomed into families and peer-groups when confused appear to have been important for the resolution of initial disjuncture. In those processes the sojourners seem to find a meaning in the sensation of initially "being thrown into" an unfamiliar context. In the following quotation, Sofia recalls that moment of being overwhelmed and shocked, her attempts to

contextualize the fact that she had arrived, and how increasing insight about her new environment, together with support from her hosts, resolved the difficulties:

[i]t was quite cold and, then waking up and it was cold in the apartment and not knowing how to get hot water (...) and, then there was no breakfast only some bread so, being cold and hungry and everything being different, then it felt as if, “Ohh God I want to go home to my mother” (laughs). So, that is like the first, or what I recall, but then it all worked out well, once I found out, but all the new impressions, that it is actually cold indoors, but having found out how things worked then it felt really fine, they took really great care of me. (Sofia)

Sofia’s recollection of feeling cold, hungry and wanting to go home are consistent with comments above that experiences of disjuncture also caused physical reactions that contributed to long-lasting impressions of the first meetings. Sofia ends her remarks by saying that “they took really great care [of her]”, as if her finding out how things worked and overcoming the difficulties occurred through her interaction with the hosts. Having gained new insights and felt taken care of seem to have been keys to overcoming the feeling of being overwhelmed by the unfamiliarity of the situation. Thus, the interaction and reception appear to have played major roles in the resolution of the disjuncture, and associated acquisition of new insights.

The sojourners’ numerous examples of the importance of the reception suggest that the extent to which individual experiences that the other engages with, and helps to resolve disjunctures plays major roles in restoring harmony. Other contributors appear to be insights gained and the individuals’ personal predispositions. For example, Lisa says that she needs control, and finds it difficult to be in situations that she does not understand or know what is likely to happen next.

I worry a lot, about the structure, well about, what will happen (...) I mean, both how things are structured, how they are organized, but also will I feel safe? What places will we visit? It can be like, “Will there be toilets?” And, just that thing, not knowing if there will be toilets, well that can make me nervous and then, so, there were so many, many things that I was very worried about. (Lisa)

The sojourn appears to have been very challenging for Lisa, as she had to relinquish control, and accept that numerous aspects would be difficult to predict in advance. Furthermore, she was far from her family for the first time, had not slept well and her digestive system was upset. In these circumstances she said in further comments that it was comforting to stay with an understanding family. Their caring attitude made her feel at home and gave her confidence to openly express how she felt. Lisa seems to recognize that her personality influenced the meetings, and the reception, together with gained insights, helped her to cope with the difficult situations. These, and other examples in the interviewees’ narratives, strongly indicate

that a welcoming and inclusive reception can reduce the time needed to overcome an initial disjuncture. However, if disjunctures are not resolved the same situations can foster discomfort and vulnerability, leading potentially to more severe problems and a feeling of failure. In longer stays there is obviously more time to address and resolve such problems. Conversely, if a sojourn is short there is relatively little time to resolve disjunctures, but if they are rapidly addressed the individuals can move on and potentially gain more from the interactions.

In this section it has been shown that development of confidence, feelings of safety, a self-reflective attitude, the other's reception and insights into how things are done in the unfamiliar context all help sojourners to overcome disjuncture, and may be particularly significant in short sojourns.

4.3 Experiences of Leaving and Arriving

The participants considered the sojourn to be an opportunity to develop language skills, interpersonal meetings and learn to deal with new situations in meetings with others in other contexts. These expectations seem to have contributed strongly to the impressions of the first phase of leaving their home environment and arrival in the host environment.

All of the sojourners' accounts of their initial intercultural meetings include some description of their harmony being disturbed by disjuncture, often involving conflicts between the reality they encountered and their preconceptions and stereotypical images, in which the other was often interpreted in the light of themselves. This may explain why some sojourners reasoned that although they expected to encounter numerous differences there would also be some kind of "normality", or familiar features, in people's everyday life.

They had mixed feelings of tension and high expectations which together with the recurrent communicative problems led to feelings of unfamiliarity and vulnerability. This might to some extent explain why the initial meetings resulted in disjuncture. The first impressions are to a large extent about communicative problems in the first meetings, and the sojourners' perceptions of themselves in the meetings. In terms of the three educational functions, the participants' narratives indicate that insufficient communicative skills (qualification) affected them subjectively and impaired their socialization through the inability to express themselves and interact as they wanted. The other's reception is highlighted as a key factor for overcoming this communicative disjuncture. Feeling included and that the other was interested and welcoming made the sojourners feel confident, capable, relaxed, safe and taken care of. Consequently, they then felt confident enough to try to communicate more, even when linguistic limitations caused further discomfort. This can be interpreted as an example

of the development of a cosmopolitan attitude to learning based on mutual interest. The establishment of comfortable interaction and feelings of trust and being safe reflect a development in socialization that also seems to have influenced them subjectively and their qualification. When feeling included, they felt strengthened in themselves and then also found strategies to resolve the communicative problems.

The sojourners considered various options, tested possible solutions, resolved the situations and found meaning. Together with the positive reception of the other that process contributed to overcoming disjuncture and learning in the initial phases. There is obviously more time to develop solutions in longer stays than in short stays. However, the experiences of disturbed harmony in the initial phase — a key learning phase in which individuals potentially experience strong changes in themselves — are not dependent on the duration of the stay. Furthermore, overcoming disjuncture quickly is probably desirable, regardless of the length of stay, so that the individual can form deeper relationships and stronger rhizomatic roots (*sensu* Hansen, 2011: 57, section 2.1).

The numerous situations of learning from experiences of disturbed harmony are examined in the next chapter, focusing on how they developed during the sojourns.

5. Challenges During the Sojourn

During the sojourn the participants continued to meet with situations that were challenging to them. In that respect this phase was similar to the initial phase of arrival, but during their stays the sojourners had time to reconsider, reflect upon and revise previous experiences over time. The sojourners' experiences during the stay were strongly related to situations of interaction and how they themselves developed in the meetings with people. Section 5.1, *Encounters with People*, focuses on their interpersonal interactions after the initial encounters. As a school-arranged activity the sojourn involved an encounter with formal education, and section 5.2, *Encounters with Education* focuses on the sojourners' impressions of attending school in another country. In section 5.3, *Experiences from During the Stay*, I analyse the participants' reflections on their experiences in the host-country in relation to educational and intercultural developments.

5.1 Encounters with People

In this section the focus is on the sojourners' experiences of interacting with people in the intercultural contexts.

Communication

Communication was a recurrent theme in the participants' narratives. They said that they frequently reflected upon the communicative situations and how they experienced themselves during their sojourns. Their comments show that communication was affected not only by their linguistic proficiency but also by personal factors.

[i]t is like playing different roles depending on what language I speak. That is how it is. At least in my opinion ... Had I spoken English then it would probably, or rather, it would surely have been different, because (...) I feel that I play different roles depending on what language I speak. (Bettan)

This example highlights the interdependence of language and personality. Bettan's references to language and its roles suggest that in addition to being a tool for communication, language also influences the speaker himself or herself, or at least how they express their individuality, as a subject. By describing herself as "playing different roles" and not being the same when speaking all languages Bettan presents herself as actively adopting language-dependent roles. Language can be interpreted as both a qualification factor and a competence that can be switched on or off. On the other hand there are aspects of language and related roles that seem to have affected Bettan

emotionally, and she “feels” that she plays different roles, as though it was more of a response than a chosen act. Her identification of herself depends on the language she speaks. In that manner language and communication can also be interpreted as contributing to developments in subjectification and socialization. Following this reasoning it is also possible that people’s perceptions of experiences vary depending on the language used in a particular moment and context. In these situations language connects the other and I, playing a key role as a mediator in the interaction.

During their sojourns the participants developed, adjusted and in some cases adopted new ways of being, thinking and doing. Many describe themselves as communicative and outgoing, while others think of themselves as shy or reserved. Such personality factors, together with general experience and language skills, also appeared to influence the meetings.

[y]ou arrive in a place with like, new people, and you do not know who they are, but also you don’t know if you will have enough language skills. “Will I be able to make myself understood or will I stand there like a fool person and no one will understand what I say, and then just sit there looking down at the table for three weeks”. (Tintaglia)

Clearly, on her arrival Tintaglia felt anxiety and uncertainty, which she relates to limitations in her ability to communicate and interact. Her question “Do I have enough language skills” and conclusion that if not she might be standing there “like a fool” can be interpreted as connecting linguistic competence as a qualification factor to the development of anxiety and uneasiness, that is, potentially effecting the individual in his or her socialization and subjectification. Even people who felt confident in their linguistic skills and describe themselves as outgoing were challenged by the difference between communicating in a second language in authentic meetings and the linguistic practices in their home school.

[Y]ou practice with a friend but you do not know the words, you just say it in Spanish and it will be understood, but being there [in Sweden] I could not do that, and that was when I (...) became quiet (...), but by and by one becomes more relaxed and opens up more and that is when one begins to realize that one can actually speak. (Mia)

It is possible that the uneasiness that made Mia quiet was due to lingering effects of the transition shock from her arrival, and as she became more confident in the new context she could open up more and gradually realized that she could communicate. This example suggests that being outgoing and confident in one’s communicative skills do not guarantee a successful interaction in an unfamiliar situation. When facing difficulties the outgoing Mia became quiet, and there are several more similar examples. Cami describes herself as someone who likes to joke and laugh a lot, but when speaking the foreign language she felt embarrassed and became shy and

quiet. Alexander describes himself as confident, outgoing and having a facility for languages, but he also experienced himself differently in the unfamiliar situation.

It was often very difficult. That is, not being able to, I mean usually at home I talk a lot and I am a person who gets a lot of attention and space and so on, but during that stay I could not do that, I was more in the background, I was just one of the others. (Alexander)

Being unable to interact in the way he was used to, Alexander became more passive than he knew himself to be. His confidence seems to have been further diminished when facing difficulties to expressing himself.

It was like, right, now I want to say something, and now that moment when I could have said something has passed and now I won't be able to say it (...) You find yourself there, frustrated all the time and I constantly wanted to say things (...) [other sojourners] just kept on speaking even if it was not correct all the time, [they] could tell a few jokes and so on and, well, I felt that I couldn't do that, until the end of the sojourn, perhaps. (Alexander)

The communicative problems of not being able to interact and speak fluently were experienced as frustrating. As a result of the communicative disjunctures several of the sojourners seem to have perceived themselves as changed or different. However, although some became more reserved or withdrawn, others dealt with the difficulties differently.

[w]hen you have the disposition to communicate and the other has the disposition to listen to you, language does not matter. So I told myself that, once there, I will come up with something. And I did (---) [a]nd I managed to say things that my friend couldn't manage to say despite all the English that he knows. Then I felt really satisfied about myself and those days with the host-family were all about learning new things and communicating by means of gestures so I turned into a complete mime artist (...) I believe that attitude helped me in that moment of travelling. (Sol)

Sol explains that her language skills were limited, but she had decided that she would not let that hinder her from interacting. Having an attitude of openness, interest and a creative approach to problem-solving helped her in the challenging moments of communicating. Others shared that approach but did not manage to maintain that attitude when facing the communicative challenges.

I remember thinking that I will not be so afraid of speaking, I will take the opportunity to practice, but it is easy to say. Later it did not really turn out that way. So I guess I was somewhat disappointed about myself afterwards, that is, for not benefitting more from that situation, I could have profited more if I'd ventured or dared more. (Karin)

Despite deciding in advance that she wanted to improve her Spanish skills, Karin explains that the fears of not speaking well made her refrain from

“venturing” anything. As she held linguistic improvement as her aim (rather than communicating in any possible manner), this approach to dealing with the difficulties resulted in continuing frustration and discontent about fulfilments. In contrast, Sol’s successful experience of a decisive attitude had given her an experience of being capable. She explains how this learning was different.

These are things that, even though a lot of time has passed, in its moment they are so agreeable and nice, or, sometimes the impact is so strong that one remembers them and they become kind of recorded, like how to greet or the, “puss-puss”³¹ or things like that, yes, I remember (...) it was all new experiences where they taught you different things and talked, and they taught me new words or how to invite people to have “fika”³² (...) It was very fun, because apart from the fact that I learned more things I also felt very comfortable, like integrated or like, part of. (Sol)

Sol describes how the things she learned became “recorded” in her. This can be interpreted as pointing at the learning having become grounded in her and hence long-lastingly significant. Sol learned that an attitude of not allowing limited language skills to hinder her establishing contacts favoured her interactions. She chose a multi-modal strategy of receiving the other with an open-mind and using various communicative tools. Her creativity and the use of dictionaries, signs, digital translation sites, body language and learning useful keywords in Swedish became keys that facilitated successful interaction. Taken together Sol felt that she advanced in getting to know people and it made her feel comfortable and integrated. Kim expressed a belief that effective communication involves much more than simply language skills.

[a]part from language it is (...) an attitude, as well, and a way of seeing things, it is not only a question of vocabulary, actually it is also about you as a person (Kim).

Clearly, Kim believes that the outcome of a communicative situation is dependent not only on language skills but also on personality. This understanding of communicative situations can be interpreted in terms of complex interactions between qualification, socialization and subjectification processes. An individual’s linguistic ability, customs and personality traits (such as being reserved or outgoing) are all factors that to some extent might influence how an interaction develops. The results of this study do not demonstrate that any particular combination would generally be particularly favourable for successful interaction. However, the interviewees’ comments

³¹ “Puss-puss” can be literally translated as “kiss-kiss” and is a way of saying goodbye.

³² The Swedish word “fika” is both a verb and a noun, referring to having a cup of tea or coffee, often together with a sandwich or something sweet.

do indicate, for example, that low language competence together with a reserved personality could potentially be an unfavourable combination, while linguistic proficiency and an outgoing personality could potentially be favourable. It can also be argued from Sol's example that perceived linguistic deficiencies will not necessarily lead to discontent and a perceived poor quality or failure in interactions. Similarly, being a confident, communicative and outgoing person may not necessarily guarantee a successful social interaction.

The participants' accounts suggest that high qualification is often thought as being essential for effective communication. However, interpretation of the participants' experiences in terms of the educational functions have shown that socialization aspects, i.e. awareness and integration of customs related to human interaction and subjectification, i.e. personality traits, also strongly influence communicative success and the development of interactions.

The Foreign Context

To the discussion about language and personality traits in the above section is supplemented here with considerations of some implications of being situated in a foreign context. First I present aspects of familiar aspects of everyday life for the sojourners, then turn to impressions of perceiving themselves as different.

The sojourners' narratives about the numerous day-to-day interactions in everyday contexts show that those aspects contributed to a feeling of familiarity with things they had perceived as being very different before going. However, within the familiarity there were also differences. An activity such as taking the bus to school was familiar, but when not knowing how to queue or pay that familiar activity was perceived of as different, engendering feelings of anxiety and uneasiness (Elias, Cami and Kim). Such experiences have previously been discussed as sudden, momentary disjunctures of first impressions. However, the sojourners continued to have challenging experiences throughout the sojourn.

The challenges in everyday situations resulted in a processing that not only aimed at resolving the actual situation (as aspect of qualification), but also resulted in reflections about oneself and one's relation to the others related to subjectification and socialization. Håkan's account provides examples of the challenges in the complex processing involved in deciphering cultural codes and finding an individual way of responding.

I remember when arriving that they asked if I was hungry and I replied somewhat off-handedly, no I am not, because I thought that it was late and they had probably already eaten (...) then they glanced at each other and asked me in English instead, and I wondered if they thought that I was being impolite when

turning down their offer and then I began thinking that maybe they have planned something, so I said like, “Well, yees”, and then we went to a restaurant to have dinner. But I was not hungry, I had already eaten. (Håkan)

Håkan had to almost immediately interpret a situation that he recognized as familiar in some ways, but in the unfamiliar cultural context he was unsure about how to be polite. Håkan gives several more examples of a continuing struggle with the challenges to understand the cultural norms in different situations.

I remember that I unintentionally hurt my host-mother, it was not at all my intention and I thought it would be okay to say those things, but later I realised that it was not okay (...) I had told her that I like pineapples, and then the other day she had bought one, for the meal. She had put the pineapple in that terrible pickle that they put everything in, and then she asked, “Well, did you like it?” And I was not quick enough to put everything together [having expressed his liking for pineapples and her preparing one for him] so I just replied; “Well, hmmm, perhaps a bit”, but then, I noticed that she (...) she was disappointed, and I had not realized that, that my comment would sound so bad. (Håkan)

The wish to melt in and be regarded of as an agreeable person was important to Håkan. He recalls how he thought that his reply would be “okay” and realized too late that through being frank he had been impolite. It seems that the authentic live communication obliged the sojourners to make quick decisions based on their understanding of different situations while simultaneously formulating responses in a foreign language. Håkan’s example shows that complex processes of interpretations of culture and language underlie the familiarity in everyday situations. It also shows how such situations challenged and contributed to the sojourners’ development in terms of qualification, socialization and subjectification. The process of resolving the experience of disjuncture seems to include a phase in which qualification is activated, when the individual consults his or her previous knowledge. Furthermore there is a phase in which socialization is activated, when the individual in response interacts and perhaps considers cultural codes and appropriate ways of dealing with a particular situation in a particular context. These processes are also dependent on subjective, i.e. personality, factors. Thus, the processes of resolving the disjuncture will be influenced by, and induce changes in, the qualification, socialization and subjectification of the individuals involved. The experience might then become transformative and contribute to growth not only during and immediately after the experience but also in reflection later in life.

The foreign environment prompted the participants to observe not only differences in actions but also physical appearances.

In the beginning I thought it was somewhat embarrassing because in Sweden people are not so frank about such things (...) people do not look at others and comment on them in the same way, about one’s looks. If I commented about the

looks of a person that I do not know, I believe that the average Swede would be quite embarrassed (...) at first [in Chile] I thought it was embarrassing, but later I thought it was quite nice. I mean, I felt that it strengthened my self-confidence. (Bettan)

Bettan explains that receiving attention about and comments on her looks was initially embarrassing and made her aware of herself being different. However, later the experience of being different appears to have contributed to a strengthening of her self-confidence. Several other participants recall how difference attracted more attention than usual and how that boosted their self-image and confidence. Nevertheless, as Alexander explains, the attention attributed to difference was not always a positive experience.

[O]ne stood there, looking European, and then people approached asking if they could take a picture with you (...) [i]t was like, "Damn, I don't want to be that different" (...) it was strange that she would take a picture of me. Ehhh, as if, one walks around being different and that is not a positive feeling for anyone, it is natural that one wants to melt in. It is fun to get attention, but it's not fun to be like, the freak you know (---) [so] one was sitting there like a mannequin and, when they were looking at you it was like, "All right, are they laughing at me now?"(Alexander)

Being perceived of as different hindered Alexander from "melting in" and caused uneasiness. He remarks that it is "fun to get attention", and standing out is thus not necessarily unwelcome or objectionable, but it is when one stands out so much that one becomes "a freak". Not being able to follow conversations and not knowing how to interpret a look or laughter, seem to have further reinforced that feeling of being strange. His comments indicate that he received some kind of admiration that he found difficult to deal with, showing that even responses that could be regarded as positive attention can be experienced as troublesome when an individual just wants to be one of the others.

Several other participants also commented feeling different in various ways (e.g. in looks, ways of dressing, speaking with a broken accent, being blond, or either paler or darker than the majority). For example, Karin reflected about the effects of being perceived of as different as follows.

There were several who did not speak to me, at least among the boys, and then I thought to myself that they must find me boring and prefer to talk to my friends, and then I thought that perhaps they were so hesitant because they found me so very different in a way (...) I heard from others that people commented my looks a lot, for example that I am so tall. (Karin)

Karin clearly thought her physical differences for the others influenced her interactions. At first she thought that it was because she was boring, and later came to the conclusion that people hesitated to interact with her because she was physically different. Being situated in a foreign context made her highly aware of her appearance in a way that seemed new to her.

Being in a minority appears to have been a new experience for many of the sojourners and it appears to have made several others aware of physical differences. Madi, for example, recalls how she felt “chiquita y morena”, that is, small and coloured. Cami also recalls becoming aware of being “morena” in the midst of the many blond people around her in Sweden. In further reflection (supported by Karin’s reasoning in the above quotation) she comments that it might be the same for a blond person coming to Chile. Interpreting these situations in terms of educational functions there are potential learning outcomes that may be understood in terms of qualification, i.e. learning about life in a different situation. There may also be complex outcomes in terms of socialization and subjectification. Being different, and the subjective experience of becoming aware of oneself as different, may adversely affect socialization (at least in the immediate situation), as illustrated by Karin’s comments. These examples also show that the individuals from both national contexts became identified with ethnicity in the meetings. The Chileans became aware of their brown skin and Latin American background, while the Swedes noticed that they became representatives of a European culture, and some highly aware that they had paler skin than the majority in the host-country. The participants’ reflections on these matters suggest that such issues were of some importance in the meetings, and in that sense appear to have contributed to developments in their socialization and subjectification. Several participants suggest that perceiving oneself to be in a minority may have been educational.

There is a value in being in a minority (...) to have that feeling or experience, indeed, because it is a particular situation to be in, to be the one who stands out from the others, the one who does all the strange, odd things, to be the one who makes a fool of himself. (Maria)

According to Maria, experiencing oneself as different and in a minority is valuable when it is experienced as a “particular situation”. As I interpret Maria she seems to stress that the sojourn is a “particular situation” which is different from other situations where people experience themselves as alienated in society, partly at least because it is temporary. As a “particular situation” Maria seems to believe that there is value in experiencing oneself as different. Following this reasoning, experiences of being different may foster individual’s personal growth and development in all three educational dimensions. The examples of participants’ experiences of themselves in the unfamiliar context show that both the Swedes and Chileans experienced not only inclusion, but also distance in being different. New insights gained from these situations increased their intercultural experience and knowledge (qualification), while the subjective impact seems to have developed new self-awareness (subjectification) and social awareness (socialization). The experiences may accordingly develop as educative processes in which the

individuals become in intercultural terms and in the educational functions more experienced.

Expressing Oneself

Several participants said that being able to express their thoughts freely (hopefully grammatically correctly) and perhaps tell a joke or laugh at others' jokes once in a while are important elements of positive interactions (Sofia, Bettan and Kim), and that linguistic proficiency and personality traits are important requirements for this. Other factors that they said influenced the quality of interactions included the topics that were chosen or avoided. The extents to which the sojourners thought they successfully communicated what they wanted to say (which was important to them when establishing contacts) varied.

The sojourners engaged in many conversations about mundane topics, in which they were attempting to get to know the others, and *vice versa*, but there was little scope to express their personality or opinions. As a common part of the learning content in school language courses the participants had practiced communication about mundane topics before their sojourn, thus it should not have been particularly new or difficult for them. However, their narratives show that they found those everyday situations challenging.

I thought that it was disturbing not being able to show them my personal self, that is, because I could not express my thoughts or ideas, and those few things that I managed to say sounded like a child speaking, then a lot of one's personal self is lost, it is difficult to show that only with gestures, and even if you are not a shy person you become one. I thought that was very disturbing. (Kim)

Clearly, it was important to Kim to speak her mind and show her personality, and when she was unable to do so she felt shy and that she lost a "lot of her personal self". Thus, the experience had potent subjective effects and impaired her socialization. It also suggests that loss of the ability to interact in one's customary manner may be particularly disturbing for people who feel that such ability is important. Gonzalo expressed similar feelings, saying that, at that time, he felt a need to communicate who he was. However, others said that their primary objective was to improve their language skills and that it was hardly important at all to transmit their personality or to have profound discussions.

[It was]not something that I thought much about, it was rather, I was more concerned about how bad I was at speaking Spanish than about them not getting to know me as a person. No, I did not think so much about that, I focused on the fact that I wanted to become better at speaking Spanish. A driving force for that, becoming better at Spanish, was not to be able to show them who I am, instead getting better at Spanish was a value in itself. (Håkan)

Håkan tells in this extract that he focused on improving his language, i.e. here interpreted as an element of qualification, and that he had little concern about subjective or social elements of interaction. He was worried (he said) about his linguistic deficiency, but not as a vehicle for getting to know the other, and *vice versa*. However, as previously shown in extracts from his narrative concerning the interaction with his host-mother, he was concerned about making a good impression and being liked. In that respect he appears to have been concerned about revealing his personality and being liked. So, even if aspects related to socialization and qualification were not explicitly recognized as being important in relation to interaction generally, they had recognized importance when sojourners thought it was important to be polite, make a good impression or perceived interpersonal relations to be important in some other sense.

Numerous factors other than language skills, personality traits and topics can facilitate effective communication or impair a conversation. These include the directness of face-to-face meetings, which is not present in various other kinds of interaction and demands an intensely participatory approach. Other factors that the sojourners mentioned include: the rapidity of speech; turn-taking; use of slang, humour; metaphors; formal or colloquial language; the number of people involved in the conversation; feeling rested or exhausted; interest and engagement in the speech-topic. The directness appears to have been experienced as stressful in several cases and the sojourners had to drop out of conversations on some topics when they could not meet the demands of the conversational situation. For example, when they were tired they said it was often more difficult to participate in and understand conversations so, when they were not directly addressed, some sojourners said that they chose to take a “time-out” (Kim; Lisa). Such pauses in the interaction may have been temporary, but they imply that the participant disengaged from the meeting with the others, and if the language for communication had been their own they may have continued to participate more actively. If so, both the subjective experience and social outcome may have been different. For example, Kim and Lisa became more passive and distanced themselves in some interactions. The complexities and challenges related to the interactions might explain why maintaining a conversation was, as Lisa says, experienced as rewarding. The communicative situations thus not only provided arenas for developing skills in terms of qualification, but these examples of their effects on the participants also show that these situations influenced them in their interactions and in their views of themselves. As such these situations can be interpreted as having contributed to developments understood as responding to the educational functions of socialization and subjectification.

Cultural aspects were also cited as factors that might facilitate or impair an exchange of ideas and opinions. Tintaglia reasons that when unsure about

what is “okay” it is better to drop a topic or listen rather than actively engage in a discussion about a heated topic. She further explains that despite feeling safe, comfortable and included in the communities, a combination of uncertainties about language, cultural norms and customs, as well as being a temporary guest, made her avoid some conversational topics and refrain from revealing her opinions fully. Politics, intimate relations and history are examples of topics mentioned by the participants that caused such uncertainty. For example, when the Swedes asked about Pinochet some of the Chileans felt unsure about how to respond.

I thought that [the Swedes] might agree or might not, then I did not know if I would ruin the situation so I preferred to lie. (Cami)

While Cami chose not to speak her mind for fear of ruining an agreeable situation, Maria in contrast said that she often ventured into discussions about history and politics. Notably, when meeting people who regarded the Pinochet regime favourably, she was surprised and thought it provided interesting opportunities to learn and gain new perspectives. She comments that she learned from these situations that people sometimes adopt diverse attitudes about events that at first might seem black and white. This attitude of openness and interest in learning can be interpreted as reflecting a cosmopolitan-minded attitude to the meetings. In Maria’s case, this attitude of regarding discussions in which strongly conflicting views may be expressed as learning opportunities, rather than avoiding them, can also be interpreted as having opened opportunities for broadening her insights when adopting different perspectives (a qualification outcome) and both her subjective and social perspectives in the understanding of the other. This approach to interactions may potentially maximize learning opportunities in meetings.

Some sojourners had been previously advised to adopt a careful attitude in their meetings and consciously avoided some themes or jokes that they assumed could be delicate, indiscreet or perhaps misunderstood. Being unsure about how their questions would be interpreted they said that they chose not to ask about things that they perceived as strange. Some such topics were related to impressions of the other as being more or less liberal and tolerant, for example in relation to different religions and sexuality, family relations and adolescents’ emancipation (Gonzalo; Elias). Such reflections did not solely concern a perceived strangeness in the other. As the sojourners elaborated an understanding of the other through self-reflective analysis their conclusions also seem to have prompted a questioning of their accustomed ways of thinking and doing, and thus influenced their subjectification.

Overall there were few reports of conversations being hindered by the topics being considered delicate. In these few cases it could be argued that by avoiding delicate topics through fear that they may have been inappropriate the individuals showed intercultural sensitivity. However, it may also have resulted in the loss of some of the educational potential of the interactions.

Surprising Connectedness

Most of the sojourners developed feelings of sameness and connectedness, made friends and established close relationships. Many also expressed surprise about this, because they expected to encounter differences that would preclude it.

I never thought that I would find a friend in such a distant place (...) [w]hat I appreciate more than anything else from the exchange, apart from all the things I learned, is having been able to develop such a beautiful relationship with them [two Swedes], and that it has been maintained. That is something that I really appreciate. (Mia)

Several sojourners remarked how surprised they were about the developed connectedness, and that proving to be the most important outcome from the meetings (Sofia, Kim, Pelusa, Tintaglia, Madi). When beginning to develop such connectedness the participants also began to question their home contexts.

In Chile it feels as if they have their homes open. No matter the time you come by they are always very happy [to see you] and there is always food for all and nothing is troublesome or tiring and they have, in a way, a different attitude to people and meetings. Here [in Sweden] we rather close our doors and they rather open them (...) [we, Swedes] put up limits and defend our space and they prefer to share their space and time, and they are happy if there is someone who wants to share his/her time with them while here people want to protect their own time. (Sofia)

This reflection on inclusion shows how Sofia developed connectedness in aspects of life that she valued. She gives several examples illustrating appreciation of the apparent closeness of people in Chile, their strong family ties, joining together and prioritizing relationships, and their open and welcoming attitude. According to Sofia Swedes are more individualistic and reserved when interacting. Such impressions of differences in interaction seem to have affected Sofia in ways that can be interpreted as reflecting developments in subjectification. When reflecting upon the implications of different ways of leading a life she seems to have become more aware of her own culture and she also seems to have started thinking about what she valued in life. Bettan also comments on perceived differences in interaction.

[t]he warm reception, the warm communication that came as a nice surprise (...) it was that spirit of community that I felt so comfortable with when I was there and that I missed so much back home again. (Bettan)

Bettan stresses the “warm reception” and “communication” as aspects of the interpersonal meetings that made her connect and feel “comfortable”. Thus, factors beyond linguistic aspects of communication seem to be important for the development of connectedness, and the fact that Bettan developed such relations despite perceived language deficiencies surprised her.

[O]f course they must have thought about that, [about her not being fluent in Spanish] sometimes I think of that, that it must, that perhaps it is sometimes tiresome to be considerate to someone who is not on the same communicative language level, imagine having to adapt all the time, it must have been so very tiresome. I experienced that it was like, a very high level of tolerance and that people were quite patient, I never found that people impatiently sighed or anything like that. (Bettan)

Despite the potential distance that language barriers might have imposed, Bettan says that finding that people were considerate and warm engendered a feeling of connectedness. The sojourners were generally surprised to find that the others were patient, tolerant, positive, welcoming, understanding and attentive (Sol, Pelusa, Maria). Bettan remarks that it must have been “tiresome” to meet someone like herself, who did not speak the language well. This raises the question why both the Swedes as well as Chileans were surprised to meet people who were patient and tolerant with them. Why would they expect others not to treat them well simply because they did not know the codes for interaction or speak the language well? A possible explanation (or part of explanation) lies in their home contexts.

I experienced a very nice reception when I came [to Chile] and I was like included in their community right away, and I believe that there are not many immigrants or strangers who come to Sweden who get that kind of reception. So it was like a very positive surprise to be so very well received. (Bettan)

A sojourner is a stranger who, according to Bettan, is in a similar position to an immigrant. In Bettan’s experience immigrants do not generally receive inclusive responses in Sweden. Consequently, the connectedness and inclusion she experienced was surprising. However, none of the Chileans verified Bettan’s perspective. On the contrary and, despite their preconceptions of Swedes as being cold and aloof, the Chileans also experienced inclusion, interest, tolerance and consideration while visiting Sweden. The conflicting perspectives may be due to differences between receptions of immigrants and temporary visitors, and between the subjective experiences of immigrants and visitors. The participants’ reflections on these matters of inclusion and distance also suggest that the nature of meetings between the majority and the other differ in these cases. However,

expectations of difficulties in connecting with people in the host-country, based on experiences of immigrants, may explain why many sojourners were surprised to be received inclusively and develop connectedness.

Difference and Sameness

When reflecting upon what it was like during the stay in the host-country many of the sojourners commented on class-differences and their perceived interplay with other social categories, such as gender and ethnicity. Notably, some of the Swedes commented on the custom of well-to-do Chileans to employ a housekeeper. They regarded this as a status symbol for the employers, while they said the housekeepers were at the bottom of the social pyramid, being unqualified, poorly paid women, and often immigrants with an aboriginal background from Peru or Bolivia.

That they paid for having a woman to cook and clean, that was like...and the families that we stayed with were like middle class people, and still they could afford that (...) one wonders how the ones who actually work as a housekeeper live, if they can work for a middle class family, well, that tells something about the huge class differences (...) Chile is actually quite racist, and a lot towards their own people...their own race too, the Mapuche people who are very exposed to that, and usually they are the ones who are having the hardest time (...) many of the housekeepers were from Peru and Bolivia and there was a lot of negative remarks about them, like, on a daily basis (...) I reacted to that, it felt as if, as if they were aware of status, that it was important for them to know, I mean, people want to belong to a more prestigious class, and it felt as if the lower classes are worth somewhat less in society, and that it is almost as if they want to mark that out in order to strengthen their own image and their own class. (Sofia)

This quote exemplifies how Swedish participants reasoned about their understanding of the interplay of social categories, which was incorporated into their understanding of Chilean society. It also exemplifies how this kind of personal reflection on impressions of another culture, mapped in relation to their own cultural context, contributed to the development of their individual life-world. In that sense the experiences prompting such reflection can be understood as influencing all three educational processes. More specifically, in the cited case, input in qualification led to reflections that seem to have expanded the individual's repertoire of both social and subjective perspectives. In the terms of Levinas (referred to in Kemp, 1992; Lévinas, 2003) this example illustrates how people come into being in the face of others. This implies that people mirror themselves in others, are dependent on social relations and generally sensitive to others' perceptions of them. Such reflections based on comparisons might have contributed to developments in qualification as the participants learned about other ways of leading a life. In addition, the challenges to their thinking about social categories in subsequent reflection upon the implications of such aspects of

interaction and one's own being in the world may have prompted development in terms of socialization and subjectification.

Aspects of social and economic class-differences were not difficult to interpret as such, but the face-to-face encounters with differences and people situated in unequal positions seem to have been both new and challenging.

[i]t was so defined, that depending on how much money you have, that defines your possible choices (...) like, where you **wish** to attend school is not a question of your wish but a question of where it is **possible** for you to go, depending on how much money your father has (...) I knew of such differences before, that there are a lot of class differences, that there is a lot more poverty and that the rich are very rich, but nevertheless it is like different to experience that in reality and meet with those people and see it. (Kim)

According to Kim, people's financial circumstances were manifested in their choices and actions or, conversely, their options were dependent on their economic status. In the face-to-face encounters with class-differences the sojourners seem to have been challenged to think in new ways about having or not having possibilities in life. As a qualification input the new understandings also resulted in reflections that had implications on the participants' socialization and subjectification. Tintaglia also argues, in line with Kim, that it was shocking to meet differences in reality.

[t]hat is completely insane. That, I guess it was like a shock, that there can be so big differences in such a small area (...) one could move from the really, poorest of the poor to the really, to affluence, and there were only a few kilometres between them (...) I mean the class differences were really like, well, here we have the poor people, and here we have the people who have a little more, and here is the middle class, upper-middleclass and then the really rich people, it was like, pam, pam, pam [makes a gesture with her hand, marking out a hierarchical form with the poor at the bottom and the wealthy at the top]. Preferably with a fence between. (Tintaglia)

Tintaglia and several other sojourners noticed how living areas are physical, concrete markers of a segregated society that manifest the social and economic hierarchy. The face-to-face encounters with such differences seem to have challenged their conceptions and induced questioning that does not seem to have been possible before the sojourn. Exposure to alternative views of seeing the world and the complexity of perceived differences in people's living conditions appear to have contributed to insights and development not only in qualification but also in the sojourners' socialization and subjectification.

Lisa, among other participants, said that differences recognized from the home environment became more noticeable to them in the foreign context. An example raised is related to gender differences. Kim felt that the Chilean girls did not really like her because as a female sojourner she was too outgoing and more assertive than a girl was expected to be. She says this was probably a reason why she had some difficulties in forming good

relationships with them. Another example is provided by Alexander, who described himself as foppish, talkative and jocular, which made him different, less masculine than he perceived he was expected to be, putting him in an awkward and unfamiliar position while in Chile. Shifts in subject positions in these examples, based on ideas about gender and what is considered girlish and boyish, prompted the participants to reflect about the other and themselves, leading to subjective changes and modification of their interactions (socialization).

In some cases the perceived new subject positions originated from experiences of being cultural representatives of either a “developed” or “developing” nation. Madi, for example, said that she thought of Chile being “sub-, sub-, sub-desarrollado”, that is a developing country, and the visit to Sweden strengthened that opinion. However, she says, Chile is not far behind, not like Africa, because people are not starving to death and diseases are under control. In contrast, Mia, did not think of herself as a representative of a developing nation, but an incident during an everyday interaction with her Swedish host made her feel that way. This situation seems to have resulted in an unfamiliar subject position and reflection about how people think about themselves and the other. When the Swedish host demonstrated how to use a hair-straightener, as if thinking that Mia had never seen one, Mia began to reflect upon aspects of inferiority.

I had the impression that they thought that I came from the third world, like a bit, much more primitive. Because it was interesting how (...) one day we were going out and she [the host-daughter] called for me and she said “Look here I have a straightener for the hair”, and she said “Look, look, with this you can straighten your hair”. And I like, “Okaaay...,” it was as if she was demonstrating a novelty to me and I said, “Yes I know I have my own in my suitcase. I know what it is”. And she was like, “Ohh I am so sorry.” (...) [t]hat was kind of funny, and it made me realize that they, they do not know much about what Chile is like. Or like, where I come from. Because, it is not that different. Many things are just the same. (Mia)

Mia’s host seems to have had preconceptions about what being Chilean might entail that led her to believe that Mia would not be as familiar with modern appliances as she was. On the other hand, in terms of qualification Mia had become more experienced when she stepped out of her comfort zone during the sojourn. The experience had also widened her frame of reference and she concluded that things are not very different elsewhere, but rather much the same. In that respect the experience contributed to both her qualification and to her socialization. Furthermore, her perception in the same social interaction that the other thought of her as “third-worldly” influenced her subjectively, via the accompanying implication of inferiority.’

Receiving attention and not being able to choose when to be anonymous seems to have made the sojourners experience themselves in new or

unfamiliar ways, as representatives of a culture. This appears to have been, as expressed by Håkan, unexpected and sometimes uncomfortable.

It was unexpected. I thought it would be more what it would be like if someone came here, to Sweden, then we would pretend and try to be really nonchalant and not care (...) I thought it would be a bit more like that (...) [but] it surprised me that there was so much attention, it felt as if we were the white colonizers in Africa, I mean, like really privileged (...) it was more difficult to deal with than something negative but it felt a bit like, wow, this is a bit uncomfortable. (Håkan)

Not being able to melt in or choose when to be anonymous appear to have been quite novel experiences. The example shows that receiving attention is not always comfortable. In order to communicate that feeling of strangeness Håkan turns to a simile, describing that it made him feel like one of the “privileged”, “white colonizers in Africa”. This subject position, i.e. thinking of himself as White and privileged and “otherness” seems to have been a difficult thing for him to deal with, which influenced both his interactions (socialization) and subjectification.

In another example, Kim recalls that she did not initially connect with a boy who made fun of her during the sojourn, and a lack of language skills had hindered her from confronting him. However, after meeting the same boy later and having a more fluent conversation they resolved the bad relationship. In such cases language and communication not only seem to have constituted clear markers of difference, they also appear to have positioned people differently in relation to each other. If, for example, Kim and this Chilean boy had been able to have a more fluent conversation from the beginning, their initial meeting (and the subjectification and socialization processes for both individuals) may have been very different. This example illuminates several facets of potential effects of the disturbance of interaction, in which language is often a key mediator, as the improvement in linguistic competence provided opportunities to improve understanding in later meetings.

These examples of reflections on the meetings show not only how the participants perceived the other in the interactions, but also how they related the other to themselves and discovered new ways of thinking about subject positions and premises that frame the ways people can or cannot interact. These reflections are indicative of an intercultural processing of impressions of both the new and more familiar social contexts, showing that in meetings with a perceived otherness people learn not only about the new but also about themselves. When facing the otherness of the other one becomes more aware of one’s own particular ways, often accompanied by profound qualification, socialization and subjectification effects.

Respect is a topic that the sojourners frequently reflected upon when speaking of differences and sameness, in relation to various situations

regarding, for example, family, generational, class and social relations as well as public space and environmental issues. Sara reasons that respect is manifested in the ways that people position themselves in relation to each other. As an example she says that it would be disrespectful of her to address a teacher using the informal you. In Sweden she noted that there were few rules regarding interactions across social classes, generations and professions. Nevertheless, she found Swedes to be respectful, confident and that they respected to social codes and public space in a way that was new to her. Sara gives two more examples of reflection upon differences in the understanding of respect. In both cases she considers that she had inadvertently breached formal or informal rules. In one of these situations she had walked on the wrong side of a divided sidewalk, upsetting a cyclist who berated her. She felt uneasy about this, but having failed to comply with the rule she acknowledges that the cyclist had reasons to be angry and shout at her. In the other example Sara recalls a bus ride with Swedish friends. They were all enjoying themselves, taking pictures of each other and laughing out loud at the pictures and generally at the many communicative difficulties. A person, about their age, turned around and angrily said that she did not want them to take pictures of her. Sara found that reaction strange, but adds that it might have been because they were too loud.

They [the girl and people she was with] thought we were taking pictures of them but, we were not taking pictures of them, not at all, but it bothered them. That was strange. Or perhaps it was all because we were making too much noise, because we were laughing a lot. I don't know (...) [a]s we did not understand so well there were so many misunderstandings and we laughed. (Sara)

When interpreting this act Sara examines her own behaviour for an explanation, as if asking if she had caused this reaction. She says that laughing and being too loud could explain why the Swedish girl (and the people she was with) had been “bothered”. The numerous communicative difficulties they had encountered had sparked a lot of laughter, and Sara seems to believe that they had angered the girl and the people she was with not because they were taking pictures but because they were disturbing them by being too noisy. In other words she believes that she and her friends had breached informal etiquette regarding behaviour when travelling by bus in Sweden. These situations gave her new insights into Swedish culture and the subsequent reflection and meaning-making seems to have both developed Sara’s socialization and led to subjective revision.

Several sojourners commented on respect in relation to public space. For example, Madi commented that she was surprised that the Swedes seemed to care not only about their own things but also about public spaces. The way people seemed confident, leaving their cars, bicycles and houses unlocked was unfamiliar to her, because, she said, in Chile there is not much trust.

Respecting and caring about not only the private but also the public was different to her, as were the ways that people seemed to respect each individual's rights. Such respect for the public and private was observed in ways people could act out their individuality without others seeming to interfere. Madi tells that the Chilean culture is judgmental and constrains people from being themselves. People have opinions and they pay attention to how others appear in public. Ways of dressing, family background, sexuality, surnames and places of study are, according to Madi and others, important markers of difference that also govern how people interact and respect the other. In such reflections originating from meetings with others and others' contexts the sojourners have revised their own home context, norms and values.

Attitudes to values related to environmental issues and public spaces were frequently commented on in terms of respect. Mia noted that the city centres, plazas and streets in Sweden clean and people did not throw things on the ground as they often do in Chile, reasoning that it is somebody else's job to pick up litter. The respect and care about public spaces was something that many found particularly different. Madi tells that she had an impression that the Swedes seemed to share the same ideas about the kind of society they wanted to live in, and collectively promote. Similarly, Sol commented that the Swedes' care for their surroundings and public spaces sharply contrasted with behaviour and attitudes she was used to in Chile. Regarding such issues the Chileans perceived Swedes to be respectful.

In reflections on the experiences that added to the sojourners' knowledge about life in the unfamiliar context there are references to things that were different but also some that they perceived to be the same. Such reflections have also developed their understanding of their home contexts and their understanding of themselves. In this way the experiences of a disturbed harmony in the numerous situations that were perceived as different the sojourners not only seem to have developed in terms of qualification as they became more experienced, but also in terms of socialization and subjectification, through the expanded awareness of different ways of interacting and understanding themselves.

The Homestay Experience

The homestay provided close, direct contact with people in their everyday lives for the sojourners. This is a source of learning that distinguishes sojourns from many other forms of exchanges in which, for instance, students might stay in an apartment or together with other students. The reflections on experiences from the homestay often concern interactions and ways in which everyday situations were both the same and different. One of

the factors that contributed to overall contentment was the nature of their reception. The homestay was in several cases a source to such contentment.

I thought [the host-family stay] was really nice and it was really fun (...) It was actually, that is when one can experience what it is like for them, and their culture and their everyday life, and I mean, also in a family, in a particular family. So I thought that was really fun, and then also all the time [I] spent with Eric³³ was fantastic, I mean he is such a fantastic person, such a very nice person, and (...) we became very good friends (...) I felt very safe when I was there. (Kim)

The homestay seems to have contributed not only to a feeling of being well received but also to a more general feeling of being safe. Several others have also expressed that closeness and trust were valuable experiences from the homestay.

[I] felt that I was very fortunate to have that host-family, that, well, already the second day they began calling themselves 'my Chilean family', like that, and the daughter in the family she became my Chilean sister. And even if I don't have much contact with her today I know that, well they made it very clear to me that I can come back whenever I want to and that I will always be part of their family, that was very nice (...) it was something so different from the Swedish culture where, it is just like the nuclear family, the smallest unit of the word family. (Lisa)

The new, widened and more inclusive understanding of the concept of family made Lisa feel "fortunate", included and close. However, a few sojourners also commented that the attention was sometimes difficult to deal with, as expressed for instance by Maria:

[I] was not prepared for getting so much attention (...) that the girl I stayed with was very, all the time so much attention, I mean, it was like, okay, can I please use the bathroom a second, phew! Like that. And also, that they never left you to be on your own for a while. (Maria)

Here Maria explains that she had not expected that much attention and to her it was challenging to never be left on her own.

In general, the sojourners found interpersonal factors difficult to predict, prepare for and hence it may be a sensitive aspect of not only the homestay but also the sojourn as a whole. Although none of the participants said that the stay with the host-family was disappointing, that should not be taken as proof that everything proceeded smoothly. There were often situations that the participants perceived of as being familiar and different at the same time. Mealtimes illustrate this duality, as the act of gathering and eating together was familiar, but some customs prompted reflection about difference. In the words of Maria:

³³ Eric is a pseudonym I have chosen for the host that Kim stayed with.

[t]hey just felt so familiar and cosy, it was easy to join in with them (...) they were like talkative, anyway we could like sit and talk, and they remained seated by the dinner-table. I mean that is also done differently, some people they just leave the table and sit in front of the television. But this family was quite communicative (---) [I appreciated] that we had dinner together (...) I am quite a home-loving girl, I like to sit and socialize with mom and dad on the weekends, nowadays as well as then, and I have always done that, so I appreciated that a lot, that they remained seated and socialized. (Maria)

The way that this family socialized around the dinner table was familiar to Maria, and when recalling the most important outcome of the sojourn she returns to the meals. To some extent, having paid attention to this aspect of the meeting she appears to have been somewhat surprised about discovering that the gatherings around the dinner-table would be important moments for interaction and for her and the hosts getting to know each other. Such familiarity with everyday activities contributed to an overall positive impression and a feeling of life being much the same everywhere (c.f Håkan, Tintaglia). Madi explains that “living as a person from that country” is a unique and educational experience that gives insights into culture, attitudes, norms and values. Based on such arguments some of the sojourners also reason that those aspects made the learning different from the learning that takes place during lessons in school.

When learning about day-to-day activities the sojourners processed their impressions from those situations and seem to have come to conclusions beyond the first impression of the daily routines. Examples are present in the Chilean sojourners’ comments on aspects of trust and safety. This explained that in Chile people have alarms, doors are always locked and one would never enter a house without an invitation from the owner. That was all done differently in Sweden and the Swedes did not even seem to think about safety. The Chilean sojourners say that such acts communicated that the Swedes have trust in the other, that they are confident and seem to feel safe in their homes and society at large. The acts appear to have communicated something more about attitudes, norms and values, beyond the acts *per se*. At first sight some of the reflections might seem to be about insignificant details, but closer consideration shows that they challenged the participants’ understanding of attitudes, norms and customs. Another example regarding food illustrates this.

I remember that the food situation was very different (...) we had that lunchbox, a lunchbox within brackets, I had like pink cookies (...) [but] one does not want to be like that, I mean, staying in the family for a short period, it is just a question of adapting, but when it comes to food, then, when one does not eat as, I mean, it develops into a mood-thing in the end, so I remember that I thought it was somewhat difficult (...) I remember a supermarket, there were those gigantic bottles of soda (...) in general they consume a lot of sugar (...) it was not at all the discussion that we have here about less, reduced E-numbers and sizes (...) but I believe that it is an important part of the going as well. That one **has**

to adapt to their customs and then one will gain a lot more [from the experience]. (Maria)

The food customs were different and they challenged Maria since they conflicted with her thoughts about what constitutes a healthy lunch. Rather than insisting on following her accustomed routines she reasoned that the stay was short and thus it would be better to adapt and develop good relations. To experience and learn from things being different had, after all, been part of the whole rationale of going on a sojourn. Maria's attitude towards the perceived differences as opportunities to learn was shared by most sojourners. Their attitude of interest in the other and willingness to learn from the meetings can be interpreted as representing a cosmopolitan approach to the intercultural meeting.

The sojourners' experiences of the everyday activities in the homestay seem to have induced them reflect upon their understanding beyond the first impressions. By providing intensive, close and direct interactions, the homestays appeared to have fostered such reflections despite being brief. When managing to interact and develop relations the sojourners felt pleased, and in this manner the meetings with people and the time spent with the host-family contributed to qualification in terms of becoming more experienced. They also contributed to the sojourners' socialization in the development of feelings of connectedness and fellowship, and subjectification by promoting learning about themselves and discovering capabilities. However, when for some reason they did not perceive their interactions to be successful, some participants became withdrawn or more passive. Thus, the extent to which experiences of disturbed harmony in interactions are resolved may significantly influence the extent to which the full educational potential of a sojourn is realized. Communicative skills, together with personality factors and the others' reception, are factors that may have either limiting effects or favour the dynamics in the intercultural meeting.

Both Chileans and Swedes expressed surprise about having been included and been able to make friends and, people generally being tolerant and patient with them. I suggest that previous knowledge and fairly negative stereotypical images of the other to some extent explain their surprise about having connected. The briefness of the sojourn may also have contributed to the surprise, as they may have thought there would be insufficient time to develop close relationships.

5.2 Encounters with Formal Education

The participants' narratives indicate that they perceived the typical everyday routines in the host-countries largely as familiar, consisting of waking up in

the morning, having breakfast, accompanying the hosts during their schooldays, spending time together during breaks, moving around in the school building, socializing and having lunch together, and doing homework. All of this appears to have provided substantial insights into education and everyday life in the host country.

For the Chileans, language was a complicating factor since most lessons were held in Swedish. The Swedes had the advantage of knowing some Spanish and could therefore benefit from lessons in both Spanish and English. The amount of time that the sojourners spent in the educational environments, the number of lessons they participated in, the subject matter during the lessons, and thus their experiences in this respect, varied. The participants' reflections on school situations include general impressions, references to interpersonal relations in educational environments and reflections upon organizational aspects.

General Impressions

The Swedes' and the Chileans' descriptions of their own educational environments, and their impressions of the other's, are largely consistent. Both describe the Swedish educational environment as one in which formative aspects of socialization and subjectification are strongly emphasized. Such comments on impressions of the Swedish system are to a large extent related to teaching being based on cooperation, critical thinking and conversational methods that they describe as creative, democratic and interactive. Communicative teaching methods are commonly applied and described as favouring learning. The physical school environment, the school-buildings and the areas around the buildings, are described as modern, spacious, beautiful, clean and well maintained. Overall, the sojourners' description of the Swedish educational environments is favourable.

In contrast, overall impressions of the Chilean educational environments are fairly negative. Both the Swedes and Chileans describe them as being in some respects hierarchical and formal. Teaching is described as strongly focused on content, which relates to the function of qualification, and the teaching methods as being based on one-way communication. Other features of Chilean school environments regarded as characteristic include small, shabby and fenced school-buildings, pupils and teachers wearing uniform, and formal conduct.

Although the Swedish and Chilean participants' descriptions of their impressions of the two educational contexts are fairly consistent, in several ways they also vary. For example, both groups frequently commented on interpersonal relations in the educational environments and both commented on political, economic and ideological aspects of formal

education. However, certain impressions of these aspects were particularly strongly emphasized by the Chilean sojourners.

Interpersonal Relations

When recalling impressions of their time in the educational environments the participants made numerous comments about aspects of interpersonal relations, particularly about teacher-student relations, with fewer remarks concerning relations among students.

In comparison with the impressions from the Swedish school environments the Chileans present a picture of their own Chilean educational environments as disordered, noisy and unruly.

[I] do remember that it was much calmer [in Sweden] (...) here [in Chile] the situation in the school, there is much more disorder during lessons (...) it is not that the teachers have lost control but everything is much noisier, unruly, more pupils in each lesson, [in Sweden] there were fewer pupils in each group and it was much calmer, like, and more cordial relations, than here. (Sol)

As illustrated by this quotation, the Chilean teaching environment is described as noisy, unruly and disordered, while the Swedish environment is described, in contrast, as calmer and more ordered. The Chileans' identify structural conditions, such as the number of students in each group, as explanatory factors for at least some of the differences. In addition to being perceived as calmer, the relations between Swedish students and teachers were also perceived as more respectful. Cami notes that, being quiet and paying attention, the Swedes also seemed "interested in learning".

They all seemed interested in learning. It was as if all of them had that mentality, -"I am here to learn so, please" [respect my wishes]! And no one spoke a word. It was as if they were all really focused on the lesson and it was like, - "I'll pay attention now, so you mind your business and I mine and let's listen!" It was as if they did not even look at their sides, they did not speak to each other because they were paying attention to the lesson. That was really nice (...) totally different, because the typical situation here is that the teacher has to tell the group to be quiet every second minute and it is the same at the university, the same thing. It is as we have that custom. (Cami)

Most of the Swedish students seemed interested in learning and as they in generally did not disturb the others Cami perceived them to be respectful. Gonzalo shared that impression.

It was interesting, the relation teacher-student relationship, that respect, which does not work here. Here the teacher is shouting 40, or I do not know, however many hours they work, even at those who are about 17, 18 years old, and there [in Sweden] that did not happen. They are all quiet, listening even if they are not that interested they stay quiet in their own world of thoughts, in their bubble (...) here it is different, in the sense that there is a lot of disorder, it doesn't really matter what they do. (Gonzalo)

Paying attention, being interested and not impairing others' learning situation by disturbing them were some of the features that made the Chilean sojourners think of the Swedish student-teacher relations and classroom situation as calmer, more respectful and different from the Chilean counterparts. Madi confirms Gonzalo's impressions when commenting on the teaching situation and student-teacher relations:

[The Swedish students] could have their computers, the teacher was sitting on the desk and the pupils too, and here [in Chile] you would never see that, it is as if they broke with all the social stereotypes, here we are very disciplined and structured, the pupils seated, the teachers by the whiteboard. (Madi)

In comparison to the impressions of the Swedish counterparts, Chilean educational environments are described as simultaneously disordered and as Madi puts it above, "very disciplined and structured, the students seated, the teachers by the whiteboard". A possible interpretation of this dichotomy of perceived order and disorder may be found in the use of the words formal and informal. On a structural level they seem to refer to norms, rules and regulations, while in terms of interpersonal relations they seem to refer to distance. The Swedes' descriptions of their own educational environments correlate well with the Chileans' perceptions, but their descriptions of the interpersonal relations and school environments in Chile are more varied. For example, some of the Swedes expected the Chilean school environments to be characterized by some of the respect, strictness and hierarchies alluded to by Madi, for example (see above), and expected this to be reflected in the interpersonal relations.

I had expected it to be very strict and somewhat like, well, France, I mean, that it would be very Catholic and that they would be smacked on their fingers with the ruler if they spoke without permission during the lessons. But it was much more relaxed than that. At the same time it was perhaps not like Sweden, but, nevertheless the pupils were joking and speaking out loud in the classroom, well, like that. (Alexander)

The preconceptions of strictness, in conformation with a hierarchical structure and physical punishment being included in disciplinary measures, seems to have been derived from stereotypical images of a Catholic culture. Alexander learned that the Chilean students joked and spoke out loud in the classroom, leading him to regard the Chilean educational environment as relaxed, and thus not that "Catholic" and more similar to the familiar Swedish environment than expected. However, Bettan presents a different impression of the Chilean educational environment:

We had very open communication at my school [in Sweden] and not at all ... There was no strict hierarchy. That was a very big difference to what it was like during the lessons I attended in Chile. It was like, it was supposed to be quiet in

the classroom and even the teacher had like a uniform, and the students too, and it was like, very, very strict and, at first I thought that was difficult to deal with, but then I began thinking that perhaps there is no right or wrong in that, just because I was used to one thing that was not necessarily the correct way, the other way was not necessarily the correct way either. That maybe something in between would be good. I mean, I thought a lot about that and I have thought a lot about it ever since, how we think about authorities. (Bettan)

As in this example from Bettan's narrative some of the Swedes perceived the Chilean classroom environment as strict, quiet and formal. Bettan's reflection that perhaps there is no right or wrong way, only different ways, can be interpreted as representing a cosmopolitan attitude to interpersonal meetings. Bettan had this impression of strictness while several others, Swedes and Chileans, had the impression that Chilean educational environments were noisy, unruly and characterized by one-way communication. In relation to the teaching Bettan further underlines a positive impression that differs from that of most of the sojourners.

[T]here were many things related to the teaching that were very good as well, in Chile, that I had a very positive impression of, and that I just feel, oh, how far behind we are, everything was so structured and planned, with nice Powerpoint presentations and all very pedagogical and I understood everything. Everything. In a totally different way than at home. It just felt so very structured and, like, well thought through. That was a very positive surprise. (Bettan)

In contrast to the more dialogical teaching methods that Bettan was used to she perceived the Chilean education as more "structured" and the teaching methods as different and "pedagogical". This attitude of interest in developing an understanding of impressions and the conclusion that there is no right or wrong way can be interpreted as reflecting intercultural sensitivity and a cosmopolitan attitude of openness to the unfamiliar and recognition of the local. However, the sojourners' narratives also include value judgements (as in this quotation from Bettan) that are inconsistent with such a cosmopolitan attitude. Such value judgements are expressed, for example, in comments such as "how far behind we are" and the Chilean education having been a "positive surprise", as if its quality surpassed expectations.

The student-teacher and student-student relations in the Swedish school environments were described by both Swedes and Chileans as informal, understood as relaxed and close. Such conclusions were drawn from impressions of how the students were, for example, allowed to sit more or less where they liked in the classroom, address the teacher with the informal "you", dress and cut their hair as they liked and none of that was considered disrespectful (Sara). The Chileans describe their own school context, and their teacher's thinking, as formal, conservative and rather old-fashioned (Sara, Elias, Gonzalo and Cami). With regard to such impressions of differences the Chilean and the Swedish educational environments are in the

participants' narratives described as each other's opposites. Formality appears in the participants' descriptions to be understood as conservative with a bureaucratic attitude to norms, rules and regulations. In contrast, informality is described in terms indicative of looser norms, rules and restrictions about appearances and people's ways of acting and interacting. An interpretation of the description of Swedish educational environments as being informal and the Chilean as being formal may proceed from the above analysis of the uses of the words formal and informal. The Swedish student-teacher relations are described by the sojourners as informal and close because they were interpreted as relaxed and unregimented. The Chilean student-teacher relations are described as formal and much more strictly regimented, but the classroom situations are described as noisy, unruly and inconsistent with that idea of formality. Consequently (as in this semantic example), the sojourners appear to have struggled to understand and make meaning from some situations. In another example, Karin's reasoning about the word respect also relates to the formality and informality in relations. She argues that from her impression there was a structural level understanding of being respectful in Chile, which correlated poorly with the unruly atmosphere in the classroom, purely as obedience to norms and rules regarding how to act and interact. The acts of obediently greeting a teacher according to the norm and then seconds later being unruly, noisy and ignoring the same teacher during lessons was perceived as contradictory and disrespectful, and an example of double standards of morality that were difficult to reconcile.

These examples illustrate how diverse impressions of situations in the educational environments abroad prompted the sojourners to reflect intensely on meanings and understandings of their own and the other's context. These reflections were not only about learning, as related to qualification, but also strongly related to the teaching situation and interpersonal relations, that is to aspects of socialization and subjectification. The participants' narratives strongly suggest that such reflections on the dynamics, roles and contexts of interpersonal relations in educational environments can promote profound questioning of established conventions, and the acquisition of new perspectives regarding values and norms in relation to previous knowledge and insights.

Organizational Aspects

Many of the sojourners reflected upon political, social, economic and ideological aspects of education, based on various features, one of them concerning schools as open or closed areas. Being unfamiliar with fences surrounding schools, as in Chile some of the Swedes were breaking rules. Håkan said:

I didn't know, so one afternoon we just left, because we were finished (...) and then a guy came running after us, like, "Hey, what are you doing?" (...) it was like, wooduw, I'm sure he took, or it seemed as if he'd taken a huge risk running after us to tell that we couldn't leave (...) it felt as if... I was like used to, I mean, "You cannot lock me in here, I can go wherever I want", a bit like that, that was something very different, that we, in a way, it felt as if being deprived of one's freedom. (Håkan)

In comparison to the fairly open school environments in Sweden, the fences and guards that were prominent features of Chilean schools induced feelings of being "deprived of one's freedom". Chileans also indicated that the fences could be interpreted as signs of deprivation of freedom and, as such, seemed like remnants from the time of dictatorship. According to Gonzalo, people's fears are also like remnants that reflect the relatively rapid change from dictatorship into democracy.

[I]t is like a lot of people have so much fear, I don't know, but like fear that they might kidnap their children so they had better lock them in (...), but that isn't even common here, but people have a lot of fears of things, I don't know if it has something to do with the dictatorship or, well now it is called the regime, they have changed the name for it [laughs] (...) well because that happened before, and Chile lived and survived some..., processes, that were like..., actually we have developed really fast since then, I don't know but, there has to be some reason why it is like that now. (Gonzalo)

The fences communicate fears and allude to the experience of dictatorship. Gonzalo reasons that irrespectively of whether that fear is a remnant from the time of dictatorship or is related to contemporary fears of kidnappings it does not perhaps reflect a realistic threat today. He says that the development towards democracy may have been faster than the individuals' inner and emotional processing of past experiences. Returning to the school environment, it is possible that the fences communicate both fear associated with a dangerous society and safety, marking the schools as places that provide protection from the dangerous world outside. The non-gated Swedish schools with no school uniform, no bells, gaps between lessons and the freedom to move in and out were different from that perspective, and reminded the Chileans of university environments. Being perceived as more liberal, freer and open than the Chilean schools (Madi) and reminding them of schools in films representing western modernity the Swedish schools made some Chileans feel provincial (Pelusa). The impressions of the fenced and non-fenced school areas seem to have prompted reflections resulting in the acquisition of new insights, perspectives and knowledge about, fear, safety, identity, history and culture. Thus, they proved to be highly symbolic features that fostered developments in qualification, socialization and subjectification.

In Chile students often progress directly from upper secondary studies into further studies (Sol). The participants' comments on the importance of

the career choice indicate that studies are regarded as a once-in-a lifetime experience in Chile. Many of the Chilean participants expressed feeling of stress and frustration when thinking about the finality of those educational choices. The Chilean sojourners argue that form and content in upper secondary education are strongly influenced by the PSU tests that students have to pass to qualify for further education. Hence, students, schools and parents regard the PSU tests as highly important, which may explain why the Chilean sojourners experienced Chilean education establishments as highly focused on qualification rather than arenas for the development of other more formative aspects of socialization and subjectification. In contrast, the Chileans perceived that such formative aspects of teaching and learning were prioritized in Sweden. They said that their education was centred on obligatory courses, memorization and tests, with little or no time assigned to aesthetic or vocational areas of knowledge. In Madi's opinion there is little scope in the Chilean educational system for development of self-knowledge, or personal mental, emotional and social development that "te llenen a ti como persona", that is "enrich you as a person". The Swedish system seemed different and inspiring because the students could opt for courses according to their individual interests and the vocational and aesthetical subjects mattered (Sol; Gonzalo). The Swedish participants also reflected on the implications of attitudes to education, personal interests and life-choices and they thought of themselves as freer in those respects. Bettan comments that it was a totally alien thought for her that, for example, her parents would have any say in her career choices.

That artistic part, that was different. I was very interested in that and many of those that I developed a close relation with were also passionate musicians, I mean, if we turn it all around. To me it went without saying that I could do whatever I wanted, if I wanted to go for a career in music, then I could, I mean, I can do just anything that I want, and I felt that the group of people I spent time with in Chile, had no option to decide for themselves what to do. For example, there was a very different attitude to studies and what was considered valuable and not, so that issue of making your own choices (...) perhaps a few Chileans would have liked to develop a career in music but, - "No, I will study biochemistry". And I thought that was kind of sad. To me it was natural to do whatever I wanted. And at the same time, to them it is perhaps just as natural that it is not like that, that it has always been like that. But I thought that was a significant difference (---) There was not that free choice, the free choice that was so natural to me (---) I believe that many felt like expectations from their parents... and, parents are like, authorities, and they [the Chileans] had a very different attitude to authorities. (Bettan)

Bettan reasoned that it was "natural" to think that no one else should have any say in her choice. Initially she thought that it was "sad" that many of the Chileans had to follow their parents' opinions and drop their dreams. Then she changed her mind and reasoned that their attitude may have been as "natural" to them as her own opinion was to her. The idea remained strange

to her, but she realized that the involvement of others in the decision-making is not necessarily undesirable or frustrating in their opinion, and one approach is not necessarily better than the other. There are only different ways of doing. This can be interpreted as reflecting a cosmopolitan attitude. Bettan shows how the new ways of thinking about life-choices, what is valued, respect and relations, in this case in relation to education and parental influence, developed her intercultural thinking and prompted her to reflect on her understanding of herself and her own situation. Those reflections fostered the development of perspectives that in terms of educational functions can be interpreted as contributors to both her socialization and subjectification.

The participants' reflections express criticism (implicitly or explicitly) of Chilean education for focusing on qualification and failing to promote formative aspects of socialization and subjectification. The low status of aesthetic and vocational areas in education is also criticized, although it mirrors their status in society at large. As it is difficult to become self-supporting and earn a living if such a career is chosen, the Chilean sojourners argue that few consider such options when making career choices. Gonzalo argues that the thought of giving priority to one's interests before considering the most lucrative choice was a new and different way of thinking about what to become. Mia explains this further:

[S]omeone who wants to study arts or become an art or music teacher, it is like, **no!** Or, I mean you really need to be passionate about wanting that. Because otherwise you will not earn much, no one will appreciate you, or like, you are not an important person, unless you are really, really, really a genius, then well, or, in order to be an artist you need money in order to have an important network that can help you get out of the country to become specialized, here you cannot do that. You starve to death. So if someone wants to become a musician everyone will reply "You will starve to death", here no, no, no. (Mia)

Even if someone meets all the requirements to pursue a career as a musician he or she will probably not only starve to death but never be appreciated. This might explain why the Chileans commented so much on their impressions of differences in relation to subject matters and the more open attitudes to different studies and career choices that they encountered in the Swedish schools.

The Chilean participant and some of the Swedish participants, said that in Chile the quality of education people receive solely depends on their economical circumstances, and thus possibilities to choose schools (Gonzalo). The Swedish schools seemed more equitable. Gonzalo explains that in Chile social and economic class dictate who people engage with. If you are poor you go to a public school and if you are rich you go to a private, school he says. So, rich and poor people may not meet until university studies or at a workplace in Chile, because each group stays within their

“bubble” (Gonzalo). Inherited capital, in terms of money and contacts, is described by some of the Chilean sojourners as essential for passing smoothly through the system. However, as Gonzalo notes, those structures in the system do not allow social mobility. Thus, impressions from the Swedish school system, which seemed to operate in a different way, were major elements of Chilean sojourners’ overall impressions from the encounters with education in the sojourn.

5.3 Experiences During the Stay

In summary, interaction, interpersonal relations and implications of political, social, economic and ideological orders are topics that frequently recurred in the participants’ reflections upon impressions during their stay in the host country. In their recollection of what it was like to stay in a host-family, attend school, socialize and resolve everyday situations they say they were fairly unprepared for their own reactions and dealing with the many challenging and surprising situations. Communication and difference were two topics that they often addressed when speaking about how they were challenged during the stay.

Many of the examples that relate to challenges in communication originate from day-to-day activities and situations that people might recognize from their own everyday living. However, when these everyday issues were experienced in an unfamiliar context many of them proved to be challenging, involving complex processes of interpretation and communicative and intercultural consideration. Furthermore, most of those processes had to be completed almost instantaneously, as the live situations required here-and-now responses, and this requirement in itself was often perceived as challenging. The challenges in this context consisted of interpreting, establishing understanding and responding sufficiently quickly in a foreign language to allow some fluency in the conversation. The challenges associated with not being in control and not knowing how to deal with the particular situations seem to have made many of the sojourners feel uneasy. Many of their reflections relate to issues that seem to have resulted in developments in qualification, but they also show how the communicative situations and encounters with people and education abroad can promote developments in the formative elements of subjectification and socialization. Examples of this are found in the ways that the individuals reflect upon their interaction, how they position themselves in relation to each other and how they have critically reflected upon tradition, culture, economic, social and political aspects of being part of a particular society and engaging in the world. Their narratives show that a sojourn is an activity that has potential to prompt individuals to reflect, assess, revise and formulate new understandings not only of the other and unfamiliar but also of

themselves and their own cultural contexts. During their sojourns the participants became more experienced in adjusting, interacting and establishing conversations and relations, and many of the examples in this chapter illustrate the synergism of the three educational processes. Communication in intercultural settings raises many challenges, accompanied by various kinds of disjuncture, hence international upper secondary sojourns seem to holistically contribute to all dimensions of participants' learning: qualification, socialization, and subjectification.

6. Transformations in Retrospect

Chapters 4 and 5 reported on the participants' experiences from the sojourns. Their narratives show that the meetings were characterized by what I have called feelings of disturbed harmony and a constant process of resolution. The analysis centred on how the experiences of disjuncture and challenges can be understood in terms of serving the three educational functions of qualification, socialization and subjectification. The findings show that the participants' experiences were not all about impressions of the other and the unfamiliar contexts, but also about self-reflective learning about themselves and their own contexts. This final empirically based chapter focuses on the homecoming and how the participants relate the experiences from their travels to their present lives in retrospect.

Section 6.1, *Transformations*, considers experiences referred to in terms of having induced changes, while section 6.2, *The Value of Sojourns*, focuses on how the participants relate to the experiences, in retrospect, as educational outcomes. In section 6.3, *Experiences of Coming Home*, I summarize the chapter.

6.1 Transformations

When reflecting upon the experiences and relating them to their present lives the sojourners recurrently commented on aspects of the experiences that contributed to changes in perspectives. The focus of attention in this section is on how the participants relate to such perceived changes in their narratives.

A "Turning Point"

In the interviews many of the sojourners say that the sojourn strongly affected them in diverse ways. For example, in various ways some describe how the experience of the sojourn was a "turning point" in their lives. On returning home the sojourners felt a need to share their impressions and tell others about their experiences. Several commented that when doing so it was difficult to communicate the complexity and the numerous layers of the impressions (Alexander, Håkan, Madi). Some of the Swedes (Bettan, Sofia, Alexander) also said that they did not receive much attention when they wanted to share their experiences from the sojourns, while some of the Chileans (Sara, Gonzalo, Elias) said that they were met with great interest. In comparison to describing activities, for example, the transformative dimensions of the experiences were more difficult to transmit and some sojourners found that others at home seemed to think that they had merely

been excited, moody or exaggerated the impact (Madi, Cami). However, others, like Sofia, reasoned that some might just have thought that the whole thing was uninteresting.

I believe that people soon found it boring. They were not that interested in listening, I think, and I believe that they didn't understand, because to me it was such a great turning point (...) I believe that in that moment it was quite frustrating. That people did not understand how important this was to me. And that people lost interest or were fed up with listening so quickly, so I believe that it felt quite frustrating. But on the other hand, not all people share that interest in other cultures and exchanges, they might even have thought that it was boring, I don't know (...) one gets so much more when learning a language, a whole new world opened up (...) I believe I have a different view of things than those who have only been in Sweden (...) [the experience] affects my everyday life, like in most things, most of my choices. (Sofia)

The whole experience is described in terms of having been a "turning point". Thus, effects of the experiences can be interpreted as having been significant and in some respects transformative. Sofia highlights the experience as something that is important to her in her everyday life and most of her choices. The importance of the perceived change that she expresses suggests that the experience has long-lasting qualities. Accordingly, and interpreted in the terms of Biesta's three educational functions, the sojourns appear to particularly contribute to experiences that sojourners express in terms of having implied personal development and change that can be particularly related subjectification. As this example with Sofia shows such transformative aspects appear to have been particularly difficult to transmit to others when sharing one's experiences.

The narratives indicate that sharing is driven not only by a need to talk about the concrete experiences, but also a need to communicate the personal effects of the experiences. The participants describe the experiences as having significantly affected their selves and consequently perceived others' disinterest as frustrating. The changes the participants speak of in their narratives appear not to be expressions of temporary excitement. As they are described as turning points that were still important to the individuals several years later I have characterized them as life-changing experiences. Some of the sojourners, like Karin, further explain how the new insights became integrated and hence influenced later choices in their everyday life.

[i]t has affected quite a lot of the choices that I've made after [the sojourn], well, on the one hand my interest in the Spanish language, that I have continued studying, that I moved to Spain and that I am still interested in all that, and that I still want it to be a significant part of my life and who I am, and that it made me eager for more, more travels and that I will go back to South America this spring, and had it not been for the sojourn I would never have done that. It has also contributed to an interest in the surrounding world, and to me that it is extremely important to stay up-to-date with what is happening, to have general knowledge and not only know things about (...) Sweden, but globally. (Karin)

The fact that some experiences are said to have influenced “quite a lot of the later choices that I’ve made” (Karin) or been “at the bottom of most choices” (Sofia) indicates that they have been integrated in the individuals’ world views, and hence had long-lasting educational effects. In Karin’s example the experiences awakened interest in the surrounding world, travelling more, taking up specific studies, staying informed and contributing to changes elsewhere. In another example Sol explains how she met herself in the meeting with the others and their context, which prompted reflections about who she is and wants to be in the future.

It was completely self-reflexive to return home... like, the learning from the sojourn together with beginning to consider the importance or the meaning of my life. Because it is true that I went to Sweden without having any clear aims (...) I didn’t go in search of anything, but without intending to, I did find an answer to my life that, finally, I am putting into practice right now, that is, the Arts. So without intending to, I did return with something so much more valuable than anything that a 17-year-old girl might have brought with her from such an unfamiliar place. And that is what is going to be my life from now on. So, the sojourn was very important to my life. (Sol)

Sol describes how she took her impressions from the sojourn a step further in self-reflection on returning home when “beginning to consider the importance or the meaning” of her life, and bringing with her an “answer to her life”. For Sol, the answer was related to the directions to choose in life, studies and career plans. The examples of experiences that I have here interpreted in terms of having been transformative also contributed to further changes and action taking. The transformative impact can be interpreted in terms of all three educational functions, but it appears to have been particularly significant in terms of subjectification. This is strongly reflected in the processes whereby Sol made decisions about her future, Sofia became aware of the needs of others in the face-to-face meetings during her sojourn (consequently joining a children’s development organization and sponsoring a child in Chile) and concern for the environment was awakened, e.g. in Madi. Others, like Maria, argue that they discovered new sides of themselves having become more understanding, sensitive and respectful, better at decoding or reading people and more socially competent. Similarly, Håkan commented:

I think I became more humble after the sojourn (...) I felt that I had to respect those I stayed with, that I was new in their family, and that I wanted to behave correctly when meeting them. I believe I took home with me this desire to treat people in a more humble and respectful way than before the sojourn. It is possible that it was a general part of becoming more mature but, at least it was something that occurred during the stay (...) I think I became a better person from having been there [in Chile] (...) I would not like to have it undone, but its use, the value, I don’t know, to speak Spanish, that is something I have not had so much use of later. (Håkan)

Håkan tells that he learned to become more “humble” and “a better person” from the sojourn. However, despite of having experienced such personal change he still questions whether it is really the task of education to promote that kind of development or personal enrichment.

[I]t is only on a personal level, then if it is the task of the school to enrich me, my experiences and so on, that I don't know. I am grateful for it, but if I really think that it is the task of education to let me see another culture and have fun, (---) [to] me it was good, but is it something that schools should spend tax money on and engage in? That, I really don't know. (Håkan)

Regarding the value of the sojourn Håkan comments on linguistic proficiency rather than the personal change he experienced. He concludes that he has not had much use of the language experiences later. When speaking about ‘value in such cases there appears to be an underlying assumption that the sole function of education is to provide qualification (here linguistic proficiency, as a formal, assessable learning outcome). From that perspective, other formative aspects related to socialization and subjectification may be considered informal, private and not necessarily appropriate focal concerns of formal education. However, in several cases (including Håkan's account) the participants' narratives indicate that the experiences not only enhanced qualification but also fostered personal development through prompting them to start broadening their social and subjective perspectives. Furthermore, this can be interpreted as the emergence of a cosmopolitan attitude in which the individual develops perspectives that connect local and wider global concerns. Examples of the participants becoming aware of their transformations and making changes in their lives based on such reflection are here interpreted as examples of the potential of sojourns to provide educative experiences with long-lasting importance.

Overcoming Limits

Here I present some examples of the complexities of the participants' perceived transformations.

The sojourners frequently describe being challenged by experiences of what I have called disjunctures. Their descriptions of their resolutions and meaning-making of the disjunctures are here interpreted as having improved their interactions and opportunities to learn from the experiences. When looking back and relating the experiences of such difficulties to their present lives many of them talked about how overcoming limitations engendered feelings that I interpret as feelings of empowerment. Both Chileans and Swedes commented on such experiences, but the Chileans most frequently.

Starting from the perception of crossing national borders most sojourners commented on the move from what they regard as one extreme of the world to another. While still situated in their home context the thought of going abroad seemed remote and in some cases impossible. The impression of the border seemed to change with the experience of going and ceased to be a limit, restricting what one can do in life. Mia comments:

Since I have done it, it made me want more. To continue learning, well, since I managed to go once I can go again, now I know that it is possible. (Mia)

Having had the experience once, Mia overcame a limiting border and she now considers these options as feasible. Several of the participants speak of how overcoming limits opened new thinking in terms of possibilities and capabilities. Pelusa's remark that "nothing is impossible", in the following extract, can be interpreted as an example of how overcoming of limiting borders can be empowering.

I believe that now, I feel that nothing is impossible (...) I can make it, I know how to, now I can board a plane, I don't know, such simple [things] but at the same time such very big issues (...) Nothing is impossible. (Pelusa)

Pelusa does not seem to have pictured herself as doing something like the sojourn and she explains that it might seem "simple" but have a strong impact. The experience seems to have generated an empowered self-image and consequently she feels that "nothing is impossible".

[The sojourn] opened up a great many things for me, and it also opened up this possibility, because before it was more like a dream, to say that I wanted to go to Spain to study (...) but now it is like, I have been to Sweden, and I managed to live there, I learned a lot, I know things (...) I managed to do that, so now there is nothing that I can't do. (Pelusa)

In overcoming a limiting border Pelusa seems to have discovered new ways of thinking about herself, what is possible and what she can or cannot do in life. Seeming empowered by the experience she now believes that she is capable of turning her dreams into reality. In the participants' reflections about limits, possibilities and capabilities there is a close connection to developments in their subjectification. This is also reflected in a transformed way of thinking about their life-situation and future. Bettan comments:

It [the experience of the sojourn] opened my eyes to a totally different part of the world (...) I have thought about that many times, what it meant to me and it was so incredibly significant (...) and I thought that if I can do this then I will be able to deal with almost anything (---) I became very inspired and, kind of pepped up on life, in spite of the culture shock. (Bettan)

There appears to be a strong sense of subjectification in the personal development of empowerment when one has been challenged and succeeded. In Bettan's case those experiences "opened her eyes". However, the experiences were far from smooth processes, as illustrated by their description as a "culture shock". Nevertheless, Bettan felt that the whole experience "pepped up" her life. The importance of the personal impact, highlighted by Bettan (and other participants), imply that advances in socialization and subjectification prompted by the experiences were often mentioned before other strictly qualification-related educational outcomes.

In a further example, comments by Madi indicate that the sojourn made her see that she can decide for herself what to do, and that she can promote change in ways that previously seemed impossible.

[I]f I want to I can change my reality, it is not that one has to live and die here (...) that can change, oneself can change, one can incentivize a change in others or one can leave. It is possible to be more open to change. (Madi)

The experience seems to have made Madi believe in both herself and others as capable of contributing to change. Madi's experience illustrates the potential importance of leaving one's comfort zone at home in order to begin to think differently about change. Madi further comments:

Now I have a changed vision of the world, and I do not feel so restricted to this reality, now I also have other perspectives of the world. I know that other realities exist. That it is possible, that change is really possible. Everyone says, - "No, there can't be a change", as if they consider it Utopian. But it is true, things can change. (Madi)

The perceived change and discovered belief in change generally appear to be partly founded on a newly gained confidence in being qualified for making such a judgement. Insights about being capable and qualified can be understood as representing developments in qualification. However, the changes appear to be particularly related to developments in socialization and subjectification (especially changes in the individuals' self-images and their relationships with others and society at large), and the development of a cosmopolitan attitude, for which openness to change is a fundamental aspect. Leaving the comfort zone appears to provide opportunities to engage with the larger world. When leaving the comfort zone and engaging with other ways of leading a life the participants seem to have crossed various limits, which appear to have been transformative.

[Now] one knows that one can do it (...) this self-esteem or confidence that one can handle difficult situations, that suddenly felt less difficult (...) That one can do things as long as one trusts one's own capability. (Alexander)

In this example the experiences seem to have had a transformative impact on Alexander's confidence. Sol, among others, experienced similar changes.

There are no limits. But, of course, from here it seems difficult to go abroad, and then the frontiers become limits, but once you have lived that experience of crossing the borders you realize that they are not limits, and that you can cross them again if you put your mind to it, and that it is a realistic possibility to leave the country and be together with other people. (Sol)

This extract, and various others, indicates that the experiences of crossing various kinds of limits induced long-lastingly important transformations in the sojourners' ways of thinking about their lives and futures, thereby significantly contributing to their subjectification. Feeling connected to the larger world opened the sojourners to the development of a cosmopolitan attitude, and some say it is unlikely that they would have changed as they did without leaving their home environment.

I feel that I became more mature, and I considered myself and my life more independently, for example in making plans for my life, I, myself, and also have my own objectives and personal dreams (...) going alone, at that young age, it is formative and it serves me now, I believe that I would not be the same Pelusa if I had not been on the sojourn. (Pelusa)

The transformation that Pelusa reports is reflected in her descriptions of the experience as formative. She explains that she began to consider her options in life in a different and more mature way. Thus, in her words, there was one Pelusa before and another Pelusa after the experience of the sojourn. Other examples of the transformative nature of the sojourns include the statement by Sol that:

[i]t was an important step in maturing, being far away, thinking things through, returning with a different vision, appreciating my family more, and developing the paths that I later took, my studies, how happy I am about my choices, to realize the personal development and what it implied for me. (Sol)

Sol tells that it was an "important step in maturing", which induced feelings of growth that can be interpreted as a perceived development in subjectification. The rethinking of things and the formulation of "visions" for the future as well as new prospects in life seem connected to feelings of empowerment. Several of the participants referred to such an "opening up of one's thinking" as empowering in various ways. Madi comments:

I believe it [the sojourn] has advantages of opening... one's thinking, opening up the universes of each person (...) at least I couldn't imagine that there would be a reality like they had, and I believe that neither do they picture a reality like ours. So, one has to live it to be able to talk about it (...) I developed as a person. Because I travelled far away from my home. Then it became in some sense a way of testing myself, proving that I am capable, that if tomorrow I want to go abroad, I will be able to (...) It opened up my ideas (...) and knowing that we are

not alone in this world, with our reality, our Latin America (...) the sojourn opens doors for you (Madi).

Having opened up her “ideas” and “universe”, Madi appears to have felt empowered by the realization that there are other ways of leading a life and that it is possible to embrace those other realities. These narratives by Pelusa, Sol and Madi illustrate how aspects of what I have called disjuncture, transformation/change and empowerment are intertwined. They also show how aspects of qualification, socialization, and subjectification might synergistically develop. The experiences have proved to be formative and empowering, and hence contributed to changes. The fact that the participants still reflect on the experiences, and consider them helpful later in life communicates that they can be of long-lasting importance. The participants say that they have maintained a reflective attitude and express awareness of their personal development. Travelling far away from home was challenging, and discovering new ways of thinking and finding out that they were capable made them feel empowered. In Madi’s word, the experiences open people’s “universes”.

When crossing geographical borders the sojourners positioned themselves differently in relation to the surrounding world and through their experiences they developed a belief in change and new ways of thinking about themselves and the world. Consequently, they seem to have developed a view of themselves as competent, qualified and empowered by the experiences. Believing in change and that change will contribute to something better appears to be a common educational outcome from the crossing of various borders.

Cosmopolitan Learning

Some of the transformations that the participants experienced appear to have developed as results of changes in the views of the other. However, as already discussed, in the engagement with the other individuals do not seem to gain insights only about the other and other realities. Many of the participants’ references to learning and change are also about discovering themselves in meetings with the other. Furthermore, the sojourners appear to have frequently discovered that such meetings are sources of mutual learning. From such experience they developed feelings of sameness, connectedness and friendship that can be interpreted as examples of developments of a cosmopolitan attitude.

[w]e are all humans who share a great many things, but depending on where we are situated or the context, we happen to do different things with our lives, and that is worth sharing, because my experience might be different from yours, and when I share that, you can learn from mine and I from yours, from the differences and the similarities that might be there. We are just as much alike as

we are different (...) the only thing that separates us are those frontiers that keep us apart, and the geographical distance (...) that might seem very, very far (...) and then one realizes that in a few hours or days you can get to know a totally different reality that in comparison to one's own seems like an invented story. (Sol)

According to Sol, geographical borders are not only constructions that separate and create distance; they also hinder people from sharing and learning in mutual exchange. Overcoming limiting borders could thus potentially provide opportunities for developments of a cosmopolitan attitude based on interest in the other and the other's context and learning in exchange of information about differences and similarities. As previously suggested, one does not have to travel far and wide in order to have an experience of difference. The sojourners have also noted that some separating and limiting borders are much closer.

[T]here are probably many things that we do not notice because they are always there, but, when opening the possibility to see things from another perspective and situate oneself in another place, to observe it, that also teaches you things in a different way (...) if I could have an exchange with a mapuche family for a few days, that would also be situated in another place. In order to understand oneself and the other as well, but starting in oneself because I am my own point of reference, the only one that I have, the only one that one knows, and even that is not complete (...) then, from that you begin to relate to the others, the differences and the similarities that we share. (Sol)

According to Sol, an interest in seeing things from another perspective and thereby that situating oneself differently brings an educational potential that might contribute to extensive learning and overcoming much closer borders. In line with a cosmopolitan outlook in which interest in the other, recognition of the local and constant change are considered fundamental aspects, exchanges appear to have potential to foster people's understanding not only of others but also of themselves and discover that these situations are sources of growth. To some extent the insights that drive such inner developments appear to be grounded in qualifying experiences and reflections on the meetings. However, the perceived personal growth can also be understood as a development in subjectification. A developed feeling of connectedness and solidarity can similarly be understood as contributing to socialization. Taken together these developments reflect a cosmopolitan attitude of feelings of connectedness in the shared experience of being human.

Wanting a Change

Several of the sojourners spoke of a wish to be like the other when describing how they discovered new options and became critical of their own accustomed ways of leading a life in the meeting with the other and the

other's context. In such reflections they had an open and embracing attitude to difference and a willingness to learn from the new that can be interpreted in terms of representing a cosmopolitan attitude. In the following quotations, Bettan from Sweden and Madi from Chile exemplify how the participants have reasoned about the impacts that I have interpreted as perceived transformations.

In several narratives the Swedes recalled impressions of becoming close and included in people's communities and how that contributed to changes in ways of socializing. However, as this example from Bettan's account shows, the reflections upon ways of socializing also seem to have contributed to a subjective change that resulted in an understanding of herself as having "become more like them".

When I came home I felt that I could not fully be in the same way that I had been allowed to be in Chile (...) I feel that I have become more like them, but soon after returning home that was difficult. (Bettan)

Bettan tells that she experienced herself in a different way but at home she did not succeed in communicating the transformative impact of the experiences.

I was so overwhelmed, it was like, - "This is so fantastic, you have to understand this and, you have to understand that I have to tell people about it". And then it was so frustrating when I wasn't met in a way that I expected, or with engagement (...) that feeling of fellowship that I experienced there [in Chile] I felt so comfortable in that and, I missed it a lot when coming home. (Bettan)

Despite the brevity of the sojourn this extract clearly indicates that the experiences brought about changes in terms of subjectification and socialization. Not only had the experiences made Bettan reflect upon different ways of interacting and being together, she also says it made her think in new ways about who she is. These changes clearly suggest that the impacts were not being momentary feelings of being overwhelmed but more long-lasting and transformative.

When thinking about change, the Chilean participants largely reflected upon differences related to environmental issues, social inequalities and class-differences. Their critical reflections about the differences in social organization in Sweden and Chile highlight perceived deficits in the latter and their effects on people's lives. In relation to such reflections Madi expresses a wish to be like the other:

[W]hen I came home I noticed of all the graffiti, the disorder, the broken things and I felt very depressed (...) because it is like, what humans strive for in life is to have some more order and structure, to feel safe, that it could be different, and at least there [in Sweden] I felt that it was like the ideal of what a person longs for (---) I don't know how to explain it, afterwards, returning to my reality I felt that I wanted the other. It was like having to accept my routines, the

disorder, the graffiti, the social class-differences and that one's life is not free, that everyone interferes in your choices. (Madi)

The perceived deficiencies and needs for improvements made Madi "want the other" and the personal transformations and new ways of thinking resulted in further changes in her:

I believe that after the sojourn my way of thinking changed. I thought that perhaps I will not be able to change everything and everybody but I can start in my family, for example the issue with recycling issue has intensified, thoughts about the environment and the animals, because there [in Sweden] it was a lot about that, they took care of the environment and the animals. But also, this thing about giving priority to oneself. That also changed. That is why I gave myself that time, a sabbatical year after graduating. (Madi)

This example indicates that in some cases the experiences fostered feelings of being sufficiently competent to initiate changes. In such cases the experience had implications beyond the mere discovery of a belief in change being possible. Madi's example shows how the transformative experiences that changed her ways of thinking also contributed to taking action. Madi tells that she introduced recycling in her family and, inspired by others' ways of giving priority to themselves, she chose to take a sabbatical year. She reckons that she alone will not be able to change everyone's thinking, but it has started in herself and her family. Madi's experience of "wanting the other" also appears to have contributed to a subjective development. In her reflections Madi concludes that she wants to be someone with environmental awareness who contributes to society and initiates changes. The ways that Madi relates to society at large, and more specifically to environmental issues, indicates that the experience also contributed to her socialization and qualification in terms of having become more informed and concerned about the surrounding world that we all share.

The examples from narratives by Bettan and Madi show how the participants seem to have experienced themselves as transformed and empowered by the new insights. In most cases the impressions seem to have sparked motivation to believe in change and the participants' own capabilities to contribute to change.

There were also several descriptions of partial transformations in terms of desiring and feeling capable of initiating change. Gonzalo, for example, talks about feeling discouraged by the deficiencies in Chilean society, which he became more aware of when comparing life in Sweden and Chile. His narrative indicates that such reflections have had some negative subjective effects in this respect (although they might, of course, have profoundly positive effects if and when they are fully resolved). Similarly, some of the Chilean girls' reflections show that it may be difficult to break with norms and unwritten laws, despite a desire to do so. These girls describe how they

had bought some clothes and decided that back in Chile they would dress like the Swedish girls, but they already knew that this would breach norms regarding public appearances.

[w]e then wanted to dress like that and, I remember that we bought panties, and one day [still in Sweden] we dressed up like that and we felt so different, it was like ohhh, I don't know, as if we were showing too much and, when we returned to Chile we said; "We are going to dress like **That!**... and, then we arrived back home and NO, we didn't manage to move against the system, no, I recall one day when I went out and in the face of all the others I felt so strange (...) it influences so much, we saw that [way of dressing] over there, but when we came here, to our culture we could not apply it because it made us different. As if we were, if wearing those clothes would make us different. (Pelusa)

This example indicates that it was important for the returning sojourners to be accepted and they found it difficult to be considered different in the eyes of others. In this case the socialization into new ways of being that occurred during the sojourn seems to have lost its impact when the participants returned to their home-context. The "wanting to be like the other" was not held back by formal laws but by the individuals' perception of unwritten laws and norms about how to appear in public. The girls seem surprised by finding that certain norms were more difficult to contest than others. The unwritten laws appear to have exerted as strong influence as formal laws. Similarly, it seems to have been difficult for the Swedes to contest norms for social interaction in their home-environment. In contrast to these examples, attitudes to some issues, such as environmental concern and social organization, were contested, critically examined and in some cases provided incentives for changes that were not held back by custom, norms or values in the same manner. However, despite intentions to change, the normative socialization from the home-environment appears to have been stronger and the individuals fell back into their old subject positions. The participants have reasoned about how they experienced many challenges to their ways of thinking, feeling and doing. Norms, values and pressures associated with belonging to a particular socio-economic class were factors that remained almost as limiting to the participants' thinking about possibilities in life as they were before their sojourns.

The narratives clearly show that some of the sojourners actively looked for situations that had potential to provide a transformative experience. Such strives can be interpreted in terms of reflecting a cosmopolitan approach to the meetings. Alexander uses a metaphor when explaining how the meetings influenced his ways of thinking and doing, asserting that it is necessary to "peel off one's skin" of culture and identity in order to learn from the meetings with others and oneself.

[w]ell, one has to peel it off, in order to, well it is perhaps not possible to just put on another skin but, I am of the opinion that once you have peeled it off, that is

forever, even if one can put it on again, a little, it will always be easier to peel it off again (...) that skin is like a shell, it is the same as the whole structure or the whole pattern or model of how to behave that one acquires from being Swedish, and, I mean, so much in our behaviour is just about customs, acquired behaviour, and the fact that we act and do things the way we do is because we have been taught and told to do things that way and everyone else does the same. By and by that becomes an integrated part of us and one feels most comfortable when moving around within that frame. (Alexander)

Alexander reasons that people feel comfortable within their cultural “skin”, i.e. a major, integral part of individuals’ identity that develops through immersion in their native culture. Feeling at home in a context and thereby being part of what Biesta (2010) calls a “rational community” an individual can produce feelings of what I have described as a state of harmony and it can be interpreted in terms of being in one’s comfort zone. However, as Biesta (2010) reasons, it may be that people only break into the world as unique and particular beings through engaging with the “other community”, i.e. the unfamiliar, the strange or unknown. An interpretation of this reasoning suggests that in order for a meeting with the foreign to be educational it is necessary to experience what I have called disjuncture and thereby shed some of the cultural skin that Alexander describes and expose oneself to the other. Alexander seems to believe this as an important avenue to personal growth:

[i]f not, one keeps that skin or shell as a protection, like this bubble, and when meeting with a different kind of behaviour while still being in one’s own bubble then it will not be possible to really learn from that. It could just be wiped away as something deviant because you are still within your frame and then it is not really possible to understand (...) [However, having peeled it off] one notices what has come off. By that the differences between the cultures become concrete and you start analysing and reflecting about why these people act as they do, and then indirectly one starts to reflect about oneself and why we act as we do (...) The more exposed and vulnerable the more, I believe, the more tools one gets to analyse one’s own and others’ behaviour. (Alexander)

Following Alexander’s reasoning it is rewarding to peel away some of one’s cultural skin and expose oneself as vulnerable. He believes that then one becomes open to reflection and learning from the discovery of oneself and meetings with the other. Interpreting this reasoning with regard to learning, a person can be informed without peeling off anything, but in interpersonal meetings leaving the comfort zone, peeling off some skin and exposing oneself appears to provide opportunities to develop a cosmopolitan learning based on engagement with the local and known as well as with the other and unfamiliar. Alexander also reasons that exposure to more perspectives promotes a more pluralistic view of the surrounding world, and it should therefore be part of the education of every individual.

[I] still definitely think so, that it should be part of education, the basic formation, that one goes somewhere and learns about what it is like somewhere

else. Because otherwise one will always use Sweden as one's point of reference and frame for how it works in other countries, while there may be a totally different frame. (Alexander)

Alexander reasons that it is important to be exposed to more perspectives because otherwise there is a risk that people will remain blind to other, equally valid ways of leading a life and instead use their own context as sole frame and reference point for how things should be done. The idea of the sojourn contributing enriching perspectives that allow such stepping outside of the comfort zone, i.e. outside of the “model”, “bubble”, “protection” or “skin”, and experience of the world from other points of view, can be interpreted as mirroring a cosmopolitan attitude. Several other participants (Gonzalo, Lisa, Maria, Sofia) reason in similar ways to Alexander who continues on the topic that I have interpreted as an example of a cosmopolitan attitude:

The whole Swedish educational system is built on the idea of fostering democratic citizens who should learn to appreciate our system and how to behave in real life. Isn't that the purpose of education? And also that one should develop an understanding of other cultures, doing that in practice by means of an exchange is incredibly important, I believe (...) if one has positive contacts with foreigners during one's upbringing one won't be prejudiced against, for example immigrants, or any situation in which one meets foreigners. (Alexander)

Alexander can be interpreted as having developed a more cosmopolitan thinking about his relation to the surrounding world, and his reasoning about “peeling off one's skin” shows the synergism of the three processes of qualification, socialization, and subjectification. They are emphasized in reflections about civic education, feelings of being part of and responsible for something larger than oneself and the immediate surroundings, and in the becoming of a person who is considerate and open-minded to others. This example shows how the three processes may contribute to developments of a cosmopolitan attitude based on mutuality and recognition of one's own context and an interest in the other.

6.2 The Value of Sojourns

The participants have shown, at least in retrospect, an open attitude to learning from the new and unfamiliar. The meetings with the other and oneself have contributed to qualification in that they have become more experienced and informed. The reflections upon the meetings have also fostered personal growth (subjectification) and socialization in line with a cosmopolitan learning relating themselves to the surrounding world. Important issues that remain to be addressed are the participants' views

about the value of such apparently transformative, empowering experiences, and their retrospective assessments of their sojourns.

Insights

Several participants highlight the authenticity of sojourns as a key distinguishing feature of the learning it provides, which they describe as being more grounded and holistic than the learning in other school-based situations.

I do not believe that one can really understand if one has not been there, so I think that it is necessary to go there in order to understand what another society is like and how things work in another culture, that is not something you can read about, you have to experience it (...) I believe that it is the only way, that one goes there, to see, speak and, both linguistically and culturally, I mean culture is mediated through language, so going there to experience how people interact is necessary, I believe that it is impossible to do that while staying at home (...) [By means of ICT] one might get to understand and feel sympathy for one person but I do not think that you can get an understanding for a whole culture without going there. That must be almost impossible. (Sofia)

The first-hand experience of everyday life in a different context is direct, unfiltered and thus, Sofia reasons, it provides distinctly different and more complete learning experiences than other educational situations. Similarly, other sojourners argue that it is more complete as you get to know things that are “between the lines in books” (Karin), more “real” and both the interpersonal relations and emotional closeness are difficult to achieve in a classroom situation (Kim), and the interpersonal relations may lead to engagement that is difficult to establish in teaching situations (Madi).

In addition to being described as more complete and grounded the participants also said that their learning from the sojourns surpassed their expectations and exceeded the learning that usually occurs in the same number of days in school. Hence, some of them stress that it is unnecessary to arrange a tight itinerary or a spectacular program with a lot of activities in an exchange, because everyday life in all its diversity is sufficiently educative. For the same reason, some also argue that it is not necessary to stay for a long period, such as six months, in order to acquire insights into another culture. Due to the intensity of communication and interaction in everyday life, effective learning situations constantly develop, so three weeks were experienced as very different from other three-week periods (Alexander). Kim also comments on this:

[T]o live someone’s everyday life (...) I mean we had breakfast together, then Eric’s uncle came and took us to school, we attended lessons and we had lunch, the same lunch as they had, then we went home, did homework with him, I mean, it was really their everyday life and routines. Then we also went to their cabin in the countryside and (...) I believe those things, that everyday life, I

believe that is so very important and, in order to have that it is perhaps not necessary to stay six months, but a shorter period, only to get an insight into another culture and discover that it can be different, that it doesn't have to be as in the little bubble in Sweden. (Kim)

Kim explains that in the sharing of the other's everyday life and routines there is a strong learning potential. In calling her own Swedish reality a "bubble" Kim seems to think that having a single perspective rooted in one's own reality is one-sided or narrow-minded. This example indicates that the insights and understanding engendered by exposure to life in different places has high educational potential to both develop 'rhizomatic' roots and significant transformative personal development i.e. subjectification and socialization.

The potential value of experiences from sojourns is described by the participants in terms of both personal growth and contributions to changes in perspectives that make people more tolerant and considerate towards others. In this manner the experiences from a sojourn may help to counteract racism and promote solidarity and peace. Accordingly, it can be argued that the encounters and learning that accompany the experiences may shorten the distance between people and foster a capability to associate and connect to other situations. Commenting on the recent history of Chile, Lisa says:

[T]he memorials, for example, and one realizes how many they were, how many families are victims, who have lost someone that was tortured or disappeared, and it gets under one's skin in a way, it becomes so real, because at home you watch the news, for example that 10 or 15 people were killed in Iraq or Syria or those things happening right now in the Arab countries, I mean North Africa, and then I believe that since I have been there, in Chile, I gained a totally different understanding of what actually happened there and I can apply that to things that are happening right now, because you get a more profound, grounded understanding, I would not have, I would not have had that if I had not been there. (Lisa)

Lisa argues that she gained a more complete or, in her own words more "profound", "grounded" and "real" understanding, which allows her to make comparisons and apply her insights to current situations. She says that she often recalls these experiences when thinking about the kind of society she wants to contribute to, and how to counter threats posed by anti-democratic groups. The fact that Lisa still recollects and re-evaluates her understanding of the experiences strongly indicates that they have long-lasting significance. It is of course possible to study second-hand, mediated sources about politics and history. However, Lisa's example suggests that interpersonal meetings can provide learning of a profoundly different nature, with a dimension of authenticity that helps to ground and integrate impressions via a feeling of connectedness.

Assessment

Several of the participants expressed regret that the experience of a sojourn is not recognized as formal knowledge but rather considered informal and personal. They say that the only upper secondary merits that count are those that improve chances of success when applying to university, i.e. those regarded as contributors to formal qualifications. In order to give formal weight to the experience a few suggest that study credits or some kind of certification should be awarded for completion of an upper secondary sojourn (Håkan, Madi). The experiences would then be acknowledged and transformed into a factor of qualification that can be added to other upper secondary study merits.

Despite receiving no formal certification of participation in the sojourn several participants say that they mention the experience in their CV, believing that it communicates positive things, that they are experienced, urbane, familiar with the ways of the world, socially competent, good at intercultural interaction, open-minded, unafraid, and that they can master languages (Maria, Tintaglia, Bettan, Karin, Alexander, Sara and Pelusa). The participants describe such characteristics as having developed from the experience of the sojourn. The perceived transformations in views of themselves that the sojourners developed during their relatively short stays, and subsequent reflection, has in that sense contributed not only to their qualification and socialization (knowledge base and ability to interact in diverse social situations, respectively) but also in their subjectification (notably in a positive self-image).

Some of the participants said that regardless of how people think about formal and informal competencies there are aspects of learning that strongly justify sojourns. Such learning is related to the function of the sojourn as an eye-opener, which provides glimpses of other realities that contribute to new ways of thinking (Gonzalo, Cami). Another recurrent theme is the feeling of empowerment awakened by an emerging belief in change and everything being possible (Pelusa). Having opened one's eyes to the world, or peeled away some of one's skin (Alexander), they were recalled as being left half-open or still at least partially exposed. Some believed that the most important aspects of the sojourn were adapting to another reality in a host-country, making friends and learning that it is possible to lead a life elsewhere, then returning and contributing to change at home (Madi, Sol). The development in subjectification reflected in such feelings of having become empowered and borderless are recognized and highly valued by the sojourners themselves. Thus, although the more formative aspects of learning were not formally taken into account, their accounts indicate that they may be at least as important as formal qualification aspects. Karin tells that:

I don't know, but the personal gain, well the language, but I am of the opinion that everyone should be offered the opportunity to go, well, I mean, it would be fantastic if everyone had the opportunity to go on an exchange, because it is so rewarding for that person. I mean, just consider the general awareness and understanding of other cultures and ways of thinking, and I, I just think that it is so extremely important. I mean, understanding and sympathy. Or I don't know how to explain but, I do believe that it counteracts racism, prejudices and narrow-mindedness, when one gets an insight into others' everyday lives and ways of thinking. I believe that, by that one becomes a more considerate person...perhaps" (Karin).

In this example Karin explains how the personal, micro-level gain for the individual may have macro-level implications for society at large. She believes that society will eventually benefit from people developing an understanding and sympathy that may counteract racism, prejudices and narrow-mindedness in the long term. However, Karin is aware that the activity is expensive, and despite it being educationally and personally rewarding in numerous ways, and promoting valuable ideals, she seems anxious that her conclusions about all the positive outcomes may be wrong. The educational outcomes in terms of qualification, socialization and subjectification do not appear sufficiently convincing to her to justify, definitively, the cost of offering all pupils an opportunity to participate in sojourns.

Cami is one of the participants who criticized attitudes to sojourns abroad being considered "study-jaunts" that primarily provide pleasure and diversion. This critique adds a further dimension to the belief that sojourns should provide formal merits or some other certification, in addition to valuable informal, personal life-experiences. It is possible that the participants' reasoning about the importance of the experiences from a sojourn reflects differences in attitudes to formal and informal knowledge and learning. In line with their reasoning, the only acknowledged competencies they promote are formal and related to linguistics qualification. The view that study abroad is a costly diversion with dubious benefits may also reflect views of internationalization, as a luxury associated with pure entertainment and a maldistribution of social resources. Such attitudes to study-abroad programmes have been documented in several attempts to assess experiences from them in terms of importance, value and possible outcomes (SOU 92/93:27; Ryan-Bengtsson, 2008:4).

As already noted, several participants spoke of their learning from the sojourns in ways that I have interpreted in terms of having had substantial transformative effects, accompanied by significant developments in qualification, socialisation and subjectification. Extracts from Sara's narrative encapsulate the educational complexity of these experiences. She says that the insights into someone else's everyday life were eye-openers that made her see things differently and become more open-minded, indicative of

both personal growth (subjective transformation) and realization of new perspectives (socialization). Sara also believes that the experience communicates that she is a person who is capable of dealing with different people in diverse situations. Sara's belief that these factors will be important in an increasingly global reality, and make a difference, can be interpreted as reflecting a perceived development in qualification, manifested in her remarks that she is more experienced than before and more experienced than many others.

The participants themselves are aware of the educational contributions and possible uses of their experiences. In their assessments there are particularly many references to transformations that can be interpreted as related to socialization and subjectification. They also comment that the experiences should have some formal recognition, but when asked specifically about the value of the experiences several turn to qualification to support their arguments about their perceived learning, emphasising the socialization and subjectification less strongly.

It is possible that a longer stay would facilitate assessment of formal educational outcomes. For example, aspects of qualification such as language improvement could potentially be manifested more clearly over a longer timeframe. Such assessments could then be used in discussions about the value of the sojourn as an educational practice. However, the participants have identified substantial developments related to all three educational functions, some of which have remained significant to their lives, according to post-sojourn reflections. Nevertheless, the participants report that their educational establishments rarely showed any interest in making use of their experiences, and they have had few formal, school-related uses of them.

6.3 Experiences of Coming Home

This section summarizes sojourners' experiences of returning home, the perceived implications of the learning that occurred during their stay and how they related those experiences to their present lives, as described in sections 6.1 and 6.2. Various aspects, in retrospect, appear to have been transformative and hence of long-lasting significance. All participants have spoken of the experiences from the sojourns as promoting personal growth, gaining new insights and capabilities, enhancing qualification and empowering them to think differently about themselves and others. Such transformed ways of thinking and doing are reflected in references to how the experiences: reinforced their self-esteem; enhanced their self-image; "opened" their "eyes", "universes", and "thinking"; and "widened their perspectives". The perceived formative development appears to have been built on synergistic developments in terms of all three educational functions. When the sojourners themselves assess the experiences as educational

outcomes they describe them in terms of qualification, but the frequent references to developments in socialization, and particularly subjectification, indicate that transformations appear to have been particularly important.

The participants reason that the authenticity in the encounters, the intensity of everyday activities, interaction and the personal engagement that a sojourn contributes cannot be provided in a classroom teaching situation. The participants describe experiences indicating that the sojourn promoted all three educational processes. They believe that the insights gained have made them more qualified for professions involving frequent interaction with diverse people. They also believe that the experience of a sojourn can counteract racism and promote peace and solidarity as people learn about themselves and develop feelings of responsibility and connectedness to the larger world during sojourns. This is reflected, for example, in the sojourners' expressions of changes "before and after" the sojourn, having engaged with developments in other parts of the world, and feeling responsible and bound to act upon injustices. In several cases a perceived transformation seems to have sparked further change and action taking, as illustrated by the subsequent engagement of some of the participants in charity work and environmental issues.

The participants also described the transformative importance of crossing limiting borders (geographical and social) for encountering and integrating new perspectives, and only a few had an experience of encountering socio-economic inequalities or norms that were difficult to challenge after crossing the borders.

Many of the participants expressed disappointment that their home institutions, friends and others seem to regard their perceived learning outcomes as purely informal and personal. Criticising this view, they believe that sojourns have multi-dimensional educational value, including improvement of qualification as well as profound transformative potential in socialization and subjectification, (as shown in this thesis), which should be formally recognized in the form of study credits or some kind of certificate that could be used when applying for university courses, for example.

The analysis of the narratives shows that the sojourns promoted synergistic changes related to all three educational functions, as the experiences made them feel empowered, more capable and confident, with clear benefits in terms of qualification, socialization and subjectification. As a result of the transformations the participants seem to have found room, and the capacity, to act upon change in both themselves and others. The foreign and distant others have become closer through the experiences from the sojourn, and simultaneously the participants have gained insights about their own unicity. Such transformations also confirm that intercultural meetings have high potential to foster development of a cosmopolitan attitude.

7. Learning From Sojourns

The aim of the study was to investigate into and characterise students' experiences of learning from their having taken part in an international upper secondary exchange in an intercultural context. This investigation addressed two main research questions:

1. How can the students' experiences be understood in terms of the educational functions of qualification, socialization and subjectification?
2. What is the role of 'disturbed harmony' in learning in intercultural contexts?

In this concluding chapter I summarise the results from the study in relation to the educational functions (section 7.1), discuss intercultural aspects of learning from sojourns (section 7.2) then consider the implications of the study, particularly in relation to the nature and general value of international upper secondary sojourns as educational practices (section 7.3).

7.1 Developments Related to Educational Functions

As noted in the overview of previous research (section 1.3), there have been few investigations of internationalization in upper secondary contexts. However, significantly more research has addressed corresponding themes in higher education contexts, providing some of the foundations for initial premises of this study and interesting comparative data. Several main findings are broadly consistent, notably with respect to students' interest in interpersonal and intercultural interactions, the growing numbers of students participating in exchanges, the increasing popularity of relatively short sojourns and several aspects of students' perceived learning outcomes. However, there are also differences, particularly in students' level of contentment about interpersonal interaction and the formal value of the experience in terms of study merits.

The participants in this study reported extensive interactions with host nationals that generally surpassed their expectations, possibly because their homestays provided numerous opportunities (or even obligations) to interact. In contrast, some higher education sojourners report discontentment due to a paucity of interaction and general difficulties in getting to know and connect with host nationals (Brown, 2009a, 2009b; Allen, 2010). Possibly the homestay is not as common in higher education students' sojourns and that might then at least partly explain this difference. A less satisfactory element of upper secondary sojourns (including those

considered in this study) is that they are often extracurricular activities that are regarded as informal diversions rather than parts of a course and provide no formal study merits, unlike many higher education sojourns.

The participants reported extensive learning that can be interpreted as reflecting developments in all three studied educational processes (Biesta, 2010), and particularly in subjectification. However, this learning was generally not taken into account in their schoolwork or grades when they returned to their educational home environments.

Disjuncture and Disturbed Harmony

Based on the idea that learning is favoured by experiences of disjuncture that disturb an individual's harmony (Jarvis, 2009; see also Adler, 1975; Taylor, 1994; Biesta, 2010), various aspects and situations that raised difficulties for the sojourners have been identified as learning opportunities and analysed in terms of their relations to qualification, socialization and subjectification. Such experiences were particularly common in the initial meetings, but they frequently arose throughout their sojourns and even following their return home. Examples of disjunctive elements include the participants' doubts about how to respond in particular situations and social codes for interaction, lack of linguistic proficiency and apparent changes in their personality. Several of the reported experiences, notably aspects related to communication, interpersonal relations and reflections on impressions of the other and oneself appear particularly common and recurrent. The participants' narratives indicate that the disjunctures and resulting disturbances of harmony were often unexpected and resulted in feelings of frustration, anxiety, uneasiness, worry and stress. No participants reported that they enjoyed the disjunctures triggered by the difficulties. However, together with the need to address situations the feelings triggered by the disturbances promoted resolutions. Another important factor promoting resolution of the disjunctures and restoration of harmony was the support (often surprising) provided by interpersonal interaction with host nationals.

Interaction and Learning

In initial stages of their sojourns, the participants' interactions were generally influenced by stereotypical images of host nationals and the host culture. Such stereotypes frequently contribute to social categorisation and predictions about others' behaviour, but they are often vague and inaccurate (Bennett, 1998:6-8; Gudykunst & Kim, 2003:131). Having built expectations based on stereotypes that they would encounter numerous difficulties, such as problems in connecting with the other, the participants were generally pleasantly surprised to discover that their negative preconceptions were

often wrong. Hence, the interactions and accompanying changes appear to have contributed to changes in participants' perspectives, new ways of thinking about the other and themselves, and consequently learning in all three dimensions of the studied educational functions (qualification, socialization and subjectification).

The quality of interpersonal relationships appears to have strongly influenced the degree to which the participants benefited (at least in the short-term) from the many learning opportunities in their sojourns. This conclusion is partly based on the participants' numerous reports that they very quickly developed connectedness, inclusion, ties, closeness and friendship in their interactions with host nationals, which they regarded as highly significant both as single experiences and as overall features of their sojourns. Many of those interpersonal relations were developed within the homestay environment, which as already mentioned can strongly promote and accelerate direct, close, intensive and integrated interactions between sojourners and host nationals, thereby providing many learning opportunities. The homestay may be particularly important in brief sojourns, such as those considered here, in which the sojourners have relatively little time to develop interpersonal relations. A functionally appropriate reception may accordingly compensate for a temporary loss of one's social network in the home-context, thereby promoting successful resolution of disjunctures, restoration of harmony and transformative learning processes. Conversely, in accordance with findings by Brown (2009b) and Allen (2010), dysfunctional or non-existing interpersonal interactions are often sources of dissatisfaction. Thus, poor understanding of particular interaction needs, or failure to meet them, may have serious consequences for sojourners' possibilities to profit from the learning opportunities associated with their sojourns.

Interpersonal relations and the receptive and inclusive response from the others appear to be significant for both students' perceived contentment and preventing difficult situations from developing into unresolved disjunctures. One participant reported discontentment regarding interaction because she failed to overcome barriers (strongly related to self-image and estimated competencies) hindering interaction, although her hosts were supportive. Another sojourner also initially experienced severe difficulties to interact, but she gradually overcame them and managed to find ways to deal with the situations. Without more detailed information it is difficult to tell why only one of the two managed to overcome the disjuncture and find ways to deal with further disjunctures. Both of these sojourners had high expectations for themselves, the sojourn as a whole and particularly the interaction and communication. Both of them were also highly concerned about their linguistic skills. Thus, they had similar starting points in terms of qualification, so the differences in their experiences of disjuncture were

probably related to differences in personal (socialization and subjectification) factors, notably in their self-esteem, confidence in engaging in unfamiliar situations and (hence) drawing support from others.

Learning Synergies

The relation between the three studied educational functions is according to Biesta (2010:22) "composite" and developments in one function often includes developments in the other two. Their relation is accordingly synergistic. Learning synergies, i.e. situations and processes synergistically enhancing qualification, socialization and subjectification, were apparent in various parts of the participants' narratives. Notable examples included recurrent reflections on differences in norms and social codes for interaction, politeness and appropriate behaviour in meetings, uneasiness about some conversational topics, and avoiding or abandoning conversations due to linguistic deficiencies. An example is conversations about politics which provided several cases. On discovering unexpected differences in political opinions the sojourners had to consider not only how to express different viewpoints in the foreign language, but also options for responses and several potentially sensitive issues. Would it be better to venture into the discussion or try to change the topic, impolite or disrespectful to express a different view or question the other's opinions? And is it important to be able to express personal opinions? Seeking appropriate ways of responding in such situations clearly challenged the sojourners' qualification (formal linguistic and other communicative skills). However, consideration of the relations, development of interactions, positions in exchanges, their own opinions and the rejection or integration of new perspectives in their world views equally clearly raised highly interactive social and subjective challenges. Thus, the resolution of the problems posed in these kinds of situations, and numerous others during the sojourns, also required highly interactive advances in qualification, socialization and subjectification.

Synergies in Aspects of Communication

All of the sojourners described disjunctures related to aspects of communication and commented on perceived effects of the disjunctures on interpersonal interactions. The communicative situations appear to have been potent sources of synergistic learning in numerous cases. Advances in their communicative skills resulted in socialization and subjectification development, e.g. increases in confidence and more active participation in interactions. Conversely, development of social skills and subjectification promoted qualification, e.g. the feeling of inclusion increased their confidence in expressing themselves in the foreign language. This may

explain why the individuals often perceived sudden advances in communicative skills, and changes in themselves, when they creatively tested different strategies in interactions. This does not necessarily mean that they had suddenly cracked some grammatical codes or expanded their vocabulary, with consequent advances in qualification, socialization and subjectification. Instead, the participants' many references to interpersonal aspects of their interactions indicate that social and subjective changes in attitudes and engagement provided opportunities and means for them to interact more fully and find new ways to express themselves.

The participants say that before going they thought that linguistic proficiency would be the critical determinant of the quality of interactions during a sojourn, but this preconception was challenged by the numerous examples of contentment about interactions despite linguistic deficiencies. Situations in which people are unable to express themselves, interact as desired and/or feel vulnerable, uncertain and incapable of solving unforeseen problems may profoundly affect their interactions, causing them for example to withdraw or become hesitant, doubtful or passive. Clearly, such situations also influence all three educational processes but particularly, as this study indicates, subjectification and socialization.

Having an outgoing, communicative personality can be helpful in many situations, but some examples from the sojourners' narratives indicate that it does not guarantee successful interaction. Furthermore, in some cases outgoing individuals became withdrawn and quiet in the intercultural meetings, while some of the shy sojourners became more outgoing and communicative, and experienced successful social interaction in the host-environment. Personality, the individual's abilities to adapt, think creatively about resolving communicative problems and aptitude in use of multi-modal communicative strategies are all factors that may explain general differences between individuals' interactions. Such an open approach in the meeting together with an inclusive reception by the other (communicative cooperation, attentiveness and willingness to help) are all factors that may help to overcome disjunctures and enhance the educational processes, particularly for those who believe they have insufficient language skills. The findings indicate that qualification factors, such as linguistic skills, are important as tools for communication and the development of interaction, but not necessarily as crucial as often thought. Socialization and subjectification factors appear to be equally important for the learning that occurs in the often complex and challenging processes of elaborating understanding, meaning-making and formulating alternative solutions. In terms of qualification the sojourners often strove to maintain a communicative flow in order to maintain and develop interactions (enhancing their socialization) while taking responsibility for the interaction and attempting to develop understanding of new perspectives (enhancing

their subjectification). Various recollections exemplify the synergism of the educational processes in these situations.

The situations that have been interpreted as communicative disjunctures are in this study often described as having been difficult, stressful and challenging, but their resolution often reportedly resulted in enhancements of the individuals' self-image, confidence and feelings of capability. Such feelings of empowerment also appear to have boosted personal growth in terms of all three educational functions. For example, the revisions of the participants' self-images and capabilities, options and possibilities in life are interpreted as developments in subjectification that influenced their socialization and qualification. Similarly, the numerous descriptions of making themselves understood, connecting with or being able to laugh together with the other express synergistic learning involving all three educational processes.

In conclusion, the findings support the premise that disjunctures and disturbances of harmony enhance learning. Such situations should therefore not necessarily be avoided or counteracted. The numerous difficulties and challenges described by the participants appear to have contributed to significant personal growth and transformed views of both themselves and the others. These findings clearly indicate that experiences of disjunctures and situations that disturb harmony have significant educational potential. However, overcoming challenges and resolving difficult situations quickly may be important for disjunctures to develop into synergistic learning situations. Conversely, prolonged disjunctures or failure to resolve them and/or restore harmony may ruin much of the whole experience, particularly in short sojourns in which there is little time to formulate and try out possible solutions. For example, communicative deficiencies are likely to result in discouragement, frustration and stress, while successful resolution of difficult situations often leads to perceptions of personal growth related to both socialization and subjectification, including reinforcement of self-confidence, self-image and feelings of accomplishment. The results show that when the diverse experiences from sojourns are interpreted in terms of learning they often lead to significant synergistic learning involving all three studied educational processes, but particularly subjectification.

7.2 Learning in an Intercultural Context

The intercultural context is an intrinsic feature of an international sojourn that appears to be a source of many comparisons, reflections upon impressions of the other and oneself, and situations that are perceived to be unfamiliar. In a study on higher education students' experiences from exchanges Brown & Holloway (2008) reason that many things are perceived as challenging when people engage in culturally new situations because

anxiety is never far away. This may at least partially explain why the participants in this study often felt uneasiness, stress and anxiety when encountering unfamiliarity in everyday situations and activities that they knew how to cope with well in their home environment. The unfamiliarity of various everyday situations are accordingly often recalled as having been challenging and significant features of their sojourns because at that time they were the roots of feelings of uneasiness and anxiety. Such difficulties in everyday situations created disjunctures accompanied by disturbed harmony, and hence synergistic learning potential (as argued in section 7.1). Similarly, the intercultural context of international sojourns is likely to introduce unfamiliar elements, even in everyday situations, and hence disjunctures, disturbance of harmony and extensive learning opportunities.

As argued in 7.1 the participants' narratives also show that the efforts to resolve disjunctures and associated problems involved complex processes of meaning-making. With regard to that their reflections on interactions in the host nation, relations to each other, the cultural, economic, social and political implications of membership of a particular society, traditions and engagement have all been interpreted as having strong intercultural dimensions and fostering the three educational processes. Adler's (1975:18) argument that a "transitional experience begins with an encounter of another culture and evolves into the encounter with self" is clearly reflected in the participants' reports of going on their sojourns with ideas about getting to know other realities, and in retrospect recalling to a large extent learning about themselves. These findings clearly indicate that intercultural contexts provide potent opportunities not only for revisions of individuals' views of others but also transformative self-reflection and revisions of their understanding of themselves. In the examined cases these often developed in relation to some aspect of communication, culture or identity, and in their reflections upon the disjunctures and processes of re-establishing harmony the participants elaborated their understanding and added meanings to the experiences. The descriptions of changes in self, views and attitudes show that the impressions become integrated in the individuals and hence transformed ways of thinking, feeling and doing. These results are consistent with Jarvis's (2009) model of disjunctures and the argument that it is not the experiences *per se* that lead to transformations but rather the reflection and meaning-making that occur when new impressions are added to previous understandings.

The participants describe many challenging experiences in their interactions and dealing with unfamiliar situations. They also report the development of unexpected connectedness and closeness with people and places in these meetings, leading to transformations of perspectives about life and living conditions, solidarity with others and interest in other ways of leading a life. Thus, the processes of resolving disjunctures and meaning-

making appear to offer potential for individuals to look at the world from different perspectives. Hence, the intercultural context appears to provide numerous possibilities for transformative processes and triggers for changes in perspectives. Such transformation is likely to lead to changes in meaning structures and an inclusive world view that opens individuals' minds to evaluate and integrate other ways of thinking, feeling and doing (Adler, 1975; Taylor, 1994; Jarvis, 2009).

A Cosmopolitan Outlook

A highly important feature of the participants' sojourns appeared to be the experience of stepping out of their familiar, comfortable home-context and the consequent need to engage with others in other communities. According to their narratives this frequently resulted in oscillations between disturbed and restored harmony as they resolved disjunctures and acquired "intercultural competence". This is described by Taylor (1994) as arising from a transformative process in which the individual shows adaptive capacity to adopt different perspectives in order to understand and develop interaction in a host culture. Thus, intercultural competence is related to the concept of a cosmopolitan attitude (Hansen, 2011), i.e. an inclusive perspective and connectedness with both one's own cultural in-group and other groups. Key elements of both an intercultural and a cosmopolitan outlook are interest, engagement and willingness to revise and modify one's perspectives: being reflectively loyal to the known and reflectively open to the unknown, in Hansen's terminology. The intercultural and cosmopolitan views are also related to Biesta's (2010) reasoning that it is only when leaving one's own "rational community" and engaging with others in other communities that the individual breaks into the world as a unique and particular being. However, while the interculturalists commonly speak of competencies, Biesta and Hansen, as I understand them, rather emphasize the importance of individuals' interest in and engagement with others and other contexts.

The participants clearly developed intercultural competencies during their sojourns, but various recollections (particularly Alexander's vivid metaphor about the necessity to peel off some of one's skin in order to grow) highlight developments of interpersonal relations, openness and interest in learning from diversity that are more consistent with Hansen's cosmopolitanism. Accordingly it seems necessary, in Biesta's terminology, to leave the "rational community" and engage with the other community, break with the "normality" in one's own community and become vulnerable in order for a meeting to become educational. In a cosmopolitan-minded educational approach this can be described as learning that develops from an oscillation between the known and the unfamiliar, for example in reflections that

encounters in an international sojourn have both similar and different aspects to encounters at home. As shown in this study, such developments appear to be strongly favoured in a sojourn in which interpersonal interactions with host nationals are particularly promoted.

The participants described perceptions that the physical meetings, exchanges of information and modifications of views contributed to the experiences becoming complete, grounded, emotionally significant, and long-lastingly important to them. Some also stated that the learning from the meetings with others in the host-environment profoundly differed in this respect from learning in the classroom at home. This may be because classroom education is perceived of as highly qualification-oriented, focusing for example on conveying knowledge of graded subjects, while the sojourns strongly promoted developments in socialization and subjectification. Examples of such developments are found in reflections upon impressions of new perspectives, expansions of world views, friendships, closeness, solidarity, connectedness, trust, and responsibility in relation to the other. These findings indicate that sojourns offer contexts that strongly promote learning, particularly via the acceleration of socialization and subjectification processes. Furthermore, it seems likely that people experience personal growth that can be interpreted in terms of being transformative and development of a cosmopolitan attitude when engaging with others in other communities. Similarly, Jackson (2011a:92) found that short term sojourners develop a “cosmopolitan self that incorporates both local and global elements” and concludes that “a short-term sojourn can have a significant impact on participants”. Accordingly, a sojourn may not only promote Biesta’s three educational processes and general intercultural insights, but also development of a cosmopolitan attitude. Indeed, these processes are likely to be strongly interlinked and both the intercultural context and engagement with others in the host environment may be particularly important drivers of the synergistic developments in educational functions (that seem to foster particularly significant developments in socialization and subjectification). Thus, it is also possible that changes in approaches are required in other contexts, such as classroom-based teaching, to deliver similar educational benefits. These conclusions are consistent with findings by Ellenwood and Snyders (2010) that the physical meetings in sojourns have advantages that other learning contexts such as the classroom cannot easily provide.

Transformations

Situations that are interpreted as having had transformative impact occurred throughout the sojourns and in a post-sojourn reflections. In relation to the three educational functions, these transformative impacts appear to promote

development in socialization and subjectification particularly strongly. Some of the sojourners say that they had thought about others' contexts and ways of doing and thinking as being "utopian", "far-fetched" or "invented". These expressions indicate the extent of some of the limits that were challenged, and in several cases crossed and overcome. Such experiences confirm the transformative potentials of leaving one's comfort zone and crossing physical, concrete borders as well as in contesting one's thinking and other constructed borders that might be equally limiting.

Some experiences are described as "turning-points" or "eye-opening". The participants also speak of change and themselves as changed, discovering new ways of being, acquiring new attitudes, aims and purposes in life, overcoming perceived limits, feelings of having become empowered, capable, confident, and qualified to initiate changes and take action to prompt further changes. Such examples often seem to have originated from disjunctures triggered by impressions of differences, e.g. the sojourners noticing that they were physically different, standing out, and perhaps defined as European, middle-class, third-worldly, not being part of the majority group, or speaking a foreign language.

Being regarded as a representative of a national, cultural or ethnic group associated with certain stereotypes or a social category, such as class, was often a new situation. In several cases this experience did not disturb the sojourners' harmony, or even fostered positive subjective elements, but others simply wanted to melt in and were disturbed by the attention. In addition, despite perceiving themselves as changed in some cases it was still difficult for the sojourners to maintain a changed view after returning to their home context. Aspects related to norms, notably those guiding interactions and appearances, were perceived as particularly limiting, difficult to contest and in some cases the sojourners were discouraged by failure to break norms. However, their reflections on these issues show that even if they failed to maintain a transformed way of being, thinking, feeling or doing at that moment in time, the experiences are integrated as memories in their life-worlds and biographies. In that manner they have been transformative and long-lastingly important as they may influence the individuals' thoughts and actions later in life.

7.3 A Study of a Practice for Learning

The stated aim of this study was to investigate into and characterise students' experiences of learning from their having taken part in an international upper secondary exchange in an intercultural context, using a small sample of interviewees. This approach was selected to permit the acquisition of rich data, but an acknowledged disadvantage is that drawing general conclusions from a small sample is problematic. However, the

results show that some experiences from international sojourns, at least similar sojourns to those considered, are likely to be common. This conclusion is based on the extensive cross-cultural consistency of the Swedish and Chilean upper secondary students' experiences and their consistency with previously reported experiences of higher education students from sojourns and longer stays (Brown and Holloway, 2008; Brown, 2009a; Gill, 2010; Jackson, 2010). The cited studies show that many students' experiences of learning during longer stays are likely to also develop in stays that are shorter than a month, and have transformative potential. This study and the previous investigations also show that people not only learn from and about the unfamiliar contexts, but in the meetings and post-sojourn reflections they also seem to discover new aspects of themselves. Thus, international upper secondary sojourns appear to provide powerful potential for transformative experiences through meetings with both the other and oneself.

The experiences reported in this study are to a large extent about situations that have been difficult in various ways, leading (according to my interpretation) to disjunctures and disturbances of harmony that promoted transformative educational processes. Examples include reports of changes in perspectives and perceived personal growth through, for example, reinforcements of self-esteem and a positive self-image. Such changes have developed in several expressed cases into feelings of being more confident, capable and empowered to take action and strive to initiate changes not only in oneself but also in others.

The reported experiences of disjuncture and challenges were often caused by perceived differences that resulted in disorientation and anxiety. Nevertheless, in retrospect those situations were almost exclusively spoken about in positive terms as having been valuable, interesting, fun, and informative. Thus, in accordance with Biesta's (2010) suggested "pedagogy of interruption" I argue that educational contexts should aim to challenge students to engage with things and situations that appear unfamiliar to them and lead to experiences of disjuncture and disturbed harmony, since they seem to provide extensive, synergistic learning opportunities. The processes of joining previous and new knowledge in the resolution of challenges and meaning-making seem to be critical for learning, rather than simply the experiences *per se* in a given situation. However, the experiences act as triggers and provide grounds for reflection that promote all three of Biesta's educational processes, and hence potent synergistic learning.

In conclusion, applying Biesta's (2010) terminology I argue that a "pedagogy of interruption" based on the idea that disturbance favours learning and that those situations also have strong transformative potentials. As shown here, international sojourns appear to contribute significantly to individuals' socialization and subjectification, offering opportunities for

learning from everyday situations and activities in authentic, interpersonal, face-to-face and first-hand intercultural meetings that sharply contrast with classroom teaching in familiar home contexts. The participants appear to place great importance in the experiences and perceive their learning from sojourns as more complete and grounded than their learning from classroom teaching. Their emphasis on the educational importance of the sojourn as a learning practice is also indicative of transformative and long-lasting impacts, reflected for instance in Pelusa's comments that there was "a me before the sojourn and another me after the sojourn".

Aspects of Equality

Through this study I have found that study abroad is likely to foster extensive developments in qualification, socialization and subjectification also when the stay is relatively short. However, some people do not participate in the activity partly because it is costly. Thus, the potential limitations of individuals' access to study abroad and the associated learning imposed by economic inequalities warrant consideration. None of the participants in this study had precarious family backgrounds, but, nevertheless, a few Swedes and several Chileans said that they would not have opted for the activity if they had not received external funding. Others appear to have had access to more substantial economic and cultural resources, and do not seem to have felt that their options were limited at all. Nevertheless, even some of this group (but only Swedes) hesitated or chose not to participate. Thus, having the possibility to participate does not necessarily lead to participation. However, it should be acknowledged that factors related to social classes and inequalities are associated with study abroad activities, and they are often "expensive and resource-intensive" (Anderson & Lawton, 2011:86). Economic factors might also partly explain the increasing popularity of relatively short (and hence relatively less expensive) sojourns, in conjunction with findings of this study and Stroud (2010) that the formative developments that students report in longer stays also occur in shorter stays. Thus, short sojourns appear to be educationally valuable and advantageous from inclusion, education and equality perspectives.

A 'Bildungsreise'

An international sojourn appears to be associated with diversion in some cases. However, in intercultural contexts personal developments with clearly educational elements also occur, as summarized in sections 7.1 and 7.2, in accordance with the philosophical and pedagogical justifications of early study tours or "bildungsreise" (Rantatalo, 2002). I have found no allusions

to objectives related to learning from intercultural or international meetings in the Chilean curriculum, but in the Swedish upper secondary curriculum an international perspective is stated as being important in order to:

[b]e able to see one's own reality in a global context in order to create international solidarity and prepare pupils for a society that will have closer cross-cultural and crossborder contacts. (Lpf94:6)

An activity such as an international sojourn may represent a concretization of the international perspective stressed in the Swedish upper secondary curriculum. The quote from the curriculum can also be interpreted as reflecting an intercultural and cosmopolitan attitude to learning based on engagement and interest in interaction and exchanges of information and ideas. Such curricular formulations and the presented findings indicate that sojourns' intercultural elements provide considerable potential for developing a cosmopolitan attitude to interpersonal interaction, and broader perspectives that foster solidarity, care about others, engagement in the world, and responsibility for both distant and much closer others. Hence, I argue that manifestations of the philosophical and pedagogical foundations of early study abroad activities can still be seen in the objectives and practices of contemporary sojourns.

Sojourners themselves often seem to find that the experiences have powerful impacts, but say it is difficult to communicate the personal importance and the complexities of the experiences to others. Despite this not being taken into account in the schoolwork and grading at home the participants still assume that employers may take such experiences into account. Several of them believe that having been on a sojourn communicates positive things about them being out-going, communicative, independent, mature, flexible, unafraid, open-minded, experienced, urbane, socially competent, and good at intercultural interaction and languages. Therefore they believe that the experience should improve their employment prospects and mention it in their curricula vitae when applying for jobs. These findings show that the activity significantly contributes not only to all three studied functions of education, but also significantly to the individual's biography and life-world development. Irrespectively of whether such learning outcomes are formally recognized or not, sojourns seem to have substantial transformative potential and hence can be regarded as "bildungsreisen".

Formally recognized educational outcomes are often those that lead to study credits and qualifications for further studies or careers, but experiences from a study abroad are difficult to quantify and instead they need to be measured in terms of quality and take into account "transferable skills" (Jackson, 2005). Knight (2004) argues that internationalization is a "process" and by that underlines that it is "ongoing and continuing". Such

aspects of the activity may contribute to the difficulties in relation to assessment. Although upper secondary sojourns could be regarded as “*bildungsreisen*” due to the reported transformations, they generally appear to be considered informal and personal, rather than being formally recognized as contributing to educational developments. The sojourners’ impressions of significant educational developments and the lack of formal recognition may reflect conflicts in understanding of the educational importance of sojourns. Both Swedish and Chilean curricula mention objectives associated with fostering certain attitudes, ethics and values that are strongly related to outcomes reported by the participants (e.g. developing individuals’ abilities to relate to others and the world, and their self-respect, confidence, reflexivity and criticality). Nevertheless, the considered sojourns that contribute to developments of several of those transversal curricular aims do not yield any formal study credits, and are not generally mentioned in the students’ school-leaving certificates. Thus, there is an apparent contradiction, since when these objectives are met within formal educational classroom contexts they are strived at, but as this study shows they are not recognized when they are met via an extra-curricular activity such as a sojourn. Another aspect of equity in relation to this is that, if financial resources do limit access, as discussed above, awarding merits for study abroad may clearly be unfair, since it could further restrict prospects of disadvantaged students. Such problem areas related to aspects of equity and access call for further investigation and in the arrangement of sojourns it may be valuable to actively consider implications of such aspects.

Learning in the Meetings with the Other and Oneself

The initial encounters between the participants and their hosts were often influenced by expected differences, leading to the sojourners (and perhaps the hosts) seeing the other as a stereotypical representative of their culture, rather than recognizing his or her singularity. However, they soon developed relations with the initially distant others that transformed them into closer others (with respected singularities and recognition as other human beings, just as oneself). In that respect the meetings appear to have developed from mere observation of the other into learning from engagement and interaction that can be interpreted as reflecting a cosmopolitan attitude.

The examples presented in this study indicate that meaning-making based on individuals’ preconceptions, for example when resolving a perceived disjuncture, are strongly influenced by perceived differences. However, after resolving a disjuncture and finding meaning in a particular situation the meetings between the other and oneself appear to be less influenced by perceived differences. Thus, engagement beyond superficial (or stereotype-bound) cultural differences seems to promote learning and discoveries of

both the other and oneself, as encapsulated in a cosmopolitan attitude and associated concepts. It may be possible to develop intercultural insights, intercultural competence and associated growth in the three studied educational dimensions without any direct interactions or engagement with the other, for example through observation or reading about cultures and customs. However, such development and a development of a cosmopolitan attitude are, as this study shows, strongly promoted by interaction and engagement in relations with the other, together with respect for local unicity and singularities, an open attitude and engagement with unfamiliar aspects of other ways of leading a life. Such processes of learning may be more difficult to target within other learning contexts such as the classroom.

What Biesta (2010) describes as belonging to the “rational community” may be interpreted as the state in which people enjoy a certain level of harmony in themselves and in relation to the world, based on general recognition of agreed conventions and common orders by the community members. However, the findings of this study show that perceived differences are often roots of disjuncture and disturbed harmony that have significant learning potential. Hence, situations that highlight such differences should not be avoided or counteracted. Otherwise differences may only be perceived as strange, negative and unwanted rather than sources of learning about life, others and oneself. Remaining in comfort and harmony in the familiarity of one’s own rational community without engaging with differences and disturbed harmony in other rational communities could potentially bolster narrow-mindedness and prejudices. Building on concepts presented by Jane Addams, Seigfried-Haddock states that as individuals:

[w]e are responsible for choosing our experiences. This is because our moral judgments are filtered through our experiences. To the extent that our experiences are one-sided and limited, so too will be our moral judgments. It is therefore incumbent on us to actively seek out those experiences that will enlarge the depth and scope of our moral understanding. Unless we reach out beyond our comfort zone, we will not be able to take account of others differently situated. (Seigfried-Haddock, 2007:85)

The experiences referred to in this quote do not address sojourns in particular and experiences that “enlarge the depth and scope of our moral understanding” can of course be encountered in any activities. However, I argue that the findings in this study support my argument that an international, upper secondary sojourn has exceptional potential to contribute to such educational developments.

A sojourn may have elements of pleasure and recreational diversion, but it also has strong educational dimensions that frequently appear to be transformative. Furthermore, the numerous personal micro-level gains may have substantial macro-level significance. For example, as they become

interculturally experienced the sojourners included in this study developed solidarity, understanding, care, responsibility and connectedness with others and the world. Some of them believe that sojourns have potential to counteract narrow-mindedness, racism and prejudices and hence, considerable gains for society at large, that is, when assuming that that is desirable. These considerations reflect to some degree differences in rationales regarding the purposes of education. One rationale is that upper secondary education should solely provide students with formal qualifications for further studies or careers, and as upper secondary sojourns do not contribute to such qualifications it is irrational to waste time and money on them. There are in this study numerous examples of how a sojourn contributes to learning synergies in intercultural development and personal growth in all three educational functions. These formative experiences not only favour personal development of the individual during the moment, but may serve him or her later in life, for example when progressing into further studies or engaging in society as an active citizen. The results support the contention that sojourns provide potent opportunities to learn from and together with the other, thereby fostering developments of a cosmopolitan attitude and outlook and new ways of considering oneself. Although the stay may be brief, it provides extensive learning opportunities, particularly in the interactions with the other. The narratives of the 17 young people interviewed in this study show that the learning has transformative power that may extend well beyond upper secondary school years. Thus, in overall conclusion, sojourns have extensive, transformative and long-lastingly significant educational value for both the sojourners and wider society.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1a, Informerat samtycke

Hej

Mitt namn är Åsa Pérez och jag arbetar med en doktorsavhandling i pedagogiskt arbete vid Umeå universitet. Studien syftar till att ta reda på mer om ungdomars upplevelser och erfarenheter av att under gymnasietiden ha deltagit i ett utbyte. Utifrån att du under din gymnasietid gjorde detta i ett samarbete med en skola i Chile skulle det vara värdefullt om du ville vara med i studien. Dina kunskaper och erfarenheter kan bidra till ny förståelse och kunskap om vad det innebär att ha deltagit i ett utbyte.

Hur går det till?

Ditt deltagande innebär att vi träffas och samtalar om dina erfarenheter. Intervjun består av tre delar. En del om dig och tiden efter gymnasiet, en om dina gymnasiestudier och en tredje om det utbyte som du deltog i. Jag kommer att fråga om sådant som rör dina upplevelser, om språkerfarenheter och sådant som relaterar till kulturmöten. Hur lång tid vi samtalar beror på hur länge vi uppehåller oss vid var och en av frågorna, men beräkna att avsätta ungefär 1 – 1,5 timme. Du får gärna fundera på och föreslå en relativt lugn och ostörd plats så kommer jag dit för att träffa dig.

Kanske kan det vara svårt att exakt minnas hur det var att vara med i utbytet men det viktiga är att få lyssna till vad du har att berätta, dina tankar och åsikter och hur du tänker om utbytet utifrån där du är idag. I det du har att berätta finns inte något som är mer rätt eller fel.

Hantering av information

För att jag skall kunna lyssna uppmärksamt så har jag valt att spela in vårt samtal. Den information du lämnar under intervjun kommer dock att avkodas från sådana uppgifter som kan avslöja vem som uttryckt vad. Materialet kommer att behandlas konfidentiellt i presentationen av avhandlingen och i annat material som kan komma att produceras. Det kommer alltså inte att vara möjligt för andra att se vad just du har sagt. Den information som framkommer genom intervjun kommer att förvaras så att inte obehöriga kan ta del av den. Ansvarig för dina personuppgifter är Umeå universitet.

Frivillighet

Skulle du någon gång innan eller under intervjun vilja ändra, ta tillbaka uppgifter eller avbryta din medverkan så kan du när som helst och utan någon särskild förklaring göra det. Ditt deltagande är frivilligt. Avbryter du din medverkan så kommer det material som rör dig att förstöras.

Vill du ta del av sådan information som rör dig själv eller resultat för studien som helhet så är du välkommen att höra av dig.

Vill du inte delta i studien så meddelar du bara detta i ett returmail.

Tveka inte att kontakta mig om det är något som du undrar över!

Ansvariga

Forskningshuvudman: Umeå universitet.

Ansvarig forskare: Åsa Pérez, doktorand i pedagogiskt arbete.

Handledare: Karin Sporre, professor.

Kontaktperson: Åsa Pérez

Institutionen för idé och samhällsstudier
Umeå universitet
901 87 Umeå
Tel. 090 – 786 67 93
e-post: asa.perez@idesam.umu.se

Samtyckesformulär

Härmed intygar jag att jag har tagit del av den forskningsinformation som gäller intervjuer med gymnasieelever om deras erfarenheter från internationellt utbyte med skolor i Chile. Jag intygar härmed också att jag inför intervjun fått tillfälle att ställa frågor och fått dem besvarade. Vidare samtycker jag till att delta i Åsa Pérez studie utifrån de kriterier som presenterats i forskningsinformationen.

_____ den ____ / ____ 2011
Ort Datum Underskrift

Namnförtydligand

Telefon: _____

e-post: _____

Appendix 1b, Letter of Informed Consent

Hello!

My name is Åsa Pérez and I am a PhD student in educational work at Umeå University. The study aims at developing knowledge about peoples' experiences from having taken part in an upper secondary exchange. As you during your upper secondary school years experienced an exchange in Chile it would be valuable if you would like to participate in this study. Your knowledge and experiences from that time may contribute to new insights and knowledge about the implications of having taken part in an exchange.

How?

Your participation in the study implies that we meet and talk about your experiences. The interview consists of three parts. One is about you and the time after your upper secondary school years, another about your time as an upper secondary student and the third about the exchange you went on. I will ask about things related to your impressions, language experiences and issues related to cultural meetings. How much time we need for that depends to some extent on how much time we spend on each part, but you may plan for about 1 – 1,5 hours. You are welcome to suggest a relatively calm place where we can meet!

It might turn out that it is difficult to recall in exact terms what it was like to be on an exchange, but most important here is to get time to listen to what you have to tell, your thoughts and opinions from the position of where you are today. In the things that you share there is nothing that is more right or wrong.

The information

In order to be able to listen attentively I have chosen to audio record our conversation. The information will be decoded from details that may reveal who said what. The material will be treated with confidentiality in the presentation of the thesis and in other materials that may be produced. Accordingly, it will not be able for readers of the thesis to know what you have told. The information derived from the interview will be stored so that unauthorized cannot take part of it. Umeå University is responsible for your personal data.

Voluntary participation

Would you at any time before or during the interview like to change, withdraw information or cancel your participation you are completely free to do so without any further explanation. Your participation is unconditional and voluntary. All material concerning you will, in case of a cancelling your participation, be destroyed.

In case you would like to look at information concerning you or the study as a whole you are welcome to get in contact with me.

In case you decide not to participate in the study you can just let me know by sending a return mail.

Please, do not hesitate in getting in touch if there is something unclear or something that you wonder about!

Responsibles:

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Responsible authority: | Umeå University. |
| Responsible researcher: | Åsa Pérez, PhD student in Educational Work. |
| Supervisor: | Karin Sporre, profesor. |
| Contact: | Åsa Pérez |

Institutionen för idé och samhällsstudier
Umeå universitet
901 87 Umeå
Tel. 090 – 786 67 93
e-mail: asa.perez@idesam.umu.se

Informed Consent

Hereby I assure that I have taken part of the research information concerning interviews with people about their experiences from having participated in upper secondary sojourns in Chile and Sweden respectively. I also assure that I before the interview had time and opportunities to ask additional questions about the research and the study and that they have been answered. Furthermore, in relation to the information presented in the information about the research and the study I consent to participate in the study carried out by Åsa Pérez.

_____ den _____ / _____ 2011
Place Date Signature

Clarification of signature

Telephone: _____

e-mail: _____

Appendix 1c, Consentimiento Informado

Hola!

Mi nombre es Åsa Pérez. Estoy realizando una tesis doctoral en pedagogía aplicada, en la Universidad de Umeå. La investigación tiene como objetivo aportar con más información sobre las experiencias que se viven en encuentros interculturales a través de los intercambios internacionales. El enfoque está dirigido hacia personas que durante sus estudios en la escuela secundaria participaron en un intercambio entre Chile y Suecia. Como usted tiene una experiencia de haber participado en un intercambio en conjunto con un colegio sueco su aporte en el estudio sería de gran importancia. Las experiencias y vivencias tuyas pueden dar luz a un conocimiento y entendimiento nuevo en lo que implica un intercambio.

¿Cómo es?

Durante el mes de yo estaré en Chile para encontrarme con las personas que participarán en el estudio. Esto significa que usted me propone una hora y un lugar donde nos podemos encontrar para hacer una entrevista. La duración de la entrevista depende de cuánto nos detendremos en cada tema. Pero será de aproximadamente 1 ½ hora. Conversaremos de las experiencias que usted tuvo del intercambio, los encuentros interculturales, comunicación, identidad y cultura.

Puede ser que resulte difícil recordar cómo era y lo que sentía en ese momento pero lo importante para mí es escucharle y compartir el recuerdo, sus pensamientos y opiniones acerca de esa experiencia. En lo que me tiene para contar no existen respuestas que sean más o menos correctas, existe solamente su relato y el recuerdo suyo que es algo auténtico.

La información dejada

Para que yo pueda escucharle atentamente las entrevistas serán grabadas. La información grabada será descodificada de datos que puedan revelar la identidad del informante o quién dijo qué. El material es confidencial y será tratado así tanto en la presentación de la tesis como en otro material presentado o publicado en relación al estudio. Por lo tanto otra persona no podrá identificar lo que haya dicho usted en la entrevista. Las grabaciones y los datos personales serán puestos en custodia en una caja fuerte en la Universidad de Umeå. Todo para asegurar que solamente personas autorizadas puedan conseguir acceso al material.

Participación voluntaria

Si usted en algún momento durante la entrevista desea cambiar, retomar información o cancelar su participación lo puede hacer sin tener que dejar motivo o explicación alguna. Su participación tiene estatus de participación voluntaria sin compromiso. En el caso de que desee cancelar su participación, la información ya dejada relacionada a usted será borrada. Si luego desea ver información que trata de usted o resultados del estudio completo, no dude en tomar contacto!

Por cualquier duda o pregunta que tenga espero que se ponga en contacto conmigo!

Responsables

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Autoridad de investigación: | Universidad de Umeå |
| Investigadora responsable: | Åsa Pérez (estudiante de postgrado en pedagogía aplicada) |
| Asesora encargada: | Karin Sporre, profesor. |

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Contacto: | Åsa Pérez Dpto. de estudios de historia, filosofía y religión. |
|------------------|---|

Universidad de Umeå
901 87 Umeå

Teléfono: +46-90-786 67 93
asa.perez@idesam.umu.se

Certificado de consentimiento informado

Con el presente documento se hace constar que he recibido información sobre el estudio y la entrevista sobre los intercambios interculturales. También se hace constar que ha habido tiempo y ocasión para hacer preguntas y recibir respuestas a las mismas. Según los criterios presentados en la información sobre el estudio apruebo a participar en el estudio realizado por Ása Pérez.

_____ el ____/____/2012 _____
Ciudad Fecha Firma

Nombre _____
Teléfono _____
Correo electrónico _____

Appendix 2a, Intervjuguide

Del 1 Om dig (personuppgifter och bakgrund)

- Namn, ålder, ålder vid utbytet, gymnasium
- Språk: talar ni annat språk än svenska hemma och vilka språk talar du?
- Har du varit på andra utbyten (före eller efter detta till Chile?)
- Har du vänner/bekanta som har en annan språkbakgrund än svensk? Internetvänner?
- Hur har det varit sedan gymnasiet? (Fråga om resor, boende, arbete, studier i något annat land?)

Del 2 Gymnasietiden och utbytet

Be personen tänka tillbaka på gymnasietiden - det var ju ett tag sedan. I detta projekt är jag ju intresserad av frågor som rör kommunikation, kultur och identitet och gymnasietiden tänker jag är en tid då det händer mycket med ens personliga utveckling inom dessa områden:

- **HUR VAR DET FÖR DIG ATT GÅ GYMNASIET?** (personlig utveckling, vändpunkter, vägskäl, framtidsplaner?)
- Kultur, vad tänker du att det är?
- Vad tänker du om ordet identitet? Vad är identitet för dig?
- I vilka skolämnen, under gymnasiet, tycker du att kultur och identitet var centralt? (hur och med vilket innehåll?)

Genom skolan skulle du sedan vara med i ett utbyte som också handlade om att möta en annan nationell kultur;

- Berätta först, **HUR KOM DET SIG ATT DU DELTOG I UTBYTET?** (fråga om syften och finansiering)
- Att internationalisera (också globalisering i allmänhet) var det något du tänkte på då? För egen del eller strategiskt på något sätt (för utbildning / jobb?)
- Du mötte en annan nationell kultur i utbytet med Chile, vad tänkte du om Chile/Latinamerika innan utbytet?
- Vad tänker du att dessa tankar byggde på?
- Berätta om förberedelserna inför utbytet. (Förväntningar, mål, dina förberedelser inför detta)

Del 3 Erfarenheter från utbytet i Chile

- Hur reagerade andra på att du skulle resa iväg så långt?
- Vad tänkte du själv? (såg fram emot /orolig inför?)
- **HUR VAR DET FÖR DIG ATT VARA I CHILE?**
- **Hur var det för dig när du kom fram? (Hur blev det senare under vistelsen)**(mötet med familjen och chilensarna, skolan -livsstil, värderingar,

tänka/göra annorlunda, relationer, rutiner, vardagen), var det något särskilt som förvånande/övertäckande, positivt /negativt, saker som var lika/olika, konflikter?

- **Var chilenerna intresserade av dig och Sverige?** (Vad berättade du, känsla av samhörighet eller att vara främmande, att representera Sverige och svensk kultur)
- **Hur minns du att chilenerna uppfattade dig och hur kändes det för dig/hur upplevde du att det var att vara i denna situation (av att vara borta och att delta i ett annat sammanhang?** (att känna sig hemma eller främmande) (språk, vanor, intressen, förväntades du vara på något särskilt sätt, om att sticka ut, vara annorlunda, smälta in, att sakna något, särskilt starka intryck, något du tog med dig hem igen eller bidra med).

Det här med att kommunicera kan vara en komplicerad process, inte minst på ett främmande språk. Utbytet innebar förstås också en hel del kommunikation.

- **Hur gick det, hur var det för dig att kommunicera på spanska? Hur tog du dig fram i kommunikationen?**

Hur var det att prata spanska i Chile? Hur fungerade kommunikationen? Hur påverkade språk/kommunikation kontakten med människor du mötte? Hur skulle du beskriva dig själv i sådana kommunikativa situationer? (Fördelar/nackdelar med ditt sätt?) (vilken typ av situationer kunde uppstå, hur löste du olika situationer, hur kände du dig i dessa möten? (att lyckas/misslyckas)

- **HUR TÄNKER DU OM UTBYTET IDAG?**

Om du skulle försöka samla tankarna till en helhet, vad minns du då särskilt från utbytet, något som sticker ut som särskilt viktigt för dig personligen? (är det skillnad mellan då och nu?) Hur kändes det när du precis kom hem? Hur känns det idag när du tänker på erfarenheten?

- **Har andra varit nyfikna på dina erfarenheter?** (Vad berättar du när de frågar? Vad skulle du säga att du fick med dig efter att ha deltagit i utbytet? Fick du någon uppfattning om hur värdarna upplevde mötet med dig?)
- **Det var ju ett skolutbyte och man tänker kanske att det skall handla om att man utbytet innebär ett lärande. Utifrån det perspektivet, lärande, hur skulle du då beskriva de erfarenheter du gjorde?**

Vilka erfarenheter skulle du beskriva som "nya" för dig, upptäckte du något nytt hos dig själv?

Det var ett skolutbyte och ofta innebär ett utbyte ett merjobb för den som åker, hur var det för dig? Upplever du att du hade någon nytta av dina nya erfarenheter (skola/privat)

Finns det sådana som du då upplevde som viktiga, är det andra idag?

Finns det något du skulle göra annorlunda om du gjorde om utbytet idag?

Finns det något i utbytet som du är särskilt nöjd med?

Upplever du att du gjorde några särskilda erfarenheter genom utbytet som du inte skulle ha kunnat göra på egen hand, egen resa, hemma, privat eller i skolan?

Hur ser du på lärandet i relation till vistelselängd (korta/långa utbyten och syften/mål i relation till lärandet).

Hur tänker du om värdet av denna erfarenhet? (skola, jobb, framtid, kontakter, internationalisering ...)

- **Hur är det idag? Har du kvar någon kontakt med Chile/personer därifrån?**
- **KOMMER DU PÅ NÅGOT ANNAT SOM DU VILL SÄGA – TILLÄGG, NÅGOT DU VILL ATT JAG SKALL VETA SOM JAG INTE FRÅGAT OM EL. NÅGON ANNAN FRÅGA ELLER FUNDERING INNAN VI AVSLUTAR?**

Appendix 2b, Interview guide

Part 1 About you (personal data and background)

- Name, age, age at the time for the exchange, upper secondary school.
- Language: other language at home, what languages do you speak?
- Have you been on other exchanges (before or after)?
- Do you have friends who have some other language background than Swedish/Chilean? Internet friends?
- What has it been like since graduation? (ask about travels, living, work, studies)

Part 2 The Upper Secondary School years and the Exchange

Ask the person to recall the upper secondary school years – it was some time ago. In this project I am interested in issues related to communication, culture and identity and I think of the upper secondary school years as a time when individuals experience much development in those areas.

- **WHAT WAS IT LIKE FOR YOU TO BE AN UPPER SECONDARY STUDENT?** (personal development, turning points, future plans)
- Culture – what do you come to think of, what is that to you?
- Identity – what do you come to think of, what is that to you (compare culture/identity).
- Were there subjects in school in which issues related to culture and identity were focal? (how? What content?)

Within those studies you were also about to take part of an exchange which also implied a meeting with culture (nation culture)

First, tell me HOW COME THAT YOU TOOK PART / THAT YOU WENT ON THE EXCHANGE? (Ask about aims and financial issues)

- Internationalization (globalization in general) were those issues that you were in any way concerned about? (In case of yes, how? why?)
- In the exchange you met another nation culture, what were your ideas about Sweden/Chile before going on the sojourn?
- What were the sources to your pre-knowledge?
- Tell me about the preparations before going. (Expectations, aims and personal preparations).

Part 3 Experiences from the Exchange.

- How did others react when you told them about your going?
- What were you thinking yourself (things you looked forward to / felt worried about)

WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO BE IN SWEDEN/CHILE?

- **What was it like to arrive? (how did it develop during the stay?)** (with regard to the meeting with the host family, the host nationals in general, school, lifestyle,

values, thinking and doing differently, routines, relations, the everyday life, something that surprised, things that were alike/different, positive/negative, conflicts)

- **Were the host nationals interested in you and your background /nation?** (What did you tell, connectedness or alienation, representing a nation culture)
- **How do you recall that the others perceived you? How did you feel about that/ what was it like to be in this situation? (being part of and participate in another context)** (to feel at home or strange, language, custom, interest, expectations on the others and their behaviour, about being part of or not, missing things, particularly significant impressions, things you learnt and took with you home or conversely left).

This thing about communicating can be a fairly complex process, not the least in a foreign language. The exchange did of course involve a lot of communication.

- **What was it like for you? What was the communication like how did you manage to communicate?**

Did the communication work or not? Did language interfere, in what ways, did language affect the contact with people? How would you describe yourself as a person in communicative situations? (Pros/cons related to your communicative style? What kind of situations were there? How did you solve different situations? How did you feel in those meetings? (about success and failure)

- **How do you think about the exchange today?**

If you would try to sum up your thoughts, what do you then particularly recall from the exchange? Is there something that stands out as particularly significant or important to you personally? (is that different today in comparison to back then?)

- **Have others been interested in your experiences?** (What do you tell? What would you mention as things that you learned from the exchange? Did you get any impression of how the hosts experienced the meeting with you?)
- **It was a school arranged exchange. And one would assume that it is to a large extent about learning. From that perspective, education and learning, how would you then describe the experiences you made?**

What experiences would you describe as "new" to you, did you discover something "new" about you? Important then/different today?

A school exchange may imply a lot of extra work, what was it like for you? Have you had use of your experiences? (school/private/work).

Are there things that you would do differently if you were to do an exchange again today?

Is there something that you are particularly happy or content about?

Were there experiences that you could not have done on your own (private travel, at home, or in school?)

What is your opinion about learning from sojourns in relation to length of the stay? (shorter/longer exchanges, aims in relation to learning).

What do you think about the "value" of this experience? (school, work, future, contacts, internationalization).

- **What is it like today? Do you have contact with Sweden/Chile?**

Is there something else that you wish to comment on, perhaps something that I have not asked about that you think I should know of? Would you like to add something to your comments? Or, anything else before we are finished?

Appendix 2c, Guía de entrevista

Primera parte: Estas preguntas están relacionadas a datos personales, colegio y el tiempo después de la graduación.

- ¿Nombre, edad (fecha del intercambio) Colegio?
- En tu casa, ¿hablan algún otro idioma? ¿Cuáles son los idiomas que sabes hablar?
- ¿Cómo es tu entorno social, tienes amigos, familia, o conocidos, que hablan otro idioma, que tengan otra cultura nacional o que se identifica con otra cultura?
- **¿CÓMO LO HAS PASADO DESDE LA GRADUACIÓN?**

Segunda parte:

En este proyecto me interesan los asuntos relacionados a comunicación, cultura e identidad y me imagino que, durante el periodo de adolescente es común que uno sienta varios cambios y desarrollo en esos aspectos/ámbitos. Ahora, ha pasado un tiempo desde que te graduaste, pero si te pones a pensar en cómo eran los estudios en la secundaria y los recuerdos que mantienes de ese tiempo, entonces:

- **¿CÓMO ERA PARA TI SER ESTUDIANTE EN SECUNDARIA?**
- ¿cómo describirías el colegio, cómo era, desarrollo personal, seguiste algún programa o carrera especial, planes para el futuro?
- ¿Cómo era tu colegio, puedes por ejemplo contar de normas y cultura de estudios?
- A propósito de cultura, comentemos eso un poco más...¿Puedes definir lo que es cultura? Y, ¿qué es identidad? – con tus palabras!
- Puede ser que sea común que una persona sienta que ese periodo, esa etapa de la secundaria (entre 15 a 20 años) ha sido significativo para el desarrollo personal, ¿cómo fue para ti?
- En el colegio, ¿hablaron de temas relacionados con cultura, identidad y desarrollo personal? ¿En alguna asignatura específica o en otros momentos en el colegio?

En el colegio organizaron un intercambio con Suecia, que implicaba un encuentro intercultural ...

- Cuenta primero, ¿cómo fue eso de que participaste en el intercambio? (pregunta si postuló, si fue opcional, si hubieron criterios, cuáles fueron los objetivos del viaje, financiamiento).
- Eso de internacionalizar (a propósito de globalización) ¿fue algo en que tu pensaste en ese tiempo? (para ti mismo, estratégicamente = trabajo, educación?).
- En el intercambio te encontraste con otra cultura nacional – pero – ¿qué sabías de Suecia antes de viajar, cómo te imaginaba a los suecos y a Suecia?
- ¿De dónde provenía tu preconocimiento o estas ideas?
- ¿Cómo te preparaste para el intercambio?

Tercera parte Experiencias del intercambio con Suecia

- ¿Cómo reaccionaron otros al saber de tu viaje y el intercambio (tan lejos)?
- ¿Qué pensabas tú de eso? (algo que temías, algo que ansiabas, algo que deseabas realizar?)

- **Y, ¿CÓMO FUE PARA TI ESO DE LLEGAR A SUECIA?**
¿cómo fue la llegada, como fue el encuentro con Suecia /los suecos, la familia, el colegio, relaciones con otros (chicas /chicos, entre suecos / entre chilenos, entre profesores alumnos...), estilos de vida – rutinas, valores, pensar/hacer diferente, impresiones de las cosas que viste (algo en especial – sorprendente, positivo/negativo?) cosas que fueron iguales/diferentes, conflictos?
- Algo / Cosas que te sorprendieron /desceptionaron
- **¿Los suecos estuvieron interesados en conocerte y saber cosas de ti?** ¿Qué querían saber, qué les contaste? ¿Hubieron momentos en los cuales te sentiste extraño/ajeno? / o que sentiste que había “feeling”/contacto, representar Chile y la cultura chilena?
- **¿Te acuerdas cómo los suecos te percibieron? ¿Cómo te sentiste en estas situaciones de estar lejos y participar en otro contexto?** (Hablar otro idioma, ser de otra parte, integración, ¿había en ellos (los suecos) una expectación de cómo tú iba a ser/actuar? ¿Solían comentar tu forma de ser / tu origen?
- **Eso de ser mirado de alguna manera especial, ser extraño o de sentirse como uno más del grupo, ¿qué piensas de eso? ¿Lo viviste en alguna ocasión?** ¿Has pensado en tales cosas anteriormente?
- Durante tu estadía en Suecia, ¿te acuerdas si extrañaste algo? ¿Hubo algo que te faltaba?
- ¿Hubo algo que te hubiera gustado traer a Chile o algo de Chile que hubiera gustado dejar en Suecia?

Me imagino que durante el intercambio tuviste que pensar mucho en cómo comunicarte, a veces la comunicación resulta complicado...

¿CÓMO RESULTÓ ESTO DE LA COMUNICACIÓN?

- **¿Cómo fue para ti comunicarte en Suecia? ¿Cómo resultó la comunicación – en un idioma extranjero?** (¿En qué formas te afectaba el idioma en la comunicación y al relacionarte con los suecos? ¿Puedes describir tu personalidad en la comunicación, ventajas/desventajas con tu forma de ser, qué tipo de situaciones encontraste y cómo resolviste dificultades? ¿Cómo te sentiste en estos encuentros – tener éxito o no?).
- **Y ahora, ¿QUÉ PIENSAS DEL INTERCAMBIO?**
Si te pones a resumir tus impresiones/recuerdos a una enteraidad, ¿qué es lo que más o mejor recuerdas del intercambio? ¿Algo que sobresale, lo más significativo o algo que para ti ha sido particularmente importante/valioso? – ¿es diferente - entonces y lo que es ahora?

Y al regresar a Chile, en ese momento, poco después y más tarde – ¿han habido interesados en saber de tus experiencias, impresiones, pensamientos? En esas ocasiones, ¿qué es lo que cuentas?

Qué dirías, ¿qué aprendiste de la experiencia de un intercambio? ¿Tuviste alguna impresión de cuáles fueron las impresiones de ti de parte de los suecos que te conocieron?

- **Este intercambio fue parte de una actividad escolar; entonces se supone que también implica algo de aprendizaje – desde ese punto de vista, ¿qué dirías sobre las experiencias que tuviste?**

...¿Hay experiencias que fueron como “nuevas” para ti? Descubriste algo “nuevo” en ti?

... muchas veces implica trabajo extra, ¿te costó mucho trabajo realizar el intercambio?

...en el colegio, ¿la experiencia te ayudó de alguna forma? (de forma privada/colegio)

... ¿tuviste algunas experiencias únicas que no se podría hacer por intermedio de los libros, internet u otro medio? Es decir, ¿qué es lo que aporta el intercambio que no se puede lograr dentro del aula, internet et cetera?

... ¿hay algo en el intercambio que tú harías diferente si estuvieras por hacerlo de nuevo?

...¿hay algo en especial que fue particularmente bueno para ti?

... ¿qué piensas sobre la relación aprendizaje / duración (de la estadía)?

... ¿qué piensas sobre el “valor” de la experiencia? (en relación con estudios, trabajo, futuro, contactos e internacionalización).

- ¿Cómo es hoy? ¿Tienes algún contacto con Suecia/personas?
- **¿Hay algo más para comentar? ¿Algo que no he preguntado que piensas que sea bueno que conociera? ¿Alguna otra pregunta o comentario que falta por decir antes de terminar la entrevista?**

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