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Cultural and Public Health perspectives of Australian exchange students at the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences

A qualitative Evaluation

Bachelor Thesis

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Preface

During my studies at the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences I always had the idea to go overseas and study abroad. In my opinion it is the easiest and most beneficial way to experience another country and a different culture.

In 2009, I successfully applied for the AUS-EUphe mobility program and spent 12 months (02/09-02/10) in Melbourne, Australia where I studied one semester at the Deakin University. Afterwards I did an internship at YMCA Victoria (Young Men's Christian Association) in Melbourne, an international organization promoting physical and mental welfare.

Even though there were challenging and rough times, the time abroad was a positive and life changing experience for me. I enjoyed the semester at Deakin University and experienced the different university culture to be absolutely beneficial for my future study and career path. Living in Australia for 12 month made me more independent and even more confident in terms of personal and professional competencies.

This thesis is a qualitative evaluation of the cultural and Public Health perspectives of eight Australian students participating in the AUS-EUphe program. Among other things, the results will contribute to the development and sustainability of the program. It is a particular concern for me that exchange programs, such as the AUS-Euphe, will sustain so other students can experience the 'Adventure of going overseas'.

In this regard, a special thanks goes to my friends Alexander, Rebecca and Nadine for their support and their tolerance towards my mood swings as well as to Prof. Dr. Seibt who encouraged me to write this thesis.

In this spirit: *Done like a dinner mate!*

Contents

1 Introduction	1
2 Background	3
2.1 Student exchange programs	4
2.2 Public Health development	5
2.2.1 German Public Health development and education	5
2.2.2 Australian Public Health development and education	6
3 The definition of Culture	7
3.1 Perception of Culture	8
3.2 Developing intercultural sensitivity	8
4 Study Design	12
4.1 Study objective	12
4.2 Methodology	12
5. Results	17
5.1 Demographics and general background information	17
5.2 Understanding culture	18
5.2.1 Food	18
5.2.2 Behaviour and Language (melody, speed, tone)	19
5.2.3 History	20
5.3 Daily Life	20
5.3.1 Housing	20
5.3.2 Maintain Relationships and making new friends	21
5.3.3 Expenses	22
5.3.4 Homesickness/Isolation and support	23
5.3.5 Language barriers and difficulties	24
5.4 Professional identity	26
5.4.1 Future career path	26
5.4.2 International perspectives/Empathy/Choice of working location	27

5.5 Education culture	28
5.5.1 University environment.....	28
5.5.2 Structure and study content/student-teacher relationship	28
5.6 Competencies	30
5.6.1 Personal skills	30
5.6.2 Intrapersonal skills	31
5.6.3 Interpersonal and communication skills	31
5.7 Global Citizenship.....	33
5.7.1 Broader world view/Interests in other cultures	33
5.7.2 Tolerance and appreciation/Feeling foreign.....	33
5.7.3 Taking on a German perspective	34
5.8 Public Health/Public behaviour	34
5.9 Impact of studying abroad on the students' life	35
6 Discussion.....	38
6.1 Results	38
6.2 Classification of intercultural sensitivity	41
6.3 Methods criticism	43
7 Recommendation for the AUS-Euphe program	44
8 Conclusion	45
9 References.....	46
10 Eidesstattliche Erklärung/ Declaration	48
11 Appendix	48

1 Introduction

In times of medicalization and demographic changes Public health becomes an evolving discipline that is challenged to tackle ramifications of the globalised world. In order to meet the challenge an essential part of a public health student's education should include global networks and perspectives. Several studies report that students on exchange developed confidence in their skills; it positively influences their career path and they developed intercultural competencies. (Dwyer & Peters 1999; Cowan 2007; Keogh & Russel-Roberts 2008)

Intercultural competence and sensitivity is going to be a key soft skill of the 21st century in terms of personal development and international professional careers. Therefore, student exchange programs are beneficial for the students' personal and professional development as well as getting a broader world view and therefore enable them to tackle those Public Health challenges mentioned above.

This thesis is a qualitative evaluation of cultural and Public Health perspectives of eight Australian exchange students participating in the AUS-EUphe program (Australian European public health education) at the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences. An additional aim in this context is to evaluate the students' cultural sensitivity and competence in order to understand the positives and negatives of such an experience. These results will be used to contribute to the development and sustainability of the program.

The thesis starts with background information of the AUS-Euphe program. Following there will be a description of the status quo of students exchange programs in general, in particular a description of Australia and Germany regarding numbers of exchanged students and enrolled international students.

As mentioned above, the Australian exchange students' perception of subjective and objective culture in Germany will be evaluated. This includes the education culture as well as their perception of Public Health issues in Germany. To be able to relate to those perceptions it is necessary to know and understand the Public Health development of both countries and accordingly to identify differences and

similarities. Therefore, the Public Health development of both countries will be presented.

For further background information there will be a definition of culture and how people perceive foreign cultures and cultural differences. Building on that the term intercultural competence and the process of developing intercultural sensitivity will be explained using Bennett's 'Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity'.

The next part of the thesis deals with the study design including study aim and methodology followed by the detailed presentation of the results.

The discussion part of this thesis comprehends the result discussion and interpretation followed by the interview classification into the stages of intercultural sensitivity according to Bennett's model. Finally there will be a criticism of the study method.

Based on the results the last part of the thesis gives recommendations in order to contribute to the development and sustainability of the program. Afterwards there will be brief conclusion to summarise the main outcomes.

2 Background

Public health is an evolving discipline and increasingly deals with issues that affect populations worldwide. The New Public Health is challenged to respond to the political, social and economic ramifications of the globalized world (Baum 2008). Therefore, it could be argued that global networks and perspectives are an essential part of a public health student's education. A study in 1999 found that the majority of students on exchange describe their experience abroad as having a 'positive' influencing on their 'career path, world-view, and self-confidence'. (Dwyer & Peters 1999)

The AUS-EUphe (Australian-European public health education) mobility project is a program implemented from the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences (HAW Hamburg). It is based on an initiative of the European Union and the Australian Government that aims to 'develop capacity and resources for a global public health workforce'. The European and Australian universities exchange Bachelor and Master students studying Public Health and Health Sciences and staff for 6-10 months, offering an opportunity to live, work and study abroad.

The four participating universities from Europe are:

1. Hamburg University of Applied Sciences (HAW) in Germany
2. University of Southern Denmark (SDU) in Denmark
3. Kaunas University of Medicine (KMU) in Lithuania
4. Jagiellonian University Krakow (JU) in Poland

The four Australian universities are:

1. Griffith University in Queensland
2. Curtin University in Western Australia
3. Deakin University in Victoria
4. Flinders University in South Australia

(AUS-EUphe 2010)

In 2010, six Australian Bachelor and two Australian Master (Public Health) students spent a semester (March – July) on exchange at the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences as part as the AUS-EUphe Exchange program. This group

was chosen to participate in an in-depth study, investigating their perspective on cultural and Public Health issues, especially in relation to whether personal goals and expectations had been met during their time abroad.

2.1 Student exchange programs

Student exchange programs have been common worldwide for over 20 years and the interest of students to study abroad increases. The trend of studying abroad is seen in Germany as well. In 2007 approximately 5% (90.300) of all students were studying abroad comparing to 2.7% (45200) in 1997. Especially the numbers of student participating in an exchange program such as the “ERASMUS” program increased from approximately 16.000 in 2000 to 24.000 in 2007 (Statistisches Bundesamt 2009).

In contrast only 1% of all Australian students were studying abroad in 2002. A recent study by the International Education Association of Australia (IEAA) indicates an increase of participation. Nevertheless, Australia is one of the countries hosting the most international students (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2007). In 2008, international students studying with higher education made up 28% of all student enrolments in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2010).

Several studies report that exchange programs are successful in developing a student’s ‘personal, educational, professional and cultural competencies’ as well as increasing their ‘employability’ (Cowan 2007; Keogh & Russel-Roberts 2008)

Characteristics and competencies such as ‘understanding other cultures’, ‘personal growth and maturity’, ‘adaptability’, ‘self confidence’, ‘communication with others’ and ‘international awareness’ were defined. Those competencies have developed the most during studying abroad comparing to students studying at their home university. (Van Hoof & Verbeeten 2005)

Nevertheless, students going on exchange usually already have skills such as ‘open mindedness’, cultural empathy’ and ‘self efficacy’ comparing to non-exchange students. The exchange students pre-existing skills developed further to more flexibility, international and critical thinking and concrete plans to work and travel overseas (Daly 2007).

2.2 Public Health development

The HAW Hamburg, as the programs' lead manager, was explicitly interested in an exchange between Australia and Europe because of the exemplary Australian perspective on Public Health issues.

It is to be noted that the following presentation of the Public Health development of both countries mainly serves the purpose of a general insight. The below mentioned numbers concerning the Public Health education cannot be compared directly but they give a general impression of the differences.

2.2.1 German Public Health development and education

The global demographic changes, the medical-technical progress, financial problems in health care and the improvement of health of the population, especially for disadvantaged groups, are basic reasons to change the perspective on health care. It was obvious that the medical individual approach is not appropriate to tackle those issues. The new orientation towards a multi disciplinary approach, the 'New Public Health', was necessary.

This new perspective is an actual issue in Germany for more than 30 years. Since the eighties the research and education structure concerning health care has changed. The government supports public health research groups financially since 1992. The basics for the new perspective were set. Nevertheless, the implementation is still proceeding slowly.

One reason of the slow progression is the lack of educating competent professionals adopting the new perspective and subsequently working in the Public Health field. For a long time Public Health or Health Sciences aspects were just integrated in other study fields. The implementation of Public Health or Health Sciences courses at Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences started at the beginning of 1990. Additionally, already established university courses were extended with Public Health aspects. (Kolip 2002)

The first faculty of Health Sciences was established in Bielefeld in 1994 and since then many cities all over Germany followed suit. (Universität Bielefeld 2010) However, Public Health and Health Sciences courses are still representing a minority among study courses. For the winter semester 2009/2010 (September/October 2009 till February/March 2010) app. 1.2% (24272) of all German students were enrolled in Public Health or Health Sciences courses at

universities. In total, 5.6% (118675) of all students being enrolled chose 'Health' as the field of study (including Medicine and Dentistry). (Statistisches Bundesamt 2010)

2.2.2 Australian Public Health development and education

The initial Australian Public Health perspective was affected by the reduction of infectious diseases. Since the nineteen-seventies the governmental aim was to ensure general access to health care and the establishment of community based primary health care facilities. In 1973 the 'Community Health Program' was established to focus intensively on preventive aspects of Public Health. The 'Better Health Commission' started for the first time in 1985 to report and investigate on the health status of the Australian population. Based on these reports national Public Health problems could be identified and subsequently effective strategies such as the 'National Drug Strategy' and the 'National Better Health Program' were defined and implemented.

These strategies are based upon the World Health Organisation's agenda 'Health for all by the year 2000'. The previous focus on specific diseases and risk factors developed "towards a 'whole of system' approach to health". (Department of Human Services 2003) The new approach to health is based on the understanding and involvement of all determinants of health.

This increase in prosperity of Public Health also spread out to the education as Australia has a strong Public Health education and research sector. In 2008, 13.2% (app. 141000) of all students enrolled in higher education level were studying Health. Health courses comprise Health Sciences, Medicine, Dentistry, Physiotherapy, Nursing and other health related issues. With 13.2% of all students enrolled in higher education level, Health courses are located at rank 3 of courses with the highest enrolment range. The specific number of students studying Health Sciences and Public Health courses could not be traced. (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2010)

3 The definition of Culture

In times of globalisation there is a huge diversity of different cultures, whether you are in a foreign or in your home country. Therefore, the awareness of cultural diversity and the ability to deal with it, so to speak, intercultural competence and sensitivity, is going to be one of the key soft skills of the 21st century in terms of personal development and future professional careers. (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2006)

Wherever we are confronted with cultural diversity or culture itself, we perceive different aspects of culture. To be able to comprehend those we need to understand the idea of culture. Bennett (1998) distinguishes between objective culture, or “culture writ large” with a capital “C” as he calls it, and subjective culture, or “culture writ small” with a small “c”.

Objective culture refers to institutional aspects such as political, social and economic systems as well as the products of culture such as art, music, literature and food. The understanding of objective culture equips people with knowledge, but it does not necessarily give them the competence to communicate or adapt to this culture. (Landis et.al. 2004)

“Subjective culture refers to the experience of the social reality formed by a society’s institutions” (Landis et.al 2004,p.150). Subjective culture is defined by learned and shared behaviour, values, norms and beliefs of interacting groups. The understanding and experience of subjective culture leads to intercultural competence. (Landis et.al. 2004)

The term intercultural competence is yet not finally defined. Experts are debating for years to come to a common definition. The essence of most of the definitions is that knowledge of another country and more important the development of one’s skills and certain attitudes enables us to interact appropriately with persons of different cultures (Deardorff 2004).

Therefore, to gain intercultural competence and sensitivity to develop the key soft skills of the 21st century mentioned above, you need to experience culture.

3.1 Perception of Culture

How people perceive culture and cultural differences is the determining factor of how people react to culture and those differences. The person's interpretation of cultural impressions forms a subjective reality in which the person orientates oneself and acts. Schulz von Thun (1981) classifies three steps of receiving such cultural stimuli:

1. Perception

The perception is selective and is influenced by personal, specific cultural- and group interests and experiences. The person only perceives impressions that are useful and meaningful to him.

2. Interpretation

Interpretation is an active process of relating perceived impressions to known categories and patterns in order to understand them. This process is basically inflexible and people tend to 'see' things even if they are not there or they do not 'see' things even if they do exist.

3. Feelings

Perception and Interpretations are connected with feelings and therefore followed by judgement. These judgements result in certain images of the environment and usually do not measure up to the reality.

The classification in categories simplifies the interaction in foreign environments. Nevertheless, it also skews and blocks the perception and, in worst case, tends to result in stereotypes and prejudices. To avoid this people need to be aware of this process and they have to be cultural sensitive. (Schulz von Thun 1981)

3.2 Developing intercultural sensitivity

Developing intercultural competence and intercultural sensitivity is a dynamic process. Bennett (1998) designed 'The developmental model of intercultural sensitivity', explaining the experiences of people in intercultural situations as a cognitive process. The model is based upon students observed and reported experiences in intercultural workshops, classes and exchanges. Therefore, this model is best suited to classify the interviewed students' intercultural sensitivity

and competencies. Due to this classification it can be evaluated whether these students developed further competencies because of this exchange.

Bennett pointed out that there are six stages of developing intercultural sensitivity. The first three stages are called 'ethnocentric stages' and comprehend 'denial', 'defense' and 'minimisation'. The last three stages are called 'ethno-relative stages' and comprehend 'acceptance', 'adaption' and 'integration'.

People in the ethnocentric stage usually see their own culture as the point of reference. In this stage people are trying to avoid cultural differences "*by denying its existence, by raising defences against it or by minimizing its importance*". (Landis et.al. 2004, p. 153)

The ethno-relative stage means that people grade their own culture within the context of the foreign culture. They are searching for cultural differences "*by accepting its importance, by adapting a perspective to take it into account or by integrating the whole concept into a definition of identity*". (Landis et.al. 2004, p. 153)

The classification of people to a certain stage is based on observed and reported experiences. There are typical statements that can be related to the particular stage. For a better understanding of the cognitive processes in the dynamic process of developing intercultural sensitivity and how people can be assigned to the different stages there will a short listing of some of these statements. The chosen statements are best suited and relevant to classify the students' intercultural sensitivity due to their interviews.

Ethnocentric Stage

1. Denial: worldview is polarised into 'them-us' differentiation, existence of superior, dominant and lower social status people

"All big cities are the same - lots of buildings, too many cars, McDonalds."

"As long as we all speak the same language, there's no problem."

"The main concerns I have involve knowing how to get around and ordering in restaurants."

"I never experience culture shock."

"Live and let live, that's what I say."

2. Defense: worldview is polarised into 'them-us' differentiation, stereotypes and prejudices, protecting the own culture

"I wish these people would just talk the way we do."

"Even though I'm speaking their language, they're still rude to me."

"When you go to other cultures, it makes you realize how much better the U.S. is."

"These people don't value life the way we do."

3. Minimisation: cultural differences are simplified and are more seen as similarities

"The key to getting along in any culture is to just be yourself-authentic and honest!"

"Customs differ, of course, but when you really get to know them they're pretty much like us."

"No matter what their culture, people are pretty much motivated by the same things."

"If people are really honest, they'll recognize that some values are universal."

Ethno-relative Stage

4. Acceptance: both cultures/differences are seen and placed into contextual categories, no need to like it but accepting

"I know my homestay family and I have had very different life experiences, but we're learning to work together."

"The more cultures you know about, the better comparisons you can make."

"You certainly wouldn't want to have all the same kind of people around-the ideas get stale, and besides, its boring."

"I always try to study about a new culture before I go there."

5. Adaption: acting outside one's own cultural context, behaviour is seen as 'being right' rather than 'it is supposed to be', is not generalizable

"To solve this dispute, I'm going to have to change my approach."

"I know they're really trying hard to adapt to my style, so it's fair that I try to meet them halfway."

"I'm beginning to feel like a member of this culture."

"To solve this dispute, I need to change my behavior to account for the difference in status between me and my counterpart from the other culture."

6. Integration: multicultural worldview, flexible in terms of cultural contexts

"Everywhere is home, if you know enough about how things work there."

"I feel most comfortable when I'm bridging differences between the cultures I know."

"I truly enjoy participating fully in both of my cultures."

"My decision-making skills are enhanced by having multiple frames of reference."

(Bennett 1993)

4 Study Design

Following the study objective and study methodology will be presented.

4.1 Study objective

The main aim of this study was to evaluate cultural and Public Health perspectives of eight Australian exchange students participating in the AUS-EUphe at the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences. An additional aim in this context was to evaluate the students' cultural sensitivity and competence in order to understand the positives and negatives of such an experience. These results will be used to contribute to the development and sustainability of the program.

4.2 Methodology

A qualitative approach was chosen because it allowed an in-depth investigation into student experiences, enabling them to freely reflect on the benefits and challenges of such an exchange, at a specific point in time. (Diekmann 2007)

Prior to the initiation of the study a thorough critique of the literature was performed in April 2010. This literature review was done to capture the current state of research in the field of student exchange programs and intercultural competencies.

Academic databases using Scopus and Proquest were searched using key search terms in combination or individually: evaluation, study abroad, student, exchange, culture/al, intercultural competencies. This yielded more than 30 results. The abstracts of these articles were examined and were only included if they were related to the specific topic, used qualitative methods and were published in the past 10 years. The available information referred mostly to the Erasmus program or study abroad experiences in general and the experiences of nurses on work placement exchange programs. Furthermore, in terms of intercultural competencies, most articles referred to student exchange programs between the United States of America and Asia.

Based on these articles and in particular the validated questionnaire 'Sociocultural Adaptation Scale' (Ward & Kennedy 1999) (see appendix 11) and partly the 'Study Abroad for Global Engagement' (SAGE) survey (University of Minnesota 2009) a

mind map was created to allow the research team to conceptualise and structure all information sources collected. (see Appendix 2)

The Sociocultural Adaption Scale was used because it captures all aspects of objective and subjective culture. Moreover, the scale provides an adequate measure instrument of the students' cultural sensitivity.

The following themes and guiding questions were extracted from the literature review and were used to guide the study:

- understanding culture
- daily life
- professional identity
- educational culture
- competencies
- global citizenship
- public behaviour/Public Health

Based on the mind map a series of seven questions were developed, with an additional set of probing questions that were introduced if interviewees were having difficulty answering questions.

During the development of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted with a local German student who had recently returned from an exchange in Australia. This was to test the usability and content of the questionnaire. As a result of this pilot study the order of questions was changed, and probing questions were altered. (see Appendix 1).

The first six interviews, using the revised and tested questionnaire, were conducted in a coffee shop at several days within two weeks (end of May-beginning of June 2010). At the time of interview students had been abroad for two and a half months (half way through their exchange). The interview location provided a relaxed, common ground for both interviewees and interviewers. The interview duration was at an average of approximately 20 minutes and were recorded on an ipod nano.

The interviewers were two Australian Masters students on the same exchange, meaning there was an existing relationship with the interviewees. Most of them had met in Hamburg while on exchange but a few students already knew each other from a brief meeting prior to the destination. They had formed strong friendships, enabling in depth and personal responses to be given to all questions asked.

The last two interviews were conducted with the two Australian Master students who made the first six interviews. The location was a park close to one of the interviewees place and provided a relaxed ground as well. The time of the interviews was at the end of the semester (end of June) and therefore at the end of the exchange. The interview duration was at an average of approximately 27 minutes and were recorded on an ipod nano. The extended recording time was caused by additional questions which were not part of the initial study aim. They will not be included in the analyse to ensure the unity of questions and answers.

The interviewer, at the same time the author of this thesis, was a local German student, recently participating in the AUS-EUphe program. She spent 12 months in Australia and was back in Germany for five months at the time of the interviews. The interviewer and interviewees already knew each other and were working together at the university enabling in depth and personal responses to be given to all questions asked.

The interviews were transcribed according to predetermined characteristics because all interviewers had transcribed their conducted interviews. All spoken words were transcribed the way they have been pronounced (slang, abbreviations) as well as sounds (uhm) and laughs. Pauses during the responds were marked with three dots. This procedure ensured the unity and therefore the quality criteria of qualitative content analysis. The transcription of sounds, laughs and pauses enables the researcher to realise if questions were difficult to understand, inappropriate or dismissed. The transcribed interviews were read and re-read by all members of the team and any areas of conflict or confusion were discussed. Some areas were identified as irrelevant and were therefore eliminated from the analysis. The interviews were coded as I1-I8 (see Appendix 3 - 10) and mentioned names were left out to ensure anonymity.

Afterwards the interviews and demographics were entered into MAXqda, a computer software especially made to analyse qualitative data.

The content analysis was done according to Mayring (2008) who assumes there are three ways to deal with interview data. These are:

1. Summary
2. Explication
3. Structuring

The Mayring method of structured content analysis aims to filter data according to specific topics and categories. This method enables the researcher to categorise the content of the interviews systematically. On the basis of these principles the content of qualitative material can be easily analysed.

After reading the interviews several times a coding system was constructed to identify common statements and themes. The coding of all interviews was done four times to saturate the coding system. Finally, there were seven categories with several sub categories that are related to the prior elaborated mind map, guiding questions and themes. (Kuckartz et.al 2004) These included:

Understanding culture

- Food
- History
- Gender
- Behaviour
- Language
 - Tone/melody/speed

Daily life

- Cooking
- Climate
- Expenses
- Housing
- Maintain friendship/family
- Homesickness/isolation
- New friendship

- Public transport
- Shopping
- Support
- Language barriers

Professional identity

- Career path
 - Changed
 - Confirmed
- Empathy/International perspective
- Choice of working location

Education Culture

- University environment
- Organisation
- Structure
- Study content
- Student-teacher relationship

Competencies

- Personal skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Intrapersonal skills
- Communication skills

Global citizenship

- Tolerance and appreciation
- Feeling foreign
- Take on a German perspective
- Broader world view
- Interest in other cultures

Public health/public behaviour

- Nutrition
- Drinking/smoking
- Safety

5. Results

The results are now presented beginning with demographic data and general background information of the students. Afterwards the thematic analyse of the interviews is presented in seven themes in order of appearance in the methodical description. The themes are 'Understanding culture', 'Daily life', 'Professional identity', 'Education culture', 'Competencies', 'Global citizenship' and 'Public Health/public behaviour'. The subcategories of each theme are either presented individually or combined in case they are related to each other.

The last question of the interview was "*In your own words can you describe the impact study abroad has had on your life.*" This question can be seen as a summarised reflection of what has been said as well as a reflection of this exchange. The responds of each student are finally presented to give a concluding overview of their experiences.

The quotations given below are referenced with the interview code and line according of the appearance in MAXqda.

5.1 Demographics and general background information

The eight students interviewed were on exchange from March to July, 2010 within the AUS-EUphe program and were located in Hamburg, Germany. At the time of the interviews three students were planning to extend their stay in Germany. They were all studying at the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences in AUS-EUphe Life Sciences International Program. Six students are undertaking undergraduate courses aiming for a Bachelor Degree in Public Health at their home universities. Two students are undertaking postgraduate courses aiming for a Masters Degree in Public Health. The home Universities are located in Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide.

The eight participants are female and with two exceptions are all in their early twenties. One student is in her mid thirties and the other student is in her mid forties. None of them has Children except for one student having three children.

All students have Australian citizenship, one with an additional dual citizenship of Italian and one with an additional dual citizenship of English. Seven students are born in Australia and one student is born in France. All of them speak English as

their mother tongue. The students do not speak a foreign language with one exception who also speaks French fluently. None of the students speaks German fluently.

Beside this exchange program to Germany four students had lived outside Australia for more than three months. One student lived in Japan for five months, another student in Vietnam for 3 ½ months and one student in Canada for 10 months. Only one student was living in Europe prior to this exchange namely in France until five years of age. None of them has been to Germany before.

Prior professional qualifications were limited to three students. One student holds a Diploma of Teaching and a Diploma of Business Management. Another student holds a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education. The third student holds a Bachelor of Food and Nutrition.

5.2 Understanding culture

All students made comments on subjective cultural differences or similarities in terms of food, behaviour and language. One student also made comments on German history.

5.2.1 Food

Concerning the food availability, food choice and eating habits almost all the students mentioned that they have experienced differences to their home country. The statements are basically lead back to traditional German food supply. I6 (5) said: *"Food...their breakfasts are very different. Usually I have cereal at home but here it's all about bread and meat...and bakeries seem to be everywhere"*. I8 (4) said: *"the main cultural differences I have experienced are probably...food is one so I suppose you guys have the fairly traditional German food... ()...I love the wurst yeah it's good and I like the bread and...I don't eat the bread that much I like the different breads and the salamis and all that sort of things and you have pretty good cheese"*.

One statement concerning the traditional German food supply can be lead back to a general and stereotypical expectation about German food as I4 (19) said: *"...and I'm a vegetarian so that makes it hard because it is pretty much just sausages and sauerkraut...and raw meat...(laugh)"*. Nevertheless, the student was laughing as she said this and therefore it is just an allusion to the stereotype that Germans just eat Sauerkraut and sausages.

5.2.2 Behaviour and Language (melody, speed, tone)

The most mentioned subjective cultural difference was the behaviour and attitudes of Germans. In that matter the student's experiences were differing. Some students mentioned positive characteristics such as: *"Most of the people I have met have been extremely friendly, so there is a culture of wanting to help, so that's been really nice."* (I3, 3) or *"...especially the students, we got given the buddies, they have all been really friendly..."* (I4, 5) and I2 (3) said: *"I have found Germans to be much more...I'm not sure if its formal or polite I think it's a bit of both...for example when I leave the elevator people always say goodbye...in Australia you would never get that...even if they have not said a word to you the whole elevator trip they say always 'Tschüss'...I find that very respectful I guess...very polite."* One statement disproved the students' expectation of the stereotypical German behaviour such as being blunt as she said: *"you come here from Australia you always say that Germans are very blunt... ()... I haven't really found people blunt everybody I found has been really welcoming"* (I8, 4)

On the other hand there were statements like: *"Germans are very blunt people. They don't really know the meaning of tact"* (I6, 3) and I5 (10) confirmed the stereotype concerning German behaviour saying: *"the general customs of the locals I suppose they are a bit ruder and blunter so all the kind of stereotypes some of them have been true"*. This impression of Germans being rude and blunt was consistent to two statements of difference in the tone and melody of the language saying: *"I find the German language very harsh and so I kind of think that they are angry at you"* (I6, 7) and I7 (4) said: *"sometimes at the language... when they speak in German can seem quite blunt...()... even if they are not jellying at me sometimes it might they are"*.

The only mentioned negative or different characteristic is the German directness as I3 (3) said: *"There is more of directness when you are talking with Germans. I think sometimes Australians are picked out as having that same quality but I have noticed that it's not quite the same, so with this directness if you are asking a questions you have to be quite specific in what you are asking"* and I6 (3) confirmed this issue saying *"They say what they think"*.

Two students thought that there is no difference concerning behaviour patterns and that Germans are just like everyone else by saying *"Attitudes...()...yeah I think the German people... are ()...quite similar to every other person in attitudes...()... generally I think like interacting with German people has been just as easy as I would do"*

back home apart from the language barriers” (I7, 4) and I4 (5) said: “I think they are very similar to us () in their attitudes. I don't think they are very different”.

5.2.3 History

An aspect of German culture and known throughout the world is the German history in terms of World War and the Nazi era. One student mentioned this aspect in a neutral way by saying: *“oh I've noticed that Germans are very aware of their history...()...whereas in Australia I think we are aware about our history but it's more...it's not as much history of course so I've enjoyed hearing about that and people have sort of reflected on that...it has been quite interesting ...()... and learning about the different parts of Germany...the east and the west has been really interesting...sort of first hand from people” (I8, 4)*

5.3 Daily Life

An important issue of the evaluation was to elaborate how students had adapted to their new life in a foreign country in terms of activities in daily life situations. The focus was on day-to-day situations such as shopping, cooking and housing and the living situation. Furthermore making new or maintaining relationships and understanding how the students coped with feeling isolated or homesick. Other issues like difficulties because of language barriers were evaluated as well as the support they have experienced.

5.3.1 Housing

For most of the students the living conditions and the living environment changed completely. In Australia, almost every student was still living with the family and usually everything (cooking, washing, food shopping) was provided and paid for. I2 (11) said: *“It's very different to home... ()...I'm pretty much dependant on my mother... ()... I don't pay rent... ()...I don't do my washing, I don't make my bed....I'm a spoilt little only child...”* and I4 (29) said: *“it's different, the living arrangements are a lot different where I'm living with two people () and back home I was living with my family”*

One student adapted quickly to the new living conditions as she was already living on her own in Australia and was independent. *“Pretty easily...it was () some aspects were very similar to what I experienced before because I moved out of home to go to university in Melbourne...so ()... moving into the student residents and stuff were quite similar”*. However, the living conditions were challenging for her as well as she was used to have her privacy. *“but it's such a confined space and really stickily... like you*

only have your room as your private space and so that's been a bit challenging in times because I used to having my whole house where I can do whatever I want () so sometime it gets a little bit...just confronting and a bit like I feel I need to get out" (17, 6).

Overall the cooking, shopping and unknown living situation, being independent and self-dependent, was a challenge for most of the students. I6 (21) said: *"Yeah, it's really different. The hardest thing for me is cooking...cooking for myself...to think of something to cook for tonight's dinner or what I need to tomorrow or Sundays when the shops aren't open"*.

Nevertheless the majority perceived the changes positively and mentioned they have gained independence as for example I2 (11) said: *"() I've liked gaining my independence."* and I4 (15) expressed: *"I've learnt a lot about food... ()"* as well as the statements: *"Well, I have enjoyed it...since I turned 18 I've always wanted to be independent...()... I've always wanted to have that independence and this has been the first step in getting it."*(I6, 25) and *"Gaining independence...when I go home I'm not going to let my Mum do all the work."* (I2, 49).

One student mentioned that she expected student accommodation to be different and even more challenging by saying: *"I think would have preferred to live in with less people and I think I would have liked to live with people I didn't know just to put me outside of my comfort zone. As much as it is good to have people it's always good to broaden your horizons"* (I6, 41). The challenge for her would have been to live with unknown people to gain interpersonal skills. However, she did not tackle the challenge completely in terms of communication skills as she said: *"I expected it to be more social, I thought cause we have that good living room we would be in there but I think the people we live with makes it a bit difficult...being four Turkish girls with limited English...you can't have that interaction with them...the conversation doesn't really flow...()... I suppose that is my choice, there's always the bar downstairs and stuff but I don't go to it"* (I6, 43).

5.3.2 Maintain Relationships and making new friends

None of the students said they had problems maintaining relationships with close friends and family back home. They all communicated quite regularly via e-mail, 'Facebook' and Skype. The only harassment using Skype for communication was the time difference as the students had to make arrangements and had to set up dates.

All of the students have made new friends, mostly with other international students as this was their actual peer group. *“Well I have made pretty good friends with all or most of the internationals students.”*(I1, 13) and I7 (8) said: *“making friends has been relatively easy because we all have been put into the same environment so everyone had something in common and kind of used each other for support”*. Other students were now able to make more friends in Germany within the university network than back in Australia. Especially students working fulltime did enjoy this as I8 (12) said: *“especially the Australian girls that I have had and being able to study full time has been great for me because usually I am working and studying so there is not a lot of time for me to socialize at uni so that has been really nice”* and I7 (38) said: *“their classes are at night so I would come straight from work, I would go to class, I would sit there, I would listen and take my notes, I go to the tutorial () and then I would go home because () it was 9 a clock at night and have not had dinner () I had to get up and get to work tomorrow. So there was no interaction really, minimum unless you had to do something in a partner or group, I rarely spoke to anyone...”*.

Nevertheless, most of them had difficulties making friends with Germans besides their buddies. I4 (43) said: *“I thought by now I would have more German friends than I do”*. The main reason was because of the language barrier as I6 (10) said: *“I've found it easier to get along with people who's English is much better...when their English is quite fluent...that has been mainly been with Australians...”* as well as the statements *“And I'm socializing more with the German youth (not older generations) so they all know English”* (I4, 89) and *“...() even though they speak English it is still like hard to be friends with them because ...()... it's not at the same level...()... and it's just sometimes easier to talk to other English speaking people”* (I5, 26).

5.3.3 Expenses

Concerning money and expenses all students agreed that it is more expensive in Germany comparing to Australia. Nevertheless, they all got along with the scholarship money in terms of rent, groceries and shopping. For additional travels within Europe most of the students were using their savings.

5.3.4 Homesickness/Isolation and support

Concerning the issue of feeling isolated or homesick almost all students felt integrated and comfortable most of the time. Those students mentioned the support they got from their friends and buddies as a reason of feeling comfortable. I3 (11) said: *"I haven't felt too isolated, I think the buddy system was fantastic"* and another statement demonstrates this issue: *"without the Aussie girls I couldn't have done it... ()... they've been a huge support....()...But with such a big network of friends here, the other Australian girls and international scene I don't really feel like a foreigner or alone it just feels like we are a family...()".*(I2, 23, 59)

In some situation the students did feel isolated for a short period of time. Those feelings were basically because of the distance to their home country as I7 (12) said *"I think just like certain things happening and feeling so far away"* and I2 (41) said *"I do miss my Mum a lot, because it's the first time I've been away from her"*. But the main reason was the language barrier and the difficulties the students have had communicating with people who cannot speak English. The helplessness and the subsequent frustration at the beginning of the exchange led to feelings of isolation and homesickness as I4 (84) said: *"I was still adjusting and I suppose () I was just going through an emotional time finding it hard to adapt to a living in a place where a lot of people don't speak English...()... I cried for the first time in Germany and it was because of the language barrier, I didn't know what the sales man was saying to me, he didn't know what I was saying to him"*. Another statement confirmed this *"I do feel a little bit isolated I suppose just trying to make those connections with other people...()... that is going back to making friends and () with the culture and language differences"* (I5, 42).

Apart from these short periods of homesickness, none of the respondents definitely said that they wanted to go home except for one student who was homesick saying *"yeah I'm really home sick actually and I'm kind of itching to go back home"* (I1, 29).

5.3.5 Language barriers and difficulties

The most remarkable difficulty in daily life mentioned throughout all interviews is the language barrier. This issue has been noted before in relation to many day to day activities. They will be now presented as an own summarised category to point out the importance of language for cultural adaption, how the students managed to get by those difficulties and how they felt about it.

- *“obviously the language is a big difference and that has been a big challenge...()... getting into deeper depth conversations with certain people and most people can speak English and sometimes it's getting a bit draining...()... sometimes I feel a little embarrassed that I can't speak more German so I suppose () that can be hard but I think that will get better” (18, 4 - 10)*
- *“One of the main cultural differences is the language...()...obviously it is harder to communicate and interact in society when I can't speak German...()... I was at the post office today and they didn't speak any English so there was a lot of hand gestures...()... over here at least there are challenges every day that I have to overcome ...()... day to day things are never the same because there are always different challenges . or some situations that you run into that are hard to deal with because of the language” (17, 2 – 4; 20)*
- *“...when people haven't been able to speak English they haven't really tried to help you out....or to find someone who does speak English so you are kind of left to your own devices () and it gets a bit scary and you don't know where to go from there...()... I got caught on the train without a ticket and I had to go to the DB centre and hand in a form so I wouldn't get fined and he didn't speak any English and he had to ring someone so I could speak to someone about what I wanted to get done...()...when you try and speak German...your pronunciation is horrible or they laugh at you because you've said the wrong thing () so it makes it hard for us to learn...” (16, 9 – 11; 17; 85)*
- *“most of the time Germans want to speak English () and I suppose () trying to speak () German it's a bit embarrassing sometimes because when you do you either get kind of laughed at or you either get told ‘no no you don't say that like that’ so yeah that's quite difficult but it's fun trying to work it out...()...even though they speak English is still () hard to be friends with them because it's still () it's not at the same level and it's just sometimes easier to talk to other English speaking people...()... and also just not knowing the language you might end up buying things that you didn't think that you wanted’ (15, 16; 26; 30)*

- *“() the places I have travelled in Europe, Germany is definitely the most hardest because of the language () I think it is because German doesn't get () English channels where as when you go to the Netherlands everyone speaks English () in Germany you go into a shop and if it's an older person pretty much guaranteed they are not going to speak English back to you and that makes it really hard...()... they know the basics but they can't explain themselves well () it's hard to get an inside view and in depth side of what they are talking about when they don't know English well enough...()... I cried for the first time in Germany and it was because of the language barrier, I didn't know what the sales man was saying to me, he didn't know what I was saying to him...()... you can get through that and with the small phrases you can learn before you come you will be fine.” (14, 7; 63; 81)*
- *“() I've managed quite well not speaking the language and there are () some cultural aspects in Hamburg () words like 'Tschüss' and 'Danke', and you can say those things and it's enough to get by, and you feel comfortable that you can communicate asking for small things. Obviously I can't have a conversation with anyone but I haven't seen the language as being a barrier for me at the moment,” (13, 5)*
- *“Well, I've been wanting to learn German but everyone wants to speak in English...as soon as they find out your Australian they're like...‘yeah I can practice my English’ and they want to practice with you. So, I haven't found it too hard to communicate here...()...I went into the bank and said hello...‘sprechen sie English’ and she said 'Nein' and so we just had to communicate in sign language” (12, 5 - 7)*
- *“...even though they speak pretty good English they just have no idea what I'm talking about. And for me I guess that is just really frustrating when I'm walking around Hamburg on my own and I need to find things” (11, 5)*

5.4 Professional identity

The topic professional identity deals with the students' opinion whether this exchange to Germany has confirmed or changed their future career path in Public Health. Furthermore in this context if the exchange has broadened their horizons in terms of considering to work overseas or in Australia in the future.

5.4.1 Future career path

There were mixed opinions about how this exchange has influenced or affected their future career path, but for most it had bought clarity as to whether they wanted to continue in the same field or focusing in another direction. Almost all students said that it had confirmed their future path by saying *"It has pretty much confirmed I don't want to do much in the health promotion field... ()... I've always questioned this"* (16, 64) and *"()... I still want to do public health nutrition, still planning on doing my masters in nutrition"* (14, 55) as well as the statements: *"I'm really still strongly driven to public health as a career"* (13, 23). Two of those students also mentioned that they are benefiting from the exchange experiences in regards of their future profession by saying: *"Yeah I am really set on public health and ...social marketing and communication is kind of what I have done before and () doing the masters and coming on exchange here has really () given me strategies and depth () certainly the social marketing models and the health behavior theories () here will underpin the work that I have done and also a lot of the examples we have been given...()...within Europe and just academic articles ()...I would like to use those in the future"* (18, 32) and 17 (28) said *"I am going to public health to get away from food and work more with nutrition and the results of the food and since being over here I do not want to have anything to do with nutrition or food ...()...I know they are going to be the primary thing of public health but they just seem so pointless to me () and that is why I decided to stay on here and do my internship because they are offering a project in infectious diseases which I have no () expense with () so this will give me an opportunity to open a new door () whereas if I go back to Australia to do the internship ().they would have given me a project that was based in there ()"*

However the students also mentioned that it was not only because of this exchange because it is a short period of time: *"I'm not sure if this course has given me any further... ()...clarity on which direction I want to take, I don't think I've experienced enough about public health in the last three months to give me any more grounding in that respect"* (13, 23) and 17 (28) said *"I do not know if it is what I have been studying here,*

but just having the time to clarify my mind over here has definitely changed my perspective”.

For two students this exchange had challenged their future career plans. They explained this by saying: *“I think it has made me realize I need to make the most of every experience. I don't want to get stuck studying one thing or something I don't love...()...I know I want to help people and it will be probably in health but I don't know if I want to make it my main career choice...I'm really not sure”* (I2, 51-53) and one student got off the public health path while on exchange: *“it has kind of put me a little off centre (moved them away from) of health promotion...()...I don't know I have even considered being kindergarten teaching, health promotion in Paediatric care, Au-pair work in France.”* (I1, 37-39).

5.4.2 International perspectives/Empathy/Choice of working location

Nevertheless it has broadened their horizon in terms of the prospective working location and deepened their studies: *“...() its opened up the path to maybe do more overseas travel with study linked to it ...whether European, America or Canadian to do more study in public health and I wouldn't have considered that having not come here in the first place.”* (I3, 23). Other students confirmed this statement by saying: *“It has given me the opportunity...()... if I stay here for a year and learn the language a bit more maybe it gives me the opportunity to come back here and work in the future which I think I would really...()... like to do or somewhere else in Europe...”* (I4, 53) and I6 (108) said *“Hopefully as soon as possible I have one year to go in my degree so I would like to finish that off and hopefully after that maybe look for a job overseas”.*

For some students this exchange also widened their international perspective and they are aware of the possibilities to build an international network of professionals as I8 (34, 40) said *“() I am also interested in research so I think that the context I have made here with students and with the professors here will be something I can keep up and I think an international network of researchers is pretty exciting...()...if I do go into research I would like to collaborate with international people”* and I4 (54 - 55) said: *“you learn () how other countries function and what their problems are and it's just so much information its great...()...to see for companies () I have studied in Germany and I have a wider perspective that just the Australian ()”*

5.5 Education culture

The theme education culture deals with the students' perception of the host university comparing to their home university in terms of administration system and study content. Another issue is the basic university environment concerning student-lecturer communication and university as a place for socializing.

5.5.1 University environment

All students experienced the University and the campus as a social place where you can, besides studying, meet people and friends and stay longer even after the class has finished. *"I like the structure of the actual campus where there is a big communal area... ()... you're constantly running into people and its quite social"* (15, 56). The students enjoyed the easy atmosphere and the socialising: *"I just love it being so social... ()...I enjoy it because you have got your breaks and you are with everyone and your chatting and socialising... ()... I really enjoy that part of it."* (14, 71). Classes in Australia are bigger and the lectures are usually presented in theatres I6 (95) compared the social environment to her home university saying: *"it's a bit of a social time whereas in Australia people go off their own way and it's a massive campus so it takes ages to find someone"* as well as I7 (37 - 38) saying: *"here it is very more social which is really good because I could name everyone that is in my class and back in Australia I could not even tell you if they are in the same class...()... our classes at all are a little bit different in Australia, in Australia we would go to a lecture and it will be in a big lecture theatre although being a master student there were maybe 50 people and here it is like 12 but still there would be a big room"*.

5.5.2 Structure and study content/student-teacher relationship

In contrast are the opinions about the organisation structure and the study content and quality. Almost all students were disappointed about the teaching methods, the study content and the student-teacher communication:

- *"I think it is not as organized as my home university...()...I feel I've left a university with really strong teaching/academics skills and a focus on assignment work and there's a lot more clarity and organization... ()...from a study point of view it hasn't been a positive experience"* (13, 25 - 27)
- *"I don't think in Germany they are as organized as back home and the classes and the courses aren't as intense as back home...()... they haven't been as organized in terms of their teaching"* (15, 56)

- *“with the lecturers I had more communication with them back home”* (14, 69)
- *“I guess the subject content isn't that useful and I'm just use to something different”* (11, 55)
- *“...also some of the lecturers they speak English but not coherent English, and it doesn't quite make sense. So it makes it difficult to understand... ()...I don't like the length of the classes in Hamburg...it can get a bit draining after three hours”* (16, 93-95)
- *“It's been very easy, the workload is almost non-existence”* (12, 61).

Nevertheless, two students admitted that the workload for German students seemed to be more and that as International students the pressure to pass the exam was not as great: *“I'm not sure if It is just the international course cause I have seen some of the Germans work and it looks a lot harder”* (12, 61); *“because here I know I only have to pass and my grade back home is not going to change I need to pass these subjects, not that I'm not trying, I'm trying but I do not feel pressure”* (14, 61).

Two students were interviewed after the final exams and they are in a master's course. Their perception were differing from the other students concerning the university structure and study content as I8 (18) said: *“I think the course here is more practical...and I think I would not have had some of the experience I have had here from a practical point of view like for interviewing and collecting data () as I would if I was in Australia so...that has been good () the culture here I would say is...() more respected. I think people expect to take time to go to university, I know people work as well but I know the master students here take two days out to do their courses.() For the masters' course it is a lot more time at uni ...().* She is able to have neutral but critical look at this theme and does not see her home culture as the only and right one by saying (42) : *“as far as the academic culture...I think it depends on your lecturer...I think it comes down, and the same in Australia, it comes down to your lecturer and I would say that () in the masters course the majority the lecturers are very good. () But I think at times I would say in Australia it is more...theoretical and there is a lot more social theory and a lot more heavy reading I have a semester here in applied sciences and... () we get to interviews we get to collect data we get to analyse the data and writing up reports () so for me that has certainly given me a certain perspective within the masters course”.* I7 (38) commented on formal and content issues following: *“() it is taught in way quite personal so I know all the teachers I know all the students although some of the content has not been as...exciting, I do not think like regardless of where I was I think I would*

have been bored with some subjects. You cannot be stimulated the whole time () although at times were draining I think there are assignments and what we have learned was quite beneficial and I think I will definitely use in my future”.

5.6 Competencies

Gaining soft skills and further development of pre-existing competencies while on exchange is an important issue and the most realised outcome of exchange programs throughout literature.

Some soft skills are already mentioned above concerning day to day activities and the challenges involved. The gained competencies will be hereby defined specifically into four categories namely personal skills, interpersonal skills, intrapersonal skills and communication skills.

5.6.1 Personal skills

All students grew in their personal development because of the exchange and based on these competencies they are now able and willing to change certain things: *”Yeah it’s given me a great experience to change the monotony my life was in Melbourne, giving me the chance to live in a European country.”* (I6, 99) *“I’ve become more independent () back home I was calling my mum to ask her so many questions but here I just figure it out for myself I have to () because she is not always there and yeah I have grown as a person”* (I4, 47), *“I’ve liked gaining my independence”* (I2, 11), *“You’re always going to grow when you live away from home in different country”* (I6, 77) and *“it’s like it has just changed everything, I’m a different person in terms of my physical, my mental, my social ...yeah that’s pretty impossible to describe”* (I5, 64). Some students developed their pre-existing personal skills as I7, (14) said: *“I have gained more independence...I was relatively independent when I was at home but () at home I had my parents and my sister and my brother and all my close friends who could support me if I ever needed it and over here it was () a fresh sleigh and I had to build up my own support network again which was a good challenge and also just being how to deal with... situations”* and I8 (18, 28) even mentioned that she gained more confidence in regards of her academic skills saying: *“I think I have gained confidence () being able to compare health care systems and looking at public health from a more critical point of view (), two different ways of doing things I can have a more critical overview when I can see ()...two systems and it’s different reading about it and actually being here and hearing about it from the local people () and to be () make comparisons so that has been*

something I think I have gained confidence within understanding public health...()...I want to use the competence and also the international perspective I have when I go back to a job and I feel that is something that I can offer that I would not have been able to offer before...especially in public health”

5.6.2 Intrapersonal skills

Moreover there are intrapersonal skills developed as well. Most of the students were able to self reflect on their behaviour and attitudes. *“meeting people from different cultures has kind of been quite intense and its challenging () I suppose you learn the significance of certain things () you learn so much about yourself ()I think you have to go through the negatives to get to the positives sometimes”, (15, 24, 46, 54, 64) “I found a guess a bit of an inner strength within myself () I have seen on this trip that all things can be positive and negative () and I have tried to see the positive of negative things () and it has given me some understanding of how I have treated other people when they have been a foreign student” (11, 35, 47-49), “Looking back know I feel I was a bit ignorant expecting people to speak English and being able to speak to anybody but being here now I realise that it’s not. () It has put me out of my comfort zone yet I feel comfortable being here.” (16, 83, 99) and 17 (40) said: “it has definitely made me realize that...there is hell lot of possibilities out there and I should not just settle for one () you should just always be chasing what you want and not settle for something less ()yes it has made me not take for granted what I used to have”.*

5.6.3 Interpersonal and communication skills

A challenge for all students has been the interaction and communication with different people from different cultures. However, it was a positive experience and a welcoming challenge for all of them: *“trying to talk to people from different cultures which is not something I was use to () back home” (15, 24), “I think I have learnt to communicate with all different people like talking to people that don't speak English and communicating with them...()”(14, 47) and “I think you grow in knowing how to communicate with people who don't have English as their mother tongue.” (16, 79).*

Two students mentioned that they have developed further competencies because of the interaction with second-language speakers or people who do not speak English at all. *“being able to interact with people from different cultures () language competencies ()...has definitely grown and although I can't speak German very well I tend to be able to understand what they are trying to tell me and find way of how to communicate with them () equipping me with a hundred more skills than I would have got*

if I had just gone to London where I speak English” (17, 14, 20) “...you don’t need lot of the language to speak if they do not have any language...to have some sort of communication and I think...() ...body language is a big thing but you can () maybe tell a little bit of people just from being with people so...that is something that I have learned” (18, 22)

Some students had German lessons before they came to Germany and while on this exchange they were trying to improve their German skills. However, they all agree that it is hard to learn the language and they need to have more chances to actually practice. *“but I’m learning, I’m learning the language slowly () I’m enjoying it, it’s hard, it’s very hard” (14, 7 - 9) “I had lessons before I came which I thought it would help me more but I think just talking to German people has helped me more and I’ve been pretty lucky that I’ve spoken to a fare few Germans () who can’t speak English so I’ve learned it that way” (18, 4,), “Well, I’m trying to learn a little bit. I could throw myself into it a bit more I admit I haven’t tried as hard as I could but hopefully if I stay for another semester it will kind of force me to speak with Germans” (12, 9) Even though the language is hard to pick up the students were willing to learn and they were enjoying it when they did speak some German. “I’m hoping by the end of the year if I do stay () that my German skills will be adequate to be able to have a conversation at least” (14, 94) and 18 (20) says: “if I actually get a conversation done in German I feel quite proud of myself”, “it has been a good experience trying to pick up the language” (17, 32)*

Due to the fact that most of the students cannot speak German fluently or any other language they were interacting with second-language speaker in English. Australians speak fast and with a certain accent. Especially when they are in a group of their own it is sometimes hard to understand for second-language speakers. *“especially when there is a group of Australians together and we talk in English quite fastly () my buddy () is just like ‘what do you say I can’t understand you” (17, 16) In that matter the students had to change their way of speaking. “I now for myself speak differently and slower and I’m not really saying what I want to say to them because they are at a lower level” (15, 26) “you really have to speak English in very basic terms and I think I’ve become better at that...” (16, 79) “I have been told that I speak quite fastly so I’m always now conscious when I’m speaking with especially German people () speaking clearly and slowly has definitely been something that I have taken on () the way I*

speak English has changed because I had to use more...simple terms () and so I feel like my English is deteriorated a little bit" (17, 16)

5.7 Global Citizenship

The theme Global Citizenship deals with three different issues namely the ability to be tolerant and interested in other cultures as well as being able to take on the German perspective on issues. Moreover to have a broader world view and therefore being interested in more travelling and more overseas experiences.

5.7.1 Broader world view/Interests in other cultures

Going overseas and living in a foreign country has broadened the student's minds and they have become more interested in other cultures. Statements include: *"I have gained an interest in other cultures, I hadn't had a lot of experience with German culture, I'm more comfortable with Italian or Asian cultures so it's been nice to be closer to another European culture" (13, 19), "Absolutely, I think just like having a view into a different culture and actually living has just been like a blessing...()...I developed new appreciation for cultures...()...it has just opened my mind up to new ideas and possibilities" (15, 46), "Yeah, as far as a world view..I think it's opened it up, I'm more than comfortable with what I've experienced." (13, 29) and "It has also made me want to know more of the German culture and German language. I've got a connection with it now" (16, 99).*

5.7.2 Tolerance and appreciation/Feeling foreign

Because of this exchange and the experiences some students have become more tolerant and appreciated to other cultures. They got an impression of what it means to be a foreigner and the difficulties involved as 18 (10) said *"I mean things like filling out forms is a lot harder and makes me realize how hard it is for people to come to Australia who do not have any English and there is no one to save them".* 11 (49) confirmed this saying *"it has given me some understanding of how I have treated other people when they have been a foreign student".* 16 (83, 87 - 89) said: *"it's a bit impolite that we are living in a country where English isn't the first language and you are expecting them to conform to your language () I would recommend to know some things cause they would appreciate it...()...I understand that it's tiring speaking another language".* 17 (30) reflected on her experiences concerning the language difficulties and transferred this to Australia by saying: *"it has made me realize that people from Australia in particular are quite arrogant in...we only speak one language...we are one the most*

multicultural nations and the majority of our population can only speak English which I think is really disappointing... it has made me become very envious and ()...just hold this people in high regard that can speak two languages”

5.7.3 Taking on a German perspective

Taking on the German perspective on things after such a short period of time is certainly not easy of course. Even though some students were able to accept the “German way” of dealing with things as I4, (81 – 82) said: *“I’ve kind of just got to accept that that’s their way of dealing with things and I’ve got to understand that and learn German better and fight back () It’s interesting seeing the other side as well, because often in Australia I find that when someone can’t speak the language () you often feel a bit impatient.”* as well as I7 (32) by saying: *“Sometimes...I have had myself... stop and think about things a few times...()...especially when ()...the language barriers is getting there () and there have been a few times where I’ve been stopped and well like ‘I’m in their country and I’m the one that is in the wrong’ () I don’t speak the language I don’t think I’ve been able to fully engage with taking on their perspective but I can certainly stop and see () where they are coming to or why they do certain things”.*

Having this broader world view all students are definitely planning to go overseas again whether in connection with travelling, studying or working. Their future plans mainly depend on their financial or study situation.

5.8 Public Health/Public behaviour

The theme Public Health/public behaviour deals mainly with issues of social life such as drinking and smoking.

Three students mentioned the possibility to drink in public because it is not allowed in Australia. I3 (3) said: *“...from a cultural perspective I think that the culture of drinking and the acceptance of street drinking is something that has thrown me a bit. There’s a sense of fun and coolness about it that you can drink out on the street and I think there’s a public health issue, that potentially has not been addressed....that’s something that stood out for me.. and smoking as well”* and I5 (10 - 14) said: *“they party harder, they party longer and later...() it’s just ridiculous compared to the difference in that area in Australia () how they do it in total, the time that it starts, where they drink, how much they drink, what they drink...”.* I8 (4) commented on this issues saying: *“drinking on the trains and that sort of things. In Australia you could not do this. In Australia when you saw people drinking on the streets you would probably associate it maybe with people a bit drunken*

and violent” but she, being the only one, also mentioned safety as an public health issue: “other big differences...I suppose some of the things to do with safety...so bicycle helmets I have noticed ()...in Australia we always wear bicycle helmets, here we don’t and I suppose ()...Australian should see that quite European”.

5.9 Impact of studying abroad on the students’ life

The last question of the interview can be seen as a summarised reflection of what has been said as well as a reflection of this exchange. The responds of each student are now presented to give a concluding overview of their experiences.

- *“Bit of a big question. Made me more mature...also made me very childlike at times. It has also shown me that being around children and older people is where I’m more comfortable. Spending 5 days in France with people in their 70’s was just a breath of fresh air for me. Because my parents are much older, they are in the 70s ahhh...uhm...and not having the connection to children, I know that is weird, but I really miss being able to play with them. Amelia my little 8yr old niece said ‘when are you coming home’ and I said ‘July’ and Ethan, the 6 yr was like of ‘that’s such a long time’ and that just makes you be like I want to go home, I want to go home, I just want to go home because that’s just what it is for me and it makes me sure that I want to have a family and I want to be part of my sister’s wedding next year and just these...little things you know,...just the little things.” (I1, 57)*
- *“It has made me more open to different experiences you know, I do things over here even if I don’t think I’d like it. I mean Oktoberfest isn’t really my scene but I still want to go and experience it. It’s given me different opportunities, experiences, whereas at home I’m home a lot more...on the computer.” (I2, 71)*
- *“There’s been some really great experiences, I’ve met some really nice people. I’ve seen some fantastic uhm places and I have some really great memories of that. From, and it’s not a negative thing, we’ve experienced some...() having a knee operation we didn’t see that coming but even a positive of that is having it here meant that he has time to recuperate whereas at home he would have been stuck without working for 6 weeks so I can see the positives even in that...that threw us...what was the question? Uhm...we’ve had stresses here that we didn’t have at home and each time even though it’s all sorted out there’s been a condensed period of stress which I haven’t enjoyed and I wouldn’t have had the same stresses at home cause I try and have no stress in my life at home.” (I3, 33)*

- *“Huge impact, uhm it’s...I think about it a lot and how small decision can change your life, your direction and your path through life. It was such a small decision to apply for this because I got an email and I told friends and they were like ‘no we have got boyfriends we are staying at home we are not going to apply’ ra ra ra and I’m like ‘just apply with me it could be fun’ and I wasn’t even thinking of living in Germany. I don’t even know I was like ‘exchange yeah that could be fun’. I didn’t think about it that much and I sent in my essay saying why I wanted to go on exchange just like a motivational, you know essay, and yeah I then got an email back saying ‘you’re through to the next stage’ ra ra ra ‘come and talk to us’ and that’s when it kind of hit me...and such a small decision to write that essay, has, will have changed my life forever. Coming over here has opened so many doors and like a said before, I hope to come here and maybe work in the future. Even if, like I said, I go back home and stay back home and get a job, even just to have it on my resume and to have, yeah, yeah knowledge from another country.” (14, 103)*
- *“It’s like...it has just changed everything. I’m a different person in terms of my physical, my mental, my social skills and like...everywhere possible I have changed slightly and...yeah that’s pretty impossible to describe, and definitely, for a positive effect, I think you have to go through the negatives to get to the positives sometimes. But I think in total it hasn’t been a negative experience at all, it’s been awesome.” (15, 64)*
- *“It’s been such a great experience I would encourage anyone to do it. It has put me out of my comfort zone, yet I feel comfortable being here. I feel like it is home. It has also made me want to know more of the German culture and German language. I’ve got a connection with it now. I’ve lived here for 6 months. It’s always going to be a part of my life. Uhm...yeah I’ve made some great friends out of it. I’ve made friends with people I doubt I would have made friends with back at home. Yeah it’s given me a great experience to change the monotony my life was in Melbourne giving me the chance to live in a European country.” (16, 99)*
- *“On my life...uhm...I think it’s made me realize that...uhm...I can do anything, whatever I want to do I should do and then I should not feel like I can get stuck in any situation if I don’t want to be there...uhm and that picking up and moving is, as much as people say is terribly hard, it’s so easy. And things that you think would never work out always work out and if they don’t work out then, you know, life goes on...uhm. Yes it’s made me not take for granted what I used to have but also...like I look back at what I used to do and I don’t think I had a horrible life. It was great fun and while I was there I enjoyed it and I miss so much of it but it also made me kind of uhm start a new life...like I felt like I kind of ended that stage and now I*

started a new stage and when I get back from Hamburg that will be an end again and there will be another new start and I think that kind of...starting fresh...you need. Otherwise you just get stuck in that...straight forward. Everything is the same and nothing is changing, even though things are changing but in reality nothing is really changing uhm and I think I definitely need that because I uhm after having this change I've realized how bored I was before and, you know, life is too short to be bored so yeah it's definitely made me realize that...there is hell lot of possibilities out there and I should not just settle for one because...just because uhm that you should just always be chasing what you want and not settle for something less.” (17, 40)

- *“It's a big one. (laugh) I think study abroad has had an impact on my life because it's something I will remember for a very long time. I think that it's been a positive experience that...uhm...has affected my life in terms of...uhm...making me or allowing me to have time to study and to really focus...allowing me to have time to uhm meet people I would not have met before uhm. It has allowed me to...be placed in a different public health, in a different system where I can learn about uhm public health, rather than from a textbook, in real life in a different country and I think that's been, certainly for my career, it's been really positive uhm. For my family it's been an amazing experience and I think something that uhm you know...we have experienced together and that we'll remember forever yeah so...it's been an amazing experience and I feel really lucky that I've been able to do it and...just yeah...really uhm...I suppose...uhm...yeah lucky is the word...that I've been able to be part of it and to have had such a positive experience.” (18, 46)*

6 Discussion

In the following the results will be discussed and interpreted. Afterwards the students' intercultural sensitivity based on Bennett's 'Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity' will be evaluated. Finally there will be critical reflection of the study method.

6.1 Results

The students had positive and negative experiences and perceptions while on this exchange.

The positive experiences that were revealed in this study were associated with daily life, social and subjective culture, competencies gained and global citizenship.

Overall, students identified growing on a personal level in terms of their communication, intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. Much of this was related to moving out of home, living in a different country and becoming independent in terms of daily life activities including cooking, cleaning and different living circumstances. Their ability to cope with living in a different European culture and interact with people of different cultures developed throughout the exchange. These circumstances made them more confident even though it was identified as challenging to the students when adapting to their new life, especially at the beginning of the exchange.

The cultural differences mentioned most frequently were German food and the German manner or behaviour. However, some realised differences in food can be lead back to stereotypical assumptions of these students as they mentioned that themself.

In terms of German behaviour and manner the students' opinions differ. The perceptions range from 'being rude and blunt' over 'no differences' to 'being friendly and helpful'. The students made their own, individual experiences with different Germans and this result in different opinions about German behaviour. Especially the perception of Germans being rude and blunt can be lead back partly to stereotypical assumptions. Furthermore, some students mentioned the language barriers and language melody and tone to be the reason for their perception. Therefore, the impression of Germans being blunt is more connected

to those aspects rather than the actual behaviour as the students did not give explicit examples for rude behaviour.

The language barrier was identified as the biggest challenge for all students. This challenge resulted in positive and negative outcomes. Strategies were formed to overcome this and it was approached in a positive way. Negative outcomes of the language barrier were feelings of isolation, helplessness and homesickness as well as feeling embarrassed.

Students identified that their career path opportunities had been broadened by this exchange. However, for some students not necessarily in the public health field but it has definitely clarified their future path. This exchange had given most of them the confidence to pursue careers abroad and work in multi-cultural settings and build up an international network.

This broadened horizon in terms of the professional identity can be seen in their world view as well. They all got a feeling of what it means to be a foreigner and the difficulties involved. Some students were even able to take on a German perspective on issues a little bit or understood why Germans act the way they do. The tolerance and appreciation towards other cultures and the interest in other cultures developed further. The students already had competencies such as open mindedness and empathy; otherwise they would not have gone on exchange in the first place.

The negative experiences that were revealed in this study were associated specifically with the education culture namely teaching methods, class content and structure. Some students commented that the workload was 'easy' and therefore 'less stressful' than what they are accustomed to. However, in this context it needs to be mentioned that six interviews were made after the first three months of the exchange. At the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences there are usually no assignments or exams during the semester but rather at the end of the semester. Whereas in Australia the course assessments take place on a monthly basis and with final exams at the end. This difference needed to be mentioned to explain the students' perception of the study workload. Two students were interviewed after the final exams and they are in a master's course. Their perception was differing.

Most of them reported having minimal contact with teaching staff, which they associated with language barriers. Furthermore, some aspects of the course were hard to comprehend due to the professor's inability to use academic English to explain technical terms.

The study content and format was partly seen as not beneficial from an educational point of view. The students reported that in Australia they are used to have more intense courses with more reading and more theoretic content. However, you cannot compare the structure of Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences, regardless of the country. As the name indicates, Universities of Applied Sciences are more practical with a focus on field work and field experiences. Obviously, some students did not know the differences or they did not know that they will be enrolled at a University of Applied Sciences

In terms of Public Health some students were concerned with the non-approached public drinking in Germany. These students see this as a serious issue that should be tackled. Furthermore, the amount and way of drinking was mentioned to be more accepted and performed compared to Australia. This perception is not representative and cannot lead to the assumption that Germans drink more than Australians. The attitude towards drinking and celebrating is a sensitive issue. The persons own attitude reflect his perception of drinking and celebrating. In a manner of speaking, if a person do not drink that much or at all, he or she would always perceive it as to be excessive, regardless of the country.

In general the exchange was a positive and life-changing event for all participants. All students expressed the desire to travel overseas in the future due to the positive impact this exchange had on their personal development and therefore on their lives. Almost all students broadened in their horizons in terms of building up an international network and some students are even considering working overseas in the future. This experience was an opportunity the students would highly recommend to fellow students in the future.

6.2 Classification of intercultural sensitivity

Based on Bennett's 'The Developmental Model of Intercultural sensitivity' the student's stage of intercultural sensitivity at the beginning of the exchange will be allocated as well as their development of further sensitivity. The classification will be made due to the overall impression of the interviews. Certain quotations will be mentioned as they resemble to the typical statements listed above.

The different stages are briefly repetitive explained. The ethnocentric stage, where people try to avoid cultural difference, comprehends:

- Denial: worldview is polarised into 'them-us' differentiation, existence of superior, dominant and lower social status people)
- Defense: worldview is polarised into 'them-us' differentiation, stereotypes and prejudices, protecting the own culture
- Minimisation: cultural differences are simplified and are more seen as similarities

The ethno-relative stage means that people grade their own culture within the context of the foreign culture. The stages are called:

- Acceptance: both cultures/differences are seen and placed into contextual categories, no need to like it but accepting
- Adaption: acting outside one's own cultural context, behaviour is seen as 'being right' rather than 'it is supposed to be', is not generalizable
- Integration: multicultural worldview, flexible in terms of cultural contexts

Initially, all students can be placed in the 'ethnocentric stage' because they have not been exposed to German culture before. In particular, most students are in the 'defense' stage as they are aware of cultural differences but known aspects of German culture (food and behaviour) are based on hearsays and reports which lead to stereotypical assumptions. Statements located in the result section '5.2 Understanding culture' include: "*I didn't really know Germans before I came here but I was expecting...I heard that they were quite () rude people and I suppose I found that when I first arrived*" (14, 5) and "*the general customs of the locals I suppose they are a bit ruder and blunter so all the kind of stereotypes some of them have been true*" (15, 10).

Students with prior overseas experiences identified differences more as basic similarities as for example I7 (4) said "*() I think the German people... are ()...quite similar to every other person in attitudes*". Those students are operating at minimization

During their stay in Germany most of the students developed more sensitivity, especially in terms of cultural acceptance and tolerance. Some students saw both cultures in contextual categories and they are able to differentiate between them. The perceived cultural differences were interpreted in its context and the students reacted appropriate. Therefore, most of the students are now acting in the ethno relative stage acceptance due to this exchange. Statements located in the result section '5.7.3 Taking on a German perspective' include "*It has made me more open to different experiences (), I do things over here even if I don't think I'd like it. I mean Oktoberfest isn't really my scene but I still want to go and experience it.*" (I2,71) and "*I don't speak the language I don't think I've been able to fully engage with taking on their perspective but I can certainly stop and see () where they are coming to or why they do certain things*" (I7, 32) and "*I've kind of just got to accept that that's their way of dealing with things and I've got to understand that*" (I4, 81)

One student is still placed in the ethnocentric stage as she has realised but still avoided differences by minimising its importance and defending her own culture. Nevertheless, she did gain competencies in regards to a broader world view and tolerance towards other cultures.

One student even operates in adaption as she feels at home in Germany. "*I feel like it is home. It has also made me want to know more of the German culture and German language. I've got a connection with it now*" (I6, 99).

Overall, all students developed further intercultural sensitivity due to this exchange.

6.3 Methods criticism

The interviews were conducted by three different interviewers. This could result in an in homogeneity of questions and responds. This was prevented by using the half structured questionnaire with seven main and several probing questions.

The time of the interviews was differing. The first six interviews were conducted half way through the exchange. The last two interviews have taken place at the end of the exchange. This could result in different perceptions of certain questioned aspects of the exchange. Furthermore, these students already knew the study aim and the questions. This could result in skewed responds as the students knew the aimed outcome.

The Public Health perspective, which was one study aim, was not mentioned frequently. It should have been addressed more within the questionnaire. This was caused by the fact that the pilot study was conducted only with one student. A more extended pilot study would have identifies the missing questions on this topic.

7 Recommendation for the AUS-Euphe program

Overall the students rated the program to be a great success in terms of their personal development and global citizenship. Almost all shared a residence in a certain line up and especially the younger students used each other for support to get along with day to day and housekeeping activities. Thus, it is recommended to send, in case they are young and still living with the family, at least two students together on exchange.

The students were dissatisfied with the administration system at the HAW as well as the study content and format. Obviously, some students did not know that they will be enrolled at a University of Applied Sciences or they did not know the differences between a University and a University of Applied Sciences. Therefore it is necessary to inform all participants intimately about the university structure, format and study content to clarify those issues in the first place.

The language barrier in day to day activities and intercultural interaction was a challenge for all students. An initial compulsory German course prior to the destination is recommended for the participants as well as consecutive course during the exchange. German students and international students in general have to demonstrate their competence in English by providing certified documentary evidence in order to study at an Australian University. This is not required for Australian students as the courses at the HAW are in English. Nevertheless, a certain basis of German would simplify the student's acclimatisation and adaption to the new life.

The 'buddy system' was a great support for all students. The assistance concerning administration issues such as registration at the citizen center and transport from the airport to accommodation simplified the acclimatisation in an unknown environment. The 'buddies' also facilitated the contact within the university setting to build up a social network and helped with little day to day things such as getting a mobile number and getting along in the city. Therefore, the 'buddy system' should resist and be strengthened in the future. Australia does not have such a system to support the exchange students. It should be implemented as it will continue to help to lead the project to success in that matter.

8 Conclusion

In general the exchange was a positive and life-changing event for all participants. Most of the students gained characteristics and competencies such as 'understanding other cultures', 'personal growth and maturity', 'adaptability', 'self confidence', 'communication with others' and 'international awareness'. All students developed further intercultural sensitivity and competencies due to this exchange. Therefore, this study revealed and confirmed the beneficial outcomes of student exchange programs.

The negative experiences that were revealed in this study were associated specifically with the education culture namely teaching methods, class content and structure. Identified reasons are the limited academic English skills and the lack of clarity in terms of university structure. An additional reason is the time the interviews were conducted. A final evaluation at the end of the AUS-EUphe program with all participants from Europe and Australia will identify whether this result is a general issue.

The most important recommendations for the AUS-Euphe program are the continuation of the 'buddy system', an initial compulsory German course and more clarity and information in terms of university structure, content and format.

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10 Eidesstattliche Erklärung/ Declaration

Ich versichere, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit ohne fremde Hilfe selbständig verfasst und nur die angegebenen Hilfsmittel benutzt habe. Wörtlich oder dem Sinn nach aus anderen Werken entnommene Stellen sind unter Angabe der Quelle kenntlich gemacht.

I hereby declare that this thesis has been written only by me and without any assistance from third parties. Furthermore, I confirm that no sources have been used in the preparation of this thesis other than those indicated in the thesis itself.

Ort, Datum/ Place, Date

Unterschrift/ Signature

11 Appendix

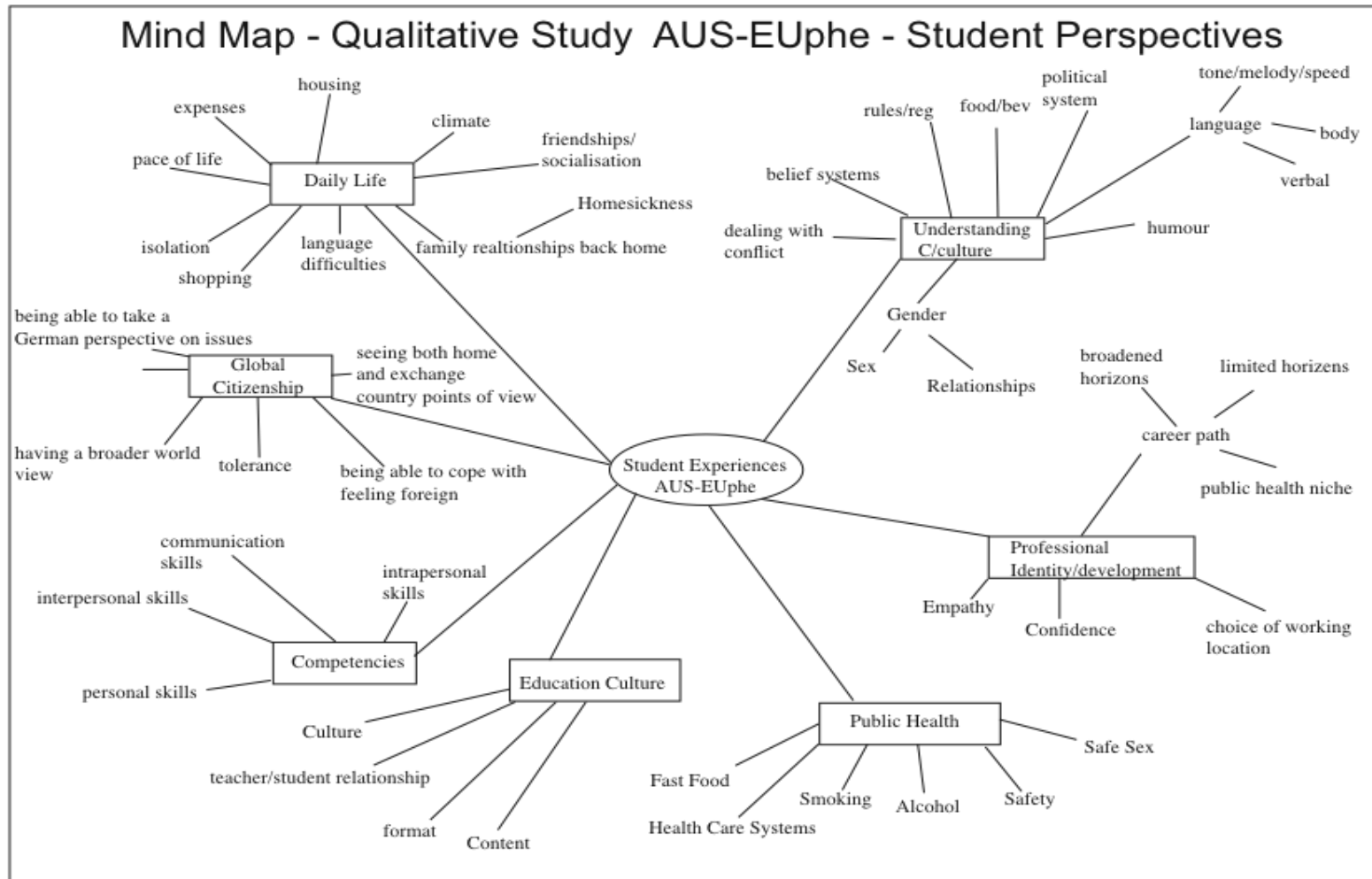
Contents

Appendix 1 Questionnaire	1
Appendix 2 Mind Map.....	2
Appendix 3 Interview I1	3
Appendix 4 Interview I2	8
Appendix 5 Interview I3	13
Appendix 6 Interview I4	17
Appendix 7 Interview I5	24
Appendix 8 Interview I6	29
Appendix 9 Interview I7	36
Appendix 10 Interview I8	44
Appendix 11 Sociocultural Adaption Scale	51

Appendix 1 Questionnaire

Question	Probing Topic
In your words, please describe the cultural differences between Australia and Germany that you have experienced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attitudes/ Beliefs - Language barriers - Public Transport
In your own words, please describe how you have adapted to your new life in Hamburg.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rules/regulations - Food/shopping - Language - Housing - Money/expenses - Climate - Isolation - Family relationships back home - Making new friends
Since being on exchange, what new skills or competencies have you gained?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personal skills - Interpersonal skills - Communication skills - Intrapersonal skills
Can you please describe how this exchange has affected your future career or study path?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has this experience clarified your niche in the public health field?
Can you please describe how this exchange has influenced your overall view of the world?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have you been able to take on the German perspective in certain situations? - Have you been able to cope with the feeling of being a foreigner? - When is the next time you want to go overseas? - Your tolerance level towards different cultures
Can you describe any differences or similarities you experienced in the university culture when comparing your home and your host university?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teaching Methods/ Structure/ study content - Communication and interaction between professors/students and between students
In your own words, please describe the impact study abroad has had on your life.	

Appendix 2 Mind Map



Appendix 3 Interview I1

I: Ok, so we are here today interviewing on student perception of AUS-EUphe program, in Hamburg in June. So, just to start, thanks for coming today. In your own words, can you please describe the cultural differences you have experienced here in Hamburg?

R: Ah, for me I think...I don't really find some of the Germans on the street very approachable. The general consensus, say...when I'm on a train it's just a bit dead.

I: So, when you say on the street, can you give us an example of that?

R: Uhm...I don't know uhm...well say, when I was in London or in Melbourne, you could go up to someone and they would try and give you an answer. Whereas, I have been through a few situations where I have had to ask about 10 people where something is and even if it is just a block away they have no idea. Even though they speak pretty good English they just have no idea what I'm talking about. And for me I guess that is just really frustrating when I'm walking around Hamburg on my own and I need to find things.

I: And what about language? How have you found the language differences?

R: I find the German language very harsh and so I kind of think that they are angry at you. I guess coming from an Italian background it is just a very different way if like... it's kind of opposite.

I: Is that to do with attitudes and beliefs?

R: I don't know. I guess coming back to it, I don't know if I would come back to Hamburg to live...and it's an experience in the fact that I came to Hamburg. I don't think I would have come to these countries if I didn't have the scholarship.

I: In terms of cultural differences, what are you finding different?

R: Cultural differences...yeah food, yeah food is alright. I just cook what I want to cook. Getting, you know, self raising flour or you know, getting...I don't know castor sugar and all those things we kind of take for granted and yeah.

I: And can you please describe how you have adapted to your new life in Hamburg?

R: Well, I have made pretty good friends with all or most of the internationals students. My buddy and her friends are really lovely so I get along with them and see them when I can...but I also have to be very understanding that the Germans study...somehow have to study a lot and my study load here isn't as full on, so sometimes it's hard to catch up with them.

I: And what about other things like housing, food, money?

R: Cooking is...ah cooking and money has been fine uhm...ah most general day to day things are ok I think...it is just.

I: How does it differ to what you were use to back home?

R: Ok...well, the fact that I have had to cook for myself.

I: So you lived at home in Melbourne?

R: Yeah, but I think I have adapted ok...to cooking for myself. It's really quite nice not having to follow a recipe and to just use whatever is in the cupboard. I have watched that many cooking shows with my mum that I think it's just a nate. (Authors comment: nate is Australian slang for something you really like and just you enjoy doing it, in this context enjoy cooking)

I: What about living circumstances?

R: It's different. I think I'm more use to a family environment and that...because I live with my parents and I see my brother and sister a lot and my sister comes over all the time.

I: And so that's back home. What about here in Hamburg?

R: Well, it's a bit different...students housing...4 Turkish girls with cultural differences. But I think at the core of it you find similarities and you teach them English and you help them improve their English and I guess you have to be very respectful of everyone else in the house and I think you have got to be a bit selfless.

I: And going back to those family relationships back home, are you finding that is having an impact on your life here? Are you in touch with home a lot?

R: Yeah yeah all the time.

I: And you enjoy that?

R: Yeah, I didn't expect to be in contact with my parents so much, but I guess coming here have shown me what I value in life and I guess sometime you need something to be taken away from you to realise how important it really is. And my mum really misses me and my dad and they say the house is really quiet at home without me.

I: So you're quite homesick in that way?

R: Yeah, I'm really home sick actually and I'm kind of itching to go back home and I had the option to go back home if I really wanted to but this is for my study and I don't want to spend another year at Deakin after I have already extended my degree out for a year. So I'm waiting it out.

I: And uhm...what about things like going shopping here? How have you found that?

R: Yeah, food shopping is fine. Clothing shopping is probably on par. I think the prices are on par and I think the food shopping is actually a little bit cheaper but then again...I'm only shopping for one person so...relatively that's...and also depending on what stuff you buy and there is a lot of things you can buy back home and so I'm leaving a lot of stuff here with friends because you...I can't take it all home with me.

I: What about climate? How are you enjoying that?

R: Uhm...it's kind of a bit like Melbourne. Today for example, in the morning, it was wet and cold and now it is sunny and nice. The climate has been ok. I mean, I think before summer started initially it was warmer than what it is now, but I've been able to wear no sock and I don't have to worry about my boots and I probably packed too much for winter time and here you kind of just need normal clothing...like when you travelling, everyone

goes to travel stores but really...you just need to bring everyday clothes what you normally have, depending on where you're going.

I: Ok. Since being on exchange, what new skills or competencies do you think you have gained, from a personal level, communication, those sorts of things?

R: Ok, I found, I guess, a bit of an inner strength within myself. I guess at home I had a lot of social support and I guess again...you don't realise this until it have been taken away from you and therefore you have to look within yourself and at times that is really difficult. I've found an English speaking church which only took me 2 months and that's been nice. I have only been a couple of times and I guess, faith has kind of shown me that I do need it and I've been brought up fairly catholic. But I'm not out there to...kind of preach or make people feel uncomfortable. It's just an inner thing for me. I've also meditated as well and tried different things like going for walks and...but I guess for me, I'm a peoples person and I need to be around people and I need to talk and my parents also need to talk to me as well. So it's been a struggle on both sides.

I: How has this exchange affected your future career or study path? For example, has it clarified your niche or put you off it?

R: I guess that subjects here are different and disorganised and I've been very frustrated and, I don't know if you have felt this, but it feels like there isn't a lot of support from the lectures. They just kind of talk at you and I don't know...it has kind of put me a little off centre of health promotion and that's where it has been nice to kind of...read things up on the internet and get things from my mum and just kind of bring me back to health promotion.

I: So, has it made you want to go along that health promotion path or has it made you want to change?

R: I don't know. I have even considered being kindergarten teaching, health promotion in Paediatric care, au-pair work in France.

I: So it's made you consider different things?

R: Consider doing volunteer work...and I mean these are things I've kind of had up in the air. I don't know what's going to happen when I go back home. I don't know what I want to do. I might stay in Melbourne but I guess it has broadened me in my thinking but it has also made me...not...not knowing the future. I think everyone is kind of a bit fearful and that kind of thing comes naturally.

I: Ok, how has this exchange influenced your overall view of the world? For example, coping with feeling like a foreigner. Do you want to see more of it or do you just want to go home?

R: I kind of think that, if I was going to come back to Europe I would probably come back to places where I would feel a little bit more comfortable in, like Italy, France, UK and Ireland. I'd come back to Germany but maybe do more of Bavaria. I'd want to come travelling with someone. I think doing it on my own, I realised it has just been so tough.

I: So, being here on your own you have felt quite isolated?

MS. Yeah, and I think also to...I would love to go to other parts of the world, like Mexico, America and yeah.

I: So, just touching on that isolation, how have you coped with feeling isolated and have you got any examples of how you have felt isolate?

R: Uhm, coping with the isolate...I email and I sent funny things back home and I talk you my parents a lot and...I don't know if that is a good thing or a bad thing and I think I've seen on this trip that all things can be positive and negative, depending on which side you flip the coin and I have tried to see the positive of negative things and...

I: And have your friends here helped you as support for that?

R: Kind of. I think a lot...for me my buddy has been really supportive when she can be but then again...I've had to be really understanding that she is busy and she does have her own life so for me it is about trying to find some inner peace within myself. I guess, always at home, you don't realise how dependent you are on other people and here I have had to kind of go 'ok I don't have everyone here I want to be with, or my friends so I'm literally go to have to draw in from here'...and I have also had to learn that everyone does have their own lives. I'm not saying back home I'm the centre of attention, but how to describe it...but people are there when you want them to be there and here you don't really have that. And it has given me some understanding of how I have treated other people when they have been a foreign student, and maybe my expectations are too high here...I don't know.

I: So, it has given you a sense of what it's like to feel like a foreigner, bring it back to this question. What about your tolerance level to different cultures and that sort of things? Can you comment on that?

R: I'm more comfortable in France. I spent 5 days in France and I was just so more comfortable there. I don't know how to describe it.

I: Can you describe similarities and differences between your uni culture back home and the uni culture here? You have touched on this a bit already, but maybe just discuss the interaction between lectures and students and students to students, teaching methods. What differences have you noticed?

R: I've been a bit disappointed with how the university is structured here.

I: In what?

R: Well, I didn't really understand the term University of Applied Sciences. Health promotion is a part of applied science. It kind of feels like a cross between a university and a Tafe here. I find it weird that I haven't entered a lecture theatre. Sorry, but I find that really odd. I'm use to having sorter classes. My attention span is just wavering just a tad. I get really frustrated when you go 'come on what are you talking about' or...and being a native English speaker you have to be very respectful of the other person and at times that wavers because there is no structure and like I don't know...if there is a medical centre on campus, where at Deakin you take that for granted you walk into building b and there is the medical centre. I think the buddy system has been fantastic and I think Deakin and all the other universities should adopt this system. But then again, you can't have your cake and eat it. I guess people will have gone to Deakin from Germany and may be a

little disappointed and feel isolate. I guess the subject content isn't that useful and I'm just use to something different.

I: And in your own words, can you please describe the impact this study abroad has had on your life?

R: Bit of a big question. Made me more mature...also made me very childlike at times. It has also shown me that being around children and older people is where I'm more comfortable. Spending 5 days in France with people in their 70's was just a breath of fresh air for me. Because my parents are much older, they are in the 70s ahhh...uhm...and not having the connection to children, I know that is weird, but I really miss being able to play with them. Amelia my little 8yr old niece said 'when are you coming home' and I said 'July' and Ethan, the 6 yr was like of 'that's such a long time' and that just makes you be like I want to go home, I want to go home, I just want to go home because that's just what it is for me and it makes me sure that I want to have a family and I want to be part of my sister's wedding next year and just these...little things you know,...just the little things.

I: Thanks for talking to us today and thanks for your time.

Appendix 4 Interview I2

I: In your own words, can you describe the cultural differences you have experienced while on exchange in Hamburg?

R: Uhm...I've found Germany to be much more...I'm not sure if its formal or polite...I think it's a bit of both...for example when I leave the elevator people always say goodbye. In Australia you would never get that...even if they have not said a word to you the whole elevator trip they say always say 'Tschüss'. I find that very respectful I guess...very polite.

I: Anything else? About the language...how have you dealt with this? How have you found talking to German people in general?

R: Well, I've been wanting to learn German but everyone wants to speak in English. As soon as they find out you're Australian they're like 'yeah, I can practice my English' and they want to practice with you. So, I haven't found it too hard to communicate here, except for once or twice in a hospital.

I: Can you elaborate?

R: Well, I had to go to the bank to organize payment for an Ebay purchase and I went into the bank and said 'hello...sprechen sie English' and she said 'Nein' and so we just had to communicate in sign language. I had everything written down and she just filled it out for me. She was very nice even though we couldn't speak a word to each other. And in the hospital I had to get an X-ray on my knee and I said the same thing 'sprechen sie English' and she said 'Nein' and she was speaking to me in German, saying the instructions in German, but basically using sign language.

I: So, you haven't found it too stressful. Have you learnt any of the language?

R: Well, I'm trying to learn a little bit. I could throw myself into it a bit more. I admit, I haven't tried as hard as I could but hopefully if I stay for another semester it will kind of force me to speak with Germans?

I: Can you describe how you have adapted to your new life in Hamburg and how it's different to home?

R: It's very different to home...at home...I'm pretty much dependant on my mother...I mean, I have a fulltime job and I'm a fulltime uni student but I don't pay rent. I do the food shopping for her but I don't pay for that...she gives me the money. I don't do my washing, I don't make my bed....I'm a spoilt little only child and here I've had to do everything...but I've found it pretty good...I've liked gaining my independence.

I: How's your housing situation?

R: It's really good. I couldn't have done it without Monique...she is always teaching me and showing me how to cook. I'll be eating toast for dinner and she's always cooking extravagant meals and the next night I'll attempt to make it even though I don't think it tastes anything like hers.

I: And house mates, how have you enjoyed that?

R: Mmmm...In my house I live with Monique and Andy. He's a Chinese boy. That's been kind of strange living with a boy. Me and Monique do a lot more house work than he does...but that's ok...he doesn't really make a peep...and then on the other side there's the other Australian girls, the American and two Chilean boys and sometimes we keep the doors open so it's one big flat but that doesn't happen that often.

I: So, when you spoke about how at home your completely dependant on you parents, or you mother, and so over here the main barriers have been food shopping, anything else that you've experienced...that you've had to learn how to do yourself?

R: Well, food shopping I did at home...but it is very different here cause it's all in German...ah...I've been doing my own washing...that was an experience. I had to ask people how to use the washing machine downstairs...what else? I have been keeping my room clean...at home I leave my room in a mess and I close my door and then I'll come back and my Mum's gone in there and tidied it up without me saying anything...but since she's not here I do it myself and my bed is made and its clean...its vacuumed. I vacuum!

I: And as far as making new friends...have you found that different here or...?

R: I actually have a lot more...I guess not as close friends...but I have a wider network of friends here. At home I have three to four really close friends who I spend all my time with, here I have a huge bunch of people who I divide my time with. They're not as close but I couldn't have done it without them.

I: So, you're enjoying that side of it?

R: Yeah.

I: Are you making friends with Germans or international students or both?

R: Both,...uhm without the Aussie girls I couldn't have done it...I couldn't have done it without them, they've been a huge support. And then without my buddy Muriel and Vince and Jan, the other two girls' buddies...they took us to get registered in the first week we were here. Without the Germans to help us we would have been lost. I don't know how the internationals go in Australia cause they have none to help them...so if I didn't have the Germans to help in the first couple of weeks...they helped us settle in and connected us with the rest of the international students...I couldn't have done it.

I: Just going back to making friends, how do you find relationships in Germany from a gender point of view...boys and girls...is there a difference, culturally?

R: Uhm...apart from the really bad dancing I don't think there is. I guess there's a few cultural differences but I've travelled quite a bit and lived in different countries so I don't really pick up on them that much. I just see them more as friends rather than the things they do differently.

I: So, do you find relating to different genders is easier, the same as back home?

R: Probably the same. I have boy and girl friends here and boy and girl friends back home.

I: And what about the money and expenses over here?

R: It hasn't been too bad over here...but I've been travelling a lot, and then I need to eat out a lot, it consumes so much more money. But in terms of just Hamburg it hasn't too been too bad...it seems to be a bit more expensive here.

I: And you find the scholarship money just staying in Hamburg would cover your time here?

R: Yeah, for the 6 months yeah...I didn't think it would back then...I didn't think it would...and I saved some money and paid for my own flights and stuff but I think it actually would for 6 months.

I: And did you get the scholarship as a lump sum or installments?

R: As a lump sum.

I: Do you think this was better?

R: Only because, if I got installments it would be paid into my Australian bank account and it would cost 20 dollars each time I transferred it to my German one and you need to have a German one to pay your rent and other stuff so...it would be ok in installments. I think I would have saved more money in installments...if it could have somehow been paid into a German bank account.

I: Going back to your Mum and family relationships, how are you going with keeping communication up, or not keeping communication up?

R: Oh no, communication is fine. I call her on Skype every two to three days. She puts the dog on the phone.

I: What about the other relationships, your friends and stuff?

R: Yeah I call my friends on Skype...I call my best friend once a week...and my other friends once a week too. It depends, we just catch up on things...Facebook has been a huge help...they get to look at my photos and they like that.

I: So, are you homesick?

R: No, I do miss my Mum a lot because it's the first time I've been away from her. I think it's a lot harder on her...more than it is on me. I just don't want her to feel alone, she doesn't really have many friends in Australia and my best friend, I guess things are changing along the way it's a little bit hard.

I: And have there been instances in Hamburg where you haven't participated in life in Hamburg because you've needed to be on the phone in back home, or you've wanted to write an email or skype?

R: No, when I feel a bit tired and don't want to go out then I might just call someone, but I haven't missed out on any experiences to call someone. I think the experiences here I need to make the most of and my friends, they know I'll call them one way or another.

I: And so you don't feel any pressure to maintain these relationships?

R: No, I think cause I'm single it's a lot easier...I think if I had a boyfriend he'd want to hear everyday and I can see Monique having lots of trouble and I've done the long distance relationship thing but since its just my Mum really...it been easy.

I: Since being on exchange what new skills or competencies have you gained?

R: Uhm...a little bit of German. I've been taking piano lessons and I've never done that before and I have so much spare time that I'm like why not? I've been taking dance again so I'm getting more fit. Making new friends, gaining confidence.

I: What about personal skills?

R: Gaining independence...when I go home I'm not going to let my Mum do all the work.

I: Do you feel this exchange has affected your future career or study plans?

R: Oh no...they gave me this scholarship and now I've caught the travel bug and now I don't want to work at all...I just want to travel. Uhm...no I think it's made me realize I need to make the most of every experience. I don't want to get stuck studying one thing or something I don't love.

I: And has it made you think you will continue to study public health?

R: Honestly, probably not. I know I want to help people and it will be probably in health but I don't know if I want to make it my main career choice...I'm really not sure.

I: How has this exchange changed your overall view of the world?

R: Absolutely, there is still so much I want to see. I have always wanted to travel in order to see different cultures, to be in different cultures, in order to shape my beliefs.

I: Have you lived in a different country before?

R: I was born in France but I left when I was five...so don't really.

I: How do you feel coping, like you are a foreigner? In Germany or any travel experiences?

R: Well, sometimes if I'm walking down the street alone and the customs are a bit different they don't care, they just bump into you, they walk different. But with such a big network of friends here, the other Oz girls and international scene I don't really feel like a foreigner or alone...it just feels like we are a family but I guess if they left it might be a bit different?

I: What about any differences between the University back home and here, the courses, culture?

R: Uhm...it's a lot easier here I have to admit. I'm not sure if it's just the international course cause I have seen some of the Germans work and it looks a lot harder but in terms of my course? At home we would have had a few five thousand word essays by now, we would have done something similar to this interviews where we had to type out ...so much

work...here we've had learning diaries, no exams...one exam German and that's it. It's been very easy, the workload is almost non-existence.

I: Have you found a difference in the teacher/student relationship?

R: Yeah, I expected it to be more strict but it seems a bit more casual. A lot of people don't come to class and I find that disrespectful. I know I don't always go but sometimes I feel bad cause I know so many people won't come cause he'll notice if I'm not there. Sometimes it's just us aussie girls sitting there. A lot of people do that back home but there's at least 20 people still there. And I find it I guess more relaxed...not as strict.

I: And you're planning to stay on for the rest of the year?

R: Yeah, but it depends on money...at the moment money isn't going so well but if I get a job and my French passport so that I can work here, I definitely do want to stay.

I: So, you'll go home at the end of the semester?

R: Yeah February, March.

I: After that, when you go home, when do you think the next time you go overseas will be?

R: I don't know. That's why I want to make the best of this opportunity. I do want to just go home, finish that semester and then one more left and then save some money and go travelling again.

I: In your own words can you describe the impact travelling abroad has had on your life?

R: It has made me more open to different experiences you know, I do things over here even if I don't think I'd like it. I mean Oktoberfest isn't really my scene but I still want to go and experience it. It's given me different opportunities, experiences, whereas at home I'm home a lot more...on the computer.

I: Do you think you would go and live in another foreign speaking country again after this experience?

R: Definitely. I don't want to go home. I just want to keep travelling, living for 6 months in different countries.

I: Do you think that your love for travelling will be combined with a future career/study path?

R: Yeah I hope so, if I could find a job like that, it wouldn't even be a job it would be great.

I: And working with people from different cultures?

R: Yep, we are all human...so yes.

I: Thanks for your time.

Appendix 5 Interview I3

I: In your own words can you describe the cultural differences you have experienced while on exchange in Hamburg?

R: Uhm...wow...culturally I think some of the differences have included...there is more of a directness when you are talking with Germans. I think sometimes Australians are picked out as having that same quality but I've noticed that it's not quite the same. So with this directness if you are asking a questions you have to be quite specific in what you're asking and I've been caught out a few times when I've started to talk to somebody and am not quite sure what I was...or was thinking as I'm talking and they're going 'so what are you asking' and that's happened a couple of times to me and I don't think I would experience that same sort of thing in Australia. Uhm...from a cultural perspective I think that their culture of drinking and the acceptance of street drinking is something that has thrown me a bit. There's a sense of fun and coolness about it that you can drink out on the street and I think there's a public health issue, that potentially has not been addressed...that's something that stood out for me...and smoking as well. Most of the people I have met have been extremely friendly, so there is a culture of wanting to help, so that's been really nice.

I: And language, how have you gone not being able to speak the language?

R: I think it's been quite good. I've managed quite well not speaking the language and there are some nice things, some cultural aspects in Hamburg, some nice things in this part of Germany where words like 'Tschüss' and 'Danke' and you can say those things and it's enough to get by and you feel comfortable that you can communicate asking for small things. Obviously I can't have a conversation with anyone but I haven't seen the language as being a barrier for me at the moment, other than maybe restaurants when it's pretty much full on Germans. But when they're Italian, Spanish or Portuguese restaurants I can work it out.

I: In your own words can you describe how you have adapted to your new life in Hamburg and how it's different to home?

R: Food shopping...all really easily...it really helped when we first got here...we're now in our third neighborhood so we've got to see quite a bit of the suburbs of Hamburg. Shopping has been really easy. I've been really happy that I've been able to get fresh fruit and vegetables. I think they're at a reasonable price. The health foods that I like are readily available and I think I've actually got a wider choice than I have at home...there's great restaurants and they are reasonably priced. So I am spending the same if not less, potentially eating out less that I would at home...its fine. Shopping is really accessible. I think one of the interesting things is that shops aren't open on Sundays and at home there's a really big push to have shops open on Sunday and they think cause its so cosmopolitan and European and everyone else in the world is open on Sunday, but its not actually the case and its quite nice to have the shops shut on Sundays, its not really necessary, you get by.

I: What about climate?

R: I've struggled with the climate. I've found that it just stayed cold and wet for too long and I wasn't expecting that. One of the draw cards for me coming over here at this time of

year. I was told it would be far better than September, that the weather would be better and we are now in June and its only just starting to warm up and you can't control the weather, but I guess I have been a bit out of sorts when the weather...I haven't been exercising as much cause I haven't actually wanted to go outside in the cold and it's actually changed my normal lifestyle to what it would be in winter at home as well.

I: What about isolation, making new friends in a new city?

R: I haven't felt too isolated. I think the buddy system was fantastic and I was assigned a really great buddy who's become a good friend so I feel that's really good...uhm...having the other Australian girls has been helpful and also being here with a partner makes a difference. So we haven't met lots of different people but I haven't felt much isolation. If anything it is our friends at home that have not made much contact with us and expecting us to do all the contacting...that's been strange for us.

I: And on that topic, how have you found maintaining relationships back home?

R: Ah, we've maintained the relationships with people we've wanted to maintain the relationships with and actually people we didn't think we'd hear from we've heard from and people we expected to hear from we haven't. But that's more of a personality thing and their interest in actually emailing, skypeing etc...I don't think it's a reflection of us.

I: And housing, how have you found that?

R: We've been lucky that we've found two great apartments...but I was really disappointed from the effort we got from the University helping me find it. So our buddy helped us but we arrived in Hamburg not knowing where we were going to live. To be staying long term...I think the program caters for younger students and they have not put something in place for mature age students.

I: Disappointed in Perth or Hamburg?

R: Hamburg, I don't think it was the responsibility of my University to help me with accommodation. I just think the communication there was difficult. It would have been different if I knew about the suburbs. I did get one email once that said there's a flat available that's an hour away and to me an hour away was just too far. Now I know that an hours travelling time is nothing, but that wasn't explained well, it could have been clarified. Potentially I could have asked more questions and I didn't but I didn't know what questions to ask...someone should be sharing that information.

I: And since being on exchange what new skills or competencies do you feel you have gained?

R: I think I've lost a few...in terms of...we've let things happen to us with accommodation that wouldn't have happened at home. Being charged extra when we've set a price and I think I got all confused and I think I'm quite strong in character and I would challenged something and because I'm in another country and out of respect haven't challenged it. But I guess some of the things I have gained are an interest in other cultures. I hadn't had a lot of experience with German culture. I'm more comfortable with Italian or Asian cultures so it's been nice to be closer to another European culture. Relying on public transport, I mean at home I catch public transport but it's minimal. We rely on our car but

here you rely on public transport and you get by, even without the language skills you get by and that's quite good.

I: What about communication with people who don't speak the language?

R: I'm quite comfortable with that. I guess I've had experience and growing up...I went to school with a lot of migrants and also through teaching and other experiences I've had exposure to other cultures.

I: Can you describe if this exchange has affected your future career or study plans?

R: I'm really still strongly driven to public health as a career. I'm not sure if this course has given me any further...uhm...clarity on which direction I want to take. I don't think I've experienced enough about public health in the last three months to give me any more grounding in that respect. I guess I need to do more study before I know exactly what path. But I guess it's opened up the path to maybe do more overseas travel with study linked to it...whether Europe, America or Canada to do more study in public health and I wouldn't have considered that having not come here in the first place.

I: Can you describe any similarities or differences in the University culture, coming from home to here?

R: I think it's not as organized as my home university. So that's one thing I've really noticed on a negative side. I feel I've left a university with really strong teaching, academics skills and a focus on assignment work and there's a lot more clarity and organization. Similarities, I suppose I've only just started to see similarities doing the masters course, so I see that it's a style of teaching that I've experienced back home. I've been disappointed from a communication perspective about the opportunity to do the masters courses uhm...I had to search that out and things have changed in the masters courses and I wasn't told so I'm missing out on doing another masters class because I wasn't told about the revised dates, even though there's a masters group, the other people need to be communicated with too. If we've been told we can do the courses...so I've missed out on doing another unit cause I've made other arrangements. I've been a bit disappointed with some lecturers not responding to emails. I'm not sure if it's just my experience but other people have said one particular lecturer has responded to them but I have gone three weeks without responses. So I've now gone to the offside and I'm not getting a response from them either. So, I don't know about the protocols as such and I think for an English...it's been promoted as a course in English and there's been other aspects...like one particular lecturer organising a visit to an obesity clinic and we couldn't go cause it was all in German and there were no provisions made for us to attend and we were told it was a waste of time and I think it should be better organized and managed.

I: Can you describe how this exchange has affected your overall view of the world?

R: Yeah...I think it's been a really positive experience, if I looked at it overall and I went home and said 'was this a great experience?'...it really was, but the experience has been more about just living in Germany. Would I go back and say 'I had a fabulous four months studying and learning about German public health from a different perspective', I don't think I've achieved that. So it has been a positive experience but from a study point of view it hasn't been a positive experience.

I: And far as your world view?

R: Yeah, as far as a world view...I think it's opened it up. I'm more than comfortable with what I've experienced.

I: And when do you think you'll travel overseas again after you return home?

R: Within 12 to 18 months depending on finances.

I: And in your own words can you please describe the impact studying abroad has had on your life?

R: There's been some really great experiences, I've met some really nice people. I've seen some fantastic uhm places and I have some really great memories of that. From, and it's not a negative thing, we've experienced some...() having a knee operation we didn't see that coming but even a positive of that is having it here meant that he has time to recuperate whereas at home he would have been stuck without working for 6 weeks so I can see the positives even in that...that threw us...what was the question? Uhm...we've had stresses here that we didn't have at home and each time even though it's all sorted out there's been a condensed period of stress which I haven't enjoyed and I wouldn't have had the same stresses at home cause I try and have no stress in my life at home.

I: But generally an overall positive?

R: Yes, positive impact and I think all these things are sent to try us and if you can come out and see the positives it's fine but it's just been strange...some of the things that have happened to us.

I: Thanks for your time.

Appendix 6 Interview I4

I: We are interviewing () for qualitative research for the students perception of the AUS-EUphe program. So () can you tell us in your own words the cultural differences you have experienced between Australia and Germany?

R: Uhm...well, cultural differences between Germans and Australians.

I: Yes

R: Well, uhm...I didn't really know Germans before I came here but I was expecting...I heard that they were quite a rude, rude people and I suppose I found that when I first arrived. I found that the adults more like...I don't know they don't want to uhm...answer and stuff but the, the students I have found very helpful people and especially the students we got given the buddies, they have all been really friendly and uhm I think they are very similar to us. I don't think there is, in their attitudes, I don't think they are very different and uhm yeah.

I: What about uhm things like language? How have you found that?

R: Hard. I think I have travelled like...the places I have travelled in Europe, Germany is definitely the most hardest because of the language...because I think it is because German doesn't get ah uhm English um English channels whereas when you go to the Netherlands everyone speaks English. In France everyone speaks English and in Turkey everyone speaks English. Whereas in Germany you go into a shop and if it's an older person pretty much guaranteed they are not going to speak English back to you and that makes it really hard. Uhm but I'm learning, I'm learning the language slowly.

I: And your enjoying learning the language?

R: I'm enjoying it, it's hard, it's very hard but yeah.

I: And what about public transport? Have you found any differences?

R: Public transport is awesome. It's a million times better than the gold coast. Uhm yeah...I'm really enjoying that and it's really nice that you don't have to worry about it because you have the ticket, you don't have to think about how much it is costing you because it is already paid uhm...yeah...uhm yeah. I think it is really good, the train system goes everywhere you never have to walk far to find a train, find a station. Yeah, it's really really good.

I: Uhm, in your own words again, can you please describe how you have adapted to your new life in Hamburg?

I: How you feel you have coped, adapted things, you have had to change from your own life in Australia?

R: Well food, uhm I have had to change my eating habits quite a bit. Uhm yeah, especially being over here, from Claire I have learnt a lot about food and I think what I'm allergic to and that's changed a lot. Because back home I use to eat more carbs and bread and stuff and back home I use to eat out I think more that I do here because it is easy to eat out when you can eat everything. But over here I'm finding that hard but uhm...what else have I adapted...?

I: Any sort of German foods that you have noticed or...?

R: I hate German food. I pretty well can eat any German food (all laugh).

I: And you're a vegetarian.

R: And I'm a vegetarian so that makes it hard because it's pretty much just sausages and sauerkraut and raw meat (laugh) uhm...but when I first came here I was going to the fish market a lot which is kind of similar to back home. Every weekend I would go to a big, a big farmers market...every weekend and get my supply and I was doing that when I first came here but I have kind of stopped that because it is so early in the morning and stuff...but uhm yeah...I don't know.

I: What about, as far as uhm the housing and expenses and all that sort of things, how are you coping with all that sort of things?

R: Uhm...I'm coping with it, it's more expensive than back home for sure. Rent isn't I think because I'm in student accommodation I'm lucky uhm...but every other expense I find I'm paying more for food especially when's hopping at Real and stuff like that and when you want special things the cheaper Aldi and Lidl...don't sell...you know, that other things like soy milk and stuff like that but uhm yeah...the cost of living is ok I suppose, it is kind of comparable to Australia but yeah, I'm spending more now than I was back home and I think that is because I have a little bit more money to spend which is not good

I: Do you think the scholarship is adequate to maintain your life over here?

R: For sure. Unless you want to do a lot of travelling, but to live in Hamburg for 6 months I think it...s enough money and to experience experience it and if you do it properly you should have a bit left over to experience other places in Germany.

I: And you got yours in a lump sum?

R: Yes, I got all mine paid in January.

I: And do you think that was good or bad?

R: I think it was good...uhm...for someone uhm I know I didn't need it to help me with my flights but I know some people who did need it to help them with their flights and they couldn't have come here if they didn't have it in January, yeah, it just wouldn't have been an option for them. So I think it is good that way but then uhm it's hard for budgeting. You've got to be really strict which means...yeah.

I: Uhm, what about isolation? Have you felt isolated in your new life in Hamburg at all?

R: Uhm, I don't feel isolated. It's different, the living arrangements are a lot different where I'm living with two people () and () and back home I was living with more family, really close family friends, () my brother and we would all be eating together and stuff like that whereas here I feel isolated at night I'm eating in my room, I eat my breakfast in my room, I'm on my computer a lot eating. I don't eat with a group of people hardly ever so that way but I socialise a lot. I go out with friends so, I go to coffee more than I go back home.

I: Yeah uhm...and have you, what about your family and relationships back home, how have you felt being in Hamburg and still maintaining them?

R: Uhm, I feel like a few friends I'm drifting apart from, especially my uni friends I haven't really kept in contact with or to close to my uni friends uhm...but my family I think I'm in more contact with now than I was back home because of Skype. I see them more that's for sure and uhm my close friends.

I: Your boyfriend?

R: Oh and my boyfriend, we see each other every day which is probably too much but.

I: Has that been hard?

R: Oh yeah, it's been the hardest, but yeah it will be right, we couldn't have done it without Skype I didn't think but no, its good and uhm my close friends we have kept in contact through Skype and email and stuff but other friends I suppose are drifting apart a bit.

I: And do you feel that there is a bit of a weight on your shoulder or that it's a bit of a job to maintain relationships back home?

R: To keep up...yes I do, for sure. I feel at the moment I haven't been writing enough emails and stuff like that but it takes so much time and it's like so time consuming and you're sitting there thinking 'well I could be outside doing stuff' but I'm writing to people back home and yeah.

R: And so have there been time where you have not participated in things in Hamburg because you have been in contact with people back home?

R: Yeah yeah, especially Skype dates and stuff like that where you don't want to let someone down like I will talk to you tonight at this time and then something comes up and you can't talk to them or you go mad then other way around and so yeah.

I: And what about the climate, how have you found that in comparison?

R: When I arrived I loved it, I was like 'Ahh cold' because I hate the hot, hot humid weather so I really liked that and then it started snowing and it was heaven and then it lasted a few more days and I was over it, I was completely over it, but now it's beautiful it is like my ideal climate, yeah I love it.

I: What about making new friends, has that been any easier or difficult?

R: Uhm, I thought by now I would have more German friends that I do. But I have kind of clicked with all the Australians. My German friends are my buddies really, like the buddies of my friends and me and their friends. But at uni I haven't really made friends with the Germans in class. We talk in class but we don't hang outside of class so.

I: And why do you think that is?

R: I think like maybe they, they stick together with their German friends, I don't know, I know at the gold coast when I moved there for uni I haven't made many friends from the gold coast. They're all from outside, it's like...here they all just want to stick together maybe and they don't want to include people in their groups and that stuff. But when you're a buddy you don't have a choice you have to include your buddy and stuff like that so maybe that's why.

I: Good, uhm since you have been on this exchange what new skills or competencies do you think you have gained?

R: Uhm, I can uhm I think I have learnt to communicate with all different people, like talking to people that don't speak English and communicating with them and uhm I've grown, I think I've become more independent obviously I don't feel like I need too, back home I was calling my mum to ask her so many questions but here I just figure it out for myself. I have to kind of because she is not always there and yeah I have grown as a person.

I: Personal skills yep. So communication skills you have talked about, and language and that sort of things?

R: Yeah.

I: Uhm ok. Can you describe how the exchange has affected your future career or study path plans like has it changed your direction or clarified your position?

R: Uhm I suppose it has given me the opportunity, well if I stay here for a year and learn the language a bit more maybe it gives me the opportunity to come back here and work in the future which I think I would really really like to do or somewhere else in Europe uhm.

I: In public Health?

R: In public health yeah, I still want to do public health nutrition, still planning on doing my masters in nutrition, but I think just to have this on my resume I think it is going to be a good thing just for people to see...for companies to see I have studied in Germany and I have a wider perspective that just the Australian, you know.

I: Yeah, Yep.

R: I think that's good.

I: And during your study have you noticed, what are the differences you have noticed in your uni in Australia and your uni in Hamburg?

R: (laugh) What have I noticed, uhm its more laid back.

I: Here?

R: Yeah in Germany it is more laid back uhm...on the gold coast I felt like I was under a lot more pressure, maybe that's also because here I know I only have to pass and my grade, back home is not going to change. I need to pass these subjects, not that I'm not trying, I'm trying but I don't feel pressure. I'm someone that gets pressured a lot and stresses out about things, but it's nice to be able to just do an assignment or do a report and not feel like I have to get 100%. So yeah that's good.

I: What about the teaching methods?

R: Uhm, I find it hard with some of my teachers that don't know a lot of, like they know English but they're very, you know, they know the basics but they can't explain themselves well enough you know, uhm it's hard to get an inside view and in-depth side of what they are talking about when they don't know English well enough.

I: And compared to Australia where you had in depth conversations?

R: Yeah.

I: Yep.

R: And ah, maybe it's more exciting in lectures back home because they have got the...they are more into, they know the language, you know, they are English speaking people whereas maybe in Germany they are a bit shy. I know that some of my teachers come across and a bit shy to talk to English, which is hard. And a lot of them, oh well one in particular is reading, like is reading her lecture off the notes which is really hard to be interested in because you know she is just reading it to you and you could just be reading it yourself but yeah. No, some teachers are really good so I suppose you get good and bad teachers everywhere.

I: And what about the communication between yourself and the lecturers here and yourself and the lecturers back home and student to student?

R: Uhm, with the lecturers I had more communication with them back home, through email and stuff like that and just talking in class and yeah. But it was also a lot bigger classes back home, but here in class I don't feel like I have a personal connection with any of my lecturers. I have emailed a few of them over uni things nad, most of them have got back straight away. Uhm yeah student to student me to German students or?

I: Well just the interaction with students here versus back home.

R: Oh it's no, much better here, I can't explain. Back home you go to uni, you go to your class and you go home, uhm you don't, there is no mensa, well there is but you don't...it's just so ridiculously priced for students so none goes and I just love it being so social here, like Thursdays it's my full days, its 8.30 till 5.30 and I enjoy it because you have got your breaks and you're with everyone and you're chatting and socialising so that's yeah, I really enjoy that part of it.

Pause

I: Can you describe how the exchange has influenced your overall world view? How you see the world, and you sort of touched on that already, you feel it has broadened your perspective as far as careers concerned, but sort of being able to take a German perspective and understand different cultures and that sort of thing? And can you give any examples of that sort of thing where that has happened to you and you recognise that you can see that side of it?

R: Uhm trying to think...I can't think of an example.

I: Maybe just like feeling like a foreigner, feeling like you're different from someone who is German and actually being able to see both sides of it?

R: Yeah.

I: Like instead of getting angry just kind of accepting things for that and taking them on board?

R: (Laugh) Uhm yeah, I'm just thinking of my fish market experience

I: Yeah, well if you can describe that?

R: Well, that was towards the start, the start of my trip here I was still adjusting and I suppose I was I was just going through an emotional time finding it hard to adapt to a living in a place where a lot of people don't speak English and uhm...I was just at the fish market one Sunday morning and I really just...wanted a paw paw...and twice it happened to me...and I found 2 paw paws. The first time I was about to buy it and it got taken off my by a Chinese man and the second time it happened with another lady and I was trying to speak English saying 'this is my paw paw'. I had the money and I was paying for it and someone grabbed it and I found that hard and I cried for the first time in Germany and it was because of the language barrier. I didn't know what the sales man was saying to me, he didn't know what I was saying to him. I just had my money out trying to pay for it. So that kind, if broadened my way of thinking I've kind of just got to accept that that's their way of dealing with things and I've got to understand that and learn German better and fight back, yeah fight back.

I: It's interesting seeing the other side as well, because often in Australia I find that when someone can't speak the language and maybe friends, and you often feel a bit impatient.

R: Yes yes, it must be frustrating for them as well, and I understand that.

I: And so would you recommend to your friends and family to come to Germany because of the...such a big language barrier?

R: Language barrier?

I: Because like none really speaks English here.

R: Ohh no no no.

I: Do you feel like you have worked through that?

R: I have worked through it and I think if someone was moving here who didn't speak German I think they would too. I suppose it's not that hard, it was hard when I first arrived but you get use to it. And I'm socialising more with the German youth so the students all know English. It's just when you're buying things and stuff like that but you can get through that and with the small phrases you can learn before you come you will be fine. But I would definitely recommend all my friends and family to come to Germany, especially Hamburg because I have fallen in love with it.

I: And do you think this experience of living in a foreign speaking country you would then again go and live somewhere where you don't speak the language?

R: Yeah uhm...I think I would. I don't know where I'd go but I want to travel through Europe, so um yeah I don't know where I would live.

I: Would you be more inclined to go somewhere where you know...

R: Where I knew the language? Probably, but then also I would consider moving somewhere else in Germany. I want to keep my German skills up and if I moved to another country that would mean I would have to learn another language and I would probably put German on the way side.

I: But you're considering staying for another 6 months?

R: Yes yes I am. So I'm hoping by the end of the year, if I do stay, that at the end of a year that my German skills will be adequate to be able to have a conversation at least.

I: And so you will be here for the next 6 months and then go back to Australia?

R: Go back to Australia, finish my degree.

I: And when you can see the next time that you would go overseas?

R: Overseas as in anywhere overseas or?

I: Yeah travel again after you have been home.

R: As soon as possible, as soon as I've got the money I've got the travel bug and I just want to travel everywhere. I think probably after Europe I will be travelling Asia, it's so close to home and its cheap I suppose.

I: And in your own words can you describe the impact this study abroad has had on your life?

R: Huge impact, uhm it's...I think about it a lot and how small decision can change your life, your direction and your path through life. It was such a small decision to apply for this because I got an email and I told friends and they were like 'no we have got boyfriends we are staying at home we are not going to apply' ra ra ra and I'm like 'just apply with me it could be fun' and I wasn't even thinking of living in Germany. I don't even know I was like 'exchange yeah that could be fun'. I didn't think about it that much and I sent in my essay saying why I wanted to go on exchange just like a motivational, you know essay, and yeah I then got an email back saying 'you're through to the next stage' ra ra ra 'come and talk to us' and that's when it kind of hit me...and such a small decision to write that essay, has, will have changed my life forever. Coming over here has opened so many doors and like a said before, I hope to come here and maybe work in the future. Even if, like I said, I go back home and stay back home and get a job, even just to have it on my resume and to have, yeah, yeah knowledge from another country.

I: Thank you for your time, nice to talk to you.

R: You're welcome.

Appendix 7 Interview I5

I: So here we are interviewing I5 on the student's perception of the Aus-Euphe program.

I: I5, thanks for coming along today.

R: No worries.

I: Ah, in your own words can you please describe the cultural differences you have experienced between Australia and Germany since you have been here.

R: Ok first of all there...yum.

I: Just for the tape I think we should pause while he does that wizzing up, yep ok, go.

R: I've noticed lots of similarities and differences, it's hard to say if there is a big difference or not.

I: Just mention some specific things.

R: Ok I suppose the general customs of the locals I suppose they are a bit ruder and blunter...so all the kind of stereotypes some of them have been true. Uhm cultural differences... they party harder, they party longer and later, they have stomachs made of iron, uhm I don't know...I think uhm...I don't know.

I: Do you think with the partying harder, do you think you can split that into whether the guys party harder or the girls' party harder? Like is there a gender difference?

R: Uhm...well I think considering who my buddy is I have to say the guys party harder but girls are quite good as well...but it's just ridiculous compared to the difference in that area in Australia.

I: Is that to do with drinking?

R: I just think the whole uhm...just how they do it in total, the time that it starts, where they drink, how much they drink, what they drink, yeah.

I: What about things like language and that sort of things? How have you found that?

R: Impossible...as far as that would go with my failing in the exam yesterday (German exam). Learning that is hard and I find that although we have been told that, I'm speaking German...like... with Germans it would be obviously easier to learn but it seems like most of the time Germans want to speak English as well and I suppose like trying to speak like German it's a bit embarrassing sometimes because when you do you either get kind of laughed at or you either get told 'no no you don't say that like that'. So yeah that's quite difficult but it's fun trying to work it out.

I: And public transport, have you found that different to where you live in Australia?

R: It's amazing over here. Uhm...from the gold coast, the gold coast is terrible. There is like...in the gold coast for instance there is only buses and or taxi so it's basically like a necessity to have like a car there because the buses don't go anywhere near enough places. Whereas the tram system, or the U bahn system over here is just so efficient and yeah...its really effective.

I: Ok so in your own words, can you describe how you have adapted to your new life in Hamburg?

R: How have I adapted... hmmm like you mean...sorry...what things I have had to change?

I: So like...yeah how it is different compared to what you were living in Australia?

R: I'm fatter over here.

I: And why do you think that is?

R: Because you're doing a lot more socializing and you're always socializing over food or drink...it's like when you go travelling everything is a bit of a novelty so it's like you're constantly like ...that's the way you are meeting and mixing with people, and I suppose living in the situation, I haven't live in student housing like this, but it's been great meeting people from different cultures has kind of been...quite intense and it's challenging but it's really fun trying to like...I suppose make friendship or trying to talk to people from different cultures which is not something I was use to or of the norm back home.

I: So have you found making friends difficult or hard?

R: Uhm...kind of in the middle. I suppose their language, even though they speak English, is still like hard to be friends with them because it's still like...it's not at the same level and it feels like you have to...well I now, for myself, speak differently and slower and I'm not really saying what I want to say to them because they are at a lower level...understandably, and it's just sometimes easier to talk to other English speaking people...yeah basically.

I: What about shopping and that sort of things? How have you found that?

R: Ohh expensive, do you mean food shopping?

I: Food shopping or any sort of shopping, clothes shopping?

R: Ok food shopping for starters is really hard. It's so fun but it's hard with not having the packets packaged as well ...or you know, with as much information as Australia and also just not knowing the language you might end up buying things that you didn't think that you wanted too. Uhm...clothes shopping I haven't really done too much of that and I don't really like that and I mean like...it's been fun I suppose, shopping is like really a big part aside from like food shopping.

I: Just to pick up on the label thing, can you just describe the differences between Australia and Germany?

R: In Germany they don't really have a nutritional content like...it's not mandatory unless you know it's a claim like... if they are making a claim, unlike Australia and like...just trying to figure out like what's in it which is really hard especially if you don't want to have something in your foods or you can't have something in your food you're not too sure if the product you're buying has it or not.

I: So in Australia it's very clear?

R: Yes and also the language helps.

I: Uhm what about other expenses? How have you found handling your money?

R: Uhm I suppose it's just really hard because I suppose just everything is expensive with just the conversion rate but it just seems like...I'm always needing something else or paying for some other cost or then again I'm doing lots of travelling. So that's where my money is going as well but there always seems like...there is always something I need to buy or I need to, yeah, there is always something like I need to get.

I: And do you think the \$10000 scholarship is adequate for the 6 months over here?

R: I think \$10000 is extremely generous but I wouldn't have been able to do it with just \$10000. I had to get a loan and even with the loan from the government I'm still like very conscious of it...especially if I'm like...planning to stay on another 6 months, but the \$10000... if you weren't to do anything but live in Hamburg...possibly yeah.

I: And you got your scholarship in lump sum. Do you think this was beneficial or would you have preferred it in installments?

R: Uhm...that's hard to say. I kind of like the idea of a lump sum because you can budget from the start. But then again, getting it in weekly or fortnightly payments, it's kind of like budgeting for you...but it's hard to answer because I don't know the other side.

I: And what about isolation? Have you felt isolated during your experience over here?

R: Uhm sometimes...but that is going back to making friends and things and just with the culture and language differences. No...but I have always felt like there is a big network of people around me. But sometimes I do feel a little bit isolated...I suppose just trying to make those connections with other people.

I: And what about, with relationships back home? Are you finding maintaining them stressful or easy?

R:...It's actually amazing I haven't really been homesick since I have been over here and there are times where I do miss my family more than my friends...but I don't talk to my friends as much as I would like to...but it's just like this is my life over here and there is always so much to do and it's kind of hard and it feels pointless always telling them what I have been up to when it's just like 'I went food shopping or I went to university today'. It's not the most exciting thing...but...no I think I miss my family more than my friends but things like Skype and emails and things have helped.

I: And since being on exchange, do you feel you have gained any new skills or competencies?

R: Absolutely, I think just like having a view into a different culture and actually living has just been like a blessing. Also being over here with our trip to turkey I have developed new appreciation for cultures and I suppose you learn the significance of certain things like...for example the ability to travel there. I didn't know as much about turkey and its history with Australians and I would never have known that unless I had of gone on that trip. I think just an overall appreciation and it has just opened my mind up to new ideas and possibilities.

I: Has the exchange program effected or changed your future career or study paths? Has it maybe clarified your niche in public health or put you off it?

R: I came over here with a pretty good Idea that I wasn't going to stay in public health but I though the opportunity to come over here might clarify things for me or open up some new possibilities for new things. At the moment it kind of hasn't but it has made me more excited about getting to know different cultures and it hasn't necessarily pushed me away from public health. But it has definitely presented me with the idea of how much I just want to see the world.

I: Would you be able to describe how? And you just sort of touched on this, how coming on exchange has influenced your view of the world? Do you feel like you have coped with being a foreigner in a different country and how would that change your view of the world

R: I suppose I have...I'm not sure if the word is appreciation, but I definitely respect people who travel more and who don't speak the language whatever country they are in. Ahh the view of the world, it's actually just become a bigger place...that there is just so much to see. It has kind of made me think that I don't know what to do about that, I want to see it all but it's just so big. Uhm...what was the question again?

I: Just bring that back to the career study path topic. Has it made you more able or capable to work with people who didn't speak your language or to have that appreciation?

R: It has definitely opened that idea to me and without this experience I probably wouldn't have thought of that. I wouldn't have thought it was possible or that I would be interested in it, but I think after this experience I can see the possibility of having the opportunity to work with people like that, whereas before I don't think I would have been able to work with someone like that.

I: Do you think you would ever go and live in a country where they didn't speak English as their first language again?

R: Yeah for sure. I think it's just you know...you grow as a person for that and you learn so much about yourself and how other countries function and what their problems are and it's just so much information. It's great.

I: Can you describe any difference or similarities you have experienced between the uni here in Hamburg and your uni back at home? Just in terms of university culture or teaching methods?

R: For Germany...I like the structure of the actual campus where there is a big communal area where people go and have lunch. You're constantly running into people and it's quite social. I don't think in German they are as organized as back home and the classes and the courses are as intense as back home... not that that is a real problem, that has been fine for me but I just think they haven't been as organized in terms of their teaching and...yeah I don't know...I like it and it is definitely more of a social place which is great but it is just not as organized.

I: And what about the teachers to student relationship? Have you found that different in anyway?

R: Uhm...kind of uhm...it's hard to say. I think the classes over here are a bit smaller so that helps...but like...they get to know who you are a bit better, but then again there is a bit of a language difference. Although they speak English it is harder to approach and harder to... I don't know, it's hard to say.

I: So you have applied to stay over here for another 6 months and then after that will you return back to Australia?

R: Uhm...unfortunately yes, I have to finish my course back home but then...after that who knows, I might be straight back over.

I: Yes, well, that was going to be my next question. When is the next time you can see yourself going overseas?

R: Yeah...it's up in the air but the sooner the better. I suppose money is the only issue more than anything else.

I: In your own words, please describe the impact studying abroad has had on your life. It's a biggie.

R: It's like...it has just changed everything. I'm a different person in terms of my physical, my mental, my social skills and like...everywhere possible I have changed slightly and...yeah that's pretty impossible to describe, and definitely, for a positive effect, I think you have to go through the negatives to get to the positives sometimes. But I think in total it hasn't been a negative experience at all, it's been awesome.

I: Well, thank you very much for speaking with us today. We really enjoyed it.

R: No worries.

Appendix 8 Interview I6

I: In your own words can you describe the cultural differences you have experienced while on exchange in Hamburg?

R: I have found that...Germans are very blunt... people. They don't really know the meaning of tack. They say what they think. I have found that when I ask if people speak English...they'll always say a little. But their English is usually very good. Uhm...what else...uhm ...when you think about Germans you think about them being very efficient and on time...yep there's quite a few people that...Germans that I've met....that aren't on time and they are very late..... What other cultural...?

I: What about food and that sort of thing?

R: Food...their breakfasts are very different. Usually I have cereal at home but here it's all about bread and meat...uhm. Surprisingly I haven't had a lot of the bread, I only have it as toast and bakeries seem to be everywhere.

I: Do you regard these differences mainly positively or negatively?

R: Uhm...I...am probably neutral. I know...knew it was going to be a cultural difference and it hasn't thrown me out or anything...it's just different to what I experience at home...so...I expected it.

I: And, you were talking about language before...is there anything you want to elaborate in terms of the language barriers you have encountered?

R: Uhm...when people haven't been able to speak English they haven't really tried to help you...to find...to help you out...or to find someone who does speak English so you're kind of left to your own devices a bit and it gets a bit scary and you don't know where to go from there.

I: Can you give us an example of this?

R: I went to the post office..uhm desk...uhm ...I asked for a parcel to be sent to Australia and she just didn't...she told me I had to go and get a special envelope and she was just pointing. There was also another time when I had to...uhm...I got caught on the train without a ticket and I had to go to the DB centre and hand in a form so I wouldn't get fined and he didn't speak any English and he had to ring someone so I could speak to someone about what I wanted to get done...uhm.

I: Did you find that any language you had before you came helped you? Did you have any language before you got here?

R: I had done a short course, but that's the very basics...I suppose I don't think it helped me much.

I: Did you think it would be easier with the language than it has been before you came here?

R: No, but I don't think we are exposed to it enough.

I: In Australia?

R: No, in Germany. Whenever we speak to someone it's always in English and then when you try and speak German...your pronunciation is horrible or they laugh at you because you've said the wrong thing or something so it makes it hard it hard for us to learn.

I: In your own words can you describe how you have adapted to your new life in Hamburg? As in coming to Germany from Australia...you've had to adapt to a new lifestyle. So can you maybe explain how your situation has changed and how you have coped with that?

R: Uhm...well I came from living with my family...uhm so everything was pretty much provided for...uhm my meals. I didn't have to pay rent. I didn't have to worry about anything really because my parents did it for me.

I: So it must be really different?

R: Yeah, it's really different. The hardest thing for me is cooking...cooking for my self...to think of something to cook for tonight's dinner or what I need to tomorrow or Sundays when the shops aren't open. You can't just duck down and get something so you have to think ahead...that's been one of the difficulties.

I: And do you feel like you have overcome that or it's still hard work?

R: I still find it hard but I am getting used to it.

I: Have you enjoyed the transition from having everything done to you to now being independent?

R: Well, I have enjoyed it...since I turned 18 I have always wanted to be independent. I never wanted to live at home, it's just so easy to. At home unis around the corner, my friends are all close so I've always wanted to have that independence and this has been the first step in getting it.

I: And do you think it was harder having that independence being in Germany? Do you think you'd be having the same trouble if you were in Melbourne?

R: I think it would be the same. I think I'm a very independent person and I want to do my own things...uhm...I don't think I would have come across too many difficulties.

I: So the food thing you think would still be the same in Melbourne or Germany?

R: Yep.

I: And how about feeling isolation or feeling like your far away from home, or maybe some of the relationships you have with people from home? How's that going?

R: That's fine. I have not had any home-sickness and don't feel the desire to go home...ever. I speak to my family probably once a week...but...that's not...it's what I want to do...uhm...my parents don't really initiate it and say...'when are you going to call' and then my friends I speak to quite regularly too so it's not that I miss that interaction either.

I: Do you feel you are successfully maintaining your friendships back home while still interacting enough here in Germany?

R: I think I am maintaining the friends that mean the most to me...so I don't feel like I'm losing anything back home and what was the second part of the questions?

I: Do you feel like you are able to still maintain relationships back home while still being able to participate here in Germany

R: Yep.

I: So would there ever have been an instance where you give up on doing something in Hamburg so you could talk to people back home?

R: I suppose I have done that...like going to the gym I sometimes say no I can't do that cause I'm skyping but I think that's cause I've organized it and I don't want to let them down.

I: And you kind of have to be organized cause of the time difference?

R: Yeah...exactly...so I don't feel...like... I could easily change that...and they'd be fine with it ...but I want to do it as well.

I: What about the housing arrangements here in Germany compared with Australia? I know I'm living here with you but don't let that cloud your judgments.

R: There are pros and cons...I think would have preferred to live in with less people and I think I would have liked to live with people I didn't know just to put me outside of my comfort zone. As much as it's good to have people it's always good to broaden your horizons...uhm...what else, something I find...no it's.

I: Was it what you expected it to be? Living in student accommodation?

R: I expected it to be more social. I though cause we have that good living room we would be in there but I think the people we live with makes it a bit difficult...being four Turkish girls with limited English...you can't have that interaction with them...the conversation doesn't really flow.

I: And what about other people within your building...is that more social?

R: Not really, but I suppose that is my choice, there's always the bar downstairs and stuff but I don't go to it so.

I: And what about the climate?

R: It hasn't been too bad...it was a new experience coming to snow. I'd never seen snow before, so that was good but you soon got over it...the ice and just being cold all the time. But, I've been fascinated by the transition from Winter to spring and the blooming of flowers are tress. It's been beautiful. I'm looking forward to seeing what a European summer is like and...cause, yes I was walking around our lake and people were sun-baking in bikinis...and 20 degrees in Australia...I think it's about 18 there at the moment and they are complaining that it's freezing...it's not like that at home.

I: Any other main differences...like money...any troubles...any difficulties with money...you said you don't have to pay rent back home?

R: Rent is one thing. But, I haven't been....what's the word?

I: Budgeting?

R: Yeah, I haven't been budgeting or looking at my expenses too much...I only have a general overview of...how much I have...but it's not like...I try and set myself 70 Euro a week but usually go over it...but yeah.

I: And 70 Euro for just basic expenses...for everything? And how did you decide on that?

R: It's a 50 and 20 and it comes out the ATM like that.

I: Obviously you have more money available to you so why didn't you set 300 euro?

R: Cause I want to save some for my travels afterwards.

I: So you're still trying to save while living here?

R: Yep.

I: And the scholarship money...do you feel that will cover your time in Hamburg?

R: Definitely.

I: Do you think the payments are adequate?

R: Yep...Yep.

I: ...and getting them fortnightly?

R: It's a good idea cause I don't think I would have controlled my expenses as well...I would have spent more.

I: And just to change the subject a bit. Can you describe how this exchange has changed affected future career or study path. For example has it clarified your niche in the field, or made you want to change? How has it made you feel about your future plans?

R: It has pretty much confirmed I don't want to do much in the health promotion field, so.

I: Do you think this is Germany that has turned you off? Or...?

R: It's always been...I've always questioned...I've always questioned this...in first year of uni I really like the subjects cause they were very general but now it's become more refined and I am not liking where the course is leading.

I: So, just for the record. You're doing commerce as well...a double degree?

R: I'm doing commerce/health promotion/public health.

I: So, you're leaning to the commerce side of your degree?

R: I probably am...but I'm not sure what field I want to go with.

I: So if a job opportunity came up that was commerce related but in the health field would that be something that would interest you?

R: Probably more so.

I: And do you think that being on exchange has given you some competencies or skills that you can take into your future career whether or not it's health related?

R: Uhm.

I: Do you think you've gained any competencies while on exchange?

R: I think I've gained personal skills. You have to get to know a diverse range of people. You have to live with different people. So...you're always going to grow when you live away from home in different country. I think confidence in myself...travelling you have to be independent...uhm...yeah.

I: What about communication...the way you communicate with people?

R: I think you grow in knowing how to communicate with people who don't have English as their mother tongue...you really have to speak English in very basic terms and I think I've become better at that.

I: And so in your future career if you were working with someone who didn't speak English would you feel confident to have people like this...or would you be more inclined to go for a job where there was only people who spoke English?

R: I don't know if when I go for a job I will be the same person as I was where I would go for my comfort zone...or whether I'll branch out and go for a job where English isn't the first language.

I: And do you think you would ever go for a long period of time to a country where English is not the first language?

R: I think I would but I would be a bit hesitant if I didn't know anything. Looking back now I feel I was a bit ignorant expecting people to speak English and being able to speak to anybody but being here now I realise that it's not...rude isn't the right word...it's a bit impolite that were living in a country where English isn't the first language and your expecting them to conform to your language.

I: So you've spoken about the language in Germany. Have you experienced this anywhere else in your travels...outside of Germany?

R: Uhm...in Turkey their English skills were better than in Germany...in the Netherlands their English was very good so there was no problem starting up a conversation with them, or a shop-keeper not being able to understand you. In Prague that was a bit more diff in that it's such a different language to English so there were a few times where they'd be speaking to us and we had no idea what they were saying and one time we were in a supermarket and they were saying we hadn't given them enough money...we didn't speak Czech, she didn't speak English and we were just standing there.

I: And do you think this language barrier put you off....would you say to people don't go to Germany if you can't speak German?

R: No definitely not...but I would recommend to know some things cause they would appreciate it.

I: And so...we talked about feeling like a foreigner, do you feel like a foreigner when you are here...and how do you cope with that...if you're with German friends...how does it make you feel?

R: I don't actually feel to foreign...I understand that it's tiring speaking another language...so if they speak German sometimes they try to explain the conversation to me...and then I'm like 'it's your conversation I don't mind you don't have to translate it for me'...it honestly doesn't bother me...yeah...if they wanted to involve me in it they would.

I: And just as far as the course is concerned, just some questions, from what you've experienced. Are there similarities and or differences between the Australian and German universities, in regard to classes, relationship between students and staff, that sort of thing?

R: Does it just have to be class or can it be other things?

I: No, the general culture of the universities.

R: I find the university to be quite similar to school...you have the periods...the cafeteria where everyone sits at lunch and everyone goes there and you have more specific times for lunch. The classes are even similar to school. At Deakin you have massive lectures ... filled with people and then you go to tutorials whereas here they are only 20 people in the classes. The courses themselves are ...I don't find them to be very stimulating...I feel like I've done a lot of the content before in my other unit's in Australia. It feels like it's kind of repeated...also some of the lecturers they speak English but not coherent English and it doesn't quite make sense. So it makes it difficult to understand.

I: Do you enjoy the German uni culture more than Australia?

R: I think I enjoy the German a bit more, for reasons that...you know that everyone will be in the same place at the same time...at the one time...it's a bit of a social time. Whereas in Australia people go off their own way and it's a massive campus so it takes ages to find someone. However I don't like the length of the classes in Hamburg...it can get a bit draining after three hours. In Australia you'll have a two hour lecture and a one hour tutorial at a different time so it's not all at once...yeah there's not as much interaction...there's not as much interaction not as practical as Hamburg...in that respect it's good but the theory I don't mind either.

I: So it's the time blocks that are the most draining part?

R: Yes, they go on for a long time.

I: Can you please describe in your own words the impact this exchange has had on your life? I know we've touched on this but just in your own words, what would you say?

R: It's been such a great experience I would encourage anyone to do it. It has put me out of my comfort zone, yet I feel comfortable being here. I feel like it is home. It has also made me want to know more of the German culture and German language. I've got a connection with it now. I've lived here for 6 months. It's always going to be a part of my life. Uhm...yeah I've made some great friends out of it. I've made friends with people I doubt I would have made friends with back at home. Yeah it's given me a great

experience to change the monotony my life was in Melbourne giving me the chance to live in a European country.

I: And back to the friends...did you find it difficult to make new friends...even the way people interact...say with the opposite sex compared to how you interact with them back home...back to German culture.

R: I've found it easier to get along with people who's English is much better...that English is quite fluent...that has been mainly been with Australians...but also with the Germans

I: Have you noticed a difference with interaction of different genders?

R: I've noticed Germans...not so much genders...like to gossip about other people...and tell stories about other people. There's not much of a secret...with gender I've found it easier to get along with German boys...in Australia when you first meet them they are not as open and easy to get along with whereas here they are very welcoming and friendly...that one difference.

I: So, you're going home...when are you going home?

R: Well I have a flight booked back on the September 15 but I am definitely staying longer. I have travel plans from the start of August to mid October and then I'm not sure what I'll do after that cause I don't have to be home until February when uni starts again.

I: And when you get back how long do you think it will be until you go overseas again?

R: Hopefully as soon as possible. I have one year to go in my degree so I would like to finish that off and hopefully after that maybe look for a job overseas...but that is dreaming.

I: Well, thanks for talking with us. Thanks for your time.

R: You're Welcome.

Appendix 9 Interview I7

I: In your own words please describe the cultural differences between Australia and Germany that you have experienced?

R: Cultural differences...uhm...one of the main cultural differences is the language...uhm. Obviously it's harder to communicate and interact in society when I can't speak German...uhm...but it hasn't been too bad because a lot of people understand English but... for example I was at the post office today and they didn't speak any English so there was a lot of hand gestures and stuff...cultural differences.

I: What about attitudes?

R: Attitudes...uhm...yeah I think the German people... are very...quite similar to every other person in attitudes. Sometimes at the language... when they speak in German can seem quite blunt...and so...you even if they are not jelling at me sometimes it might they are...uhm...but generally I think like interacting with German people has been just as easy as I would do back home apart from the language barriers...uhm. The public transport has been really good (laugh) it yeah...it works really well and it's been a kind of like a breath of fresh air to not have to drive my car and know that where I can get I can get to on train...or I've been riding my bike to a lot of places which has also been really fun...something that I didn't do as much back home. It's much more of a culturally acceptable environment over here to ride your bike then it's in Melbourne especially so... uhm...that's been really good I enjoyed that a lot and ...also... not having the car just means that I've to allow extra time to get places..uhm...either by bike or by train which means you know I'm more organized...uhm...because I never use public transport back home because I always thought it would take too long and the car was always easier but in reality transport is just as good...uhm...that's all.

I: That's all? In your own words please describe how you have adapted to your new life here in Hamburg?

R: Uhm...pretty easily...it was... uhm some aspects were very similar to what I experienced before because I moved out of home to go to university in Melbourne...so uhm... moving into the student residents and stuff were quite similar..uhm...and also reminded me that I left student resident living in Melbourne for a reason...and initially it was great because I've got to know and it's great because I've got to know all the people that I'm living with really well but it's such a confined space and really stickily... like you only have your room as your private space and so that's been a bit challenging in times because I used to having my whole house where I can do whatever I want uhm. So sometime it gets a little bit...just confronting and a bit like I feel I need to get out...but uhm...The money has been fine it's a little bit uhm more expensive and I probably spending a bit more money but I'm also...like I'm not trying to...save too much...like I would buy uhm... I wouldn't necessarily choose the cheapest option when I'm doing my groceries shopping because...uhm...yeah you know just to save money...So I've been intentionally probably spending more money than what I would what I've back home and also the euro is more expensive than what I'm used to back home so everything in general is more expensive...uhm...other things of daily life.

I: What about shopping?

R: Shopping...yeah it's been good I like shopping a lot (laugh) so the uhm... when I first arrived here it was like...uhm... H&M was the biggest novelty because we don't have it in Australia but now like now it kind of run off a bit but ...uhm.... yeah I like just to have like look around like in the Sternschanze there are nice shops there uhm...Sometime things are quite expensive but other times they are reasonably priced so that's been good uhm...making friends has been relatively easy because we all have been put into the same environment so everyone had something in common and kind of used each other for support and having the Australian girls here has kind of made a network for us all...uhm and I live with Tess so that's become really nice...and we have got that friendship where we are living together but not living on top of each other so we can be in the same house at the same time but not necessarily have to be doing stuff together so that's been really good...and also uhm...because the rest of the exchange students are doing the bachelor program and Clare and I doing the masters and so were are exposed to other people which has been good... making friends outside of the direct circle of the international program has been nice because you don't always have to socialize with the same people..uhm.

I: Did you make friends with Germans?

R: Yeah in masters course there are probably 5 or 6 Germans in there they speak very good English so it was easy but they were very welcoming and uhm friendly and helped us out with everything and also not just in our masters course I also did some international courses and there were German students in them as well that I made friends with so that was good but..probably not so much outside of any of that I would probably could count on one hand people that I know that are German uhm...but...the people that I've made friends with I feel I've made good friendship with them so it's better than having a hand full of people I met once than I can have relate to a small number of people...uhm.

I: Have you ever felt isolated or homesick?

R: Homesick yes...which was interesting because I've lived out of home before and I've been from my family for so long I didn't think I would but a few things happened back home uhm...and...they made me really want to be back there and ...yeah I think just like certain things happening and feeling so far away...one of my good friends dad passed away while I was over here and just made me feel like I was literally on the other side of the world...and then it also just made me wanna be with my family because every time I spoke with one of my friends it was all their family were together and I just felt like I was way away from everything and I guess that's where my homesick kind of started but it didn't last very long because I... kept thinking about 'oh I wish I could just be back there' and then it was kind of like 'I'm in Germany so what would I be doing if I was back there'. I could not prevent anything from happening I can just kind of be there for people and I did that over the internet and Skype and stuff so yeah...I was surprised because then after that... a little bit later...probably when it was cold andgrey and raining and in Australia it was sommer and I got to this point where I was like... 'oh I don't know if I can do this anymore' and then the weather changed and it's so easy to be here now so...it's never been like I would not want to go home but there have definitely been times of homesickness.

I: Since being on exchange what new competencies or skills have you gained?

R: Uhm...I think...I've gained more independence...I was relatively independent when I was at home but uhm at home I had my parents and my sister and my brother and all my close friends who could support me if I ever needed it and over here it was kind of just like a fresh sleigh and I had to build up my own support network again which was a good challenge and also just being how to deal with... situations like my friends dad passing away where no one else like they can be supporting but they don't know the situation just finding that...you know...the way I can deal with it which is by myself so and also...uhm being more comfortable and just doing things alone not necessarily having to have someone to go to uni with or just being alone..I quite enjoyed it...uhm...being able to interact with people from different cultures so uhm. I guess language competencies uhm...has definitely grown and although I can't speak German very well I tend to be able to understand what they are trying to tell me and find way of how to communicate with them...uhm.

I: Did you have to change your way of communicating when you speak to people who can't speak English?

R: Yeah...they always...I've been told that I speak quite fastly so I'm always now conscious when I'm speaking with especially German people but if I don't know how they speak at all to speak quite slowly and clearly uhm...yeah a few German people have always said that I'm a mambo (laugh) especially when there is a group of Australians together and we talk in English quite fastly uhm. My buddy () is just like 'what do you say I can't understand you' so uhm speaking clearly and slowly has definitely been something that I've taken on but it's also interesting that...as much as I'm being speaking English over here the way I speak English has changed because I had to use more...simple terms uhm and so I feel like my English is deteriorated a little bit uhm where anyone else has been saying 'it's so good to have you around because my English has got better'...uhm...yeah. So that's probably the only changes...uhm...what other competencies...I think that's all.

I: Speaking of competencies what do you think what mental and social competencies do you need to get into the adventure of study abroad in the first place?

R: To come here to this place?

I: Yes

R: Uhm...I think you have to be able to have the ...feeling... mentally that you can pick up and leave from what you had at home which was really hard to me to come to sense with ...uhm I was in a job I didn't like...and...I've been there for three years I could not ever see why I would leave because they are paying me good money they wanted me there but I didn't like what I was doing but I felt that wasn't a good enough excuse for me to say I quitting uhm and... at the beginning of 2009 I went back to uni to study my masters part time and when I decided to do that I thought 'oh this is good out I will do my masters degree and that will take me three years and so at the end of that I will get another job' and when I told them I was going to do my masters they were like 'ok' ...uhm and obviously triggered but maybe I will be moving on and then halfway through the first semester they send an email saying this is going right and the first thing I did I read it and I was like 'oh there is no way I could ever apply for that because I'm working full time and I'm studying part time how can I ever leave' uhm but I did send an email and enquired about what exactly required and she wrote straight back saying 'I really think you should

apply we want to send a master student and we have not had any interests from us' and so probably having that uhm...immediate responds and positive responds saying 'I think you should apply for it' kind of then started to make me think 'why can't I' uhm and what other perfect excuse than leaving a job and then I'm moving overseas so and it didn't hurt anyone's feelings which I didn't want to do like I didn't want anyone to feel like I was going somewhere else because I didn't like them uhm and therefore it provided a nice little opportunity. But I think I was very ignorant about coming over here like, I purely looked at it as an out of a situation. I didn't really know how else to get out of and also I had always considered coming to Europe at some point of my life but I had never imagined how I would do it. A lot of my friends had come to London and worked and I assumed maybe that's what I do but I'm so much gladder that I did this uhm. It's just even though there has been times that's been challenging and I still have not, can't speak the language it's still just being such an eye-opening experience uhm yeah equipping me with a hundred more skills than I would have got if I had just gone to London where I speak English. It's like moving to a bigger version of Melbourne that's further away from home so. Over here at least there are challenges every day that I've to overcome and so it's not like...I could never get stuck in rut because day to day things are never the same because there are always different challenges. Or some situations that you run into that are hard to deal with because of the language so. It's been good and yeah I think to be able to apply for an exchange you have to be able to feel like you just what you are doing currently is not the rest of your life that you can pick up and change at any time and being over here had make me realize that if I'm ever in that situation again where I don't like my job that I just need to get out of it uhm because there is too many opportunities that would pass you by.

I: What do you think what competencies and skills do you need to make the best out of the experience?

R: I think you need to be able to be quite social and not be scared to interact with people that you have never spoken to before or you don't know and even with people you can't really speak to... and uhm just be willing to be friendly to everyone uhm regardless if you don't become friends with them in the future but like initial meetings. Every time you see them it's just so easy to say hello to anyone even when there is nothing you have in common. There is lots of people in the international program where we all went and did various introduction to Hamburg things together and a lot of who I don't see anymore but sometimes I run into them on my way to uni or whatever and it's always just a familiar face and even though like the extend of my knowledge of them is that I know their name and where they are from it's still nice to see them and stop and say Hey how are you going and what is going on so uhm. If you didn't have the competency to be able to...if you would be scared of speaking to foreign people than being on exchange would be really hard...uhm...also just a bit of a relaxed competency. I don't know if this is...just being able to go with the flow and know that things are not going to work the way you want them all the time and things will be different to what you are used to and you just have got to deal with everything else that comes, not trying to solve your problems before they happen.

I: Ok, and uhm...so when you are thinking about going home, I know it's far far away but what do you think, how will it be to settle down again in Australia...to get started again and to handle all the experiences you have made here.

R: I do think about it because I try and...figure out when exactly I will go home and I've decided that I...I can't put a date on it because I just don't know what will happen but once

I get back...uhm...yeah it's going to be hard because I know that I will be sad and I feel like 'oh I'm back here and nothing is coming on and everything is so boring and I was over there and everything was so exciting'. But uhm because I went overseas for about four months after I finished my first degree and came home for a friend's 21st birthday... which was all great because the lead up to the birthday was really exciting. The birthday happened and everyone kind of went back to their life and I was like...'I've got nothing to do', 'I literally don't have a job, I don't have a house I don't have anything and why did I come home, why did I come home, I should be still overseas' so I was thinking about ways to avoid that. Initially I won't go back to Melbourne, I will probably just go and stay somewhere else...somewhere new...uhm maybe just for six months and just trying to keep it...new, so...and obviously I won't go back to my old job so...it will still be a bit new, I will get a new job and there will be a new routine, if I go back to the same house with the same people it will kind of feel like...I'm in the same...I've been away but I've come back to the same spot, so I want to try and change my environment a little bit and uhm just use everything I've gained over here in a positive way and talk about it to as many people as I can...yeah.

I: Do you think you have changed?

R: Yeah I think I've grown up more...uhm...and...I guess it's made me appreciate what I did have back home uhm and if you would ask me what was good about Melbourne when I was back home I wouldn't have said the things I would say now and not being there has made me realize how good so many things about living there are and how good my friends are and how good my family is uhm and so I think that I will...not that I didn't appreciate them when I was there but I appreciate the moment when I go back and uhm having the opportunities just be with my girlfriends or my family. I will hold on to it a bit more dearly than I did...whereas at home it was just taken for granted. I will be there for Christmas and see them for whatever...certainly, initially when I go home I think it will be a lot more exciting and a bit more...special to be back in those situations.

I: Can you describe how this exchange has affected your future career path. Has it clarified your niche in the public health field?

R: Yeah it's actually being quite interesting. I don't know if it was so much what I was studying here or whether it's just been...the change, all the changes that have happened. Initially I went into the public health masters because I wanted to be a public health nutritionist. I've a nutrition bachelor degree and I've been working with food for the last three and a half years so I feel...I'm going to public health to get away from food and work more with nutrition and the results of the food and since being over here I don't want to have anything to do with nutrition or food or any of it because it's all...I just...it's such a...I don't know. The things that I could work with as a public health nutritionist are obesity or type2 diabetes all those lifestyle diseases that I just...I know they are going to be the primary thing of public health but they just seem so pointless to me uhm and that's why I decided to stay on here and do my internship because they are offering a project in infectious diseases which I've no no expense with, no real background apart from what I've learned in class so this will give me an opportunity to open a new door uhm. Whereas if I go back to Australia to do the internship I would have been working with obesity or diabetes because I was in a nutrition school so they would have given me a project that was based in there so it's definitely...I don't know if it's what I've been studying here, but just having the time to clarify my mind over here has definitely changed my perspective.

I: Can you describe how this exchange has influenced your overall view of the world?

R: Uhm...it just made me so excited to be over here and to be able to see all the countries that are so close to Germany uhm and that...yeah I think it's made me realize that people from Australia in particular are quite arrogant in...we only speak one language. We are one the most multicultural nations and the majority of our population can only speak English which I think is really disappointing and especially coming over here as a 25 year old I'm finding it hard to pick up the language and I wish that I've had taken more advantage of it when it was offered in school...but it was only an elective and none ever tried it because it was too hard and I always thought when will I ever need that uhm. So it's made me become very envious and uhm...just hold this people in high regard that can speak two languages. It's just like make interacting with different societies so much easier...uhm...yeah in sayings that it's not been unwelcoming for me to come into somewhere where I can't speak the language which has given me...you know...the motivation that I could go and live anywhere and know that I will be able to get by uhm with, you know, basic English and then picking up what you count off the language...yeah. It's a welcoming place I think, what my overall view is...regardless of where you are from.

I: Have you been able to take on the German perspective in certain situations?

R: Sometimes...I've had myself... stop and think about things a few times...uhm...especially when uhm...like the language barriers is getting there and you can tell that they are getting frustrated because I can't speak German and I'm getting frustrated because they can't speak English and there have been a few times where I've been stopped and well like 'I'm in their country and I'm the one that's in the wrong' uhm and...yeah and I kind of came over here expecting people would be able to speak English and a lot of people can but realistically that was a very arrogant assumption because...it would be like Germans going into...there is big German community in Sydney and just...all the those Germans in Sydney assuming that everyone in Sydney speaks German... which would never happen and if you went over there with no English you actually have a lot of trouble and so the fact that I...yeah I came over here with really no German. It was my own fault...I should have done more about that but in saying that, it's been a good experience trying to pick up the language...uhm. But because I don't speak the language I don't think I've been able to fully engage with taking o their perspective but I can certainly stop and see, you know, where they are coming to or why they do certain things and stuff like that.

I: And are you going to plan to go overseas again?

R: I don't know...it will depend...uhm...originally I thought I would work over here at some point uhm but once I go home which, that may happen at the end of internship, I might look for a job and then not go home. But once I go home I think I want to stay there for a while before I go and heading off again...uhm but certainly I would not give up an opportunity for another one...to come back here.

I: And how would you prepare yourself...going overseas again?

R: Again? If I would go to a foreign speaking country I would make sure that I had some decent language lessons...that equipped me more than what I did to come over here...and not just buying the CD and listening to it because that's what I did before I came over here and I didn't do anything. Bad luck actually, going and trying to learn the

language...uhm. I think...apart from that trying to be too prepared coming into a foreign country...like you can never actually be fully prepared for what you are going to need or what you are not going to need. How you are going to...but coming over here...the blessings were that my accommodation was organized for me. Someone was meeting me at the airport...they put me on the train, they got off the train, they took me to my uhm room and...you know...that was it. So if I didn't have that organized I would have to make sure that that was organized and also I had really...no I had not looked into it a lot but, you know, having to get the visa and having to get residency and all of those things and it's just happened that my buddy had organized all that for me. But if I needed any special documents I had no idea so therefore if I've left something behind...maybe just looking at all the non-fun things, the more legal part of the stay and making sure that you are equipped with all that.

I: Ok, let us talk about the university. Can you describe similarities or differences you have experienced in university culture when comparing your home and host university?

R: Uhm...it's been similar and different...uhm...the way the workload is or...our classes at all are a little bit different in Australia, in Australia we would go to a lecture and it will be in a big lecture theatre. Although being a master student there were maybe 50 people and here it's like 12 but still there would be a big room where...uhm. I went back and we were going into a uhm new, you know, course with new people that I've never met before even though it was at the university I used to go to and uhm. Their classes are at night so I would come straight from work, I would go to class, I would sit there, I would listen and take my notes, I go to the tutorial which is more like what the classes are here and then I would go home because, you know, it was 9 a clock at night and have not had dinner, I need to do this, I had to get up and get to work tomorrow. So there was no interaction really, minimum unless you had to do something in a partner or group. I rarely spoke to anyone...I was literally there, there, home. Whereas here it's very more social which is really good because I could name everyone that's in my class and back in Australia I could not even tell you if they are in the same class. I just...it was not that I didn't care, I just felt I didn't have time to do any of that and that I was not there to make friends. I was there to study and go home. Whereas over here it's been really good that...uhm it's a small class, it's taught in way quite personal so I know all the teachers I know all the students and although some of the content has not been as...exciting, I don't think like, regardless of where I was, I think I would have been bored with some subjects. You can't be stimulated the whole time but in saying that there was probably only one subject that I could say that I hated and the rest of them, although at times were draining, I think there are assignments and what we have learned was quite beneficial and I think I will definitely use in my future. Uhm...yes...so there has been good support from the teaching staff and uhm all the students and compared to what I was...how I was as a masters student I think over here it's been a really good experience for me.

I: Ok, last question. In your own words can you please describe the impact study abroad has had on your life?

R: On my life...uhm...I think it's made me realize that...uhm...I can do anything, whatever I want to do I should do and then I should not feel like I can get stuck in any situation if I don't want to be there...uhm and that picking up and moving is, as much as people say is terribly hard, it's so easy. And things that you think would never work out always work out and if they don't work out then, you know, life goes on...uhm. Yes it's made me not take

for granted what I used to have but also...like I look back at what I used to do and I don't think I had a horrible life. It was great fun and while I was there I enjoyed it and I miss so much of it but it also made me kind of uhm start a new life...like I felt like I kind of ended that stage and now I started a new stage and when I get back from Hamburg that will be an end again and there will be another new start and I think that kind of...starting fresh...you need. Otherwise you just get stuck in that...straight forward. Everything is the same and nothing is changing, even though things are changing but in reality nothing is really changing uhm and I think I definitely need that because I uhm after having this change I've realized how bored I was before and, you know, life is too short to be bored so yeah it's definitely made me realize that...there is hell lot of possibilities out there and I should not just settle for one because...just because uhm that you should just always be chasing what you want and not settle for something less.

I: Thank you!

R: No worries!

Appendix 10 Interview I8

Interview I8

I: Thanks for coming ().

R: That's ok, no problems.

I: In your own words, please describe the cultural differences between Australia and Germany that you have experienced.

R: Ok uhm...the main cultural differences I've experienced are probably... food is one so I suppose you guys have the fairly traditional German food uhm. I love the wurst yeah, it's good and I like the bread and...I don't eat the bread that much I like the different breads and the salamis and all that sort of things and you have pretty good cheese and beer. I don't drink it, my husband drinks it, he loves it. I've to say the wine is not so good (laugh)...uhm that's one difference. Uhm...the cultural differences...I suppose uhm...you come here from Australia you always say that Germans are very blunt...I think uhm ...I expected the German language to be a lot harsher but I actually found it a lot softer and when you hear it spoken fluently, rather by people who are trying to speak it in Australia, it actually sounds quite soft and I've not really found people blunt, everybody I found has been really welcoming and uhm even when I can't speak the language. So obviously the language is a big difference and that's been a big challenge but...also something...I had lessons before I came which I thought it would help me more but I think just talking to German people has helped me more and I've been pretty lucky that have spoken to a fare few Germans because I'm living in a neighborhood and uhm there are lots of people who can't speak English so I've learned it that way. Certainly people have been very...accommodating (laugh) of my lack of German, but yeah I think I've learned a reasonable amount so I've enjoyed that. Uhm...what else...trying to think about other big differences...I suppose some of the things to do with safety...so bicycle helmets I've noticed is something uhm...in Australia we always wear bicycle helmets, here we don't and I suppose that's something that Australian should see that quite European uhm what else...drinking on the trains and that sort of things. In Australia you could not do this. uhm and ...not that I've actually noticed any violence. In Australia when you saw people drinking on the streets you would probably associate it maybe with people a bit drunken and violent but maybe I've not hanging out in the places where people get violent..uhm. Other cultural differences...oh I've noticed that Germans are very aware of their history...which is...whereas in Australia I think we are aware about our history but it's more...it's not as much history of course so I've enjoyed hearing about that and people have sort of reflected on that...it's been quite interesting ...uhm and learning about the different parts of Germany...the east and the west has been really interesting...sort of first hand from people...uhm...other cultural differences...

I: Have you been to the south of Germany?

R: No, not yet. But I'm planning to. Other cultural differences probably..uhm...yeah...I think the main ones are the language.

I: In your own words, please describe how you have adapted to your new life here in Hamburg.

R: uhm I think reasonable well...I think I could stay for longer. Hamburg is a beautiful city and I've really enjoyed the different people I've met uhm...obviously I've enjoyed being at university here and meeting people from university and both uhm German students and international students and in my neighborhood I've met a lot of really nice families uhm and through the schools, the kids go to...we have met some people who have been very kind to us and looked after us and certainly made us feel welcome so yeah uhm.ver a six months period I feel that we have built relationships that will keep...which is really nice.

I: So, did you have any difficulties?

R: Difficulties? I think once again the language has been probably difficult. I think for uhm...maybe getting into deeper depth conversations with certain people and most people can speak English and sometimes it's getting a bit draining when...it's not...when they always haven't speak English rather than uhm...sometimes I feel a little embarrassed that I can't speak more German so I suppose uhm...that can be hard but I think that will get better. I think it will take a long time to learn the language (laugh) I think that would get better but at the same time...that's the excitement of living here too...is having to be put in that situation so...I mean things like filling out forms is a lot harder and makes me realize how hard it is for people to come to Australia who don't have any English and there is no one to save them, you know. I've had a lot of people who helped me translate and uhm I think the thing is uhm... here I really had to slow down in all the processes...even shopping. You slow down because you want to look at things and it takes you longer to comprehend it even...but it's been a good thing...being able ...you know... forcing that sort of doing those process so that's been a challenge uhm with the language uhm. Other challenges uhm...like I said not to know where things are in the supermarket. But I think that's a challenge anywhere that you go whether there are English speaking people or not. It makes it more challenging with the language uhm...yeah...I think that's been the main challenge.

I: What about feeling isolated?

R: Isolate? See I've got my family so I don't really...that's all that I need uhm... and then I've really loved the relationships with the international students. Especially the Australian girls that I've had and being able to study full time has been great for me because usually I'm working and studying so there is not a lot of time for me to socialize at uni so that's been really nice uhm...and I've kept in touch with people at home through Skype as well but yeah like I said sort of fairly self contained because I've got family here so it's sort of been pretty busy...yeah.

I: What about the money? It's expensive or cheap?

R: I think it's expensive yeah...the grocery bills are more expensive but then we haven't got a car so we are not paying for petrol but as far as uhm...money uhm...I think it's a little more expensive but not unrealistically...like not crazily more expensive yeah but certainly I think food uhm...that's not been a big problem. And the scholarship money obviously was not going to cover the whole family but for one person I think the scholarship money is adequate.

I: What about making new friends? You already mentioned it!

R: Yeah I know, new friends is good, like I said I've loved the social networks at uni and meeting both German students although I've probably hang out more with the international students and then yeah...kids always make new friends for you because they make a friend and then you hang out with their parents and we have had barbeques with them uhm and enjoyed doing that and also I've a friend in Australia who used to live I Hamburg and she has got people here and actually our neighbors have been incredibly supportive and they have made sure that...and we have eaten with them and that sort of things...so yeah we are pretty lucky once again.

I: Ok good uhm since being on exchange, what new skills or competencies have you gained?

R: Uhm I think I've gained confidence in the fact that uhm just being able to compare health care systems and looking at public health from a more critical point of view, just having two options, two different ways of doing things. I can actually uhm...in Australia we often look at our public health system as uhm...we compare it to the European system and I've noticed that there is uhm I can have a more critical overview when I can see two...two systems and it's different reading about it and actually being here and hearing about it from the local people and uhm. In that way to be able to compare it and make comparisons so that's been something I think I've gained confidence within understanding public health. Uhm...I think making friends is always a big competency...to gain when you go somewhere where you don't know anyone and uhm. Sometimes when you're in your home country you don't make that bigger effort so that's something I've pretty enjoyed uhm...I think...I think the course here is more practical...and I think I wouldn't have had some of the experience I've had here from a practical point of view, like for interviewing and collecting data and that sort of thing... as I would if I was in Australia so...that's been good. What other competencies?

I: Communication skills?

R: Communication yeah. I think my German is ok. I think I could hold a conversation in a shop and I uhm I think I could build on that. I think I got to the point now where I...know enough... that I could maybe if I had some more lessons get to another level. But I'm not sure, that could be a thing about confident... but I feel certainly...in four or five months that I've gained some skills in language which...I don't find language is very easy to learn. I did them in school and it didn't naturally click with me but uhm having been able to put that in place and be able talk in shops yeah... if I actually get a conversation done in German I feel quite proud of myself (laugh).

I: Yeah. In case you go to... Spain for example...would you be afraid of talking to people who can't speak English or...?

R: No I think that's something that's shown me that you can uhm...you don't need lot of the language to speak if they don't have any language...to have some sort of communication and I think...I don't know...I kind of think you can kind of tell...body language is a big thing but you can kind of maybe tell a little bit of people just from being with people so...that's something that I've learned. No, I would not be nervous to speak to someone and I would probably make more effort because I know what it feels like, to be able to understand and also uhm...yeah I think uhm...it's definitely opened my...I knew that already but then it's...I don't know...I'm a bit of a talker and actually it's been quite

good for me to actually observe a bit more and so certainly it would mean that I make more effort with people who can't speak the language.

I: Ok and what do you think, what mental and social competencies do you need to get into the adventure of study abroad in the first place?

R: Mental and social? I think you need to have an adventurers spirit and I think you need to be uhm a little bit accepting that you are not going to know what is going to happen because otherwise you would be too scared to go and also to have a confidence that uhm that everything will be ok without worrying too much. I think uhm I certainly have friends who would not leave where they are because they are too concerned that uhm...things might go wrong if they are in a different country and won't be able to cope with that. So I suppose it's letting go of control a little bit and be happy to do that...uhm. I think that...social competencies... I think like you said you need to be prepared to put yourself in a situation where you are not totally comfortable and I think that's the excitement of a...I think that people do travel enjoy that and have a trust that they will get through and they can build on...or...trust on their skills...their kind of inner strength will get them through that. I'm not sure if that's social, that's more mental. Social skills uhm...I suppose you need to be fairly outgoing but yeah...I think is it more of a confidence thing. You need to have confidence and that might mean for some people that they need to know that there's support when they get there. I mean I've been lucky because I've my family so that's the support uhm but then again I brought my kids to a country where they go to different school and I hope that that will build up some resilience and uhm but I think the main thing that...I mean I personally believe that anywhere you go in the world there's gonna be someone you will help you so....

I: What do you need to make the best out of the experience here?

R: Uhm you need a positive attitude but I think across all of life and I think you need to want to make it work and to be able to uhm open up and take the opportunities uhm that are offered even if they might seem small at the time or they might seem insignificant. That it's worth kind of going that extra mile to meet someone half way either in conversations or uhm...because of the benefits uhm and the positive attitudes. There're gonna be days where you fell it's all too hard... but if you have positive attitudes than you can get through that.

I: Ok. Let us stick to the competencies. What do you think...what do you need to settle down again...when you go back to Australia...to get started again?

R: That's hard. (laugh) I think uhm...I think it's hard going home. I've done an exchange before and it's always hard because it's so exciting when you are away and everything is new uhm and I love new things and new experiences ...uhm I think...what do you need? You need to make sure you are engaged in something and I really want to use the skills that I've gained here when I go home and I suppose, because I will be coming to the end of my masters anyway...so yeah I want to use the competence and also the international perspective I have when I go back to a job and I feel that's something that I can offer that I would not have been able to offer before...especially in public health. So yeah...that's important and also make sure you are keeping up with some of the people that you made friends with and I think that's easy these days with facebook and e-mail and those sorts of things. But I think it would be exciting to have people that you met... come and visit Australia and making sure that you keep those channels open even if it's years before you

see people and that's exciting...uhm. Yeah I mean unfortunately there's gonna be a bit of a lull (laugh) when you go home after all the excitement of everyone seeing you but....

I: A little bit of what?

R: (laugh) A lull...(laugh) like you know ...there's gonna be a time when you think 'oh, this is boring back home' but that's life you know...you have to plan the next adventure (laugh)...if possible (laugh).

I: Good. Uhm...you already mentioned this but can you please describe how this exchange has affected your future career path.

R: Yeah I'm really set on public health and ...social marketing and communication is kind of what I've done before and this is...doing the masters and coming on exchange here has really uhm...has given me strategies and depth to that...and I've worked in social marketing before but now...realizing maybe...not such a methodical way...just sort of more communications...uhm bases and I think there is a lot of social marketing that's done on these sorts of pretences of...'quickly, let's do it together, let's do it. That...certainly, the social marketing models and the health behavior theories and that sort of things here will underpin the work that I've done and also a lot of the examples we have been given...uhm...within Europe and just academic articles and that sorts of things so...yeah. I would like to use those in the future and also I think the uhm... I've forgotten the question...was it?

I: Has it clarified your niche in the public health field?

R: Yeah it has and I'm also interested in research so I think that the context I've made here with students and with the professors here will be something I can keep up and I think an international network of researchers is pretty exciting and I'm sure they will be visiting Australia (laugh).

I: Can you describe how this exchange has influenced your overall view of the world?

R: Uhm...really positively, I think I just want to explore more and uhm... I think Germany is a beautiful city uhm a beautiful country from what I've seen of it and uhm yeah I think Europe is different, probably living...I've visited it before but living somewhere it makes uhm, you really get to see the way the people live and work and ...yeah I think just a better understanding uhm of the differences but also uhm like I said everyone around the world is kind of living the same thing and doing the same things and going to work and washing their cloths and all that sort of things. So all that sort of commonalities as well and yeah I think more travel is on the agenda yeah.

I: So, are you planning to do overseas again?

R: Yeah.

I: As soon as possible?

R: It won't be possible to go as soon as possible but probably more holidays in the next few years because we've teenager coming up we have to settle for him but definitely uhm some travel and I would like to work overseas too at some stage. But like I said, the family commitment is sort of there as well but definitely travel yeah. If I do go into research I'd

like to collaborate with international people but also yeah any opportunity I will be traveling (laugh)

I: Good. Can you describe differences or similarities you have experienced I university culture when comparing your home and host university?

R: Like I said in Australia I work and so uhm so for me university is quick getting there and I do socialize but it's not as social as here and I've really enjoyed that...just being able to take the time to really...and I think that's what an exchange does, it takes people out of their regular live and that means that they do get to go and really focus on study and I think studying is not just about the course time, it's actually about thinking and reading and all that sort of things so that's been very good uhm. The culture here I would say is...is uhm university culture is more respected I think people expect to take time to go to university. I know people work as well but I know the master students here take two days out to do their courses. For the masters' course it's a lot more time at uni ...uhm...I don't know if that's a good thing or not but it works for us and it's been nice because of the group we have worked with it's been uhm, you know, we have worked well together, we got to know each other, we were looking forward to seeing each other and that sorts of things and everyone is very supportive of each other. Uhm...as far as the academic culture...I think it depends on your lecturer...I think it comes down, and the same in Australia, it comes down to your lecturer and I would say that we have had in the masters course the majority the lecturers are very good, or the professors? But I think at times, I would say, in Australia it's more...theoretical and there is a lot more social theory and a lot more heavy reading uhm but I feel kind of lucky because I've had two semesters of that and then I've a semester here in applied sciences and... like I said we get to interviews we get to collect data we get to analyse the data and writing up reports and that sort of things. So for me that's certainly given me a certain perspective uhm...and...the other differences I was going to mention, as far as cultural concerned, sorry I get back there uhm ...everyone calls...like in Australia would never get called 'misses' (laugh). In fact I hate being called 'misses' or, you know, 'frau' and so, you know. Here it's amazing. Even today at the job fair, all the students had uhm say 'Herr... Frau'. Really the only time you would get called this if you were in a sort of school setting or...and even at my kids school they call their teachers by their first name so there is no way I would get called 'misses' unless it's a governmental, official form so that's been interesting and I think uhm...the professors call us students by this too so that's a big difference of formalities. I think Australia is not formal at all... and I think probably when you actually talk to people they are not so formal here but there is lot more history and tradition...and my neighbor here...I would always call Herr () whereas I would never call my neighbor Herr, Mister so and so (laugh). That's interesting but having said that, within the masters course I think that the discussions are quite open... and uhm certainly all the professors have told us to call them by their first name because they know we do that and have made an effort with that and probably we should...I don't know...there is only a couple of professors we called by their first name so...yeah that's good uhm...does it answer it?

I: Yeah yeah. What about the communication between the students and the lecturer?

R: Uhm...I found that I've had good relationships with all the professors...uhm...I've not really needed to email them overly uhm...and if I've got I had responses so if I've needed the communication and also within class I can go up at the end and talk to people, I've not found an issue so.

I: Ok, last question. In your own words can you describe the impact study abroad has had on your life.

R: It's a big one. (laugh) I think study abroad has had an impact on my life because it's something I will remember for a very long time. I think that it's been a positive experience that...uhm...has affected my life in terms of...uhm...making me or allowing me to have time to study and to really focus...allowing me to have time to uhm meet people I would not have met before uhm. It has allowed me to...be placed in a different public health, in a different system where I can learn about uhm public health, rather than from a textbook, in real life in a different country and I think that's been, certainly for my career, it's been really positive uhm. For my family it's been an amazing experience and I think something that uhm you know...we have experienced together and that we'll remember forever yeah so...it's been an amazing experience and I feel really lucky that I've been able to do it and...just yeah...really uhm...I suppose...uhm...yeah lucky is the word...that I've been able to be part of it and to have had such a positive experience.

I: Ok, thank you.

R: (laugh) No worries.

Appendix 11 Sociocultural Adaption Scale

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

Use the following 1 to 5 scale.

1 = no difficulty

2 = slight difficulty

3 = moderate difficulty

4 = great difficulty

5 = extreme difficulty

1. Making friends.
2. Finding food that you enjoy
3. Following rules and regulations.
4. Dealing with people in authority.
5. Taking a _____ (host country) perspective on the culture.
6. Using the transport system.
7. Dealing with bureaucracy
8. Understanding the _____ (host country) value system.
9. Making yourself understood.
10. Seeing things from a _____'s (host national's) point of view.
11. Going shopping.
12. Dealing with someone who is unpleasant.
13. Understanding jokes and humor.
14. Accommodation.
15. Going to social gatherings.
16. Dealing with people staring at you.
17. Communicating with people of a different ethnic group.
18. Understanding ethnic or cultural differences.
19. Dealing with unsatisfactory service.
20. Worshipping.
21. Relating to members of the opposite sex.
22. Finding your way around.
23. Understanding the _____ (host country's) political system.
24. Talking about yourself with others.
25. Dealing with the climate.
26. Understanding the _____ (host country's) world view.
27. Family relationships.
28. The pace of life.
29. Being able to see two sides of an inter-cultural issue.