

Foreign Exchange Programs and Intercultural Sensitivity

—A Case Study of Americans Hosting Japanese Students—

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The purpose of this multiple-case study was to investigate the experiences of three U.S. American families hosting Japanese students at their homes in southern Minnesota using a descriptive method of data collection and a qualitative method of data analysis. The host families' intercultural sensitivity was examined based on Bennett's developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. The results revealed significant characteristics of host families. All three elements of intercultural sensitivity (cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects) seemed to be developed through positive hosting experiences and learning different cultures. The subjects displayed characteristics of higher stages of the affective aspect than the other two aspects. The cognitive aspect seemed to be increased through intercultural contacts with Japanese adults. The behavioral aspect was not explored enough in this study because of the limited information.

Introduction

Foreign cultural exchange programs have been common between the United States and Japan. The participants often stay at their host family's home and experience the different culture(s) through their daily activities. Petersen's study

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(1979) states that the more the international students involved their U.S. American host family, the more the host family would become aware of other people and cultures. The American Field Service (AFS) (AFS homepage, 1998) also explains that hosting a high school exchange student or a teacher from another country benefits not only the family but also the entire community. These studies imply that the participants can receive positive consequences from intercultural communication through the experience. To explore the foreign exchange program is to understand the results of international education in the United States and Japan through the perspective of intercultural communication. However, scholarly studies are very limited on the topic of host families.

Given the importance of foreign exchange programs, this paper will explore the relationship between U.S. Americans' intercultural communication experience and their intercultural sensitivity, which is one of the significant elements in inter-cultural communication. This research paper will apply Bennett's "The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity" to U.S. American host families' intercultural experiences; this will include communication at home between U.S. American host families and international students. The host families' experiences and their intercultural sensitivity are examined through mail questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. This research uses a case study method to examine three U.S. American host families residing in southern Minnesota. Each family has hosted a different age group of Japanese students: elementary, high school, and college.

Review of literature

Intercultural sensitivity

Chen (1997) states that intercultural sensitivity is one of the necessary elements for successful communication in an

intercultural setting and many intercultural training programs aim to increase intercultural sensitivity. Chen (1997) encapsulates the definition of intercultural sensitivity as “an ability to develop a positive emotion towards understanding and appreciating cultural differences that promote an appropriate and effective behavior in intercultural communication” (p. 5). Interculturally sensitive individuals are willing to motivate themselves to understand, appreciate, and accept differences among cultures, as well as to make a positive outcome from intercultural interaction. Bennett (1986a) explains that intercultural sensitivity describes individuals’ subjective experience of cultural difference, and it can be identified in the developmental stages of personal growth.

Bennett’s developmental model of intercultural sensitivity

Milton Bennett (1986a; 1986b; 1993; & 1996) created a “developmental model of intercultural sensitivity” (Figure 1), which focuses on the subjective experience of cultural differences. The goal of the model is to gain a better understanding of the nature of cross-cultural experiences (Bennett, 1986). Bennett’s developmental model explains how cross-cultural experiences develop an individual’s cognitive, affective, and behavioral factors toward a different culture. In other words, each stage of the model identifies whether or not the people on

Figure 1 Bennett’s Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity; Derived from Bennett (1986a, 1986b, 1993, & 1996)

Ethnocentric Stages			Ethnorelative Stages		
I. Denial	II. Defense	III. Minimization	IV. Acceptance	V. Adaptation	VI. Integration
A. Isolation	A. Denigration	A. Physical Universalism	A. Respect for Behavioral Difference	A. Empathy	A. Contextual Evaluation
B. Separation	B. Superiority	B. Transcendent Universalism	B. Respect of Value Difference	B. Pluralism	B. Constructive Marginality

the stage see a “difference” between their own and other cultures and if they see it in a positive or negative way. The model implies that an individual’s cross-cultural experience develops his/her inter-cultural sensitivity. “This developmental model posits a continuum of increasing sophistication in dealing with cultural difference, moving from ethnocentrism through stages of greater recognition and acceptance of difference, here termed ‘ethnorelativism’” (p. 22). Bennett (1993) emphasizes the ethical concerns for the stages; there is no philosophical or ethical position in its own right; a position of ethnorelativism does not imply an ethical agreement with all difference nor a disavowal of stating a preference for one worldview over another. Therefore, there is no right or wrong in any position. He adds: “The position does imply, however, that ethical choices will be made on grounds other than the ethnocentric protection of one’s own worldview or in the name of absolute principles” (p. 46).

Bennett defines intercultural sensitivity in two main stages: “The Ethnocentric Stages” and “The Ethnorelative Stages.” Each stage has numerous subordinate stages, which represent each point of the development.

Next, all of these developmental stages will be reviewed.

Ethnocentric Stages

The Ethnocentric Stages imply “Assuming that the world view of one’s own culture is central to all reality” (Bennett, 1993 p. 30).

- I. Denial: In this first stage of ethnocentric stages, people simply do not consider the existence of cultural differences. The individuals at this stage believe that cultural diversity is not concerned with their issues, but with others’ issues. They live in an environment that is isolated from the heterogeneous world or they have created intentional physical and social barriers. People who are in the denial stage do not actively seek any quarrel, as cultural “others” keep their distance and hold their peace.
- II. Defense: In the previous denial stage, people can ignore

cultural differences, but people in this second stage, defense, perceive the impact of specific cultural differences as threatening and create specific defenses against them. They tend to be highly critical of other cultures. The individuals at this stage believe that the world is organized into “us” and “them”; “we” are superior and “they” are inferior. Bennett uses the example of the Ku Klux Klan for the form of denigration. He also uses the examples of black pride, feminism, and some manifestations of nationalism for the form of superiority.

III. Minimization: “Cultural difference is trivialized. While differences are seen to exist, they are defined as relatively unimportant compared to the far more powerful dictates of cultural similarity” (Bennett 1993, p. 41). Compared to the previous stages, people in this stage minimize cultural differences, but they are not aware of the importance of difference. The individuals at this stage seek similarities, and they often correct others’ behavior to match their expectation.

Ethnorelative Stages

The Ethnorelative Stages imply that an individual’s own culture is experienced in the context of other cultures. The main difference between the ethnocentric and ethnorelativism stages is that people at the ethnorelativism stage perceive difference as nonthreatening (Bennett, 1993).

IV. Acceptance: People at this stage acknowledge and respect cultural difference. At acceptance, the existence of difference is accepted, but it does not mean agreement. Cultural differences may be judged negatively, but the judgment is not ethnocentric. People at this stage are curious about and respectful toward cultural differences (Bennett & Hammer, 1998a).

V. Adaptation: While people at the previous acceptance stage have an appreciation for cultural differences, people at the adaptation stage can build more intercultural communication skills. People at adaptation can expand their

worldview to include constructs from other world-views; they can look at the reality “through different eyes,” and they may intentionally change their behavior to communicate more effectively in another culture (Bennett & Hammer, 1998a).

VI. Integration: In the above stages of adaptation, people are simply sensitive to a variety of cultures. However, people in this stage of development are “always in the process of becoming a part of and apart from a given cultural context” (Adler, 1977, p. 25, as cited in Bennett, 1993, p. 59). In this stage, individuals have bicultural or multicultural frames of difference within themselves. They have a multicultural frame of mind and continuously change their intercultural interaction styles; they often deal with issues related to their own “cultural marginality” (Bennett & Hammer, 1998a). Bennett & Hammer (1998a) explain that this last stage is not necessarily in most situation demanding intercultural competence, but it is common among non-dominant minority groups, long-term expatriates, and “global nomads.”

Related studies for Bennett’s original model

The area of intercultural sensitivity has been of interest to scholars in recent years (Efron, 1993; Kido, 1993; Pederson, 1998; Penland, 1996; Towers, 1990; Turner, 1991; Wesselkamper, 1983; Yarbrow, 1988; Yamamoto 1994). These scholars used qualitative methods, and some used quantitative methods, to examine intercultural sensitivity. Hammer (Bennett & Hammer, 1998b) was the first scholar to introduce a statistical tool to measure intercultural sensitivity; this is called IDI (Intercultural Development Inventory). The IDI is a 60-item paper and pencil self-assessment instrument that measures five of the six major stages of Bennett’s model; Denial, Defense, Minimization, Acceptance, and two forms of Adaptation (Bennett & Hammer, 1998b). Hammer (Bennett & Hammer, 1998b) suggests that the IDI instrument will be helpful in cross-cultural training, diversity training, and may

be of use in different international or intercultural settings. Since the IDI is the first statistical tool to assess an individual's or group intercultural sensitivity, this invention should contribute a great deal to the area of study in the future.

Reviewing these previous studies, some intercultural communication scholars have focused on people who go abroad (Turner, 1991; Effron, 1993; Yamamoto, 1994), and others focused on intercultural training (Efron, 1993; Kido, 1993; Penland, 1996; Towers, 1990; Wesselkamper, 1983; Yarbrow, 1988), but they have not focused on U.S. American host families who experience a great deal of intercultural communication. This case study will explore the experiences of the three families who hosted Japanese students at their homes from an intercultural communication perspective. This study will be an initial investigation of U.S. American host families' intercultural sensitivity using Bennett's model.

Methodology

This research is a multiple-case study using linear-analytic structure (Yin, 1994). It uses a descriptive method of data collection and a qualitative method of data analysis. This case study examines three U.S. American host families who reside in southern Minnesota. Each family has hosted a Japanese student; they were elementary, high school, and college students, respectively. The host families' experiences and their intercultural sensitivity are examined through in-depth interviews and demographic mail questionnaires, based on Bennett's developmental model. This section will review the research design and research procedures.

Research design

Theoretical framework

Intercultural sensitivity is composed of the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of intercultural communication. The three components are separated but mutually dependent

elements that combine to lead individuals to reach successful intercultural communication (Chen, 1997). Bennett also defined each component (see Appendix A). Based on the three aspects of intercultural sensitivity, this study will examine how the subjects display their intercultural sensitivity.

Methodological framework

This study followed the case study guideline described by Robert K. Yin (1994). Yin states that the case study method has grown in popularity within social science research recently, and the method has become increasingly commonplace, even in evaluation research, such as the survey and quasi-experiments, which are not accepted in traditional case study methods. In other words, case study methods have many ways to be used in the social science area.

Research question for case study

To conduct this research, the following research questions were posed:

- (1) What are the characteristics of U.S. American host families?
- (2) How do U.S. American families experience intercultural communication while they host Japanese students in their homes?
- (3) How do U.S. American host families display their intercultural sensitivity?

Research procedures

Subject selection

Purposive sample strategies (Frey et al, 1991) were used for this study. Several host family programs in southern Minnesota were selected, and telephone calls were scheduled with the program coordinators. The letters (including information about the intent of the study, the procedures, and potential risks) were sent to the selected host families, who were referred by three host family program coordinators. Telephone calls were then scheduled with the families, and the researcher

asked if the families were interested in participation in the study. Interested volunteers were sent additional information, the cover letter, and survey questionnaires by mail.

Three families who have different degrees of experience in hosting Japanese students at their homes (e.g. different amount of hosting experiences, different hosting time periods, different ages or genders of Japanese students) were selected. The main differentiating factor was the age of the Japanese students. One family hosted elementary school age, another high school age, and the other college age students. The target subjects in each family were the family members who were more than eight years of age or older. Three family units were selected on the basis of the applicable criteria.

Data collection

In this study, the researcher uses documentation (a demographic questionnaire), interview (in-depth), and direct observation (a focus group discussion). The three data collection methods will be reviewed:

- (1) Mail questionnaire: The mail questionnaire was used to collect the subjects' demographic information prior to the interview using standard guidelines (McCrancken, 1988; Frey, Botan, Friendman, & Kreps, 1991).
- (2) Interview: The in-depth interview was used to gather the subjects' subjective answers, such as their experience and attitudes toward cultural differences. The interview questions were generated using previous research from Bennett's developmental model (Turner, 1991; Yamamoto, 1994, Pederson, 1998). The interviews were held in a private, mutually agreed upon area, removed from other families in this study. The interview was a family unit interview. If the participants were under 18 years of age, the researcher used different interview protocols for the participants. The researcher began the interview by giving oral instructions to the participants and asking the participants to read and sign the informed consent form stating their consent to participate in the interview. The

parents of the children who were under 18 years of age also signed the consent form for their children. The researcher tape-recorded the interviews to facilitate data analysis and interpretation.

- (3) Focus group discussion/Critical incidents: The focus group discussion was used to examine the subjects' answers for the critical incident (see Appendix B). Subjects read one short story that involves intercultural interaction or cultural differences, and a question about the cultural misunderstanding is asked. They then have to select the best answer to explain it. For instance, Pederson (1998) successfully used this form to examine adolescents' intercultural sensitivity. For this study, one of the hundred incidents (see Appendix B) from the book *Intercultural Interactions: A Practical Guide*, written by Brinlin, Cushner, Cherrie, and Yong (1986), was carefully selected, and the question was generated to let the subjects explain and analyze the story using their own words. The story involves factors that involve major cultural differences between U.S. Americans and Japanese, or, put conceptually, individualism versus collectivism.

Data analysis

This research used pattern-matching, which is one of the techniques for analyzing case study evidence. First, the researcher transcribed the information from the mail questionnaire and recorded tape. The demographic information was summarized, and the information from the interview was examined by identifying key phrases (see Nakamura, 1998), which are related to the example statements of Bennett's developmental model (see Appendix A and Bennett, 1996). Each key phrase (Nakamura, 1998) was categorized into each stage of the model, and the researcher sought out any patterns of stages in each case using a statistical summary. Each key phrase from the answers was categorized into the three different factors: (1) cognitive aspects, (2) affective aspects, and (3) behavioral aspects based on the statements by Bennett (1996) (Appendix

A and Bennett, 1996). In this paper, the cross-case analysis was reviewed.

Discussion

This section discusses and analyzes the three cases on the following topics: (1) family background, (2) the host family's experience, and (3) the host family's intercultural sensitivity. This section also discusses the limitation of this study and recommendation for future studies.

Cross-case analysis

Characteristics of family

Case 1: Family A consists of a husband, wife, first daughter (15), second daughter (12), third daughter (12), and fourth daughter (9). They have hosted elementary school students from Japan almost every summer, and they have attended some international events in the past. Only the husband has been abroad, and the rest of the family members have never been abroad.

Case 2: Family B consists of a husband and wife. They have hosted three high school students from Mexico, Japan, and Thailand in summer, and one adult couple from Sweden. Both have traveled abroad.

Case 3: Family C consists of a husband, wife, son (15), and daughter (13). The family have hosted many college students from a variety of countries every quarter, but the students did not live at family C's house. The whole family has been abroad, including Japan.

Family background

There are some common elements among the three families. First, the couples are all between the ages of 31–50, and all adult subjects have college degrees or higher. The subjects are all European Americans who reside in small towns in southern Minnesota. They are all Protestant Christians. All subjects

rated their foreign language skills somewhat low. All of them have never lived in a big city. As for the children in the families, they have never lived in bigger places than small towns. This pattern of residency might be crucial for the level of intercultural sensitivity. Bennett (1986b & 1993) states that “physical isolation” on the denial stage is likely seen in small towns in the United States. However, this was not the case for the subjects of this study; very few statements on the denial stage are found. The researcher considered that the subjects were living around a university community in small towns, therefore, they have a lot of opportunities to meet people from overseas. There are over six hundred international students in their community, and there are some international professors in the university. It can be concluded that although they live in a small town, they have opportunities to meet people from overseas if they choose to participate in international events or if they host international students. On the other hand, if they want to avoid contact with international students, they also could. In short, they live in a small town, but the subjects chose to meet their Japanese students, and this fact might have affected the result of a higher stage of intercultural sensitivity than people who live in a small town in general.

Experience of hosting japanese students

All subjects of this study seemed to have had positive experiences hosting Japanese students. They enjoyed doing daily activities with their students, learning the culture, and teaching the students U.S. American culture or lifestyle. They were all very curious about the Japanese culture or other different cultures. Therefore, their affective aspect of intercultural sensitivity was rather high.

Another commonality among the three families was that the adult subjects believed hosting experiences were valuable for their children. The parents felt the children should experience cultural diversity because there is a lack of it in their predominantly white communities. In other words, the parents realized they were isolated from cultural diversity, and it was

difficult to go abroad. Therefore, instead of going to Japan, the families invited the Japanese students to get a taste of Japanese culture without leaving their homes. This point should be emphasized when people promote host family programs. The subjects know that the experiences increase their intercultural communication ability, and it is worthwhile for their future.

A common piece of advice among the three families for a new host family was “to be themselves.” The statement could be categorized on the stage of either superiority of defense or minimization on behavioral aspects. I think their advice is one of the principles of the host family in the United States. From my experience, I have learned that many international students applied to live with U.S. American families because they want to learn the U.S. American style of family life, which cannot be found at their dorm or apartments. The host families might want to share their American style of life with their students. I would like to emphasize that this is a U.S. American style of advice, because their advice might include a cultural factor, which may be different in Japan.

I have heard one story about a host family’s experience from a Japanese friend. His family (Japanese) hosted a young female student from Australia at his home in Japan. Before she came to his house, the family made many changes in their house, such as changing their bathroom from Japanese style to Western style and making other house improvements. This was not only for the student, but a large part was to make their house as comfortable as possible for the Australian student. The father of the house, who does not speak English at all, bought English conversation books and tried to learn some English words to communicate with the student. This is one of the examples of a Japanese host family, and this example shows the different notion of hosting guests between the United States and Japan.

In sum, the subjects enjoyed hosting the Japanese students, and they all had a curiosity toward other cultures, such as Japanese culture. They all believed that the hosting experience

benefited the family. They also explained that one of the advantages for the family was to explore the different cultures without leaving their house. Their common advice to a new family was “to be themselves.” Their advice could be interpreted as an ethnocentric response, but the message has more meaning than that. Considering their curiosity toward other cultures, they simply might have wanted to exchange their cultures; the Japanese students share their cultures, and the American family shares their culture. I conclude that this is a principle of the host family program or international exchange program; the participants learn about cultural differences from each other.

Intercultural sensitivity of the host families

Using the data from each family’s results, their intercultural sensitivity stages are summarized (see Table 1).

Table 1 shows the total number of key phrases from each family, and the statistical data on each stage of intercultural sensitivity.

(1) Cognitive aspects

This cognitive element of intercultural sensitivity was examined through responses about cultural differences and similarities and the discussion of the critical incident.

According to the summary in Table 1, the largest portion of responses was categorized in the minimization stage for family A, the defense stage for family B, and the acceptance stage for family C. A majority of responses from family A and B were categorized in the ethnocentric stages. On the other hand, around 75% of responses from family C displayed characteristics of the acceptance stage (ethnorelative stage); the level of intercultural sensitivity is rather higher than the other families.

All of the adult subjects could identify the cultural differences and similarities, and they perceive both of the factors as positive. However, I found most of the adult subjects see more cultural similarities than differences. There should be much

Table 1 Summary of Intercultural Sensitivity for All Families

Subjects	The numbers of key phrases by developmental stage						
	DEN	DEF	MIN	ACC	ADP	INT	TTL *
	Family A						
Total	2 (5%)	13 (31%)	11 (26%)	13 (31%)	3 (7%)		42
Cognitive	2 (10%)	4 (19%)	10 (48%)	4 (19%)	1 (5%)		21
Behavioral		6 (55%)	1 (9%)	2 (18%)	2 (18%)		11
Affective		3 (30%)			7 (70%)		10
	Family B						
Total		6 (29%)	4 (19%)	10 (48%)	1 (5%)		21
Cognitive		6 (40%)	4 (27%)	5 (33%)			15
Behavioral					1 (100%)		1
Affective				5 (100%)			5
	Family C						
Total		3 (9%)	3 (9%)	18 (55%)	9(27%)		33
Cognitive			3 (25%)	9 (75%)			12
Behavioral				2 (25%)	6 (75%)		8
Affective		3 (23%)		7 (54%)	3 (23%)		13

Notes: Codes for developmental stages: DEN=Denial; DEF=Defense ; MIN=Minimization; ACC=Acceptance; ADP=Adaptation; INT=Integration.

The numbers indicate the numbers of key phrases for each stage, and the numbers in parentheses indicate its ratio.

The ratio=(the total number of responses on each stage)/(the total numbers of all responses) × 100 (The numbers were rounded off.)

more cultural differences between the U.S. and Japan in general identified than what the subjects answered. Therefore, the interviewer expected more responses about cultural differences from the subjects. I took this contradiction in two ways. First, I think that the subjects might be able to identify more cultural differences, but they could not recall all of them during the interview. This could be one of the weaknesses of the interview method. My second interpretation was simply that the subjects had not developed their cognitive elements of intercultural sensitivity; they may emphasize more cultural similarities than differences between the U.S. and Japan, and this is a characteristic of the minimization stage. I used the second interpretation for this study.

The reasons for the subjects rating on the ethnocentric stage on cognitive elements for family A and B might have occurred because they learned about the cultural similarities and differences mostly from young Japanese students. The subjects' students might not have showed many distinguishing cultural differences from U.S. culture when they communicated with their host family. For example, the wife in family B mentioned that their Japanese student seemed to change his communication behavior because of his limited English-speaking ability; the student showed atypical Japanese cultural behavior.

Another example comes from the results of family A. The adult subjects of family A emphasized cultural similarities more than the other families. The results might have been affected by the Japanese students' age. Triandis (1995) mentions that the Japanese younger generation's cultural characteristics are shifting from collectivism toward individualism. The researcher also agrees with this phenomenon. The young Japanese people prefer to be "Westernized" and to get away from Japanese traditions. The wife of family C also commented on this phenomenon during the interview. She felt people are getting more culturally similar because they are losing their own traditions.

Another analysis for family A's results is that younger

children might not have fully developed their cultural identities because culture is learned (Samovar, Porter, and Stefani, 1998). Children are taught by their adult peers what is appropriate or inappropriate in their own culture. So the elementary school students who stayed with family A might not have fully developed their Japanese culture, but showed more universal “child-culture” traits, which exhibited humanity’s more basic needs, such as crying because of homesickness. If the students had been older, they would have tended to hide their emotions in public, which is culturally appropriate in Japan. In short, family A and B might have learned more cultural similarities than differences from the hosting experience, because the students showed more cultural similarities while they communicated, and this is the reason for their ethnocentric stages.

On the other hand, the results also showed that family C had developed the cognitive elements of intercultural sensitivity; most of the responses were categorized in the acceptance stage. This may be because their Japanese college students showed more cultural differences than the younger students who stayed with families A and B. They also had more intercultural communication experience with Japanese individuals because of their trip to Japan. Because they have seen many types of Japanese individuals, their experience is more diverse. In sum, families A and B learned Japanese cultural differences and similarities mostly from their young students, and it might be difficult to be exposed to a variety of cultural differences from such limited contacts. On the contrary, family C had more opportunities to learn about cultural differences from different Japanese individuals.

There was a limitation in examination of the cognitive aspects of intercultural sensitivity for the minor participants. The definitions of “ethnic group” and “cultural group” were asked to explain to assess their cognitive aspect of intercultural sensitivity. The questions were not easy for most minor subjects, however. The questions were taken from Pederson’s (1998) study, which used adolescent subjects. Since the

researcher could not know the subjects' ages when the interview questions were constructed, this difficulty occurred. The researcher should have prepared different types of questionnaires for different age groups, or should have limited the subjects' ages. Most of the minor subjects could list different ethnic or cultural groups, but the attitudes toward the groups were not asked, and the researcher could not find any key words for the stage; therefore, the minor subjects' cognitive aspects were not found in this study.

(2) *Behavioral aspects*

The behavioral element of intercultural sensitivity was examined through responses about communication behavior. According to the summary in Table 1, the largest portion of responses was categorized in the defense stage for family A, in the adaptation stage for family B, and in the adaptation stage, as well, for family C.

Compared to the other two aspects, the amount of key phrases for this aspect was less, and it became a part of limitation of this study. Only one key phrase was identified from family B, so the researcher should not draw a clear conclusion from the statistical results for family B. Family A displayed the characteristics of lower stages of intercultural sensitivity than family C. The result was because some of the subjects of family A did not perceive learning a foreign language as an important factor. They explained that the reason for this was because they did not meet people who did not speak English in their community. The importance of language is realized when people go to a non-English environment or when they experience communication problems in language barriers. Since family A hosted Japanese students who speak English, they might not have experienced such language barriers.

Many responses for this aspect came about from the topic of foreign language. None of the subjects rated their foreign language level as high, but most of them wished to speak another language. All of the minor subjects seemed especially eager to learn foreign languages, and they hope to use it when they

meet people who speak the language. This statement is an example of the adaptation stage, because the subjects try to change their own communication approach using another language when they meet people who do not speak English.

In addition to the topic of foreign language, the behavioral aspects were examined through the advice to a new host family, which was discussed in the previous section.

(3) *Affective aspects*

The affective elements of intercultural sensitivity were examined through the subjects' attitudes toward the different cultures, such as the responses about the hosting experience, favorite foods, and dream vacation. According to the summary in Table 1, the largest portion of responses was categorized in the acceptance stage for all families. This aspect showed the most consistent results among the three aspects, and a majority of the responses were categorized in the ethnorelative stages.

All subjects showed a curiosity toward the different cultures. They seemed to have enjoyed the cultural differences within the hosting experience. Most of the subjects picked foreign countries for their dream vacation. Their curiosity about different cultures made this aspect rate on a high level. This is probably a principle of the host family, because a host family in general will not likely host foreign students if they are not curious about different cultures. In other words, most host families in general may display the characteristic of the acceptance stage on this affective aspect when they decide to host Japanese or other foreign students. I conclude that the host families have a positive emotion toward learning, understanding, recognizing, and respecting cultural similarities and differences; this is an affective element of intercultural sensitivity (Chen, 1997). The other two aspects might increase through their hosting experience as well, because Chen (1997) explained that the three aspects were interrelated.

In sum, the three aspects of intercultural sensitivity were analyzed. First, the results implied that the limited intercul-

tural communication with Japanese young individuals could result in the minimization stage of intercultural sensitivity. In other words, more intercultural contacts with a variety of age groups of Japanese can develop intercultural sensitivity. Second, the minor subjects' cognitive aspects were not found in this study. Third, the behavioral aspect of intercultural sensitivity was somewhat low for family A, and not enough for key phrases for family B were identified. Fourth, the host family's advice for a new host family, "to be themselves," showed the characteristics of ethnocentric stages, but it implies positive cultural exchange as previously discussed. Finally, all subjects displayed the characteristic of the acceptance stage for the affective aspect, and the results show the responses for affective elements were ranked higher than the other two aspects.

Limitation of the study

There are some limitations in this study. First, the interview schedules for minor participants were not suitable for some of the younger minor subjects. As previously stated, the researcher should have prepared different questions for a variety of age groups or should have limited the subjects' ages. Another limitation was that not enough key phrases were identified throughout the interview, especially in the minor subjects and in family B. If there had been more key phrases, the findings would have been more accurate. Third, since I was the only coder of this study, there might be some biases or inaccurate coding for the stages of intercultural sensitivity. In fact, I found the coding difficult. It was difficult to categorize some of the responses in one stage because of the limited numbers of definitions for each stage. Therefore, more definitions for each stage should be established to code the responses more accurately. The final limitation was the interviewer herself. Since I am Japanese, the subjects might have hesitated to make negative comments about Japanese culture. However, the researcher's background could be a strength, because I am knowledgeable about both U.S. and Japanese cultures from my six years of experience in the United States.

Recommendation for future research

This study could be developed in many ways. First, an investigator could use Hammer and Bennett's IDI scales (Bennett & Hammer, 1998b) to conduct a quantitative study. One could also use both quantitative (e.g. IDI) and qualitative descriptive data (e.g. interview). Since the number of foreign visitors who stay with host families has increased in the United States, a researcher can find a large sample of subjects in the United States. Second, this study was conducted in small town areas in southern Minnesota, but it could definitely be done both in a bigger city and in medium town areas, and the findings could be compared and contrasted. Third, this study could be applied to different ethnic, cultural, or national groups. Fourth, host families who had negative experiences could be examined, as well. It might be difficult to find subjects, since they may feel uncomfortable reporting their negative experiences, but the effort is needed. Finally, any U.S. American families' intercultural sensitivity should be explored, and a researcher could compare the families who have had the hosting experience and those who have not, and the result might go further in finding the relevance of host family programs.

Conclusion

The intercultural experiences of three European American families who reside in small towns in southern Minnesota were explored through this study. The subjects are all curious about other cultures, such as Japanese culture, and enjoyed their cultural exchanges when they hosted Japanese students in their home. One of the reasons to host Japanese students is because families can experience cultural diversity in their homes without leaving from there. The host families' advice to a new host family, "to be themselves," showed characteristics of the ethnocentric stages, but it implied the positive values of cultural exchange and learning from each other. They value the

benefits they gained from their intercultural learning experience.

This case study was the first investigation that applied the experience of the U.S. American host family to Bennett's developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. Most of the families displayed the characteristics of higher stages on the affective aspect than the other two aspects. The cognitive aspect seemed to be increased through more intercultural contacts with Japanese adults. The intercultural sensitivity on the behavioral aspect was not explored enough in this study because of the limited numbers of key phrases. All three elements of intercultural sensitivity seemed to be developed through their positive hosting experience and the experience of different cultures.

The development of individuals' intercultural sensitivity is definitely necessary to survive in the global village. The key to this development is intercultural communication. When families host international students, it is a great opportunity to create intercultural communication in the home. The experience can enrich people's life with a little taste of different cultures without leaving their own country.

Notes

- * In this paper, "U.S. American" is used to refer to people from the United States.
- * This paper is based on the researcher's master's thesis: Nakamura, C. (1998). *Experience and intercultural sensitivity: A case study of U.S. Americans hosting Japanese students in their homes*. Unpublished master's thesis, Mankato State University.

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Appendix A

Examples of Statements from a Developmental Model of
Intercultural Sensitivity by Milton J. Bennett
(Derived from J. Bennett & M. Bennett, 1996)

I. Denial of Difference

Cognitive Structure: No categories (“what difference?”) or only broad categories for different cultures.

Affective Quality: Benign on the surface (“live and let live”), but potentially genocidal when pressed into cross-cultural contact.

Behavioral Emphasis: Aggressive ignorance (“I don’t need to know”), stress on the familiar.

II. Defense Against Difference

Cognitive Structure: Better elaborated categories for cultural difference, but original world view is protected by poor integration of the new categories (hardening of the categories).

Affective Quality: State of siege; defense of privilege and defense of identity.

Behavioral Emphasis: State-culture segregation; “backlash” actions; possible support for supremacist and hate groups.

III. Minimization of Difference

Cognitive Structure: World view is protected by attempting to subsume difference into familiar superordinate categories (“deep down we’re all the same”).

Affective Quality: Insistently nice.

Behavioral Emphasis: Active support for universal religious, moral, or political principles.

IV. Acceptance of Difference

Cognitive Structure: Differentiation and elaboration of cultural categories; development of a metalevel view of cultural difference, including one’s own culture.

Affective Quality: Curiosity

Behavioral Emphasis: Acquisition of knowledge about culture, including own.

V. Adaptation to Difference

Cognitive Structure: Knowledge and behavior are linked by conscious intention; category boundaries become more flexible and permeable.

Affective Quality: Competence

Behavioral Emphasis: Intentional perspective-taking, empathy

VI. Integration of Difference

Cognitive Structure: World view categories are seen as “constructs” maintained by self-reflexive consciousness (cultures and individuals are “making themselves up”).

Affective Quality: Confusion, authenticity.

Behavioral Emphasis: Formation and maintenance of constructed affiliation groups; cultural mediation.

Appendix B

A Packed Lunch

An American family living in Japan for one year wanted their son

(age 10) to attend a Japanese elementary school. When they so indicated to their landlord, he sent his English-speaking daughter to act as a go-between (*chukai-sha*). The boy was duly enrolled and began school. He had to take a lunch (*bento*) every day, so he took a regular American meal of sandwich, chips, cookies, and drink. The teacher subsequently contacted the go-between to have her talk with the parents about the inappropriateness of the lunch and to request the parents provide a more Japanese-style *bento*.

Question: Why was the school teacher perturbed by the child's American-style lunch?