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HOSTING AN INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE YOUTH: THE INFLUENCE ON THE FAMILY

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HOSTING AN INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE YOUTH:
THE INFLUENCE ON THE FAMILY

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Family Sciences, College of Agriculture at the University of Kentucky

By

Mark Allen Mains

Lexington, Kentucky

Co-Directors: Dr. Amy Hosier, Professor of Family Sciences and Dr. Ronald Werner-Wilson, Professor of Family Sciences

Lexington, Kentucky

2016

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HOSTING AN INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE YOUTH:  
THE INFLUENCE ON THE FAMILY

This study explores how hosting an international exchange youth influences families. Participants in the study took part in a four-week summer exchange by hosting a middle school aged Japanese youth through the Kentucky 4-H/Labo program. Labo is a Japanese club program that encourages youth to learn about American culture through international travel. As society becomes more globalized, the skills and abilities associated with international travel are increasingly important (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen & Hubbard, 2006). Hosting international youth through exchange programs is one method of developing these skills and abilities. This qualitative study uses thematic analysis to analyze three primary data sources. These were in-depth, semi-structured interviews ($n = 20$), program evaluation, and lifeline interview methodology graphs. This study explored the gap left by prior research by being concerned with families who have hosted an exchange youth for a short period of time. Previous research has focused on long-term exchanges, individuals and Americans traveling abroad. From this analysis, seven major themes were identified. These include (a) challenges of communication, (b) anxiety of program participants, (c) belief in a privileged experience, (d) personal growth, (e) familial relationship development, (f) feelings of loss upon departure, and (g) increased appreciation of home and foreign cultures. Two outlying themes of (a) father made a surprising contribution to hosting the exchange youth and (b) idealization of Japan were included for the additional context of understanding they provided. These findings offer insights into the efficacy of these programs as well as how they benefit the family. The findings, implications for program managers and potential areas for future research are discussed.

KEYWORDS: Exchange Program, Host Family, 4-H, Labo Exchange, Thematic Analysis,
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HOSTING AN INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE YOUTH: 
THE INFLUENCE ON THE FAMILY

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5/24/2016
This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, brothers, husband, and son. Your unwavering support and love have helped me to achieve my professional dreams.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements ....................................................................................................... iii

List of Tables ................................................................................................................. xi

List of Figures .............................................................................................................. xii

Chapter One: Introduction .............................................................................................. 1
  Host Family Vignette .......................................................................................... 3
  Background and Introduction .............................................................................. 5
  Problem Opportunity Statement .......................................................................... 5
  Purpose Statement ............................................................................................... 7
  Research Questions ............................................................................................. 7
  Theoretical Perspectives/Conceptual Framework ................................................ 8
    Berry’s Acculturation Strategies ........................................................................ 8
    Double ABC-X Model of Family Stress and Coping ........................................... 8
    Symbolic Interactionism ................................................................................... 9
  Biases and Assumptions ...................................................................................... 9
    Bias ................................................................................................................. 9
    Assumptions ................................................................................................... 10
  Delimitations ....................................................................................................... 11
  Definition of Terms ............................................................................................ 12
  Research Design .................................................................................................. 13
  Summary ............................................................................................................ 14

Chapter Two: Literature Review .................................................................................... 15
  Exchange Programs ............................................................................................. 15
    Overview of Exchange Programs ..................................................................... 17
      Research on Exchange Programs .................................................................. 18
    Short-Term Exchange Programs ..................................................................... 21
      Research on Short-term Exchange Programs ................................................ 22
    Homestay .......................................................................................................... 23
    Host Families .................................................................................................... 23
    4-H/Labo Exchange Program .......................................................................... 27
    Popular Support for Exchange Programs ......................................................... 29
  Globalization ....................................................................................................... 29
  Acculturation ....................................................................................................... 31
    Understanding Acculturation .......................................................................... 31
    Acculturation Strategies .................................................................................. 33
    Cultural Distance ............................................................................................. 34
    Language Distance ........................................................................................... 34
    Intercultural Competency ............................................................................... 34
  Summary ............................................................................................................ 35

Chapter Three: Methodology ....................................................................................... 37
  Study Design ....................................................................................................... 37
Purpose Statement and Research Questions ........................................................38
Research Design ................................................................................................38
Population and Sample .......................................................................................39
Demographics ....................................................................................................40
Instruments ........................................................................................................42
Validity and Reliability ......................................................................................43
    Validity ..................................................................................................43
    Reliability ...............................................................................................43
Data Collection ..................................................................................................45
    Lifeline Interview Methodology .............................................................45
    Interviews ...............................................................................................49
        Transcription ...............................................................................50
        Interviewing minors ....................................................................51
    Program Evaluations ..............................................................................51
    Pilot Testing ...........................................................................................52
Data Analysis Procedure ....................................................................................53
Ethical Considerations .......................................................................................55
Data Storage ......................................................................................................56
Summary ...........................................................................................................56

Chapter Four: Findings ..................................................................................................57
Evaluations ........................................................................................................58
Lifeline Interview Methodology .........................................................................58
    Portrait of a Homestay ............................................................................59
Primary Study Themes and Subthemes ...............................................................61
    Theme 1: Communication ........................................................................63
    Theme 2: Anxiety, Stress, and Sacrifice ..................................................65
        Subtheme 2.1: Program expectations and outcomes .......................66
        Subtheme 2.2: Anxiety, stress, and sacrifice caused by changes in family routines, dynamics, and home life ..........66
        Subtheme 2.3: Exchange youth and their interactions ......................69
        Subtheme 2.4: Interactions with schools or schooling ......................69
        Subtheme 2.5: Worthwhile sacrifice and hard work .........................70
    Theme 3: Host Families Believed They Are Participating in a Unique and Privileged Experience for Themselves and the Exchange Youth ....................................................................................71
    Theme 4: Participation in the Homestay Was a Period of Reflection and Personal Growth for the Host Family ......................................................73
    Theme 5: The Relationships between host family members Were Formed, Changed, and Developed Over the Course of the Exchange ....................................................................................74
        Subtheme 5.1: Deciding to host ...........................................................75
        Subtheme 5.2: Relationships between family members .................76
        Subtheme 5.3: Relationships between family members and exchange youth .................................................................79
    Theme 6: Departure Created a Very Real Sense of Loss for the Family and Required a Reestablishing of a New “Normal” ........................82
Theme 7: All Participants Learned About and Gained Appreciation of Their Own and Other Cultures .......................................................... 84

Outlier Themes .......................................................................................... 87
  Father makes a surprising contribution to hosting the exchange youth ..................................................................................... 87
  Idealization of Japan ........................................................................ 88

Summary ........................................................................................................... 88

Chapter Five: Discussion ............................................................................................... 90
Methodology...................................................................................................... 90

Interviewing Minors .......................................................................................... 90
  Host families ................................................................................................. 91
  Exchange coordinators ................................................................................ 91
  Family scientists ......................................................................................... 92

Lifeline Interview Graph .................................................................................. 92
  Host families ................................................................................................. 92
  Exchange coordinators ................................................................................ 93
  Family scientists ......................................................................................... 94

Theme 1: Communication was a challenge that changed the relationships within the family and between family members and exchange youth ............................................................................................. 95
  Host families ................................................................................................. 95
  Exchange coordinators ................................................................................ 97
  Family scientists ......................................................................................... 99

Theme 2: Anxiety, Stress, and Sacrifice Were Commonly Indicated as an Outcome of Program Participation by the Host Family .............................. 100
  Host families ................................................................................................. 100
  Exchange coordinators ................................................................................ 102
  Family scientists ......................................................................................... 104

Theme 3: Host Families Believed They Are Participating in a Unique and Privileged Experience for Themselves and the Exchange Youth ............................................................................................. 105
  Host families ................................................................................................. 106
  Exchange coordinators ................................................................................ 107
  Family scientists ......................................................................................... 109

Theme 4: Participation in the Homestay Was a Period of Reflection and Personal Growth for Host Family ................................................................. 109
  Host families ................................................................................................. 110
  Exchange coordinators ................................................................................ 112
  Family scientists ......................................................................................... 114

Theme 5: The Relationships Between Host Family Members Were Formed, Changed, and Developed Over the Course of the Exchange ............................................................................................. 114
  Host families ................................................................................................. 114
  Exchange coordinators ................................................................................ 116
  Family scientists ......................................................................................... 118
Theme 6: Departure Created a Very Real Sense of Loss for the
Family and Required the Reestablishing of a New “Normal”........120
Host families.............................................................................120
Exchange coordinators..............................................................122
Family scientists.......................................................................123
Theme 7: All Participants Learned About and Gained Appreciation of
Their Own and Other Cultures........................................................125
Host families.............................................................................125
Exchange coordinators..............................................................127
Family scientists.......................................................................128
Outlying Themes ..................................................................................129
Father makes a surprising contribution to hosting the exchange
youth...................................................................................130
Idealization of Japan........................................................................131
Findings and Conclusions ..................................................................................133
Limitations of the Study..................................................................................134
Implications for Practice ..................................................................................136
Recommendations for Future Research ............................................................137
Conclusion.......................................................................................................138

Appendix A: Organizational Gatekeeper—Request for Access and Response ........139
Appendix B: Lifeline Interview Graph.........................................................................140
Appendix C: Host Family Recruitment Email..............................................................141
Appendix D: Adult Interview Guide............................................................................142
Appendix E: Youth Interview Guide............................................................................145
Appendix F: Sample of Field Notes .............................................................................148
Appendix G: Demographic Information Sheet .............................................................149
Appendix H: 4-H/LABO Host Family Evaluation ........................................................150
Appendix I: Sample of Memos ....................................................................................152
Appendix J: Sample of Journaling ...............................................................................153
Appendix K: Code Book Sample .................................................................................154
Appendix L: Consent Form..........................................................................................157
Appendix M: Assent Form...........................................................................................161
References................................................................................................................162
Vita
LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1, Demographics ..............................................................................................41
Table 4.2, Lifeline Interview Graph Peaks and Valleys .................................................60
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1, Double ABC-X model of family stress and coping (McCubbin & Patterson, 1982) ................................................................. 19
Figure 2.2, A general framework for understanding acculturation. Berry (2005). 32
Figure 2.3, Berry’s acculturation strategies (Berry, 1980). 33
Figure 3.1, Example of a lifeline interview methodology graph (Assink & Schroots, 2010). ................................................................. 46
Figure 3.2, Lifeline interview graph for Boomer Franklin (father). 48
Figure 3.3, Lifeline interview graph for Martha Harrison (mother). 48
Figure 3.4, Lifeline interview graph for Ben Green (Son). 49
Figure 4.4, Composite lifeline interview graph. This graph was created using the average number of peaks or valleys indicated by the participants for each time period. It represents an amalgam of the experiences of the parents and children who participated in the present study. 60
CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION

Cultural diversity continues to increase in the United States and around the world. The rationale for the present study began with the need to understand how individuals develop the skills and competencies required for successful interaction in a global society. Technological advances help to mitigate or eliminate traditional barriers (e.g., distance or language) between cultures. Immigration continues to drive population growth in the United States. Education on international topics creates a significant and positive impact on American families (Institute for International Education, 2013b); therefore understanding the methods of developing cultural skills and competencies becomes increasingly vital.

Despite the importance of cultural competencies in a globalized society, development of these skills can be difficult. Travel to other countries is one way to interact with other cultures and foster such development. Many individuals and families do not have the educational or financial resources that would allow for extensive travel. Participating as a host family for exchange programs allows the family to experience a different culture without the associated cost of international travel. These experiences encourage the development and refinement of intercultural competency and sensitivity.

The Kentucky 4-H Youth Development program (4-H) is a land-grant university based program that encourages life skill development in school aged youth. Each year, Kentucky 4-H partners with the Japanese Labo program to accept 10–20 exchange youth who stay with families in Kentucky in order to provide an international experience. Labo is a club-based program that explores American culture and promotes individual growth.
in school aged youth. The 4-H/Labo program lasts four weeks and is conducted from mid-July through mid-August.

Increasing the understanding of the host family experience in exchange programs can aid program coordinators in recruitment, orientation, and support. There is limited research on exchange programs from the host family perspective. Research on the host families who participate in short-term exchange programs is even more minimal. Understanding the experience of short-term host families can provide useful information to the coordinators of short and long-term exchange programs.

Participants in this study were identified as host families and have a child termed the host sibling of the same sex and approximate age as the Japanese exchange youth. This program requires that the Japanese youth be matched with a host sibling. This study explored the effects of participation in this exchange program on the host family. For the purposes of this study, the term family is used to indicate the host parent(s) and the matched, host sibling. Other family member residing the home were not included for the present study.

The researcher for the present study serves as the coordinator for the 4-H/Labo exchange program in Kentucky. Through personal experiences, the researcher believes that the vignette in the following section captures themes that are shared by all participants in this program. This study focuses on the family level impacts experienced by the program participants.

The following vignette of the hosting experience was selected from pilot research conducted prior to the present research study. It is provided to aid the reader in gaining a
better understanding of this particular exchange program and how the family and exchange youth interact during the homestay.

**Host Family Vignette**

Cassie Able is an outgoing young teenager who is very involved with her local 4-H program and has passionate interest in global cultures. She is a self-professed “otaku” (an Americanized version of a Japanese word used to identify someone who is an avid fan of Japanese culture). Cassie was excited to hear that 4-H offered a four-week summer exchange program that allowed a family to host a Japanese youth. This opportunity would allow her to get to know someone from Japan and explore her interest in Japanese language and culture.

Following a family discussion, the decision was made to take part in this program. The family completed an involved screening, application, and interview, before being placed with a middle school aged Japanese girl named Akane. After approval of their application, the Able family connected with Akane through email, letters and cards in the several weeks prior to her arrival.

Initially, the Able family looked forward to the arrival of their Japanese exchange youth with positive anticipation. Immediately, prior to Akane’s arrival, however, the Able’s began to feel an increased level of anxiety as they thought about the homestay experience. The family was concerned with the exchange youth fitting in, her ability to communicate in her new environment, and if she would have a positive experience in their home and the United States.

During the initial meeting, the Able family, feeling both anxious and excited, greeted Akane and welcomed her to Kentucky and their family. Following a presentation on Japanese culture, the family returned home with Akane. Due to the language barrier,
communication was limited between the Able family and Akane during the ride to their home. But, the Able’s and Akane quickly became more comfortable interacting and conveying their thoughts and feelings.

The four-week homestay was primarily positive. Despite this, there were incidences of anxiety regarding Akane and her interaction with the family. Communication was difficult and there were several misunderstandings that resulted in concerns of hurt feelings. There were also feelings of jealousy from Cassie about the attention her parents gave to Akane. Through discussion and a concerted effort at communication between the parents, Helen and Howard, and their daughter, Cassie, these difficulties were approached and addressed as each one arose.

As the program approached its end after four-weeks, the looming departure created stress within the family as the Able’s had developed a significant bond with Akane. They had begun to view her as a member of the family. On the final day, the Able’s and Akane spent time together at the Kentucky State Fair where Cassie and Akane had matching shirts made to commemorate their friendship and time together. After making their heartfelt and final goodbyes, the family waited in the parking lot of the fair grounds for one last glimpse of Akane as she was transported to her hotel for the evening.

As the Able’s drove home, the mood in the car was somber. They experienced feelings of sadness and loss for Akane as they identified her as a member of their family. Howard was withdrawn and quiet while Cassie and Helen reminisced about their experience. It took the Able’s several days to adjust to life at home with Akane.

Communication between Akane and the Able’s resumed after she returned to Japan. The Able family focused on the many positive memories they had created with
Akane. The Able family believed their participating in this program helped them to gain a unique family member that would continue to have a significant and positive impact on their life.

**Background and Introduction**

The purpose of this multi-case study was to examine the 4-H/Labo program participant experiences to better understand the impacts of hosting a short-term, middle school aged exchange youth on the host family. This study focused primarily on the relatively under researched area of the host family experience. Such information will contribute to a better understanding of the personal and familial experiences associated with exchange programs as well as inform exchange coordinators for program improvement and future success.

The study utilized participant experiences as captured through the use of the Lifeline Interview Methodology (LIM); in-depth, semi-structured interviews; and program evaluation data. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis methods.

This dissertation is presented in a five-chapter format with Chapter 1 providing the introduction. Chapter 2 presents a literature review of current and past research on exchange programs and associated topics. Chapter 3 presents the methodology utilized for this study. Chapters 4 and 5 present the findings and the discussion of findings, respectively.

**Problem Opportunity Statement**

The research on cultural exchange programs is limited. In spite of this, international experiences are seen as important in a time when globalism is increasingly important. *Globalism* is the complex process where individuals, groups, and nations form connections that transcend cultural and geographical boundaries (Berry, 2008).
There is rapid movement toward globalism as technological advances remove barriers to communication, contact, cultural exchange, and business. People are living in an increasingly global society (Cleveland, Rojas-Mendez, Larouch, & Papadopoulos, 2016). International travel is one avenue of fostering a global perspective.

International travel is now more accessible than at any point in human history (Pitts, 2009). Exchange programs for high school and college students are a traditional way to experience international travel. These programs can provide a structured way for participants to experience another culture, people, and language. Despite increased accessibility, there are still barriers to international travel.

International travel can be costly and time prohibitive. Age requirements, expense, and travel related anxiety could contribute to the difficulty of this experience. Individuals who are unable to travel abroad have more limited opportunities to foster the development of intercultural competency and cross-cultural sensitivity. One effective method of gaining cultural exposure is hosting an international exchange youth. The Kentucky 4-H program is one example of an organization that provides families an opportunity to have a youth from a different country stay in their home.

Kentucky 4-H has offered a four-week summer exchange program with its Japan counterparts for over 30 years. This exchange program differentiates itself from many others in that it takes place during the summer, is shorter in duration, involves a younger than typical participant, and requires placement with a host family and host sibling. The program also focuses on providing a cultural experience for the exchange youth as opposed to an academic or language experience.
Research on cultural exchange programs is limited. Studies have tended to focus on specific programs and their identified outcomes, with limited contribution to the overall understanding of exchange programs as a whole. Research studies that focus on the American host families’ perspective are even more limited. The present study addresses this identified gap in the literature.

**Purpose Statement**

Popular opinion is that intercultural competency, intercultural sensitivity, and diversity awareness are important life skills in an increasingly globalized society. International education develops the skills and creates the relationships necessary for addressing global challenges (Institute for International Education, 2013b). Hosting an exchange youth can provide another method of developing these important life skills for those who are limited in their ability to experience international travel directly.

The purpose of this study was to better understand the experience of Kentucky families who hosted a middle school aged Japanese exchange youth through the four-week 4-H/Labo exchange program. This was accomplished using thematic analysis methods to explore LIG data, interview data, and program evaluation data.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ 1: What is the experience of Kentucky families who participate in the 4-H exchange program by hosting an exchange youth from Japan?

RQ2: How does the family perceive their relationship with the exchange youth?

RQ3: How does the relationship develop during the exchange period between the family and the international exchange youth?

RQ4: What factors would improve the hosting experience?
Theoretical Perspectives/Conceptual Framework

Three conceptual frameworks informed the development of the research questions and guided the analysis by providing various lenses through which to view the data (Maxwell, 2005). These were: Berry’s Acculturation Strategies (Berry, 1980); the Double ABC-X Model of Family Stress and Coping (Double ABC-X model) (McCubbin & Patterson, 1982); and Symbolic Interactionism (SI) (Blumer, 1973).

Berry’s Acculturation Strategies

Acculturation refers to the cultural changes that occur when two diverse groups meet (Berry, 1997). This process has been seen as mostly affecting the minority culture. However, Berry (1980) viewed this as a bidirectional process whereby all groups changed during the process of acculturation. This study utilized this framework of understanding acculturation to provide insight into how individuals and groups could behave when meeting someone from a different culture.

Double ABC-X Model of Family Stress and Coping

The family stress and coping approach of the Double ABC-X model looks at the responses to stress experienced before and after new stressors are added. This model builds on the work of Hill’s ABC-X model (Hill, 1949), which postulated that stressors, as influenced by existing resources and perceptions, could lead to crisis. The Double ABC-X model (McCubbin & Patterson, 1982) expands these longitudinally to the post-crisis time period. It then explores the accumulation of original and new stressors, existing and new resources, along with existing and new perceptions as influenced by coping. This combination of new and original stressors, along with coping, results in either positive or negative adaptation. This theory helps frame the homestay in terms of the positive and negative experiences that influence the family’s relationship with each
other and the exchange youth. Through this lens, factors that can improve the homestay are identified.

**Symbolic Interactionism**

Symbolic interactionism is concerned with the roles people have, the importance and relevance of those roles and how a shared understanding of the role is created through family interactions (Blumer, 1969). The role that a person plays within a family can vary in different situations. The male head of household can act as a father sometimes and spouse other times. A young person in the home could be seen as big brother/sister, little brother/sister, or child depending on circumstances. This study uses this framework to explore how the change in family roles influences the relationship development between the family members and the exchange youth.

**Biases and Assumptions**

In qualitative research, the researcher is the survey instrument, analysis tool and descriptive author (Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Creswell, 1998, 2007; Mays & Pope, 1995). For this reason, the decision has been made to include a section discussing the “researcher as instrument” in Chapter 1 of the present study. While unconventional, it is believed that an upfront discussion of the personal and professional connection the researcher has to the present study offers clarity and transparency (Bruce, 2007). This transparency of process aids the researcher in providing “an account of its [the researcher’s study] success or failure in persuading the reader or reviewer of its goodness” (Crabtree & Miller, 1999, p. 334).

**Bias**

The researcher for the present study is employed as a 4-H specialist with the University of Kentucky. In this capacity, he is a program coordinator for the 4-H/Labo
exchange program with Japan. As program coordinator, he works with the recruitment, orientation and support of both the host families and Japanese exchange youth. As such, there was a prior relationship with the study participants through their participation in the exchange program. Some of the participants enrolled in the present study were actively involved with the exchange program during the time of data collection.

As program coordinator, the researcher has a vested interest in the positive outcomes of this program. This perspective brings a familiarity for the topic, as well as a passionate interest, in the study. Additionally, as a child, the researcher participated in the exchange program when his family hosted a Japanese youth. This vested interested introduces a strong element of bias into the research process.

During the present study, the researcher remained committed to maintaining a reflexive stance. Reflexivity serves to acknowledge potential biases while bracketing these biases. This is done to understand better the actual experience of the host family and not the researcher’s perception of that experience (Ahern, 1999; Hall & Callery, 2001; Koch & Harrington, 1998; Rolfe, 2006). This was accomplished through journaling with critical self-reflection, triangulation of data, peer review, an outside coder, member checking and the use of thick, rich description.

Assumptions

Understanding the assumptions the researcher brings to the study is one method of maintaining rigor when conducting a qualitative study (Morse, Sept 2015). The researcher identified the following assumptions:

1. As voluntary program participants, host families willingly take part in the program with the expectation of having a positive experience.
2. Host families generally have a good experience and positive outcomes as a result of their participation.

3. Families participate as hosts for an exchange youth with the goal of providing a specific experience for their family.

4. The experience of hosting an exchange youth disrupts the family dynamic and requires the involved individuals to reevaluate their role and place within the family.

5. Exchange programs build intercultural competencies that are necessary in a globalized society.

6. Families that participate in the exchange program experience another culture in a manner analogous to that of the exchange youth.

**Delimitations**

The boundaries set for this study involve participants and time. First, only families from Kentucky were recruited to participate in the present study primarily because of the researcher’s role as director to the program, access to the study participants, and because Kentucky is one of 15-20 states that participate in the 4-H/Labo exchange program. With Kentucky families there was also a common program experience among participants due to only one program coordinator

Additional inclusion criteria included families that had participated in the 4-H/Labo exchange program within the last two years (2012 and 2013). The decision was made to limit the time period to two years for interview participants in order to have an adequate pool of participants balanced against the possibility of recall issues due to time lapse since participation (Peterson, 2011).
Definition of Terms

A list of commonly used terms and their definitions are provided. The following terms and definitions were utilized with the present study.

- **4-H/Labo exchange** is a four-week program where Japanese youth (aged 12–16) stay with an American family during the summer. This is a partnership between the 4-H program and the Labo program.

- **Acculturation** is the process of change that occurs when individuals from two cultures meet (Sam & Berry, 2010).

- **Family** refers to the host parent(s) if both are living in the home and the matched, host sibling. Other siblings or family members were not included in this study.

- **Globalization** refers toward the movement of more cultural connectivity, despite geographical barriers, for individuals, groups and countries (Berry, 2008).

- **Home culture** (minority culture) refers to the primary or resident culture of the exchange youth.

- **Host culture** (majority culture) refers to the culture the exchange youth visits.

- **Host family** refers to the family with whom an exchange youth stays.

- **Host sibling** is specific to the 4-H/Labo exchange and refers to the American child, of same sex and approximate age, considered the assigned brother/sister to the Japanese exchange youth.

- **Inbound exchange** is used to refer to exchange programs that accept a youth from another country into the United States.
• *Intercultural competency and Intercultural sensitivity* are used to refer to the skills and attitudes that foster effective interactions with individuals or groups from another culture.

• *Labo* is a family based Japanese youth organization that encourages English proficiency, the development of cultural awareness and the expansion of personal boundaries (Labo Exchange International, 2013). The term Labo was originally a contraction of “language laboratory”. Over time, the term has become the official name of the organization and is no longer considered a contraction or acronym.

• *Long-term exchange* is used to identify programs that last 3 months or longer.

• *Outbound exchange* is used to refer to exchange programs that take program participant from the United States to another country.

• *Short-term exchange* is used to identify programs that last less than 3 months.

• *Sojourner* is used to describe the person participating in an exchange program who travels. This term is used interchangeably with exchange youth.

**Research Design**

This study explored the experience of Kentucky families who hosted a Japanese exchange youth. To be eligible to participate in the present study, the parent(s) and host sibling had to agree to take part. Six families (17 individuals) participated. Added to this data was the pilot family of three for a total sample of 7 families (20 people).

To explore the families’ experiences, three methods of data collection were implemented: Lifeline interview methodology graphs, in-depth semi-structured interviews and content analysis. An adaptation of the Lifeline Interview Methodology
(Schroots, 2003) utilized a participant drawn, graphical and longitudinal representation of the experience as a basis for visually examining the experience. This method also served as an introduction to the in-depth, semi-structured interviews used for data collection. Participants took part in individual interviews lasting for 30–60 minutes about their experiences with the 4-H/Labo exchange program. During analysis, their responses were considered individually and from a family perspective.

To supplement the families lived experiences, the third method of data collection included a content analysis of program evaluations from families who had participated in the 4-H/Labo exchange program from 2009 to 2014 ($n = 51$). Additional years and families were included because of the rich narrative that was provided by the host family on the evaluation. This information aided the researcher in understanding the experiences of host families. These surveys were qualitative, open response answers to questions used on a program level.

**Summary**

The rapid globalization of society increases the need for culturally adaptive and competent individuals. International travel is one method of providing this experience. Accessibility to international travel can be difficult for some people. Hosting an exchange youth is one method of an international experience without traveling. This study explores how families that host international exchange youth are impacted by their experience. The identified themes are shared with the reader and implications for practice are discussed. Chapter 2 provides an in-depth discussion of the current literature on these topics.

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 CHAPTER TWO:
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter explores the current literature on exchange programs, globalization, and acculturation. Competencies relating to awareness and sensitivity toward other cultures are valuable skills in life and the workplace (Bucker & Poutsma, 2010; Reynolds-Case, 2013; Wilson, Ward, & Fischer, 2013). Individuals who demonstrate high levels of sensitivity toward other cultures are better able to function in increasingly diverse private and professional cultures. Exchange programs provide an opportunity to develop these skills.

University exchange programs have long been seen as a method of exposing youth to diverse cultures in order to create a more globally aware campus (Sowa, 2002). The need for exchange programs stems from a movement toward globalization within the United States and around the world.

This literature review was both planned and emergent (Bruce, 2007). A general overview of the current research literature on the topic of exchange programs was conducted prior to the study. Further review of the literature was conducted as themes emerged during analysis.

Exchange Programs

Exchange programs encompass a wide variety of experiences with diverse age requirements, formats, and goals. (Sowa, 2002; Weidemann & Blüml, 2009). The term exchange program is used to identify opportunities where a person from one country travels to another country to live for a period of time for the purpose of learning. Exchange programs allow individuals to develop greater cultural awareness, perceive themselves as more efficacious, develop communication competency and increase
intercultural sensitivity (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, & Hubbard, 2006; Gmelch, 1997; Milstein, 2005).

During the last decade, the number of American youth who have studied abroad for academic credit has tripled (283,332 in 2011/2012) (Institute for International Education, 2013a). Exchange programs bring youth from other countries to the United States as well as encouraging Americans to travel abroad. In 2012–2013, the number of international youth enrolled in higher education in the United States increased to a record high of 819,644 (Institute for International Education, 2013a). The international youths visiting the United States come from a wide variety of countries and cultural backgrounds.

Interaction with members of the host culture is an effective way for the international exchange youth to develop cultural competency (Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen, & Van Horn, 2002; Radhakrishna & Ingram, 2005; Searle & Ward, 1990; Wilson et al., 2013). Exchange programs help the youth develop an appreciation of their home culture, provide a broader world perspective, and develop valuable intrinsic skills such as self-awareness, esteem and confidence (Church, 1982).

Participants in exchange programs can experience negative acculturative stress as they are faced with differences between their home and host cultures (Berry et al., 1987; Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989; Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Sam & Berry, 2010; Ye, 2005). Acculturative stress can negatively impact the individual’s emotional, social, and physical health (Furukawa, 1997a, 1997b; Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002; Ye, 2005).
The majority of studies about exchange programs focus on the individual who is traveling. Research is concerned with the social, cultural, and psychological adaptations of the exchangee. The psychological adjustment of the traveler is influenced by their relationships with the host family, extraversion, life changes, and ease in social interactions (Searle & Ward, 1990). Both sociocultural and psychological facets contribute to the success of acculturation (Ward & Kennedy, 1993a). Sociocultural adjustment of secondary school youths was influenced by study abroad (Ward & Kennedy, 1993b).

Overview of Exchange Programs

Exchange programs in the United States originated in the 1940s when a group of Latin American journalists were invited to visit (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, n.d.). By 1961, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs was established to increase mutual understanding between the United States and other cultures (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, n.d.). The creation of government sponsored international exchange programs was an indication of the increasing trend toward globalization in American society.

Exchange programs vary in the age of the participants, criteria for selection/involvement, the goals of the program, format, and duration. Research conducted on exchange programs is as varied as the programs being studied. Exchange programs in the United States are most commonly thought of as experiences where an American youth (or international youth traveling to the United States) travels to another country for the school year.

The participation of American youth in studies abroad has tripled in the last twenty years, with the majority of youths participating in short-term programs (Institute

**Research on Exchange Programs.** A survey of literature associated with exchange programs finds diverse research approaches and goals. Some studies have focused on the experience of non-American youth who travel to the United States. Others have focused on the experiences of American youth who leave the United States (i.e., Burns, 1996). The prevalence of acculturative stress has led many studies to include components related to perceived stressors and coping mechanisms (Mena et al., 1987).

Family participation in an exchange program leads to a disruption of the normal routine resulting in additional stressors for the family. These additional stressors, along with acculturative stress, compound already existing factors experienced by the individual and family. The stress created by this experience, along with the resources and perceptions of the family, make the Double ABC-X model (McCubbin & Patterson, 1982) a useful lens for the host family experience.

This model provides a framework for understanding stress, coping, and crisis over time. The model expanded Reuben Hill’s (1949) ABC-X family stress model to include additional stressors that arise after an original crisis or event. This makes it a particularly useful for viewing the family’s experience of hosting as it explores the relationship that exists between stressors (a), existing resources (b) and perception of the stressors (c) and how this can lead to an event or situation resulting in a critical event (x).
The Double ABC-X model extended this framework by adding the pileup of additional stressors (aA), existing and new resources developed (bB) and perceptions (cC) after a critical event (x). These factors are mediated by coping strategies and result in positive (bonadaptation) or negative adaptation (maladaptation) after the initial and subsequent critical events (xX) (see Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.1. Double ABC-X model of family stress and coping (McCubbin & Patterson, 1982).

Research on acculturative stress is often situated within the context of stress and coping theory (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 2000). The use of stress and coping frameworks can be seen in many studies that examine the adjustment of exchangees during their exchange experience (i.e., Berry, 1997; Sam & Berry, 2010; Searle & Ward, 1990).

The self-perception of the exchange youth can influence the adjustment process while host cultural interactions can serve as a mediating factor when experiencing acculturative stress (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 2000). The destabilization of existing family
patterns and behaviors during an exchange experience can provide insight into the family, its values, norms, and ability to cope under stress (Weidemann & Blüml, 2009).

Many studies focus on cultural and community factors that influence exchange youth who move to new environments (Greenland & Brown, 2005; Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002). Language acquisition is one reason for taking part in exchange programs. Study abroad programs offer youth in Asian countries a method for improving English competency (Song, 2011).

Research studies on exchange programs have included those looking at American teachers repatriating after extended stays in Japan (Sussman, 2002). This study found greater identification with Japanese culture resulted in more significant readjustment stress for the American teacher when they returned home. Pitts (2009) found that student travelers to Paris were able to refine their expectations of the study abroad trip through everyday discussion with their fellow travelers. France and Rogers (2012) looked at the reformation of the American identity of travelers to Cuba in a globalized context. Gong (2003) found that the learning goals of international exchange youth positively impacted their interactions and academic adjustment when traveling.

Stitsworth’s (1988a, 1988b, 1989) study of 154 American youth who traveled to Japan found participants increased in flexibility, independence, and demonstrated less conventional thinking than a control group of their peers. Being the first of their family to travel overseas or paying a significant portion of the trip expenses correlated to a greater degree of change in the factors studied. Lack of language proficiency and significant language proficiency correlated with a greater degree of change than moderate language proficiency.
Short-Term Exchange Programs

Academic exchange programs that occur during high school or college are one of the more popular and well-known types of study abroad. Exchange programs can vary from just a few days to more than a year. Short-term exchange programs are becoming more common than their long-term counterparts (Institute for International Education, 2013a). As the popularity of short-term exchange programs increases, the body of research related to short-term programs is gradually increasing. This has resulted in several studies that examine the outcomes of short-term exchange programs as compared to programs of a longer duration.

Programs that require a shorter commitment of time have contributed to the growing number of American youths studying abroad, as they are more willing to commit to an exchange program of a shorter duration (Castaneda & Zirger, 2011; Donnelly-Smith, 2009). The popularity of short-term sojourns is relatively new, as only 3.3% of youths traveled through these types of programs in 1996–1997 (Donnelly-Smith, 2009). These programs offer greater affordability, academic flexibility, and seem more “accessible” than longer-term opportunities (Institute for International Education, 2008, 2013a; Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005). Short-term programs offer a greater number of individuals the opportunity and access to travel abroad (Perry et al., 2013).

These programs are ideal for individuals who have job or family responsibilities, are financially limited, enrolled in community colleges, or who are not prepared for long-term immersion programs (Hulstrand, 2006). Despite these advantages, programs of reduced duration are more limited in their cultural immersion, and offer participants a more limited opportunity to develop a global outlook (Kehl & Morris, 2008; Pitts, 2009). Language acquisition, a primary component of many study abroad programs, has been
well researched for programs of longer duration while being understudied for those of shorter length (Reynolds-Case, 2013).

**Research on Short-term Exchange Programs.** Despite being relatively understudied, past research on short-term exchange program has focused on aspects of language acquisition and skills during shorter-term exchanges indicating that short-term programs help develop these skills at a more reduced level than longer-term programs (Allen, 2010; Arnett, 2013; Cubillos, Chieffò, & Fan, 2008; Llanes, 2012; Martinsen, 2010; Menard-Warwick & Palmer, 2012; Reynolds-Case, 2013).

Intercultural sensitivity and adaptation to the host culture was represented in many research studies with mixed outcomes (Anderson et al., 2006; Gibson, Benjamin, Oseto, & Adams, 2012; Lumkes, Hallett, & Vallade, 2012; Mapp, 2012; Martinsen, 2011). The degree, pathway and outcome of relationship development between a host and visiting culture has been studied (Castaneda & Zirger, 2011). Researchers have also looked at how sojourning individuals are influenced in regards to desire for future international experiences or careers due to their travel experiences (Gibson et al., 2012). France and Rogers (2012) found that university youth studying in Cuba “experienced a heightened American identity salience” (pg. 403). The role assumed by the exchange youth when staying with host families’ influences interactions and behaviors.

The individuals participating in an exchange program are usually the unit of analysis. Schroeder, Wood, Galiardi, and Koehn (2009) studied the impact of short-term exchange programs on the host community and determined that careful consideration needs to be given to these educational experiences to mitigate possible harmful effects within the host culture. A limited number of studies have focused on the administrative
level by exploring how to plan effectively and integrate short-term study abroad programs into existing programs of study for university youths (Gorka & Niesenbaum, 2001; Stanitski & Fuellhart, 2003).

**Homestay**

The homestay portion of some exchange programs has been found to be an important component that improves language proficiency and intercultural competency in participants (Bacon, 2002; Castaneda & Zirger, 2011; Dewey, Bown, & Eggett, 2012; Ducate, 2009; Ingram, 2005; Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002; Schmidt-Rinehart & Knight, 2004). In their study of participants in a Japanese exchange program, Dewey et al. (2012) found that the amount of time exchange youth spent engaging with native speakers was a positive predictor of perceived language improvement. This was also seen in a study of language acquisition during short-term exchange programs (Reynolds-Case, 2013). Families are social groups where the exchange youth engage with their hosts to develop identity sense of personal identity (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993).

The development of self-efficacy by the exchange youth has been positively associated with the extent of interaction with members of the host culture (Cubillos & Ilvento, 2012). Contact with members of the host culture is associated with improved sociocultural adaptation (Wilson et al., 2013). The host family can offer a sense of belonging, comfort and trust to the exchange youth (Castaneda & Zirger, 2011).

**Host Families**

The number of studies related to host family exchange experiences are also limited in size and scope (Boyd et al., 2001; Olberding & Olberding, 2010). Weidemann and Blüml (2009) identified few published studies that used the hosting family as the unit of analysis. Weidemann and Blüml (2009) found that role conflicts caused many of the
negative or stressful interactions within the family. This often occurred for implicit role
expectations, when expected role behaviors were not followed, and when role
expectations were at odds due to individual or cultural differences.

Symbolic interactionism (SI) is grounded in a strong research tradition and is well
suited for exploratory research that explores the roles individuals have when interacting
(LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). SI is one of the “few theoretical perspectives to rely
consistently on both qualitative and quantitative research” (p. 135) and has maintained its
relevance in the field of family science over the decades (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993) and
has experienced resurgence in prominence and vitality (Stryker, 1987). The theory
encourages both formal and naturalistic approaches to research (McPhail & Rexroat,
1979) that make it a suitable lens for exploring host family interactions.

The prioritization of the roles available to a person is called saliency. Identity
saliency is an important concept of international exchange experiences, as confrontation
with a different culture can cause the individual to reevaluate the personal roles they
commonly assume in the context of the experience living in another culture. Families
who participate in exchange programs can enact the roles of friends, parents and/or hosts
at different times. This interaction can created stress in the family as determined by
Weidemann and Blüml (2009).

Families have well defined social roles governing the interactions between family
members (i.e., brother, father, mother) that are impacted when an exchange youth is
present. Both within-family and out-of-family roles are impacted by exchange programs
(Weidemann & Blüml, 2009). The integration of an exchange youth into the family
requires a reevaluation of the family’s existing roles.
The host family’s interactions created a shared view of the experience of having an exchange youth in their home (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993; Oliver, 2012). As families communicate, they undertake a shared social process of interaction that leads to the construction of social norms and behaviors (Musolf, 1992). The social norms and behaviors of the family are brought to light or challenged by the inclusion of a nonfamily, exchange youth in the home.

Studies that engage the host family in the research process are often more concerned with outcomes for exchange youth (Weidemann & Blüml, 2009). A study by Grieve (2015) of German students living in Australia found a correlation between the relationship with the host family, socialization, and language acquisition. Research by Burns (1996) examined factors that influenced relationship development in American exchange students and their Japanese hosts. A study by Owen (1971) found the relationship between exchange youth and host families to be complex, and suggested better integration of the exchange youth into the school and community. The theory of SI is concerned with role, role saliency, and how shared experience creates meaning between individuals (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). This can provide a framework for understanding the complex interactions between members of the host family and their exchange youth.

Existing studies on the host family were conducted using a myriad of formats, research goals, and approaches to theory and methodology. Weidemann and Blüml (2009) limited their study to host families that had participated in long-term exchange programs more than 6 months prior to the beginning of research. Programs of this type were selected to allow for a sufficient length of time for relationship development. The
gap in time between program participation and taking part in the research study allowed the participants time to distance themselves from conflicts and reflect on the experience. The limited number of studies that focus on families hosting exchange youths contributes to the lack of understanding on this experience (Weidemann & Blüml, 2009).

Pitts’s (2009) study on Americans studying abroad found that the exchange participants hoped to integrate into the host family as extensions of their own close relationships. Host families can offer exchange youth access to language development opportunities, cultural immersion, and community resources (Castaneda & Zirger, 2011). The mutual exchange of language and culture in these programs has an effect on the hosting family. There is greater cultural awareness among host families of foreign exchange youth (Boyd et al., 2001; Olberding & Olberding, 2010; T.E. Systems, 2002, 2005).

Lowe, Askling, and Bates (1984) found that host families benefit from their participation in exchange programs through (a) personal development in their attitude, interest, and understanding of other cultures; (b) the development of intimate relationships between the family and exchange youth; (c) the development of an international network of people interested in foreign affairs; and (d) through an increased understanding of foreign affairs resulting in increased civic-mindedness. Engel (2011) identified surface level cultural learning (i.e., language, lifestyle, eating and cuisine) for Spanish host families of American exchange students. The process of accepting an exchange youth into the home upsets family dynamics and contributes to an increase in the overall stress of the family system, necessitating the need to reestablish equilibrium.
This view of stress and equilibrium is reflected in the Double ABC-X model (McCubbin & Patterson, 1982).

The theory of SI also postulates what is termed the “Thomas Theorem.” This states that situations defined as real by a group of people are real in their consequences (Merton, 1995). The perceptions of the host family create real feelings and associations. For some families, the perception of the exchange youth as a family member has significant effects when the individual ends their homestay (Mains & Rowles, 2013).

There are multiple reasons that families give for their participation in exchange programs. These include interest and curiosity about others, the desire for different experiences, reciprocating for a family member’s participation in a similar program, providing an international experience for their own child, experiencing new family interactions, alleviating empty nest syndrome and the desire to help or be recognized (Arnold, 2012; Weidemann & Blüml, 2009). Individuals also participate in exchange programs by hosting to compensate for limitations that make personal travel difficult (France & Rogers, 2012).

4-H/Labo Exchange Program

There are few published studies on exchange programs conducted through 4-H (Stitsworth, 1988a). The published research studies have had little overlap in goals and/or purpose. The majority of the research studies in this area were conducted prior to 2000.

The 4-H/Labo exchange program consists of two main programs options. The first is an *outbound* program where American youths go to another country (primarily Japan). The second option is an inbound program where youth (again, the majority from Japan) stay with host families in the United States.
The Japanese Labo program has partnered with 4-H Youth Development since 1972 when 179 youth traveled to American for a homestay experience (Lang & Lang, 1981). The following year, 260 American youth went to Japan. In 2012 and 2013, respectively, 430 and 424 Japanese youth stayed in American homes during the four-week summer 4-H/Labo exchange program (Oswald-Herold, personal communication, February 26, 2014).

Studies have also been conducted to provide program coordinators with information to enhance the exchange experience (Lang & Lang, 1981). A study of Japanese and other international youths who participated in a longer-term (one school year) Labo exchange program found their overall experience to be excellent and one they would recommend to others in their home country (Radhakrishna & Ingram, 2005).

Arnold (2012) conducted a comprehensive study of inbound and outbound exchange participants and their host families. This study found that international travel and the hosting of an international youth correlated to a higher degree of interest in international careers. Both Americans traveling to Japan and those who served as hosts for Japanese youth demonstrated higher levels of social contribution and increased emotional regulation. This study also found that “hosting exchange youth from other countries is an important step on the pathway toward global citizenship” (Arnold, 2012, p. 5). An earlier study by Arnold (2004) found that this program had a significant impact on personal and life skill development for both host and outbound youths.

Mains and Rowles (2013) conducted a retrospective, longitudinal case study of the experience of one family that participated in the 4-H/Labo exchange program. This study identified six major themes regarding the homestay experience. The participating
family experienced a heightened sense of stress and anxiety prior to the arrival of their exchange youth, which ultimately helped to develop a sense of familial bonding. The family members perceived their relationship with the exchange youth as privileged and protective. The maintenance of family routine served as a mediating factor to the stressors experienced during the exchange program. The family members perceived an increase in their intercultural awareness and intercultural sensitivity. Finally, the departure of the exchange youth contributed to heightened stress and required a period of readjustment.

**Popular Support for Exchange Programs**

The increase in globalization has contributed to popular support of exchange programs. The United States Department of State produced an online video featuring Olympic medalist Michelle Kwan that encouraged families to host international exchange youths (States’ 4-H International Exchange Programs. [Website]. 2013, September 10). The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs has created a similar host family recruitment video with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, 2010, August 17). Many colleges and universities market participation in exchange programs as a method for developing valuable work skills that prepare the youth to enter the more globalized workforce (e.g., Ashford, 2011, May 26).

**Globalization**

The term globalization refers to the development of linkages between individuals, groups, and businesses that are not limited by geographical or cultural barriers (Berry, 2008; Lindsey, 2014). Technological advancement in the areas of communication and transportation has greatly decreased the time and effort needed to move people, goods,
and ideas between countries and continents (Zhao, 2010). Contact between different cultures has become increasingly expedited through technology.

Internet and cell-phone access and usage has contributed to the increase in cross-cultural connections with the number of media users increasing annually (“Emerging nations embrace internet, mobil technology,” February 13, 2014). Television is accessed and used regularly by 90% of the world’s population, bringing historically unprecedented amounts of news and current information to an ever expanding audience (Zhao, 2010). This increased interaction contributes to a need for greater cultural understanding that facilitates the development of positive relationships.

The globalization of American society in the professional and private sectors, contributes to a need for individuals to become familiar and comfortable with other cultures. By 2050, 82% of population growth in the United States will be due to immigrants and their children (Passel & Cohn, 2008). This represents an increasingly relevant influx of cultural diversity into the United States. This has the potential for significant impact on necessary job skills of future employees.

There is a movement in corporate America to embrace a more global workforce. People now exist, in the words of President Obama, in a “world where jobs can be shipped wherever there is an internet connection; where a child in Dallas is competing with children in Delhi” (Obama, 2009, March 10). Cultural competency will be important to remaining competitive in this global market. A report by the Committee for Economic Development, a Washington DC based nonprofit, indicates “Many Americans think youth lack sufficient knowledge about other world regions, languages, and cultures, and, as a result, are likely to be unprepared to compete and lead in a global work
environment” (CED, 2006, p. 14). Globalization is the starting point for the process of adaptation that occurs between the interactions of two cultures, known as acculturation (Berry, 2008).

**Acculturation**

The mental and cultural adaptations experienced by individuals during cross-cultural contact is termed *acculturation* (Berry, 1980; Berry, 1997; Dohrenwend & Smith, 1962; Maier & Monahan, 2010; Mena, Padilla, & Maldonado, 1987; Sam & Berry, 2010). While acculturation is a bidirectional process, the current literature has focused almost exclusively on the experience of the minority culture interacting with the majority culture (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987; Greenland & Brown, 2005; Rudmin, 2003).

The process of adapting to another culture can result in changes to both behaviors and attitude (Berry, 2005). Much of the literature associated with the study of acculturation has looked at identifying affective, behavioral and cognitive changes (termed the “ABC’s of Acculturation”) experienced by the individual (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001; Ward & Kennedy, 2001).

**Understanding Acculturation**

The study of acculturation developed from concerns about the influence of Europeans on indigenous peoples (Berry, 2005). Berry recognizes that acculturation occurs at both the individual and group level (see Figure 2.1).
The interactions of individuals from different cultures creates *acculturative* stress that can lead to behavioral shifts and adaptation at the individual and sociocultural level. The pathway toward acculturation mimics the difficulties and adaptation responses seen in many stress and coping models (Berry, 1980; Ward & Kennedy, 1993a; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 2000). This makes stress and coping models preferred theoretical frameworks for studying the psychological aspects of acculturation (i.e. Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward, Okura, Kennedy, & Kojima, 1998).

Approaches to acculturation can manifest in numerous ways based on attitude and behavior. Berry (1980, 2005) identified four *acculturation strategies* that reflect the type of relationship the individual is seeking with other cultures as balanced with the desire to maintain their own cultural identity.
Acculturation Strategies

Berry’s (1980) acculturation strategies include integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization (see Figure 2.2). These identification are defined by the degrees and types of interaction individuals have when exposed to another culture. These interactions are mediated by the individual’s identifications with their own cultures (Berry, 1980). Their strength of an individual’s identification with their own culture as well as with the cultures of others is labeled weak or strong.

![Figure 2.3. Berry’s acculturation strategies (Berry, 1980).](image)

These acculturation strategies are formed by the degree of connection the individual has toward their own culture and the other culture. Generally, the individual being considered is from a minority culture and is interacting with a majority culture, as is the case with exchange youth who are interacting with their host family.

Separation is a strategy whereby the individual from the minority culture maintains their identity and does not interact with the majority culture. Marginalization occurs when there is no retention of the minority culture or interaction with the majority culture. Assimilation occurs when the minority culture loses or abandons their cultural identity and is subsumed by the dominant culture. Integration occurs when there is both
interaction with the majority culture and the retention of the minority culture’s heritage and values.

**Cultural Distance**

*Cultural distance*, the degree of difference between the host and home cultures, influences acculturation (Searle & Ward, 1990; Triandis, 2000; Ward & Kennedy, 1993a, 1993b, 1993c; Ye, 2005). The term *sojourner* is often used when referencing exchange participants to indicate their status as a traveler from their home culture to a host culture (Church, 1982; Furukawa, 1997b). The sojourner’s interaction with the host culture can be a determinant of their approach to acculturation (Ward & Kennedy, 1993b, 1993c; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 2000). Exchangees interacting with a similar culture are better able to adjust than those from a very different culture (Ward & Kennedy, 1993a, 1994). Exchange youth from Japan experience a greater cultural difference than exchange youth from European countries.

**Language Distance**

The degree of language difference between the host and home cultures also effects acculturation. There is a significant difference in grammar and alphabets between European and Asian languages. The degree of language difference offers one explanation for why exchange youths from Asian cultures may have more difficulty with acculturation than their European counterparts (Ye, 2005).

**Intercultural Competency**

Exposure to other cultures fosters the development of sensitivities and competencies related to working with others. *Intercultural competency* is a multifaceted concept defined as both the acquisition of skills allowing someone to interact in new cultural contexts and the ability to interact effectively with individuals from diverse
cultural backgrounds (Wilson, 1986; Wilson et al., 2013). This applies to all types of cultural differences (i.e., geographic, racial, ethnic, etc.).

The demonstration of global competence and citizenship fosters effective interactions with people of different cultures, languages, and religions. This is an essential skill for today’s workers (Committee for Economic Development, 2006; Zhao, 2010). Research by Zhao (2007, 2009b, 2010) called for youths to become global citizens in order to ensure the continuity of human civilization.

Educators today are challenged with preparing youth to work in a diverse and global future by ensuring they have the necessary skills of foreign language competency, global history knowledge, and familiarity with other cultures (Gardner, 2004; Reimers, 2008, October 3; Zhao, 2009a). Cross-cultural skills that were previously required of only a small group (i.e., diplomats or tour guides) are now a necessity for all professions (Zhao, 2010). American schools do not adequately prepare youth to acquire these necessary skills (Zhao, 2010).

Summary

This literature review situates exchange programs in the larger contexts of globalization and acculturation. Families and exchange youth are impacted by their participation in exchange programs as they experience stress, changes to the role they have in their family, and cultural distance. The literature presented in this review is varied in study methodology and outcomes.

The review of literature demonstrates the gap in research focused on young host siblings (middle-school aged), the host family and their participation in exchange programs. Utilizing the theoretical lenses of SI, the Double ABC-X model, and Berry’s
(1980) acculturation strategies, the experiences of the host family are examined with the purpose of identifying common themes.

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CHAPTER THREE:

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This research study utilized thematic analysis methodology as proposed by Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012). This qualitative approach focuses on the identification and recording of themes and patterns within the data. This methodology draws from a grounded theory approach which uses repeated cycles of inductive analysis to identify categories from the data in order to create theoretical models (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Thematic analysis requires a high degree of involvement and interpretation from the researcher as compared to other type of qualitative analysis techniques (Guest et al., 2012). Limited published research on exchange programs makes this exploratory study well suited for the use of this type of thematic analysis (Bruce, 2007).

A qualitative researcher is an instrument of analysis in a qualitative study (Creswell, 2007). They bring biases and judgments to the research project and should explicitly state that in their report (Creswell, 1994)

Thematic analysis looks at data to identify themes and the relationships between them. A good theme succinctly summarizes a pattern or meaning from the data set that addresses the identified research question (Braun & Clark, 2006). The researcher is intimately involved in identifying and interpreting these themes in order to capture complex meanings (Guest et al., 2012).
Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of the present study was to utilize thematic analysis methodology to explore the experiences of families that host an international exchange youth from Japan for four weeks. Four research questions were identified for the present study:

1. What is the experience of Kentucky families who participate in the 4-H exchange program by hosting an exchange youth from Japan?
2. How does the family perceive their relationship with the exchange youth?
3. How does the relationship between the family members and between family members and exchange youth develop?
4. What factors would improve the hosting experience?

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative design because it explored complex issues and the meaning people ascribed to them while in a natural setting (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative inquiry requires lengthy interaction with participants where the researcher has the freedom to explore avenues of questioning as they develop. The interview data, program evaluation data, and lifeline interview graphs were all qualitative data that were most suited for inductive qualitative analysis (Guest et al., 2012). The research was centered on the open-ended, semi-structured interviews, with the goal of gathering rich data that the researcher could interpret (Creswell, 2005).

Access to the study population was sought by emailing the Kentucky 4-H program leader and asking permission to conduct the present study with individuals who had participated in the 4-H/Labo exchange program (see Appendix A) (Ahern, 1999; Charmaz, 2004; Morrow, 2005). Host families who had taken part in this program during 2012 and 2013 were sent emails asking them to participate in a research study to learn
more about their experience (see Appendix C). The host parent or parents and the
identified host sibling had to agree to participate in order for the family to qualify for the
study. Participants were interviewed individually in a location of their choosing and
asked to complete a lifeline interview graph, discuss the graph, and then take part in an
interview designed to find out more about their hosting experiences. Data from 20
individuals representing 7 families was included in the study.

Additional data about the experiences of hosting an exchange youth was available
in the form of qualitative program evaluations. The program coordinator collected these
from 2009 to 2014 (n = 51). These were also included in the analysis in order to provide
an element of data triangulation. Data triangulation was established through the analysis
of the lifeline interview graphs, the in-depth, semi-structured interviews, and the program
evaluation.

Population and Sample

The majority of data came from the in-depth interviews and discussion of the
lifeline interview graph. Additional data came from a visual examination of the lifeline
interview graph and the program evaluations. A purposeful, convenience sampling
 technique was used for the present study due to limited population and time constraints
when conducting the research.

Sample size is a subjective term in qualitative studies (Creswell & Plano Clark,
2011). Qualitative research can be conducted with as few as one participant
(Sandelowski, 1996), while Morse (1994) suggested as many as 30–50 participants for a
study using grounded theory methodology. This research study was focused on a
specific, short duration event experienced by a limited population justifying a smaller
sample size (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).
The sample size for the present study was a purposive, convenience sample of six families totaling 17 individuals. Interviews and lifeline interview graphs from one family with three individuals who participated in an institutional review board approved pilot study were added to this data set. The participants of this study included six, two-parent families and one single parent families. There was a mix of families that had a single child versus multiple children. The study included families who had hosted previously and those who had only hosted once.

The final sample size for interviews and lifeline interview graphs consisted of 20 participants from seven families. Two families initially agreed to take part in the study but withdrew prior to completion. One family began the study but dropped out through lack of contact after the mother and child completed the interviews. The other family indicated their interest but was not able to coordinate a time to meet with the researcher that accommodated their schedule.

Demographics

During recruitment of participants, nine families indicated an interest in being involved in the study. After beginning the process, two families withdrew from the study by ceasing contact with the researcher. Data from six families was collected and combined with similar data collected from one family during a pilot of the present study for a total of seven host families (n = 7 families; n = 20 individuals). All participants were assigned a pseudonym selected by themselves or the researcher.

Six family groups were two-parent households. Participating parents were in their late 40’s (mother, $M = 47.2$ years; father, $M = 46.6$ years). Participating youth were in their early teens ($M = 13.3$ years). Median household income was $60,000. Educational attainment ranged from non-degree high school enrollment through PhD (see Table 4.1).
Table 3.1

Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family (Child)</th>
<th>(Mother)</th>
<th>(Father)</th>
<th>Age (years)</th>
<th>Household income</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Previous host family</th>
<th>Total number of children in family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clark family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$60,000 to $79,000</td>
<td>In school</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>$79,000</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
<td>AD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralph</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decker family</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$60,000 to $79,000</td>
<td>In school</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andres</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>$79,000</td>
<td>AD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
<td>HS, ND</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastwick family</td>
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<td>$60,000 to $79,000</td>
<td>In school</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>$79,000</td>
<td>BS</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glen</td>
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<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td>HS, D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin family</td>
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<td></td>
<td>$60,000 to $79,000</td>
<td>In school</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aiden</td>
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<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>$79,000</td>
<td>MS</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>51</td>
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<td>BS</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>In school</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>$79,000</td>
<td>HS, D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giselle</td>
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<td></td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
<td>AD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnus</td>
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<td></td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrison family</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$100,000 or more</td>
<td>In school</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>more</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able family*</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. All names are fictitious.

HS, ND = high school, no degree; HS, D = high school, degree; AD = associate’s degree; BS = bachelor’s degree; MS = master’s degree; PhD = Doctoral degree.

* Participants from pilot study, demographic information was not collected
Instruments

Three instruments were used in the present study. The first instrument was the Lifeline Interview Graph (LIG) and discussion. This was used to collect information about the longitudinal experience of the participant. Semi-structured, in-depth one-on-one interviews about the hosting experience were also used. Both the LIG and semi-structured interviews were individually completed by each family member during a conversation with the researcher. The third instrument used in this study was program evaluations collected from previous participants in the program and included individuals not interviewed as part of this study.

Sessions with study participants began with asking them to complete a LIG (see Appendix B). Following this, they were asked to discuss the positive and negative experiences hosting an exchange youth as indicated by their graph. The interview was open-ended, with the researcher providing verbal and nonverbal prompts as needed to continue the discussion.

After completing the lifeline interview graph and discussion, study participants were asked an additional series of open-ended questions about their hosting experience. The questions were constructed to encourage the study participant to provide detailed responses. An adult interview guide (see Appendix D) and youth interview guide (see Appendix E) were used for the present study. Follow-up questions and probes were used to help facilitate additional discussion. The interview questions asked were:

1. Tell me about your experience of hosting an exchange youth.
2. Tell me more about your relationship with your exchange youth.
3. Tell me about some of the good things and difficult things you experienced during the exchange.
4. Have you or your family changed from this experience? If so, how?

Validity and Reliability

Validity

Validity refers to how well a research instrument or study measures what it claims to study. Qualitative research focuses on reliability over validity to determine if the research has sufficiently convinced the reader of its accuracy, trustworthiness, and credibility (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The research that is created should be confirmable and transferable (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). A strength of qualitative research is that it produces findings that are highly credible if the researcher accurately and transparently reports what was said, interviews informed and knowledgeable individuals, only asks questions about which the participant has firsthand experience, and effectively analyzes the information (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

This research study used triangulation of data sources, peer review, articulation of researcher bias, member checking, and thick description to develop trustworthiness with the reader (Creswell, 2007). This allows the reader to “appreciate the truth of the account” (Mays & Pope, 1995, p. 111). These approaches contribute to the validity of the research.

Reliability

Reliability is a measure of the consistency and stability of an assessment tool. In qualitative research, the researcher is the analysis tool and relies on inter-rater reliability checks to ensure consistency in data coding. Qualitative research emphasizes the importance of reliable coding and the credibility of the researcher (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Guest et al., 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).
Qualitative research is rigorous and methodical but does not place the same reliance on replication as quantitative methods (Guest et al., 2012).

For the present study, reliability was created through the implementation of a stable research design. The study adhered to the specific purpose during interviews, even though the language and direction of the follow up questions and probes may have deviated. This approach to research aided in the comparative analysis of the study’s data sources (Guest et al., 2012).

Peer debriefing was used to create inter-rater reliability when conducting the present study (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). This process enabled the researcher an opportunity to work with a knowledgeable but uninvolved outside reviewer who supported and challenged (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The selected peer reviewer was a close friend and colleague who was well suited for the role of “devil’s advocate” (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, p. 308). This individual had completed their doctorate and had over 20 years of practical experience in designing and conducting quantitative and qualitative research in an academic environment. The peer reviewer was able to aid the researcher in considering alternative meanings of the data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

Transcripts representing each family role (mother, father, and child) were randomly selected. From these, selected sections were reviewed by the outside reviewer for agreement in coding. A code book indicating codes, definitions of codes, and examples of keywords was provided. Disagreement in code definitions or the application of codes resulted in discussion until agreement occurred. Modified codes or definitions
of codes resulted in all portions of the transcripts being reviewed and recoded if necessary.

Data Collection

Lifeline interview graphs (appendix B), in-depth interviews (appendix D and E), and program evaluations (appendix H) were used for the present study. All interview data was recorded and transcribed. Interviews were conducted with individuals at a place of the participant’s choosing. This included the participants’ homes, the local 4-H office, a hotel lobby, and a restaurant. Field notes were utilized to provide the researcher context for the dialogue, make note of nonverbal communication and record any interactions that might contribute to understanding (see Appendix F) (Charmaz, 2001; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Hall & Callery, 2001). Demographic information was collected from the participants using an information sheet given at the end of the interviews (see Appendix G).

Lifeline Interview Methodology

The lifeline interview methodology provides a method for visually exploring a participant’s “self-organization of past and future behavior over the course of the life” (Schroots, 2003 p. 193). The participant draws a graphical interpretation of their experiences along a horizontal axis. The vertical axis is used to denote the degree of positivity or negativity the participant experienced at the point in time indicated by the horizontal axis (see Figure 3.1).
The traditional lifeline interview graph focuses on the period from birth through death. This study uses a modification of that format which focuses on the two weeks prior to program participation, the four weeks of the exchange and the 2 weeks after exchange youth’s departure. This eight week span was selected by the researcher to focus the participant’s attention on their feelings and attitudes toward hosting to the dates immediately surrounding the homestay. This helped minimize the number of influences not related to the hosting experience that could have been affecting the participant.
This interactive graphical approach was a useful method for initiating interviews (especially with youth) and developing rapport (Backett & Alexander, 1991; Faux, Walsh, & Deatrick, 1988; Spratling, Coke, & Minick, 2012).

Participants labeled the peaks and valleys on the graphs as an introduction to further questioning about their experiences. Verbal and nonverbal prompts were used to elicit additional information from the study participants. This initial dialog and development of rapport was carried through into the semi-structured interviews. A discussion of each of these points and what led to the upswing or downturn was discussed. Figures 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 are examples of graphs from three participants from different families (representing a father, mother, and son).
Figure 3.2. Lifeline interview graph for Boomer Franklin (father).

Figure 3.3. Lifeline interview graph for Martha Harrison (mother).
Interviews

Interviews are fundamental to qualitative research, and allow for a deeper understanding of what is being studied (Creswell, 2009). Study participants were asked primary and follow-up questions that allowed them to expand upon their answers or provide clarification for the researcher. As outlined by Rubin and Rubin (2012), the main questions provided the overall structure while more penetrating questions and probes helped to interpret and clarifying the discussion. Questions were selected with the goal of obtaining rich, nuanced, and vivid information that would tell the hosting experience in the participants own words (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002; Milliken & Schreiber, 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Each family member was interviewed individually and sequentially. The other family members were not present during the interview. Consideration was given to the development of rapport with each family
member in order to facilitate an open sharing of information (Guillemin & Heggen, 2009; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Sessions with the study participants lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. In-person interviews took place either in the participant’s home or at their local 4-H office. Interview data were collected over a 2-month period, and transcription followed by data analysis began with the first interview.

All data was transcribed and then reviewed using thematic analysis methodology and an open coding approach. This process resulted in 216 identified codes from three transcripts during the first round of review. Subsequent coding rounds resulted in codes being added, removed, or grouped with a final set of 125 codes.

An outside peer reviewer who was trained and provided with a list of the identified codes reviewed selected portions of a sample of transcripts. Disagreements in coding were identified and then discussed by the researcher and outside reviewer. This discrepancy in coding was resolved through discussion until both individuals came to agreement. This resulted in recoding some of the data but did not result in the addition or deletion of codes.

Transcription. Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed by a paid transcription service. After transcription, the researcher read and checked the transcripts against the recordings for accuracy. Reviewed transcripts were read multiple times after checking to allow the researcher to become immersed in the data.

The information was coded using thematic analysis methodology. All verbal data was transcribed by an outside transcription company and reviewed by the researcher for accuracy (Braun & Clark, 2006; Bird, 2006). Data was then reviewed for segments of
information that contributed to the research being conducted. These segments were assigned names that reflected the concept being captured. The codes were then defined with keywords representing that code being included in the definition. The process of transcription and transcription review can be tedious, but it serves as a vital step of qualitative analysis (Bird, 2005). References to the actual names of the participants were removed after the transcription process was complete. All information was stored at the researcher’s home in a locked file cabinet. The information collected were only used for the present study.

**Interviewing minors.** This study included interviews with minor participants between the ages of 11-17 years. Multiple research studies have focused on the voice of youth participants and found these young people to be vital contributors to understanding (e.g., Backett & Alexander, 1991; Faux et al., 1988; Hadley, Smith, Gallo, Angst, & Knafl, 2008; Instone, 2002; Kortesluoma, Hentinen, & Nikkonen, 2003; Lowden, 2002; Spratling et al., 2012). Per institutional review board suggestion, a modified interview guide using age appropriate language was created (appendix E). Mindfulness was given to respecting the right of these youth to participate, not participate or withdraw from the study at will (Kortesluoma et al., 2003; Lowden, 2002). Parent(s) were asked to indicate their consent for their child to participate in the present study. The youth were given the opportunity to review an assent form, ask questions, and then sign if they agreed to participate.

**Program Evaluations**

Fifty-one program evaluations were obtained for use in the present study (see example in Appendix H). The surveys were collected as program evaluations over a 6-year period (2009–2014). They consisted of open response questions about the program
and program implementation. The surveys were collected anonymously and did not contain identifying information. The survey information was collected at the end of each year’s homestay. As such, the information presented was not limited by recall issues as was the case with individuals interviewed. These surveys provided additional context for understanding the host family interview data. For this reason, all available survey information was examined. Some of the survey data collected could have come from the families who participated in this study but it was not possible to match these.

**Pilot Testing**

A pilot study approved by an institutional review board was conducted using LIGs and semi-structured interviews. The data collected during this pilot study was included in the present study. Pilot studies are conducted to identify limitations of the interview instruments or methodology (Turner, 2010). The pilot test allows the researcher to modify the proposed instrument and methodology prior to conducting the research study. A pilot study is part of the qualitative research process that helps the researcher assess bias, collect background information, correctly frame questions and adapt research procedures (Creswell, 2007).

Based on the results of the pilot test, the interview guide questions were generalized to encourage more detailed responses from participants. Additional information was added to the interview guide to better explain the purpose and use of the lifeline interview graph. Additionally, the pilot testing allowed this novice researcher an opportunity to refine his interview technique prior to the bulk of data collection. This resulted in conscious effort on the part of the researcher to embrace the silence of the interview session as a method of encouraging participants to expand upon their answers and provide more nuanced, in-depth answers.
Data Analysis Procedure

Throughout the data analysis process, checks were in place to ensure the rigor of the study. This was accomplished by following established steps in utilizing thematic analysis, writing detailed memos, and using field notes and reflective journaling to create an audit trail. In addition, accuracy and thoroughness was also accomplished with the use of thick, rich description that helps the reader understand the research themes using the words of the participants.

The major steps to thematic analysis are: becoming familiar with the data, generating codes, identifying themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report (Braun & Clark, 2006). The researcher should immerse themselves in the data in order to develop a thorough and well-rounded understanding of the deeper meanings of the words of the participants (Creswell, 1994, 2005, 2007; Lichtman, 2012; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This involves multiple readings of the transcribed data and an iterative process of analysis, review, reflection and modification. This iterative and inductive process was used to identify themes and meanings from the data (Patton, 1999).

The researcher kept detailed memos related to the study throughout the process of analysis (see Appendix I). The researcher also kept a journal of his experience that included research progress, musings, and general observations (see Appendix J). The process of journaling encouraged reflexivity on the part of the researcher and was an important component of bracketing his experiences as a coordinator for this exchange program.

Through the use of field notes, research memos, and journaling, a comprehensive and transparent audit trail was created. This audit trail creates a literary map of the
methodological process that was used by the researcher (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Creswell, 2007). The transcripts, life line interview graphs, program evaluations, field notes, research memos, and journal entries were all considered sources of information that could contribute to the overall understanding of the data. The researcher used QSR International’s NVivo 10™ qualitative data analysis software for data management and to aid in the coding process.

A detailed code book was created that included operationalized definitions of codes, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and potential keywords (see Appendix J; Guest et al., 2012). A descriptive and precise codebook gives easier access to the meanings of the identified codes, increasing data reliability (Guest et al., 2012). As the data was analyzed and codes refined, the code book went through several iterations.

The process of coding and creating the code book is a critical part of the analysis process that aids the researcher in categorizing the data. An open approach to coding was employed with the goal of creating as many segment of meaningful, relevant text as possible (Braun & Clark, 2006). These text segments were grouped and refined throughout the process. The final version of the codebook contained 125 codes that were used in the development of the present study’s prevailing themes.

Once the data is coded, the next step of the process is the development of the themes. The codes were sorted and re-sorted in order to separate them into distinct groups. These groups form the basis for thematic development. Following this process, the themes were combined or separated to better illuminate the host family’s experience. This was a two-part process consisting of reviewing the individual codes in relation to the themes and reviewing the themes in relation to the entire data set (Braun & Clark, 2006).
The last phase of thematic analysis consists of formalizing the themes and reporting them. The researcher has sought to create themes that succinctly but thoroughly summarize the hosting experience in relation to the identified research questions. These themes were compiled, presented, and discussed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 of this document.

**Ethical Considerations**

After data collection, responses were coded using common themes that emerged from the thematic analysis. Participants included families that had participated in this exchange program in 2012 and 2013. All research involves a degree of risk, but this was minimal for the present study. All efforts were made to minimize risks to the researcher, process, and, most importantly, to the participants.

Due to the small sample size, there was a risk of identification with the study’s participants. Participants were made aware of this risk before taking part in the study. Identifying information was removed from the transcripts. Study participants were given the option of selecting their own pseudonym for use when reporting this research. When conducting interviews, participants were allowed to select a time and location of their choosing. When interviewing the minors participating in the present study, the researcher used a location in sight of the parent or kept the door to the interview room propped open. There was no deception involved in the present study.

Informed consent was obtained from the adult participants of the present study (see Appendix L). These parents also provided their consent for their minor children to participate in the present study. Assent was obtained from the minor participants in the present study (see Appendix M). The Institutional Review Board (IRB) Application was created, sent for review and accepted before the research data was gathered for the
present study. This helped to ensure that all research regulations were followed, and participant rights were protected.

Data Storage

The informed consent form, assent form, and all data collected were kept private to the extent allowed by law. Physical records were kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s home. Electronic records are kept on a single computer’s hard drive. At the completion of the present study, all electronic data were removed from the computer and stored in a locked file cabinet. Privacy was protected to the extent allowed by law. The University of Kentucky Institutional Review Board is able to review the project records at any time to ensure the research project was carried out correctly.

Summary

Chapter 3 provided an overview of the present study. This includes the methodology of thematic analysis, the purpose statement and research questions, the research design, the population and sample of participants, validity and reliability, data collection, data analysis, data storage, and ethical considerations. Through the use of this research methodology, the researcher was able to obtain data from the participants that told the positives and negatives of their experiences hosting an exchange youth. Using the LIG to show the “lows” of hosting, family members were challenged with communication, loss, and stress. The LIG also showed “highs” indicating hosting was an overall positive experience that led to greater familial communication and greater cultural appreciation. These findings are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

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CHAPTER FOUR:

FINDINGS

The purpose of the present study was to utilize qualitative thematic analysis to better understand the experiences of Kentucky families who hosted a middle school aged Japanese youth through a four-week exchange program. The researcher believed that a better understanding of this topic would contribute to the currently limited literature on short-term exchange programs.

This chapter presents the key findings distilled from 20 lifeline interview graphs (LIGs), 20 in-depth interviews and 51 program evaluations. Qualitative analysis software was used as a tool for data management as well as a method for data analysis. Seven major themes emerged from the present study:

1. Communication was a challenge that changed the relationships within the family and between the family member and exchange youth.

2. Anxiety, stress, and sacrifice were commonly indicated as an outcome of program participation by the host family.

3. Host families believed they are participating in a unique and privileged experience for themselves and the exchange youth.

4. Participation in the homestay was a period of reflection and personal growth for the host family.

5. The relationships between host family members were formed, changed and developed over the course of the exchange.

6. Departure created a very real sense of loss for the family and required a reestablishing of a new “normal”.

57
7. All participants learned about and gained appreciation of their own and other cultures.

Selected outliers that provided insight into the experience of hosting an exchange youth are included in this presentation of findings.

Through the use of “thick description” (Denzin, 1989/2001) the researcher has provided the reader a method for better understanding the experience of the participants. The experience of the participants is emphasized through illustrative quotes that attempt to capture the complexity of the subject matter. This chapter is organized with demographic information presented first, followed by an analysis of the graphical data collected using the lifeline interview methodology (LIM) and concluding with the presentation of analysis of the interview and evaluation data.

**Evaluations**

The responses to the evaluation data were analyzed using thematic analysis methodology. This data analysis was combined with the data from the lifeline interview graph discussion and the in-depth interviews and is represented in the identified themes.

**Lifeline Interview Methodology**

Each of the individuals interviewed (n = 20) completed a lifeline interview methodology graph (LIG) to document the positive and negative aspects of their hosting experience during the two weeks prior to the exchange youth’s arrival, the four weeks of the homestay and the two weeks after their departure. On the graph, “valleys” represented times of negativity associated with the exchange (e.g., worry, stress, illness). “Peaks” indicated periods of positivity associated with the exchange/homestay (e.g., happiness, fun, bonding). This created a graphical representation of the experience from
the viewpoint of the research participant. This also served as an aid in recalling memories of the experience (Belli, 1998; Reimer & Matthes, 2007).

**Portrait of a Homestay**

An analysis of positive and negative experiences by time period (before arrival, during the homestay, and after departure) indicated more peaks and valleys during the homestay period. An average number of “peaks” and “valleys” for each time period were calculated and found that participants experienced one high and one low during the pre-arrival and post departure time periods. They experienced three “peaks” and two “valleys” during the homestay (see Table 4.2). An examination of the graphical data from each research participant failed to indicate a pattern in the number of positive and negative experiences based on family role (mother, father, or child).

Using the information provided by the lifeline interview graphs, a composite of the experience was created (see Figure 4.4). This is one interpretation of the experiences of hosting as indicated by the study’s participants. The composite information alone implies that the period prior to the arrival of the exchange youth was one of excitement for the host family but as the arrival time approached, they experienced more stress. The arrival of the exchange youth in the host family’s home marked a lessening of their stress and return to feelings of excitement.
Table 4.2

*Lifeline Interview Graph Peaks and Valleys*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Mothers (n = 7)</th>
<th>Fathers (n = 6)</th>
<th>Son/Daughter (n = 7)</th>
<th>Average*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-arrival</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peaks</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valleys</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homestay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peaks</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valleys</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Departure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peaks</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valleys</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. n = 20.*

*Figure 4.4. Composite lifeline interview graph. This graph was created using the average number of peaks or valleys indicated by the participants for each time period. It represents an amalgam of the experiences of the parents and children who participated in the present study.*
During the homestay, participants’ negative and positive experiences had a distinct pattern – more negative experiences were reported at the beginning of the stay while participants mostly indicated a period of positive association toward the middle and end of the program. Departure did result in a significant downward turn as the family said goodbye to their exchange youth. This returned to a more positive position after the families reported resuming their normal routine and establishing communication through mail or social media.

**Primary Study Themes and Subthemes**

The LIGs set the stage for interviews to further explore both the negative and positive experiences along the exchange time experience. Based on these interviews, seven theme and five subthemes were identified (see Figure 4.5).
Table 4.3

*Study themes and subthemes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Communication was a challenge that changed the relationships within the family and between the family member and exchange youth. | 2.1. Program expectations and outcomes  
2.2. Anxiety, stress, and sacrifice caused by changes in family routines, dynamics, and home life.  
2.3. Exchange youth and their interactions  
2.4. Interactions with school or schooling  
2.5. Worthwhile sacrifice and hard work |
| 2. Anxiety, stress, and sacrifice were commonly indicated as an outcome of program participation by the host family. | |
| 3. Host families believed they were participating in a unique and privileged experience for themselves and exchange youth. | |
| 4. Participation in the homestay was a period of reflection and personal growth for the host family. | |
| 5. The relationships between host family members were formed, changed, and developed over the course of the exchange. | 5.1. Deciding to host.  
5.2. Relationships between family members.  
5.3. Relationships between family members and exchange youth. |
| 6. Departure created a very real sense of loss for the family and required a re-establishing of a new “normal”. | |
| 7. All participants learned about and gained appreciation of their own and other cultures. | |

Outlying Themes
- Father made a surprising contribution to hosting the exchange youth.
- Idealization of Japan.
**Theme 1: Communication**

In exploring the negative valleys leading up to and during the exchange homestay, participants reported anxiety in both interviews and on the program evaluations related to the difficulty in communications with the exchange youth, and how that difficulty ultimately impacted the relationships between the exchange youth and host family, and of the host family. The overwhelming majority of those interviewed (18 of 20 [90%]) indicated communication was a barrier. The Japanese youth who participated in this program have limited spoken English competency. The Kentucky families who participated usually have even less proficiency in Japanese. Additionally, Japanese culture places a value on only demonstrating tasks where the exchange youth has perceived competency. For the exchange youth participating in this the homestay, this was a deterrent to practicing their English. Communication was an ongoing challenge that stressed the family members and created anxiety. The stress of communication was compounded by the additional stressors of changing family routine and adjustment to household dynamics as indicated by the Double ABC-X model (McCubbin & Patterson, 1982).

It was definitely different . . . because not all the time did you understand what he needed or what he, um, needed from you. You know, ‘cause it—there was just that, at first, there was that barrier, you know . . . like how are we going to communicate with you if you don’t understand . . . or how much do you understand and how much do we understand you? Um, so that . . . took a few days. (Maria, mother, no age)

I can’t communicate with him. And I will say, I mean, I know there’s different levels of . . . English that they know when they come over. [He] knew very little English. It was . . . communication was a big gap. And I think it was a struggle to Bruce . . . so you had that little bit of a struggle trying to like, we’ve gotta figure out a way to make this work, you know . . . and I wish I would have understood, I wish I would have better understood that thinking process. But because I couldn’t communicate with him, you know. (Franci, mother, 50)
Just get the Japanese kids talking more . . . I didn’t feel like we taught him that much English! He remained hesitant to use English . . . it would be nice if there were a game or something that we all could use to help “break the ice” and help our Japanese delegates learn more useful English. I really felt that the language barrier never went away . . . that it prohibited real conversation. (Evaluation, 2009)

As a result of these communication difficulties, family members had to develop coping mechanisms. These coping mechanisms were diverse and creative. For example, Alexa (mother, 56) talked about providing “English lessons…we were saying out [practicing common] words we usually use,” “pointing at things and using online or electronic dictionaries.” Despite the difficulties in communication, families found ways to make it work. Joe (father, 35) said, “. . . we made it work. We found phrases that he knew, we knew and everything else we just, you know . . . a nod, a wink, a hug says a lot.”

As indicated by the Double ABC-X model of Family Stress (McCubbin & Patterson, 1982) families responded to the challenges of communication by developing adaptive coping mechanisms through greater mutual reliance and increased family communication. They became better, more regular communicators and demonstrated frequent and effective family interaction.

I think it changed us all . . . we learned how to work out our problems together more. Like, we learned to talk to each other about things more. Like at first, with the [exchange youth] thing, I was like afraid to tell my mom because I didn’t want to be like mean and be like I don’t like her [host siblings American sister] around a lot. And so I finally told her, and we became open with each other, more, and I wasn’t as shy to tell her about, like, things that happened . . . me and my sister talk more to our parents about our problems or if we want to change something. If we don’t like something that’s going on we feel more open. (Susie, daughter, 12)

[Having an exchange youth] made me try to explain things at their level. So . . . I’m not yelling or so they’re thinking I’m yelling . . . I think it made me kind of sit down and be on their level as far as understanding
consequences and how I want to relay a message to them . . . it’s received better if it comes in a softer tone . . . making it all understandable, kind of thing because, you know . . . sometimes I had to change my words ten times to get her to know what I’m trying to say . . . trying to take time to really say what you want them to hear. (Alexa, mother, 56)

Well, uh, he really integrated into the family. We started doing more stuff together, and it really brought . . . I mean he was wonderful with the girls and especially . . . even with . . . our baby . . . he loved playing with her, and he was just . . . he was even helpful around the house. He would help with chores and stuff like that, and it was just a pleasure having him. And, uh, it just change the mood of . . . everybody very much so. (Magnus, father, 33)

Host families and the exchange youth are encouraged to remain in contact with each other at the conclusion of the experience. Family feelings became more positive about the end of the homestay after regular communication with the exchange youth resumed when they returned to Japan. While this study did not explore the experiences of the host family beyond the two weeks after the exchange, study participants indicated that communication between them and the exchange youth became less frequent over time.

But we really haven’t kept in touch much . . . I’m a little disappointed in that from my girls’ standpoint because, you know, I think it should be the girls [keeping in touch]. I like to expose the girls to any kind of opportunity . . . and I thought how cool would that be to keep that relationship up and maybe we could visit. So you know, if you don’t keep the relationship up there’s no sense in going all the way around the world to see someone you met for four weeks. (Alexa, mother, 56)

**Theme 2: Anxiety, Stress, and Sacrifice**

As the valleys from the LIGs were further explored, 20 out of 20 (100%) of participants reported stress, worry, and anxiety. The causes of this worry varied from changes in family dynamics to concerns about how the Japanese youth would get along/interact.
Subtheme 2.1: Program expectations and outcomes. Prior to the arrival of the exchange youth, host family members indicated anxiety or worry about preparing for the homestay. The host families wanted to make sure they were adhering to the exchange programs guidelines.

This often centered on the actual pick-up of the exchange youth. For some, the anticipation was a significant source of stress.

It’s always a mixed bag of feelings. It’s like the kids are all excited, but they’re tired. They’re also a little tentative, nervous, um, so there’s always, I don’t know. There’s just an initial feelings of uneasiness, it’s kind of like, um, you know, they’re looking at you and you’re looking at them and like is this gonna work? And so, it’s exciting but it’s a nervous excitement. (Boomer, father, 51)

For others, the location of, and travel to and from, the pickup site caused anxiety. The exchange youth were picked up in Louisville, KY in a large metropolitan city. Many of the families came from rural areas of the state and were not practiced in driving in heavy traffic or large cities. Having the pickup in Louisville, KY caused anxiety for these individuals and contributed to the overall stress of their experience.

Subtheme 2.2: Anxiety, stress, and sacrifice caused by changes in family routines, dynamics, and home life. The Double ABC-X model of Family stress predicts that individuals can experience stress from positive and anticipated events (eustress) (McCubbin & Patterson, 1982). While the majority of those interviewed indicated they were excited about participating in the program by hosting an exchange youth (15 of 20, [70%]), it was overall a stressful experience because of language barriers, anxiety, and changes in family routine. This was reflected by the mothers and children, and, to a lesser degree, the fathers participating in the study.

We were just looking forward to . . . the . . . experience and having her over. And things were pretty much the norm, nothing, you know big ups
or downs, pretty much the norm...we were really looking forward to having her. So it started up a little bit the closer it got, and that was pretty much it. Nothing exceptional or nothing... I was thinking there was a lot we could learn from her, a lot she can learn from us, and I was just really, uh, hoping for a good interaction between the kids. (Ralph, father, 64)

These feelings of excitement were coupled with feelings of anxiety over the arrival of the exchange youth.

It was an excitement that I saw him coming since it’d be new to my family that year...[we were] making arrangements and...events we were gonna do with him...[and] to show him how America really is...and like when we came there, it was like since he was my age, closer to my age, on the way there [to pick up] I was kinda thinking about what...was he gonna do the first day that he came? I thought like how would he act? How would his, uh, mind think? (Andres, son, 12)

Study participants were concerned with how having an exchange youth would change the family schedule, whether or not they were prepared for the arrival, how the exchange youth would interact with others, correct behavior, and how their family would be perceived. Having another person in the home made it seem like “you don’t get to get your normal stuff done.”

The normal role expectations of family members changed with the inclusion of the exchange youth. Symbolic interactionism indicates that roles individuals have within the family are created through shared interactions (Blumer, 1969). Accepting the exchange youth into the family necessitated the development of a new meaning to common family roles. This often resulted in the host sibling taking a more prominent role in helping the exchange youth adapt to living with the family.

For the host parents, taking responsibility for the exchange youth was somewhat stressful because they considered it an act of trust on behalf of the Japanese parent and because host families wanted the exchange youth to have a positive experience in
Kentucky, feel welcomed by the host family, and be at ease in their home. As a result, there was a strong sense of needing to be a “good parent,” “supplying a safe place for a child to have a wonderful experience” and doing things the “right way.”

It was originally her [host mother] idea, and I was—I was onboard for it . . . um, maybe not at first. I was a little hesitant just because we’re bringing a stranger into our house. Um, this is going to be really awkward. How is this going to work out with the rest of our schedule? And it worked wonderfully, and I would do it again. And that was, after the first time, even though our first time, uh, we had an exchange youth, he had, you know . . . he had some issues, mostly, he was out of sorts and far from home, and he was, you know had some emotional issues that, you know, we weren’t necessarily prepared to deal with. But we worked through those and, you know, I did my best, as a father figure, to help him out. I brought him [out] . . . make him feel more comfortable. (Magnus, father, 33)

Well, you know you’re responsible for someone who’s not your own child, and I think sometimes people that for granted that . . . of their own children, you know, when they shouldn’t obviously. But they do. And all of a sudden when it’s not your child, and you’ve gotta send that child back they’re gonna be responsible for telling on you or telling [laughs] what happened, you know that everyone’s on their best behavior. (Tina, mother, 52)

Despite the anxiety, worry, and stress associated with changes in the host family’s schedule and home life, it is important to note some families indicated that they did not change their day to day schedule in a significant manner (9 of 20, [40%]). Alexa (mother, 56) said, “we didn’t try to do anything special or more than we usually do, just so she would get a good feeling of what it’s like every day.” Franci (mother, 50) said they, “. . . gave him [exchange youth] his space, and then, yet, you know, tried to include him into everything that we were doing but not change our lifestyle for him . . . because we, we never changed anything in our lifestyle while he was here. We just continued doing what we normally did.”
Subtheme 2.3: Exchange youth and their interactions. The mental and physical well-being of the exchange youth was important to the hosting family members. Hosting family members were concerned about the exchange youth being “jetlagged,” experiencing too many “stressors,” becoming injured or ill, or just not having “fun.”

Several of the host parents in the study transferred their own feelings about having their middle school aged child in another country to the Japanese exchange youth. Glen (father, 50) said, “my biggest worry might have been, is he gonna be mature enough to stay away from his family for that long with little to no communication.” This translated to worry about homesickness.

I was worried that he would be homesick and that he would miss his mom and miss his dad and his brothers and wasn’t really sure how it was gonna go for those four weeks being away from your family and in a foreign country and on a totally different time schedule and, you know, different foods and different temp [temperature] . . . you know, everything is different, and I just wasn’t sure how he was going to adapt. (Maria, mother, no age)

How the exchange youth would interact with and understand American culture was also a concern. Ben (son, 12) said, “. . . one of my biggest fears . . . and this was in one of my nightmares . . . was that he would forget Japanese and know entirely English and go home and not be able to speak Japanese anymore.”

Subtheme 2.4: Interactions with schools or schooling. Of the seven host families interviewed for the present study, six placed their children in public or private school, and one provided home education. For those in public or private school, the dates of the exchange program overlapped with the school year. This necessitated seeking permission from the local school board for the exchange youth to attend school as a visitor for some or all of the time they were in Kentucky. Some schools granted this
permission easily. Other schools required more information before granting attendance or refused outright.

When the Japanese exchange youth was able to attend school, host family members worried whether or not they would be “bored” or “uncomfortable being in some school that you don’t know anything about and have[ing] to shadow someone” (Evaluation, 2010). A common request was to “have them come earlier in the summer . . . so the schools didn’t have to be involved” (Evaluation 2009). Some parents chose to send their children to school while keeping the exchange youth at home.

He is very advanced in his studies, and so he was, he was bored at school and . . . once they started doing work . . . he didn’t want to go . . . . at first I’m thinking of mom instinct is like well you got to go to school. But then I [thought] . . . he’s not really here for school or the educational process he’s here . . . to learn about the culture and what . . . it’s like to be in American or in Kentucky. (Maria, mother, no age)

Subtheme 2.5: Worthwhile sacrifice and hard work. Families that participated in this exchange made sacrifices in order to financially, physically and mentally support another child. Some parents perceived hosting as being “burdensome” for their own child. For the older host youth in the study, Bruce (son, 19), having to act as a driver for the exchange youth was a challenge. Bruce (son, 19) was not able to spend as much time and focus on soccer because he was caring for the exchange youth.

It was the start of my senior year; soccer practices were starting up. [I] had to drive him to soccer and then I did, he was at soccer. I had to make, take care of two people and make sure he was alright, [I] didn’t want him to feel lonely or anything. So I gave him a soccer ball, and it was just the fact that I was driving him everywhere . . . I was like, [I] had to be a lot more careful about driving . . . because when I drive by myself, I just don’t’ think about it. (Bruce, son, 19)

One family participated in the 4-H shooting sports program, where they learned to use firearms. The Japanese exchange program does not allow exchange youth to take
part in these activities. The host family could not take part in this regular and anticipated part of their normal routine. This resulting in the family having to sacrifice their involvement in a program that was important and meaningful to them. Magnus (father, 33) said, “. . . that was a big something for him [Ben, son, 12]. He had wanted to share but couldn’t, and I think that was a little frustrating because that was something big and close to his heart was target shooting. And it’s very much an American thing to do.” Martha (mother, 45) said, “Mark (son, 11) was having to get used to making sacrifices for another person, and he wasn’t used to that, and, you know, it’s good for him I think, you know, in terms of his character, but it was also difficult.”

Despite the perceived sacrifice and hard work, participants indicated that the program was worthwhile, and the demands were worth the benefits of participation. The short duration of this exchange program contributed to this feeling that anything could be endured for four weeks. With that in mind, several study participants indicated that they would like the program to last longer. They felt there was not enough time to accomplish all the activities, trips and events that were planned. Participants remarked, “Time went by very fast,” and, “I would rather it have been longer.”

**Theme 3: Host Families Believed They Are Participating in a Unique and Privileged Experience for Themselves and the Exchange Youth**

As the peaks were explored and host families reflected on the positive aspects of the program, many reported high regard for being involved in a unique or special experience. They believed that they created a special exchange experience for themselves and for the exchange youth that could not be replicated the youth returned to Japan.
This is a reflection of the desire for the host family to create a sense of
“specialness” around the exchange. These are often reflective of stereotypes that
Americans have of Japanese and Japanese culture. Giselle (mother, 33) said, “I expected
to be able to nurture a little bit more than I was able to because they’re not very touchy
. . . I think the [exchange youth] appreciated hugs a little bit more by the end.” Other
participants shared similar experiences.

And I did not know that they don’t do that a whole lot in Japan. They’re
not, they’re . . . it’s not that dad’s detached. Dad doesn’t come home and
throw a ball. Dad works, he comes home, he eats, he goes to bed . . .
where I was constantly involved in all, everything the kids were
doing...we were at a church softball game and I was like, “[Japanese
delegate], do you want to bat? “Yeah, this is the one thing you can do.”
(Joe, father, 35)

It was so awesome for him to see this little newborn baby. And I
remembered, like, how low the birthrates are in Japan right now and how
many people are choosing pets over children. You know, how many
people are just not able to have children or deciding not to have children
over there. So—and then, how many only children there are . . . and I
know he’s [emphasis added] not. But even him having younger siblings, it
still seemed like he had that same amazement and wonder about . . . a
baby . . . Like, I got the impression he never held one before. (Giselle,
mother, 33)

He was kinda quiet. I don’t think he really knew how to . . . interact.
Because I guess the mom in his relationship at home is a little different. I
do n’t know if she gets involved as much or . . . expresses her feelings, I
don’t know. And I kind of am like . . . expressive and hold conversation
and find out his interest and . . . try to take him shopping and see what he
needed and try to get him things . . . or do things . . . and I don’t know . . .
it was just different. (Maria, mother, no age)

Joe (father, 35) said, “Because we had an awesome experience. I mean we had
probably one of the best one last year, so this is when he arrived. This was really good
. . . and I mean it’s not being conceited . . . I think we had the best host family delegate
visit of anyone here.” Helen (mother, no age) said, “. . . I think we bonded right away.
I don’t know . . . I’m sure that probably doesn’t always happen.”
Theme 4: Participation in the Homestay Was a Period of Reflection and Personal Growth for the Host Family

The LIG indicated initial feelings of negativity during the homestay with a movement toward more positive feelings. For the host families, overcoming the challenges of hosting an exchange youth, learning more about other cultures and opening their homes to another person for a month created an environment that offered substantial potential for personal growth. Participants indicated they learned courage (i.e., “it’s worth it to take some risks”), respect (i.e., he “[son] realizes that being disrespectful is not all that”), patience (i.e., “I know I got more patient with people in general”), confidence (i.e., “[I’m] not so afraid to let the language barrier be the problem”), and a willingness to try new things.

The participants of the present study documented this personal growth in a variety of ways.

Our daughter has always been shy and quiet. With our delegate being with her 24/7, she is much more social now. We as parents only have one child at home, and it blossomed our family to share our life with someone else. (Evaluation, 2013)

Like it taught me a good deal of responsibility because I had to . . . like I was being like a big brother in a way. And I was always the little brother that everyone always looked after, and I finally had someone to look after and like in a sense of responsibility. So I think it was good in a sense of responsibility. (Bruce, son, 19)

I think Mark (son, 11) is better at recognizing—okay, you know, we are in this situation with a third person in the house, and we are going to do things a little differently . . . I think he’s a little more adaptable in that regard . . . my niece just left about five days ago . . . so we did things differently with her and everything, and I think he was a little more accepting of that. . . . I mean maybe before [exchange youth] came somebody would visit and sort of everything would go on hold. But you know, [exchange youth] was here for four weeks, we can’t put everything on hold. So Mark still had to practice piano . . . .we don’t put things on hold. Mark still has this thing he has to do and chores and what not. So I think he is a little more—he kind of gets that . . . he is more gracious about
understanding that we are going to be doing things differently with this person, and he doesn’t get to call the shots. (Martha, mother, 45)

Mark (11), Martha’s (mother, 45) son, acknowledged a change in himself as well by saying, “Um, I didn’t really think about myself. . . while he was there I didn’t really think about me that much.” Regular interaction with a non-English speaker from a different culture helped participants to become more open minded. The participants tried new foods, experienced new customs and learned new words in a different language.

I think it made me more open to . . . people because I would really have to adjust, you know, my life and you . . . do have to step out of your comfort zone. You’re bringing someone in your home, not just as a boarder, but as someone who’s going to be there with your family all the time. And a lot of your old habits have to out . . . the window. (Magnus, father, 33)

I learned a lot more. I was more open to people probably when she [exchange youth] was around and to new things. Because we were all like some things we were both learning about. Like about sometimes her heritage or why she does things or like when we go to new places and if we try new foods . . . it was like we both kind of learned . . . I probably am a little bit more open to people. I’m still a little shy but I’m like, I’m more open. (Susie, daughter, 12)

Participants in the exchange program felt like it was a fun experience that would be difficult to surpass. Andres (son, 12) had “a fun time having a visit, having a Japanese exchange youth as a visitor.” Aiden (son, 14) felt he had “learned about their way of life and had fun doing it.” Ben (son, 12) said, “all I’ll remember is how much fun we had and what we liked to do together and how we reacted to each other and stuff. That’s probably what I’ll remember.”

Theme 5: The Relationships between host family members Were Formed, Changed, and Developed Over the Course of the Exchange

Another positive area of exploration came from discussion of family relationships. The exchange program encourages host families to think of their exchange youth as a member of the family. Host families are encouraged to involve the exchange
youth in doing household chores, attending family functions, and taking part in religious or cultural celebrations. Terms such as “host mother/father” or “host brother/sister” are also encouraged when referring to the experience. Japanese youth participating in the homestay were assigned a specific host sibling of the same sex and approximate age to foster this development of a familial relationship. Additionally, the close relationship and constant presence of the Japanese youth allows the opportunity for a family-like relationship to develop.

The majority of participants indicated that they viewed the Japanese youth they hosted as a member of the family (18 of 20, [90%]). The introduction of a “new” family member strains existing relationships as role expectations shift (Blumer, 1969). In the case of the participants interviewed, this strain actually served to strengthen the already existing relationships between family members indicating bona adaptation under stress (McCubbin & Patterson, 1982). The strengthening of existing familial relationships begins with the decision making process to host a Japanese youth. In further exploration of how family relationships were formed within the exchange, participants discussed their decision to host, relationships between family members, and the relationships between family members and the exchange youth.

Subtheme 5.1: Deciding to host. All of the families in the present study discussed hosting an exchange youth as a family unit (7 of 7, [100%]). While some individuals were more vested in the experience than others, the decision was unanimously made before participating. In all cases, it was either the mother or child who indicated their desire to participate as a host family. None of the seven host families had the father initiate the application process.
Well, my mom told me it was a fun thing to do, like, and then she talked me into it and I said yes. . . we had a small meeting about it and the she told us like . . . what they do and stuff and I liked it, and then my sister and dad were ok with it . . . so we decided to do it. (Aiden, 14, son)

Well, my wife was the first one that brought it up. And, um, she thought it would be a wonderful experience for the kids, and it was something, even as a girl, she always wanted. She heard about the program, [and] though it would be great. (Magnus, father, 33)

I thought, you know, that would be pretty cool because Mark (son, 11) and I would like to travel some day and right now, well, we are getting to the point where we can travel, but at the time we can’t afford to travel internationally. It has always been my sort of partial desire to live abroad for a year with Mark and have him experience another culture as a child because I think kids are more flexible, and they can interact with other kids more easily than once you are grown up doing the same kind of time, so I kind of had in the back my mind it would be really cool to do that. (Martha, mother, 45)

Because Cassie’s (daughter, no age) the one who wanted to do this . . . well, I guess it was her and I both . . . I had heard about it and never really, but then when you passed out the flyers to us . . . we were looking and when we got home she said, “you know, maybe we should do this” and I said, maybe but we have to ask, you know, have to make sure Dad’s on board. (Helen, mother, no age)

**Subtheme 5.2: Relationships between family members.** Developing familial relationships with someone living in the home also encouraged further development of existing relationships between family members. The majority of the study participants indicated that they became closer as a family as a result of hosting an exchange youth (15 of 20, [75%]). During the exchange, families were more likely to participate in activities together as they planned special experiences for their exchange youth.

We went out to . . . family things, we went to restaurants and we would . . . talk to each other more and we did more activities that got use to be more interactive with each other . . . we all made pizza together . . . [from] scratch and we all went to [restaurant]. We did activities more than we would usually . . . that was like a special thing. I liked it. Because usually my mom’s busy sometimes or my dad and so, we didn’t get to do a lot of family stuff. It would usually be my mom and me and
my sister or my dad, me and my sister. So I actually liked it because we were more interactive with each other. (Susie, daughter, 12)

I don’t think they realize it yet, the kids. [Daughter] might a little bit, but I still don’t think she would, though. But I actually think it brought them closer, you know. Well, you know, even my perspective . . . this is family and family’s important stuff . . . it just kind of reemphasized, you know, this is family and, I and I enjoyed the family coming together. (Glen, father, 50)

I think we got closer as a family in a way because we, I spent more time out in the living room instead of coped up in my room playing videogames. Uh, we didn’t’ really argue as much, like me and my sisters, because we didn’t want him to see us arguing. Uh, I think we, overall, we just got closer as a family. (Bruce, son, 19)

I think it brought us closer together a little bit more. Obviously, we’re a family. We are together, but I think it really made us work together for a common goal, and that common goal was [exchange youth] . . . and to make him feel at home. And the girls still ran around and played and acted crazy, and I still went to work and the sun still rose. Everything still happened the same way, but we took account, with everything we did, [exchange youth] and how this will affect him. How will he feel about this? (Magnus, father, 33)

A few families indicated (2 of 7, [29%]) that the relationship between the host father and host sibling had improved as a result of the homestay. “I guess we’re closer, there wasn’t really big of a change [sic].” (Susie, daughter, 12) “We [Aiden and his father]. . . like started hanging out more.” (Aiden, 14, son) The majority of families (4 of 7, [58%]) indicated a positive change in the relationship between the host mother and host child as a result of the homestay.

Uh, well it got stronger. . . . Like, well when we had him [exchange youth] . . . we all had to . . . communicate more. So . . . when he left, we talked a lot more and hung out more than we usually did . . . I think it’s still going on. (Aiden, 14, son)

Especially, like, with my mom. Because my mom is like, she’s . . . my number one go to person for . . . everything over pretty much anybody. So, and even me and my dad . . . because he works a lot you know, I don’t always get to see him. But we got closer. And I can still feel the strength
there. Even sometimes when we are . . . at each other’s throat about the
dumbest stuff we’re still that close. (Cassie, daughter, no age)

One of the families also indicated that participation in the exchange program
strenthened the relationship between the family’s two sisters.

[Sister] and Susie got along a little better and worked together a little
better . . . and both really tried to help [exchange youth] feel . . .
comfortable and stuff. So there was probably a little more cooperation, a
little more, uh, teamwork, between our kids and her than there are usually.
(Ralph, father, 64)

While the majority of families (5 of 7, [71%]) already had multiple children, two
families only had single children. Cassie (daughter, no age) and Mark (son, 11),
experienced having a sibling for the first time. They had different responses to the
exchange experience. Mark (son, 11) was not enthusiastic about the idea of having a
brother in his life (as a result of his hosting experience) while Cassie (daughter, no age)
said, “having that sister was like, it was, amazing. Because . . . she was like, a constant in
my life for 28 days.”

For the parents, hosting an exchange youth allowed them the experience of having
more children. When asked what he learned from this experience, Joe (father, 35)
quickly answered,

“That we wanted more kids . . . children in our house . . . I felt like that
we needed to do more for children who don’t have a mother or father . . .
we knew then and there that we could take in any child and . . . it’s just not
an issue to us.” (Joe, father, 35)

Study participants also felt like their children became a better sibling or child as a
result of the hosting experience. One participant said specifically that their son was a
better big brother as a result of the example of the exchange youth. Giselle (mother, 33)
said, “I don’t think he’s forgotten anything that [exchange youth] showed him . . . of how
to be a good big brother.”
There was only one incident where the hosting experience placed a documented negative strain on the existing relationship between spouses. This was the case for the Harrison family. The mother, Martha (45), is a single mother who shares custody of their son with her ex-husband. When asked about his reaction to the exchange she said,

He was a little ticked at me, you know, for basically signing him up for this without, well, I didn’t tell him and I didn’t consult with him but he was a little annoyed that, you know, he was going to have a role in this but, I mean, he is that way with anything. (Martha, mother, 45)

**Subtheme 5.3: Relationships between family members and exchange youth.**

As an outcome of the homestay, the family and the exchange youth indicated that they became closer, shared more quality time together, and identified each other as close friends or family.

During the homestay, the participants in the study began to feel connected to the exchange youth as they grew closer and their relationship developed over time. The LIGs of the participants showed greater “peaks” in the positive range as the homestay progressed. This connection between the host family members and the exchange youth was both explicitly and implicitly indicated.

I think it was actually a really good relationship. They all accepted each other, and they were all nice around each other . . . my dad would talk to [exchange youth sometimes, and they just talked and to my mom and stuff. We talk about what we’re going to do the next day. We watched movies together and sometimes talk. (Susie, daughter, 12)

I think she did fine . . . I felt like she respected me . . . and, you know, she seemed like a really good kid where I didn’t—I could trust her, you know, like if I left them alone without anybody—any other adults there, I think they did fine. Um, but I, I would say that . . . we bonded. We had a nice relationship while she was here. (Alexa, mother, 56)

By the end of the four weeks, you know, we were definitely growing in our relationship where . . . I could talk to him a little bit more and that I think he knew that I really cared for him . . . in the end I don’t really know
how he felt. Like, I know how I felt, and I felt like he was one of the family. Um, and I hope that the felt the same. (Maria, mother, no age)

They were like brothers, closer than brothers. It was—it was amazing. It was by the time the—you know—the first 24 hours; they were glued together. Whenever one went, the other one went and, yeah, they had their disagreements through the—through the whole deal but never like most kids now where they just get ridiculous with each other. It was never like that, and it was never one sided . . . he was as close to Andres as he is his own brothers. (Joe, father, 35)

The developing relationships created a redefined sense of family between the hosts and exchange youth. The overwhelming majority (19 of 20, [95%]) of the participants interviewed reported feeling like the exchange youth was a close member of the family. The LIGs of the participants showed increasing positivity toward the end of the homestay. A discussion of this trend indicated that the host family members were becoming more familiar and accepting of the exchange youth. Berry’s (1980) theory of acculturation indicates that integration is one outcome of the interaction between a minority and majority group. In the case of the exchange family, they perceived an integration of their culturally different exchange youth into their family structure.

The feelings of familial closeness to the exchange youth varied for the family members. Many identified the exchange youth as a close member of the family using phrases such as “they were like brothers,” “our new daughter,” “family in Japan,” and “it’s like being reunited with an old family member.” Others indicated a more distant familial relationship, likening the exchange youth to a “cousin . . . you hadn’t ever seen before” and “kind of like cousin status.” Many participants devoted a significant portion of their interview discussion to describing the relationship they saw between themselves and the exchange youth.

I was surprised at how much love I felt for him as if he had been my child since the day he was born. I mean I knew—I know my personality. Maria
and I love children, but it was like there was a strong bond there. He knew it, and I knew it. He wasn’t afraid to share it. He would get up every morning, and he’d come in and he’d shake me, “What are we eating?” . . . and when I would come home from work, he’d, you know, come up, give me a hug. “How as your day?” I mean just normal stuff that our own kids would do and I thought that was awesome. (Joe, father, 35)

While having a new family member was a celebrated event in most cases, there were a few incidences where this created jealousy between the existing family members. Magnus (father, 33) indicated that their son and exchange youth went through a period where there “might have been some of the animosity . . . he became jealous of him.” Martha (mother, 45) said that “everybody was very curious about [exchange youth], and so they were talking and interacting with him more, and I think he was a little jealous of that.” During the pilot study, the Able family, as indicated from the vignette was the most aware and concerned about the feelings of jealousy experienced by their only daughter Cassie (no age). In her words,

I have to be honest, towards the end of her visit, I was a little bit jealous because I was, I’m an only child, so I don’t have . . . any siblings . . . I kind of got jealous of her a little bit, how much attention my parents would give her. I was, you know, just jealous; I’ve never really lived with any siblings. (Cassie, daughter, no age)

I though like maybe they were comparing me to her for a little bit . . . I talked to them about it, and it brought us closer because I realized that no, they’re not, I’m still their daughter and everything. I guess I got kind of jealous, but we, we really got closer together because of that. Like, as a family, we realized . . . we are always going to be together. (Cassie, daughter, no age)

The awareness and identification of these feelings of jealousy created opportunities for discussion in the family that helped strengthen their relationships.
Theme 6: Departure Created a Very Real Sense of Loss for the Family and Required a Reestablishing of a New “Normal”

Host families and their exchange youth grew closer together during the four weeks of the home stay. This made the return of the exchange youth back to Japan difficult for the majority of the participants. Having to say goodbye to someone to whom they felt so connected resulted in feelings of sadness and anger. Families had to find ways to cope with these feelings. While a few participants felt relief at saying goodbye, the majority felt like departure “left a void” in their family.

When he jumped on me I knew it would be hard to say goodbye but I didn’t think it would be that hard when he jumped on me and climbed up on me and said, “I love you dad” . . . because I know the chances of seeing him again are slim in life, and that sucks. That was . . . something I don’t think that whole packet they send you empathizes enough that you’re saying goodbye to this person for probably the rest of your life. As much as we hate to say it that way, that’s the truth, and they become part of your family very quickly. So it’s like sending one of your kids to—away and knowing that you’re probably not gonna see them again, and it’s hard. Anybody with a heart, it’s hard because those kids have grown close to you, you’ve grown close to them, and it sucks. (Joe, father, 35)

And then, like, a couple days before it’s kind of, like, you know it’s coming—like a train wreck. Like, we have to take him back. And . . . everybody gets a little bit upset and depressed and snappy. And then we’ve got to take him back. (Giselle, mother, 33)

When she left . . . I was so . . . all of us, like, went into . . . depressed mode for . . . a few days and we were like, “it feels so weird.” We felt I said to my mom, like, it feels like someone died here. She’s not here anymore. (Cassie, daughter, no age)

And it was very emotional. And I mean, I’m an emotional person sometimes. I’m not, I’m pretty strong, but I think I lost it there. I mean I’m sure you remember we were the ones still standing there waving at her . . . I wanted her to stay. I’d have loved to adopt her in a second. (Howard, father, no age)

Coping and adaptation is one possible outcome of experiencing stress (McCubbin & Patterson, 1982). Family members handled their feelings of loss through a variety of
coping mechanisms. Susie (daughter, 12) and her family “tried to do . . . something like really fun and try to stay together.” The members of the Decker family used social networking such as FaceTime and Facebook to stay connected with their exchange youth. Families employed a variety of communication techniques, including social media, phone calls, video calls, written communication, and gift giving to maintain a relationship with the exchange youth after departure. This helped them cope with the perceived loss of the exchange youth. This was expressed by one participant, “Yeah, we all missed him. And then—and then we got our first package or note or letter or whatever, and so we’re—we’re all good.” (Boomer, father, 51) A few participants used anticipation of participating in the program again in the future as a mechanism for coping with the departure of their current exchange youth (6 of 20, [30%]).

After the departure of the exchange youth, there was a return to normalcy for the family. This sense of “normalcy” was still influenced by having hosted the exchange youth and having them as part of the family.

We were just pretty much back to our regular routine, and you know, they’d still talk about her and, you know, and say they missed her . . . I think that’s when they were trying to figure out how they were gonna contact her and get a hold of her, and I think they did . . . a couple times. . . . I’m pretty sure they did send a couple of letters and stuff. And it just got back pretty much to . . . baseline. (Ralph, father, 64)

Cassie (daughter, no age) summarized this feeling as, “. . . the house became . . . more normal. I guess it’s never going to be the same as [exchange youth], but it was going back to regular, normal school life and everything.” All of the participants (20 of 20, [100%]) indicated that their communication with the exchange youth had declined over time as the length of absence from their home increased.
Theme 7: All Participants Learned About and Gained Appreciation of Their Own and Other Cultures

Having an experience of hosting someone from a very different culture (Japanese versus American) placed an emphasis on the customs and attitudes of the family, community, and country. This resulted in the study’s participants learning more about Japan, Japanese people, and their culture. The overwhelming majority felt they had learned more about Japan as a result of the homestay experience (17 of 20, [85%]). They indicated learning things such as “Japanese calligraphy” (Mark, son, 11), “basic Japanese language” (Cassie, daughter, no age), “origami” (Ben, son, 12), and Japanese cultural customs.

Well, communication’s always an interesting thing and . . . for me it’s not so much the language. It’s the culture. He—he doesn’t want to complain. He doesn’t want to tell me what he needs or wants . . . and their culture is don’t complain, do whatever your parents say, and everything is gonna be compliance. And I really wanna know how they’re feeling. (Tina, mother, 52)

The majority of participants indicated that hosting the exchange youth had increased their awareness of diversity issues and cultural differences (16 of 20, [80%]). One participant indicated they had become “more open” to people from different countries and people in general (Susie, daughter, 12). One father felt that his family was able to “understand people a little better and differences between people a little better” (Ralph, father, 64). Alexa (mother, 56) indicated that hosting an exchange youth gave her children “an idea of what it’s like to live in another country.”

This exposure to another culture and the implicit increase in awareness of diversity fostered the development of empathy toward others from a different culture, or those who were in a situation where they were away from home, friends, and family for a length of time. Most of the families were able to reference situations that indicated the
development of empathy for others or the exchange youth specifically (14 of 20, [70%]).

One participant indicated, “The patience learned by our sons by the need to understand
cultural differences” as an outcome of hosting.” (Evaluation, 2012) Another said, “I
think we just have learned to accept and be open to other cultures.” (Helen, mother, no
age)

The experience helped us learn more of another country’s differences and
culture. It truly helped my son, although difficult at time, to think of
someone besides just himself. It was also very good for not only my
immediate family but also my extended family because we live so close.
(Franci, mother, 50)

The participants in the present study also became aware of the similarities that
exist between middle school aged youth regardless of cultural and geographic
differences. They used phrasing such as “were [sic] all more alike then [sic] different”
(Evaluation, 2009), “Teenagers will be teenagers doesn’t matter where they are from”
(Evaluation, 2012), “kids are kids regardless of language ability (Evaluation, 2014) and
recognized that “kids that age can find weird common ground that kids everywhere kind
of have” (Martha, mother, 45). Tina (mother, 52) said, “A family’s a family’s a family.
Everyone’s family’s different, but every family’s a family.” Ralph (father, 64) captured
this as he recalled a memory about a time his children, neighborhood children and the
exchange youth shared an evening in the family’s hot tub.

They were all just kids. They weren’t American, Chinese, Japanese, they
were—to language barrier, nothing, there was nothing, they were just
getting along, having fun and listening to music and that was it. (Ralph,
father, 64)

Another participant said,

Like at first I thought . . . they were totally different, being on the other
side. But they’re not. Like being with [exchange youth] you can figure
out what they do and stuff, and it’s not different than what we do. Just
like their language or just like their hair is a different color . . . their inner, insides, they’re not different. (Susie, daughter, 12).

Participants were also anxious to share their own family, community, or regional culture with the exchange youth. This sharing fostered an appreciation of the home culture by the participants by “giving them an opportunity to view our city as tourists and enjoy it in a new light.” (Evaluation, 2010). Together with their exchange youth, participants “enjoyed many fun days learning about Kentucky culture.” (Evaluation, 2010).

Yeah, the program helps to go to things we might not go to every day that are close to us. I think when you look at vacations in time, you think I want to go somewhere far away for a vacation when you don’t realize what you’ve got right here in Kentucky, and I do think that it has helped us really discover some of the jewels around us. Not that we wouldn’t have taken our kids to Mammoth Cave anyway—but seeing it through their eyes is really cool. (Tina, mother, 52)

As participants developed their appreciation for their own culture, they wanted to share American culture with their exchange youth. As referenced above, families enjoyed visiting local attractions in and near Kentucky, such as King’s Island Amusement park in Ohio and Mammoth Cave State Park in Kentucky. Some families also shared their holiday experiences by hosting a Thanksgiving celebration during the homestay in order to share this uniquely American holiday. Participants indicated this pleasure in sharing cultures by saying “So it was fun to bring Japan to Kentucky and for us to share Kentucky with Japan” (Evaluation, 2014).

I like the idea of teaching somebody something new that they’ve never experienced before. And whether they’re an American, a Japanese youth . . . teaching kids is awesome, but especially when you can take somebody who may not ever experienced this again in their life. If they go home, they may go back to their life. This may be the one time, this one summer that they get to see this whole other side of the world. (Magnus, father, 33)
Participating in this exchange program helped participants gain a world viewpoint by allowing them to have an exchange experience without leaving their home. This fostered an interest in visiting Japan or in learning more about Japanese culture. Hosting an exchange youth was “a way for kids to see how other kids live, which they’re the same, kids are kids are kids, without having to spend a lot of money” (Tina, mother, 52). Several families (7 of 20, [35%]) indicated they wanted to visit Japan to see their exchange youth, or experience Japanese culture as a result of their participation in the exchange program.

I think I would love to go visit Japan now . . . I’ve seen pictures, and it’s just, it’s beautiful . . . I don’t think I would have wanted to visit Japan unless, like, having met [exchange youth] and brought him into the house and, you know, got to study a little bit more about the country. Because before I was like I don’t want to go anywhere. Biggest place I want to go is Disney World. But now it’s like, no I want to see Mount Fuji! (Maria, mother, no age)

**Outlier Themes**

Exploring outlying themes that were only mentioned a few times by participants is a useful method for enhancing the contextual understanding of what is being studied (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Two significant outlying themes that are worth noting include: the father’s surprising contribution to hosting the exchange youth and the *idealization of Japan.*

**Father makes a surprising contribution to hosting the exchange youth.** Two families (four out of 20 study participants) referenced that the contribution of the father was a surprise for them. Alexa (mother, 56) said, “. . . that was real interesting to me that he [Ralph, father, 64] got involved as much as he did . . . I was just really surprised when he was . . . open to it.” Howard (father, no age) spent more time with the family as a result of the exchange and was surprised at his own desire to support the exchange.
Maybe I stayed down at the pool longer because she was there . . . maybe I was dragged out a little more going to eat. A little bit more stuff like that, which I did it. Um, if she wasn’t here maybe I wouldn’t have done it. I [would have] said, nah, I don’t feel like going [laughing]. I want to stay home. (Howard, father, no age)

**Idealization of Japan.** Another interesting outlying theme was the participants’ idealization of Japan, Japanese culture, or Japanese people. This was most often reflected in comparisons of Japanese and American. Participants indicated the exchange youth showed “more respect” (Ralph, father, 64) or the Japanese “are so far ahead of our kids in math and science” (Joe, father, 35) and how they were “more creative, since they don’t sit in the house, they go out and play” (Andres, son, 12).

These themes are worthy of noting because of relevance to SI’s concept of role saliency and Berry’s (1980) literature on acculturation. The surprising contribution of the host father to the homestay suggests that other family members see the role of the father as having more limited involvement, interaction, or interest in family experiences. Again, this suggests that the perceived primary role of the father is interaction outside the home.

The idealization of Japan suggests that, in some cases, the majority culture holds the minority culture in higher esteem. The Japanese concept of respect toward others and focus on academic achievement is considered to be better than in American culture.

**Summary**

After examining the LIGs and semi-structured interviews with 20 participants, in addition to analyzing six years of program evaluations, seven primary themes were identified that emphasized the positive and negative experiences of hosting a Japanese exchange youth. Communication was a primary challenge that contributed to feelings of anxiety and stress for the host family. Participating in the program necessitated sacrifice
on the part of the host family and contributed to their anxiety and stress. The time of departure at the end of the exchange/homestay created deep feelings of loss for the family members. Despite these negative feelings, the overall attitude toward the exchange youth and program were positive. Family members believed they were creating an experience with their family that the Japanese youth could not have in their home country. The time period of the homestay was one of personal reflection and growth for the host family members were they learned to appreciate their own culture as well as the culture of Japan.

Two outlying themes: surprising contribution of the father to the homestay and idealization of Japan were selected for their contribution to understanding the exchange program. Elements of SI, particularly that of role saliency within the family, were reflected in these findings. The inclusion of the exchange youth in the family resulted in changes in established roles and interactions. This change in roles, along with the day to day experiences of hosting, created stress within the family. Families responded to this stress with positive adaptation and the development of varied coping techniques. The contribution of Berry’s (1980) theories of acculturation was also seen in how the majority culture of the host family interacted with the minority culture of the exchange youth.

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CHAPTER FIVE:
DISCUSSION

The central purpose of this study was to determine if and how hosting a Japanese exchange youth influences hosting families. This was an exploratory study that focused on the experience of Kentucky families involved in a four-week foreign exchange program with Japanese youth. An exhaustive review of the literature revealed little published research that specifically addresses the identified themes in context of the exchange youth homestay from the perspective of the host family. The following discussion will therefore provide further interpretation of this study’s results and critiques of the overall study as applied to each theme in the context of this study’s following research questions.

1. What is the experience of the Kentucky families participating in this exchange?

2. How does the family perceive their relationship with the exchange youth?

3. How does the relationship develop between family members, and between family members and exchange youth?

4. What factors would enhance the exchange experience for host families?

Methodology

Interviewing Minors

Interviews are a commonly used methodological tool in qualitative studies (Sorrell & Redmond, 1995). The process of using this type of data collection with adults is also well documented (i.e. Faux, Walsh & Deatrick, 1988; Instone, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Adding the youth voice to the present research study allowed a richer understanding of the experience of hosting an exchange youth. Their viewpoints on the
exchange helped to provide greater context when identifying the major themes of the present study. The minor participants contributed to the understanding of the hosting experience in way that was similar to the adult participants. Youth voice is powerful and should be included in research that is focused on the experiences of families.

Host families. Interviews with minors can take place individually, in group settings, or with parents present. The decision to conduct one on one interviews with the minor participants in this study allowed the researcher to hear their viewpoint without the influence of the parent. Often while conducting interviews, the youth participant provided indications that they would have been hesitant to share the information in front of a parent. This was most often done with the goal of not wanting to appear negative about the exchange experience to their parent. The youth did not want to misrepresent their enjoyment of being a host sibling. It would not have been possible to gather this valuable data if the interview was conducted in the presence of the parents.

Exchange coordinators. Coordinators for exchange programs should recognize that hosting is an experience that affects the entire family. When possible, include minors in the household in the discussion, interviews and evaluation of the program. Do not neglect or devalue their participation and input.

The 4-H/Labo exchange program focuses on placing the Japanese exchange child with an identified host sibling of the same gender and about the same age. The limited research on this specific exchange program has tended to focus on the experience of this host sibling. However, after completing the present study, it is the recommendation of the researcher to include both the host sibling and non-host siblings when evaluating this program.
The exchange coordinator should be prepared to provide appropriate support to the family before and after the homestay. This may include materials, education, or emotional support. Hosting an exchange student through this program can be an emotional and intense experience and families should be supported accordingly.

**Family scientists.** Minors provide an important voice in research studies (Grover, 2004). When appropriate, possible, and allowable, family researchers should included youth voice in their research. From the present study, their contribution supported the findings of the adult participants but also provided additional insights. These insights were helpful in understanding the exchange experience for the family but were only identified because of the youth participants.

The use of the LIG with the minor participants of the present study seemed to intrigue and engage them. When interviewing young people, look beyond standardized interview techniques for novel approaches. The can engage the young person in the interview process and increase their desire to contribute.

**Lifeline Interview Graph**

While originally used to document the experience of older individuals, the modified LIG used in the present study strengthened the interviews, engaged the participants, and was a tool that contributed to the collection of date that provided richer meaning to the experience than interview data alone.

**Host families.** The use of the LIG with host families served as a method of easing into the semi-structured interviews that followed. It allowed the researcher to initiate the interview in an indirect manner that was more approachable to the participant. It helps “break the ice” and served as an introduction to the interview. Utilizing this
approach can help the researcher in developing rapport with the study’s participants (Guillemin & Heggen, 2009; Spratling, et al., 2012).

The LIG may be a useful tool for individuals with certain special needs that make it difficult for them to organize their thoughts, stay on track, or fill out paper evaluations. One participant in the study said that, because of his dyslexia, he was very afraid of having to read something. The graphing of his experience followed by discussion helped him engage more fully in the interview process.

Indicating the experiences of the homestay on the LIG before and after the actual visit helped the researcher to identify periods that were commonly seen as times of increased positivity or negativity. The graphical representation of the experience, while very individualized for each participant, provides a quick method of visualizing and comparing the homestay. It also offered a method of creating a graph that represented a composite of the experiences of all participants.

**Exchange coordinators.** Through the use of the LIG, the exchange coordinator is able to view the experience from the longitudinal perspective. The lack of longitudinal studies focused on the homestay experience has previously been identified as a gap in the body of research on this topic.

Exchange coordinators could utilize this methodological tool beyond the homestay experience. It could be utilized to evaluate the experience of the exchange youth (with appropriate translation and explanation) or the experience of an American youth who is traveling outbound. The use of the LIG can be applied to many situations where it is desired to evaluate the experience over time.
The LIG allows the exchange coordinator to quickly, visually identify periods of consistently positive or negative feelings toward the homestay. Because of the short time span (eight weeks total for the present study), the timing of the positive or negative experience can be reasonably determined. Using this as a tool, the coordinator could identify periods of the program where the homestay seems to be going very well or very poorly.

**Family scientists.** The use of the LIG was well received by the participants in the present study. Consideration to using this method for data collection can help provide the researcher with a method of overcoming interview stress that may be felt by the participant. Drawing has been documented as a useful data collection tool when interviewing children (e.g., Appel, 1931; Machover, 1953). Using the LIG serves a similar purpose.

The graph created by this research study’s participants served as a guide for discussion and helped them to articulate their experience. It also provided a method of focusing the conversation and aided in the participant remembering their experience. Memory recall is a concern in studies that look at past events (Reimer & Matthes, 2007). Engaging multiple pathways of memory recollection can help the participant more fully remember their experience. The use of the LIG engages tactile (drawing), visual (looking), and auditory (discussing) pathways that can contribute to better recall of the event. Recall of past events can be enhanced through the use of multi-sensory engagement (Belli, 1998; Reimer & Matthes, 2007).
Theme 1: Communication was a challenge that changed the relationships within the family and between family members and exchange youth

All families in the present study universally identified communication difficulties as a theme. This included communication among members of the host family, between the host family members and the exchange youth, and between the host family and exchange program coordinator. Communication barriers included language but also culture and customs. Communication within a family is influenced by the perceived role of the individual. This role is learned through observation and experience (Lundberg, 1994). When bringing the exchange youth into the home, the established roles of the family members have to change creating challenges in communication.

**Host families.** The host families in the present study were faced with the challenges of communication on many levels. As suggested by the Double ABC-X model (McCubbin & Patterson, 1982), this fostered the development of a variety of coping mechanisms. There was no “one size fits all” solution to the problem of communication. Families should be prepared for the communication barriers and encouraged to find coping mechanisms that will be most effective for them. The use of gestures, pictures, and other forms of nonverbal communication are useful coping techniques (i.e. Dawson, Neal, & Madera, 2011; Madera, Dawson, Neal, & Busch, 2013). Having a plan for coping will help the individual alleviate stress and contribute to a more enjoyable experience.

The communication barrier was not one sided. The Japanese exchange youth faced similar barriers to communication as the host family. The host family members were most concerned when they perceived their relationship with the Japanese youth as not being communicative. The success of the communication was less important than the
attempt to communicate. Host families should be encouraged to assist and support the Japanese exchange youth in their attempts to speak but realize the communication may not be at the level they desire.

Role saliency within the family contributed to the communication and interaction patterns of the host family with the exchange youth. While all the participants in the present study communicated with the exchange youth on a regular basis, the role of the individual in the family dictated the level of communication. Six of the seven families in the present study had dual parent households (one was a single parent household). In all cases, the mother undertook the most communication and was concerned with the daily schedule and life of the exchange youth.

Their communication consisted of practical communication about household tasks. The host sibling communicated primarily about entertainment and activities. The host sibling spent the most time communicating and interacting one on one with the exchange youth. The fathers in the study communicated the least of all participants. Fathers should be encouraged to participate in this exchange as fully as possible. Families should be made aware that the burden of communication will fall on the host sibling and to make sure their child is prepared for and willing to accept that extra responsibility during the homestay.

In addition to communicating the most about practical topics, the mother was the primary coordinator of the exchange. In all cases, the mother initiated contact with the exchange program coordinator and completed the application process. Completing the process was most often done only after a family discussion. Even with one parent serving as the point of contact, all of the participants in the study engaged in some sort of
“family meeting” before finalizing their involvement. For an activity that requires this level of intense commitment, it is important to have the support of the entire family. Families should be encouraged to approach this hosting experience together.

Participation in the exchange program encouraged family members to communicate more with each other. This increased communication resulted in the development of stronger relationships between the family members. Families should be aware that they will need to communicate more frequently with each other in order to address the day to day needs of having a Japanese exchange youth in their home. The family members should be encouraged to share their feelings about the exchange throughout the homestay. Open channels of communication can serve as a coping mechanism for the families as problems arise.

**Exchange coordinators.** Program coordinators should recognize that communication would be the primary difficulty faced by participants in this Japanese exchange program. There are significant social and linguistic differences between Eastern and Western cultures (Abu-Saad, Kayser-Jones, & Tien, 1982). This serves as a barrier to effective communication. Exchange coordinators should provide basic communication support for the families. This can include suggestions for translation apps, programs, and/or websites. Families can be provided with an Japanese-English dictionary. Common questions and answers in both English and Japanese can be provided. Families should also be encouraged to identify the methods of overcoming communication barriers that will be most effective and useful for them.

The barriers to communication that exist go beyond language. There are also differences in Japanese culture and grammar that contribute to these barriers. The
Japanese youth who participated in this homestay were often perceived as more quiet, introverted, and non-emotional when compared to their host siblings. Personality characteristics between individuals contributed to some of these differences. However, these are also behaviors common to group oriented Japanese society. When preparing host families for the program, exchange coordinators should share cultural barriers that contribute to communication difficulties. Providing examples can illustrate the differences that might exist. List positive youth behaviors from a Japanese perspective. Provide examples of phrases using Japanese sentence structure.

The difficulties of communicating with the Japanese exchange youth can create stress in the family. Encourage families to maintain open communication between each other in order to minimize this stress. During the homestay, remind the family members to take time to share their thoughts and feelings about the exchange program and exchange youth. The exchange coordinator’s reminders to have open communication can help identify concerns before they become a problem.

Family members who are engaged in this program work diligently to create shared communication with the Japanese exchange youth. Naturally, many of them want to continue this communication with the Japanese youth at the end of the homestay. Social media and electronic communication allows this to be easily accomplished. However, the motivation to continue communication can wane over time. Encourage families to identify a flexible communication strategy before, during, and after the homestay. Have them think about the type of communication, the frequency of communication, and the timeline of communication. Creating a realistic communication
plan in advance of the homestay can help them continue their correspondence with their exchange youth.

**Family scientists.** Communication difficulties go beyond verbal misunderstanding. They can also occur when someone’s style of communication or culture are different. When working with families, it is suggested that professionals take these factors into account. The lack of effective communication between individuals could be because they do not share a common definition of the concept they are discussing. The individuals may come from a different cultural (either ethnic, family or community) background that inhibits clear communication. Being aware of these issues, if present, can help the professional more effectively work with the family members.

Communication challenges faced by the host family parents helped them to develop empathy with their own children. Being forced to think about their communication style with the exchange youth helped some of the parents to realize that their tone or method of speaking to their child could be modified for more success. Professionals should look for opportunities to help parents understand how their children perceive their communication. This can result in improved understanding and communication.

The mother was a driving force in many family interactions. While every family is structured differently, one of the parents is usually more focused on interactions in the home. In the present study, this was the mother. Professionals should identify the person who has the most influence over household or family matters and consider focusing on that individual when designing family based interventions. This could result in a more beneficial or long-lasting outcome.
Theme 2: Anxiety, Stress, and Sacrifice Were Commonly Indicated as an Outcome of Program Participation by the Host Family

Excitement about program participation was commonly combined with increased stress and anxiety on the part of the family members participating in this exchange experience. Each family and each family member had specific concerns that were most worrisome to them. However, common worries such as changes in family routine, the exchange youth’s interactions with others, program requirements, and self-sacrifice were experienced by all family members.

Symbolic interaction theory suggests that family routine and rituals are an important and stabilizing part of family life (Bossard & Boll, 1950). Research on sacrifice in families is often focused on the relationship between the husband and wife (Stanley, Whitton, Sadberry, Clements, & Markman, 2006). In this context it has been found that sacrifice in the interest of the relationship can be fulfilling (Stanley & Markman, 1992). While participation in the exchange program did require sacrifice, it was an overall positive experience for the participants in the present study.

Host families. Families who participate in exchange programs could experience numerous stressors and anxiety inducing situations. This is a normal part of the hosting experience. Concerns that families have during their own travel (such as homesickness, worry about illness, having fun) are translated to corresponding worries about the exchange youth’s experience. Families should work to identify the concerns they have when they travel and how this relate to their worries about the exchange youth. In this case, being aware of areas of potential concern in advance can help the host family members prepare.
The vocabulary of this exchange program uses the terms “host father or host mother” when identifying members of the family. This reinforces the concept that the individual is acting in the role of surrogate parents for the exchange youth. Host parents take this role seriously. The participants of this study modeled their care for the exchange youth on how they would want their child cared for in a similar situation. In their perception, doing things the “right” way was important to the homestay experience. Host family members were worried about treating the exchange youth “correctly” in order for them to have the best possible experience.

A meta-analysis of 32 studies on family routine by Fiese et. al. (2002) found that family routine was related to parenting competence, child adjustment, and marital satisfaction. Orme and Cherry (2015) found that stability and well-being are increased when disruption to family routine is decreased. When orientating parents to the program, they should be encouraged to stay with a normal routine. The purpose of this homestay is to help the Japanese youth experience a routine American family. However, it is important to allow flexibility so the family can conduct the homestay in a way that works best for them.

An often-cited concern of the host family was the potential for homesickness in their delegate. It is speculated that this concern comes from a place of worry about homesickness for themselves or their own child in a similar situation. However, actual experiences with homesickness were not a factor for any of the families in the present research study. Families should be taught to recognize and deal with homesickness but should realize that this is not as significant a factor as they might believe.
The timing of this exchange program usually overlaps with the start of the school year. Families that homeschooled their children either delayed the start of their school year or incorporated their experiences with the exchange youth into their planned curriculum of activities. Families that placed their exchange youth in a public or private school had less decision making power over this and experienced stress. Some families had a very open and amenable interaction with the schools in allowing their exchange youth to attend classes. Other families experienced more difficulties in getting approval. Families should be made aware of the possible outcomes that stem from asking school administration for permission to send the exchange youth to classes. They should begin this permission process early and have a plan in place if the school does not allow attendance. This would prepare them for a negative outcome.

The host sibling in this exchange is asked to spend all of their time with the exchange youth. This entails sacrificing their normal schedule and freedom. This is especially true for busy host siblings who are juggling school, friends, and extracurricular activities. Host parents should be aware of the sacrifice that hosting entails for their children. It is suggested that they acknowledge the contribution of the host sibling and thank them for their sacrifice. This will help create feelings of positivity between family members.

**Exchange coordinators.** Exchange coordinators need to recognize the significant time commitment given to this program by the host sibling. Participation may involve less time with friends, schoolwork, or jobs. If already busy, they are asked to balance the well-being of the exchange youth with their other responsibilities. Program coordinators should ensure that families are aware of this sacrifice and encourage host
parents to allow their child time to themselves. The intensive nature of the homestay can be overwhelming for both children and adults. Time alone can help relieve or mitigate developing stress.

The time periods right before arrival and right after departure are times of increased stress for the host family. The exchange coordinator should be aware of this and provide additional support to the host family during this time. Extra support during these critical times can help the family have a more positive homestay. This can include making themselves accessible for questions, sending a card or note of encouragement, and emailing families to make sure they have any needed information.

The normal stressors felt by families do not disappear during the exchange program and contribute to the overall stress of having an exchange youth in the home. Encourage families to identify and then eliminate or minimize their existing stressors prior to the beginning of the homestay. This might include taking care of household tasks before the arrival of the exchange youth, making arrangements for the children if the parent is not available, or reducing work pressures. Efforts made to minimize other types of stress will help prevent these from compounding with the stress experienced as part of the exchange program, which can lead to more critical outcomes (McCubbin & Patterson, 1982).

Seeking permission for the exchange youth to attend school with the host sibling is one of the stressors experienced by the parents. The parameters of the Japanese exchange youth’s travel visa do not allow them to enroll as students. Schools have a “standardized view of the proper role of parents in schooling” (Lareau, 1987, p. 73). Requesting a multiple day placement of the exchange youth in the classroom can be seen
as deviating from this “proper role”. However, the inclusion of the exchange youth in the
school setting leads to a higher level of investment and integration which can result in
increased language comprehension (Grieve, 2015).

The exchange coordinators can help mitigate the stress of school enrollment by
providing parents with the resources they need to communicate effectively with schools
about the exchange program. If possible, receiving acknowledgement and support for the
exchange program from district or state school administration could help the local school
districts acceptance of the exchange youth. When school attendance is not possible, the
exchange coordinator should make sure that the parents have a plan in place on how the
exchange youth is cared for if the school will not allow him or her to attend.

Exchange coordinators should work with families to ensure they have the
information and tools they need to combat jetlag and homesickness with the exchange
youth. The exchange coordinator should ensure the host family has all necessary
information for picking up and dropping off the exchange youth. This includes helping
them have a clear understanding of the procedures for these times, a map or directions to
the locations, and a ceremony or program that formally recognizes the host family and
exchange youth beginning or ending their time together. This will help minimize the
stress of pickup and contribute to a more relaxed and enjoyable meeting of the host
family and exchange youth.

**Family scientists.** The experiences of the host families in the present study
indicated that even desired experiences (such as the exchange program) could create
significant amounts of stress. Worry and anxiety on the part of the family is normal even
when taking part in the anticipated and overall positive experience of hosting an exchange youth.

Experiences that change the family routine will result in the destabilization of the normal family dynamic. This creates a need for adaptation and possible sacrifice on the part of the family. While destabilization and sacrifice are not inherently negative, professionals need to plan their work with the family to account for this time period and support the family accordingly.

Families who are caring for a non-familial child will demonstrate significant worry about that child. Those that are committed to caring for the youth take their role as a caregiver seriously. Professionals should help the individual identify the source of their worries for the child. The family professional should help the individual determine if their concerns are actually manifested in the situation or are an extension of their own fears and anxieties.

It is important to remember that family interactions do not happen in a vacuum. Families experience the positive and negative influences of the community in which they live. Therefore, issues with families should be viewed in the context of all their experiences and interactions. For example, transitions from elementary to middle to high school could compound other issues that are present in the family. Work problems might influence a parent’s behaviors at home. Make sure to consider influences that originate from outside the home when working with families and individuals.

**Theme 3: Host Families Believed They Are Participating in a Unique and Privileged Experience for Themselves and the Exchange Youth**

The opportunity to host an exchange youth through the four-week summer program is contingent upon having a youth the same age and gender as the child being
hosted. This provides the family with a limited window of opportunity in which to participate in the program. Research has indicated that there is a tendency to compare other’s situations more negatively in order to feel better about one’s own situation (Lockwood & Pinkus, 2014; Wheeler & Miyake, 1992; Yip & Kelly, 2013; Zell & Exline, 2014). The exchange experienced is seen as special to the host family and exchange youth with other families’ experiences falling short. It is something that others cannot replicate.

**Host families.** Despite their desire for and perception of creating a unique experience, host families base their expectations on the activities they will do together on common Japanese stereotypes. This often translates to believing their exchange youth will teach them origami, only eat healthy Japanese food, and like to play baseball. The failure of the exchange youth to reflect these stereotypes can be disappointing to the family. Families should be aware that while some of these are cultural traditions in which the Japanese youth will have familiarity, individuals vary. Families should create realistic expectations for their experience by keeping in mind that no two people are the same.

Families also believed they could provide necessary emotional support for the Japanese youth that they would not or could not receive from their Japanese parents. Host families believed that the Japanese family was less nurturing and outwardly emotive. The host families believed that Japanese youth perceived a “lack” of this emotional support. This perception may not have been accurate. Families should be aware that someone from another culture could view the behavior they perceive as emotionally supportive or caring as intrusive or aggressive.
Families often compare their exchange experience to those of others. From this comparison, they determine if they have had a better experience. Families should be encouraged to accept the individuality of their hosting experience when compared to others. They should not compare as every host family, exchange youth, and hosting experience is different. Instead, they should focus on what makes their family special and share that with the exchange youth. This sharing of personal experiences can create positive lifetime memories.

**Exchange coordinators.** Program coordinators should work with families to help them identify special activities, experiences, or situations in which they can involve their exchange youth. These can include special family observances (sharing a special birthday), activities that are unique to the family or not available in Japan (visiting a state park), or just spending time with the exchange youth. By creating these shared memories, they help their relationship with the exchange youth grow. The exchange coordinator should encourage the family to make flexible plans before the arrival of the exchange youth.

Families who participate in this exchange do so in order to fulfill some intrinsic need. For some, this might be a chance to learn about another culture and for others an opportunity to see what it is like to have multiple children. Whatever their intrinsic need, families should also receive extrinsic recognition for their involvement in the program. This helps to recognize the time and commitment that have given to the experience. Program coordinators should identify a method of recognizing the families. This recognition could be provided at a closing ceremony for the program or another appropriate time.
Many host families enter into the program with a set of stereotypes about Japanese people and their culture. While some of these stereotypes may be based in fact or have an element of truth, it is important for the families to look beyond these to the individual. Program coordinators should share cultural information about Japan with the host families but then remind them that these exchange youth are all individuals. When possible, draw comparisons between common American stereotypes (all Americans eat hamburgers) that do not universally apply with Japanese stereotypes (all Japanese eat rice and sushi).

Many, but not all, of the families are participants in the local 4-H program. For those families that are 4-H members, the program coordinator should encourage the local 4-H staff to recognize the families for their time and commitment at a 4-H activity or event. This is a form of extrinsic recognition that acknowledges the families’ contributions. For those families that are not part of the 4-H program, the 4-H staff might publicly recognize the family through a newspaper article or social media. This helps provide community recognition and promotes the program to future potential host families.

Exchange coordinators should encourage families who have hosted before to share their experiences with others in their community. This serves as a method of promoting the program. It can also serve as a method for recognizing the family. Promotion of the program by host families to others has the possibility of improving retention, recruiting new host families, and creates community awareness and support of exchanges.
**Family scientists.** Professionals who work with families should recognize the desire of the individual and the family to feel they are “special”. Family professionals should avoid the tendency to group families by their experiences. While there will be commonalities between families with similar experiences, the diverse nature of the individuals that contribute to the family identity will ensure that no two experiences are identical.

When working with families, use the opportunity to identify the positive characteristics that makes the family unique when planning interventions. In situations where the family members are struggling, it is a positive thing to help them focus on what is right about their situation. The family professional can use this as an opportunity to assist the family in identifying their assets as opposed to focusing only on their deficits.

When appropriate, use families as a resource to share about their experiences. This can include both negative and positive outcomes. Individuals may be more likely to respond to information that is shared by someone who has gone through a similar experience. In addition, it may help the family who shares their experience to process and move toward a better understanding.

**Theme 4: Participation in the Homestay Was a Period of Reflection and Personal Growth for Host Family**

The families who participated in the present study found that the hosting experience provided them with an opportunity for personal growth. Caring for a child from another culture helped them to develop empathy, learn new things, and have new experiences. The growth went beyond learning about Japanese culture to a deeper level of competency in dealing with a variety of people in diverse situations.
Host families. The children who act as host siblings in this program are with their Japanese exchange youth on a continual basis for one month. They often serve as the mediator and translator for the other person. They learned to see commonplace experiences (such as activities or language) through the eyes of a cultural outsider. Families should be aware of this happening and work to encourage the child to recognize their personal growth from the exchange. Having to be responsible for someone their own age often helped them to overcome personal shyness and allowed them to be more open with others. Families that value this in their children should encourage the development of these skills during and after the exchange.

Peer interactions have been shown to be very important to development (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997; Veronneau, Trempe, & Paiva, 2014). These peer interactions serve important sociological needs (Veronneau et al., 2014). The interactions between the exchange youth and host sibling can lead to friendship development and support the exchange youth during the homestay. Friendships form when individuals have access to one another, when there are commonalities, and when there is a high quality of relationship (Hartup, 1996). Exchange programs embody these experiences and have a high potential for friendship development.

Caring for the exchange youth also helped the host siblings to learn responsibility. They worked to make sure the Japanese exchange youth was having positive experiences. The act of being responsible for another helped them to develop in their ability to be responsible. Several of the host siblings indicated they now felt they were more responsible after completing the exchange program. In addition to believing they were more responsible, they were also seen as more responsible by their parents. Serving as
the host sibling allowed the parents to see their child in a role that might not normally be available to them. Several of the parents felt their child was more responsible after the homestay. Families should be encouraged to have their children embrace this responsibility. In addition, they should reinforce the concept with each other that this program encouraged personal and family responsibility.

Two of the seven families in the present study were single child households. Hosting an exchange youth allowed them to briefly experience what it would be like to be a multiple child family. One of the host siblings found the idea of having a “sister” to be very exciting. The other host sibling indicated that this experience help them realize they preferred being an only child. Regardless, the need to share parental attention was new to both of them. Through this experience, they became more adaptable and gained a greater appreciation for the relationship they had with their parents. Families should be aware that single child homes will have an experience that may be positive or negative depending on their receptivity to the program. The family should be encouraged to monitor the relationship between the exchange youth, host sibling, and parent(s) and make sure that one or more members of the family are not marginalized.

Hosting an exchange youth helped the family members to become less focused on themselves. By caring for the exchange youth, the host family interacted more with each other. Families can utilize the host family experience to find other ways to develop relationships with others inside and outside their family. The host family can also use this program as a springboard to improving their relationship with each other as they interact more and engage in more group activities.
Perhaps the most expected outcome of hosting an exchange youth is the
opportunity to learn more about their culture. Participants in the study felt they had
learned more about Japanese people and customs as a result of having a Japanese person
in their home for four-weeks. Through the exchange program, they tried new foods,
learned new skills, and met new people. They also joined a relatively select group of
people who have participated as host families in exchange programs. Potential host
families who are interested in Japanese culture will have the opportunity to learn through
their hosting experience. Families should be encouraged to value the educational
component of the homestay for themselves.

**Exchange coordinators.** Exchange coordinators need to recruit host families in
order for the exchange program to function. It can be difficult to find interested families
with the time and resources to commit to hosting. It can also be difficult to ensure that
the host family has a positive experience. When recruiting, it is suggested that the
exchange coordinator be positive but realistic about the program. They should work with
families to help them understand that while there will be challenges, participant can result
in significant personal growth on the part of the family and individuals.

The exchange coordinator should support the family during the homestay. At
times, the family may learn that their desire to be open to the exchange is not as great as
previously believed. The stress of hosting someone on a continue basis for a month can
be wearying to the family. Exchange coordinators should be aware of this possibility and
prepare families accordingly. During the homestay, the exchange coordinator should
check with the families frequently to make sure they are doing well and feel confident in
their ability to participate in the program.
The host sibling will be spending a lot of time with the exchange youth. Exchange coordinators should inform the families of this in advance. They should encourage the family to make arrangements for “down time” for the host sibling. There is a tendency of the family to see the exchange youth and the homestay as similar to a friend visiting. However, the exchange youth needs more direction and interaction than an American friend visiting the home. When the burden of the interaction with the exchange youth falls on the host sibling, it is important to allow them an opportunity to get some recovery time.

Exchange coordinators should be aware that the host families sometimes treat their exchange youth as guests. This is done with the good intentions of being a superior host and providing the exchange youth with a positive experience. However, four-weeks is a long time to have a “guest”. Program coordinators should encourage the host families to stick to their regular schedule and routine and view their exchange youth as a family member and not a guest. This will help reduce the guest fatigue that may occur during the exchange.

Many exchange programs, including the 4-H/Labo exchange, have mandatory evaluation and reporting requirements. Exchange coordinators are encouraged to consider the personal growth experienced by the family as an outcome of participation. When appropriate, usually at departure or immediately after the exchange, the coordinator should evaluate the family’s experience. They should consider encouraging families to document their personal growth in concepts such as empathy, courage, respectfulness, and sympathy. Virtues such as these are primarily taught through observation (Brown & Gillespie, 1997; Eby et al., 2013; Gaufberg, 2010).
Family scientists. The families in the present study were asked to provide day-to-day care and supervision for another child. There were challenges from cultural differences and in communication. However, through this experience, an attitude of openness and acceptance was fostered within the family. Families should be encouraged to find ways to exercise responsibility with the hope of personal growth.

The family members participating in the present study mirrored their own concerns and worries over participating in a similar experience on their exchange youth. As an example, individuals who seemed most concerned about homesickness in their exchange youth seemed to also worry about this in their own children or themselves. Professionals working with families should work to identify issues faced by family members and evaluate whether or not those concerns are being transferred to other individuals.

The families who participated in the present study were fully immersed in the homestay and indicated they had a positive experience. Toward the end of the time period, as they grew closer with their exchange youth, several of them indicated that they could not imagine having a better experience. This illustrates that during an intense, immersive experience, it can be difficult for people to see beyond the immediate situation. Professionals working with families can help the family gain a perspective that allows them to better evaluate their positive or negative experience over the long-term.

Theme 5: The Relationships Between Host Family Members Were Formed, Changed, and Developed Over the Course of the Exchange

The decision to host is made for many reasons that are different for each family. Some commonly cited reasons included the desire for companionship, new experiences, or seeing what it is like to have a larger family.
During the homestay, the members of the family experienced the development of a relationship with their exchange youth. There were also situations that caused the host family members to experience a change in their relationship with each other. Participating in the exchange program initiated changes in the normal role patterns of the family members as they acclimated to having the exchange youth in the home. The terminology used by the program (i.e. host mother, host father, host brother, or host sister) fostered the familial like relationship development with the exchange youth.

**Host families.** The families who participated in the present study were able to form close relationships with the exchange youth during the four-week time span of the program. The language used to describe this relationship was reflective of a familial bonding. Most often the family members said they felt like they had a new son, daughter, or sibling. Families who participate in programs such as this should be aware that the intensive nature of the homestay could foster these feelings of a family like relationship with the exchange youth. The development of these complex relationships is consistent with the finding of Owen (1971) that found the relationship between Canadian host families and exchange youth equally intricate.

When interviewing the families who participated in the present study, there was a agreement that hosting an exchange youth encouraged the family members to communicate more. Families should be aware that communication with each other is a key factor to the success of this program. Without this communication, the routine stressors of the program (or having someone in the home for an extended period of time) can compound and lead to crisis-like situations as indicated by McCubbin and Patterson (1982).
Generally one parent took the lead for, and ultimately the burden of, participation in the exchange program. In the case of the seven families in the present study, that was the mother. Families should designate a primary person who maintains responsibility for the exchange youth. While this was, by default, usually the mother, it is suggested that this be a conversation that this actually held by the family members to ensure that participation and support is not taken for granted.

This study’s research participants indicated that they did more activities as a whole family during the exchange program. They were more likely to engage in an experience with everyone in the family taking part during the homestay. They had more meals together and generally had more meals at home (when compared to their normal schedule). Fathers, if living in the home, were more likely to spend additional time with their families when the exchange youth was with them. Families should be encouraged to use this opportunity as a reason to bring the entire family together more often.

The home stay fosters increased communication within host families. They take part in more activities and find novel experiences to share with their exchange youth. They spent more time together. This leads to the family members feeling “closer” during the homestay. This is a positive experience and families should be encouraged to identify what has initiated these feelings of closeness and relationship development. They should continue to foster these experiences and encourage appropriate closeness even after the end of the homestay.

**Exchange coordinators.** The terminology used in this program fosters the development of family like relationships between the exchange youth and host family. Referring to the exchange youth as “son or daughter” and the host family as “mom, dad,
brother, or sister” encourages the individuals to develop a relationship that reflects these terms. The exchange coordinator should use language that reflects the overall goals of the homestay program. If a family like relationship or closeness is desired, then it is appropriate to use these terms. However, in other homestay experiences it may not be appropriate. Coordinators should examine the language they are using and ensure it reflects desired program outcomes.

When approving and orientating applicants for host families, exchange program coordinators should keep in mind that participation involves the whole family. When possible, they should verify that all family members are aware of the program and have given their consent or assent to participate. While parents may make decisions relative to their children’s participation, it could be a potential difficulty to know that one or more family members is not supportive of their involvement.

The 4-H/Labo program places the exchange youth with an identified “host sibling”. This is the interested child who is close in age to the Japanese youth. While the present study only interviewed these youth, it was suggested by the participants that additional insight would have been gained by interviewing all the children in the family. It is suggested that exchange coordinators make sure to involve other siblings in the placement process. They should not neglect non-host sibling family members. The 4-H/Labo program works with the identified host sibling but should also include the other children in the family in the discussion and orientation.

The relationship development that occurs within the family offers an opportunity for the exchange coordinator regarding program promotion. Many families are looking for experiences that benefit individuals but also help them become closer. Exchange
coordinators should look for opportunities to promote this or similar programs for their ability to strengthen family relationships. This could be a valuable approach to marketing the program and recruiting qualified families who are interested in having positive interactions.

The exchange coordinator should foster the relationship development of the family as a positive outcome of participation in an exchange program. They should encourage families to approach the exchange as a team exercise where they are all working toward a common goal. This encourages relationship building and could help the entire family fully engage in the exchange. Family cohesion, positive family structure, a stimulating environment, and involvement in the community are all important resiliency factors for families (Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009). These are all encouraged through participation in exchange programs.

**Family scientists.** The findings of the present study suggest several interesting possibilities that should be considered by professionals working with families. All of the families in the present study identified their relationship with the exchange youth as like that with a family member. In the majority of the families, it was compared to a relationship with an immediate, close family member. The identification of an individual living in the home as family happened quickly. Families are able to form familial-like relationships with others quickly under the correct circumstances.

In the present study, the mother was the primary point of contact for the exchange program. They also served as the gatekeeper for permission to interview the family during the present study. This suggests that mothers are still given responsibility for managing households and household related activities over the fathers. Family
professionals should continue to be aware of the role that the mother has and seek permissions when appropriate.

In contrast to the role of the mother, the father was still seen as less involved in the homestay experience. When talking about shared time as a family, it was most often indicated that the father (as opposed to the mother) was spending additional time with the members of the family and exchange youth. In the same way as the role of the mother seems to be more concerned with household matters, the role of the father is still seen as distant from this involvement. Family professionals should continue to encourage relationship building between fathers and their children.

Family cohesion, as demonstrated through interview data, increased during the homestay. Families that want to foster this cohesion or have issues of closeness with each other can benefit from having a shared, common goal. By working toward this goal, they could develop their relationship with each other and become closer. There are many studies that have linked greater time spent with parent(s) with positive outcomes for the child (Price, 2008).

The experience of hosting an exchange youth offered families an opportunity to glimpse what it was like to have additional children. For the host sibling, it was a chance to have an experience that was similar to having another brother or sister. Some family members responded very positively while others responded more negatively. Regardless, this experience was important and provided valuable insight that helped the individuals in the study appreciate the current circumstances and family. Family professionals should encourage families to have experiences that are analogous to those they desire. This might be applied to encouraging families to foster before adopting or caring for infants.
before starting a family. This can assist the family by providing insight from their response to the experience.

**Theme 6: Departure Created a Very Real Sense of Loss for the Family and Required the Reestablishing of a New “Normal”**

The language and approach of the 4-H/Labo exchange program encourages the development of bonds between the family and Japanese youth. This closeness helped the development of a familial like relationship. Generally, families appreciate this close relationship. However, at the end of the program, the family experiences a strong sense of loss as they say goodbye.

**Host families.** For host families, the departure is a time to say goodbye to their Japanese exchange youth. At the end of the four weeks, they have often began to view the youth as a surrogate member of the family. In essence, a situation has been encouraged to develop where the host family members bond with the exchange youth and then say goodbye to a “family” member. Chatters, Taylor, and Jayakody (1994) found that relationship ties can exist between non-related individuals. This is a time that will be difficult for the family but will have a greater or lesser impact on each family member. Families should be prepared and supported as they deal with these feelings of loss.

For family members who develop a very close relationship, this sense of loss can be very profound. The data collected in the present research study indicated that all family members felt of a sense of loss at the departure. However, there was no identifiable pattern of who seemed to feel the most profound loss. There were incidences of the mother, father, and child indicating the profundity of the loss. In some cases it was one member of the family and in other cases more than one. The feelings experienced by the family were intense (in some cases) and very real to the family members.
The depth of relationship development between the host family member(s) and exchange youth was a source of surprise to many of the research participants. They did not anticipate that they could grow to have such strong feelings for the exchange youth when beginning their involvement in the program. The family members felt that, during the time they were interacting with the exchange youth, that they had an additional family member. This relationship was meaningful but relatively short-termed. The majority of the host families acclimated to the departure relatively quickly and resumed their normal family patterns. The majority of the families in the present study had little or no further contact with their exchange youth at the time of the interviews. Two of the families, however, still maintained semi-regular contact through email, phone, or letter. It may be helpful for host families to develop a post-departure plan for communication. They should be encouraged to be realistic in what they will expect and be able to achieve for contact.

After departure, the family has to reestablish their sense of normal after the loss of a person who has been a significant influence on their routine, communications, and lives for the previous month. This readjustment can take a varying amount of time. Families should be encouraged to take some time together at the end of the program. This will help them process the experience and allow them to support each other immediately after departure as they deal with the sense of immediate loss.

All families entered a period of readjustment after the departure of the exchange youth. The amount of time this took was variable among families and among individuals in the family. In much the same way that travelers have to readjust to their home culture after a significant stay abroad, host families have to readjust to their home culture without
the exchange youth (Furukawa, 1997b). In many ways, the experience of the exchange youth parallels the experiences of the host family. Both parties are introduced to a new culture, develop relationships between their respective culture, and then readjust to their home culture at the end of the program.

**Exchange coordinators.** Professionals who manage exchange programs that involve a host family should be cognizant of the profound sense of loss that affects host families at the end of the exchange period. While many families did experience a sense of relief at the end of the program, in the short-term this was overshadowed by their sense of loss. Professionals should be supportive of the family during this time period, recognize that it can last a variable amount of time, and be ready to support the family as they process the emotional departure. The family should be encouraged to say their goodbyes in a meaningful manner.

The sense of loss that is experienced by the family is not as simple as saying goodbye to a friend or loved one taking an extended trip. It is somewhat more analogous to the actual loss of child. For most of the families, the departure is the last time they will see their exchange youth. The possibility of further communication is largely outweighed by the loss of the physical presence. Most of the families, at the time of the departure, do not have the inclination or means to plan a trip to meet in person. For the exchange youth, participation in this particular program is a one time opportunity. The exchange program coordinator should be sensitized to this a variation of a permanent loss versus a temporary loss and prepare or support families accordingly.

When conducting exchange programs, the coordinator should carefully reflect on the language that is used to identify the program and its participants. The language
should reflect the desired outcomes of the program. In the case of the 4-H/Labo exchange program, the goals of the program are to encourage a cultural exchange and the development of strong, familial like bonds. In this case, the language of host mother, host father, host sibling, and exchange son/daughter is appropriate. The consistent use of thoughtful language is important.

The feelings of loss experienced by the host family at the end of the program can be partially mitigated by encouraging the family to remain in communication with their exchange youth. The reality of the present study demonstrated that while the majority of the host families had the intention of remaining in contact, most did not maintain the relationship. However, at the time of the departure, providing the host family with suggests on how and when they might communicate with the exchange youth in the future would help them feel more comfortable saying goodbye.

At the time of the departure, exchange program coordinators should take the time to process the experience with the host family and encourage them to think about hosting in the future. This might be accomplished through an evaluation survey or something more complex such as a program exit interview. Encourage families to share what they liked about the program and where they experienced challenges. Developing a sense of anticipation about the possibility of hosting in the future will provide a positive opportunity for the future.

**Family scientists.** The experiences of the host families in the present study can provide important information for researchers who work with families. This research study demonstrated that families are able to incorporate a new individual into their family
dynamic quickly and completely. Families are adaptable and about to create strong family bonds with others under the right circumstances.

The rapid relationship development means that the loss of identified family members, whether blood or fictive kin, can have profound effects on the family. Programs that place youth with families, such as foster programs, exchange programs, or mentoring programs, should provide methods of supporting the family at the end of the program to prevent undue emotional stress. This support may help prevent burnout, which will increase retention of program participants.

The sense of loss experienced by families in these types of programs is intense but seems to fade quickly. The family members in the present study were asked to share their experiences at departure and during the two weeks following this time. Most individuals indicated that they reestablished their sense of normalcy after the departure within this two week time period. While the length of time needed for readjustment would vary depending on the length and type of homestay, it can be speculated that it would be relatively short.

Both the adult and youth participants in the present study developed a familial relationship with their exchange youth. Programs that place youth with a family should keep in mind that relationship development will happen with all family members. A holistic approach to preparing and supporting the family for a placement should be considered. When possible, children should be included in the orientation and allowed to participate in giving input regarding the program in which the family is participating.

Further research on how the age of the youth placement influences relationship development should be considered. However, it is speculated that the more dependent
the individual is on the family, the quicker and deeper the relationship development. This can correspond to the age of the child but also to the abilities of the child. In this case of the exchange program explored in the present study, the age and the culture of the exchange youth made them more reliant on the support of the family. This could contribute to the rapidity of relationship development. The dependency needs of an individual placed with a child will influence the relationship development.

**Theme 7: All Participants Learned About and Gained Appreciation of Their Own and Other Cultures**

Participating in the 4-H/Labo exchange program allowed host families to explore a culture different from their own. Gardner (1996) found that a willingness to undertake new experiences helps foster open mindedness. Through this participation, they learned more about Japanese culture. They also shared many activities and experiences with their exchange youth. This allowed them to learn and better appreciate their own family and community culture.

**Host families.** Families participating in the exchange program are encouraged to share the culture of their family, state, and country with the exchange youth. For many families, the homestay was an opportunity to do things in their region that they may have been aware of but never done. Having the exchange youth along for these experiences helped the family members to experience things through the eyes of a cultural visitor. Even relatively common things, such as going to the grocery store, were seen in a new light through the cultural lens provided by the exchange youth. Families should be encouraged to think about how their view of what is commonplace might be very different from what is “normal” in a different culture.
Viewing their experiences through a different cultural lens helped families to better appreciate their own lives and culture. Gaining an appreciation of their family dynamic, geographical region, or home culture was an important outcome of participating in the exchange program. Exchange programs help families learn about other cultures and new aspects of their own culture but also encourage and awareness and appreciation of the familiar aspects of the home culture. This experience is similar to that of students who travel abroad and expect to see personal change as a result of their experience (Domville-Roach, 2007).

Families who participated in the exchange program learned more about Japanese culture. Participation in an international exchange program is an opportunity for a family to learn more about a particular culture. In addition to learning about the culture, they begin to see the culture as represented by specific individuals. This provides a personalization to their connection with the other culture. In effect, their representation of Japan was no longer that of a stereotyped culture but that of their exchange youth. This was a personalization of the cultural competency of the family.

Family members seemed to be more open to further exploration of Japanese culture and other cultures. Their sense of openness toward others was developed through participation in the exchange program. There was a greater awareness of the presence or lack of presence of cultural diversity in their lives. Participation in the exchange program sparked an interest in further exploring Japanese culture through research or visits.

Families learned to appreciate the differences that existed between individuals of different cultures. However, they also learned to recognize that there are also many similarities between youth that transcend cultural barriers. Many family members, in
their own words, expressed the sentiment that “kids are kids” regardless of where they come from. Again, this helps personalize an individual from another culture and encourages the family member to look beyond stereotypes.

**Exchange coordinators.** Program coordinators are often tasked with the difficult responsibility of finding qualified host families. One method of encouraging participation as a host family is to frame the experience as a more economical way of exploring another culture. Hosting an exchange youth provides some of the benefits of traveling to a different culture without the same level of financial commitment. This may be something that is appealing to families desiring an opportunity to learn more about the world but lacking the resources needed.

Families may need assistance in learning how to be a “tourist” in their own culture. Hosting an exchange youth provides the opportunity for cultural exploration. However, many families may not be aware of some of the opportunities that might be present in their communities. Over familiarity with their home culture can lead a family to overlook opportunities. Exchange coordinators should encourage and assist families in identifying chances to share their local culture. This can encompass a variety of experiences such as parks, sporting events, museums, or farmer’s markets.

Families that participate in an exchange program develop and interest in their exchange youth’s culture. Exchange coordinators should make use of this interest by encouraging families to participate in future exchanges. They can also support the family and offering further information or opportunities to learn more about their culture of interest.
Exchange programs expose host family members to culture, and many times racial/ethnic, diversity. Exchange program coordinators should consider evaluating program outcomes in terms of the family’s awareness and acceptance of diversity. Cultural competency through the acceptance of diversity is an important outcome. This is even more relevant in an increasingly globalized society.

In addition to learning about another culture, families will want to share their own personal culture. This includes experiences such as family customs, religious observances, celebrations and many other moments that are individual for each family. The exchange program coordinator might provide families with suggestions on what and how they can share these unique moments. Possible suggestions include taking them to their religious celebrations, sharing a special family meal, recreating a holiday experience during the homestay, or throwing a birthday party. Families should be encouraged to visit friends and relatives with the exchange youth. This sharing of the personal culture of the family will be a memorable experience for both the exchange youth and the host family.

**Family scientists.** For family researchers, opportunities exist for exploring intercultural exchanges from the family perspective. Exchange programs foster the development of empathy and diversity in the participants. Family members gain insight into the experiences of an individual who is forced to interact with people speaking in a different language and who have a different culture from their own.

International travel is not the only means of providing in-depth cultural exploration and its associated positive outcomes. Exchange programs can offer similar experiences. In some cases, such as connections with an individual, the exchange
program can be a better experience than simply traveling to another country. Programs that focus on cultural competency through international travel should consider if their outcomes could be accomplished in a similar or better fashion through hosting an exchange youth. There is a difference between being a tourist and being cosmopolitan (Hannerz, 1990).

Families participating in the exchange program desired to share their own culture. However, identifying the opportunities that exist can be hampered with over familiarity. This can be applied to many situations where it is beneficial to have a situation viewed through the lens of someone who is not as close to the experience. In some cases, intimate familiarity may hinder a successful outcome.

Culture goes beyond race and ethnicity. Family scientists working with individuals should reflect on how culture influences the interaction. This includes the culture of the researcher and the client or participant. Family customs, mores, regional variations, and individual preferences will all contribute to creating a culture that is unique from family to family.

Elements of diversity awareness and cultural competence can be taught without exposure to homogenous groups. However, there is greater impact when exposing individuals or groups to ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity through interaction with a person. This creates a connection with an individual and personalizes the view of the culture. Professionals working with diversity programming should make every effort to include real world interactions with people from different backgrounds.

Outlying Themes

This study generated two interesting additional themes that were considered by the researcher. These themes were outliers in that a minority of research participants
mentioned them briefly. However, they are useful for understanding how a family experiences hosting an exchange youth. These conscientiously selected themes helped provide additional context for framing the experience of the host family.

**Father makes a surprising contribution to hosting the exchange youth.** In all families who participated in this exchange program, the mother initiated the contact with the researcher in their role as program coordinator. The mother was an integral part of the family’s participation. The father, while agreeing to participate, was not as influential in the decision making process. However, the father was as engaged in the program as the host mother or host sibling. They engaged with the exchange youth in a significant manner and were able to develop a relationship with the Japanese youth.

Although the contribution of the father was only explicitly articulated by one mother who participated in the present study, their seemed to be a generalized feeling that the host father went beyond expectations in their interactions with the exchange youth. This was manifested most often by the host mothers in stating their surprise at how quickly the host father agreed to participate, how they engaged with the exchange youth, or their desire to take part in the family experiences. The host mothers in the present study seemed to underestimate the involvement of the father.

Exchange coordinators should be aware that the father has a significant role in the exchange. They should not neglect including the father in orientation, involvement, or evaluation. Mothers should be encouraged to truly view hosting as a family experience and not automatically assume that the father will be less engaged. The host mother should share the exchange experience’s challenges with the father and help him integrate fully with the program.
The exploration of this outlying theme offers interesting insight for those working with families. While the decision to host an exchange youth was done in consultation with all family members, participation in the program was a mother driven experience. This provides support for the real or perceived idea that mother’s are more concerned with experiences that happen in the home. Despite continuing equalization of marital and familial responsibilities between husband and wife, there is still an indication of dominance of the female in the realm of the home. This can lead to the influence of the father being overlooked or minimized.

**Idealization of Japan.** Another theme that was identified during the present study was the idealization of Japan by the participants. The impact of this was minimal in regards to the host family’s experience but it was considered significant enough that the present study’s primary investigator believes it warrants further discussion and consideration. This theme was never explicitly articulated by the study’s participants but was inferred from the data collected.

Some of the individuals participating in the present study based their initial assumptions of the behavior of the Japanese youth on common Japanese stereotypes. These include assumption such as Japanese youth being quiet, reserved, mannerly, and hard working. At times, this led to disappointment in one or more members of the host family, as the actual behavior of the Japanese youth did not fit these stereotypes. Unrealistic expectations of behavior can lead to disappointment for the host families.

However, many times, the Japanese youth did seem to manifest these stereotypical behaviors. This could be attributed to the lack of language proficiency and introduction to an unfamiliar environment over actual differences in Japanese youth and
American youth. A person placed in an environment where they have minimal grasp of the language is likely to be more quiet and reserved. Someone living with a strange family for a short period of time will probably practice good manners and try to help as much as possible. The explanation of the perceived virtues of the Japanese youth may have less to do with their culture and more with their introduction into American culture.

Many of the host family parents compared the perceived behaviors of the Japanese youth to that of their own child. This was most often an unfavorable comparison. The American child might be seen as less obedient, less studious, more outgoing, or louder. This comparison can be difficult on the host sibling and could create resentment toward the exchange youth or the exchange experience.

Exchange coordinators should assist families in developing realistic and grounded expectations for the behavior of their exchange youth. There is a tendency to have a “grass-is-always-greener fallacy” as indicted by Roehl (1987, p. 453) in his book comparing Japanese and American managerial practices. While Japanese culture does place a value on behaviors such as hard-work and obedience, so does American culture. Ultimately, while people are a product of their culture, they are also individuals. Host families should not become too wedded to the idea of certain behavior expectations from their Japanese youth before meeting them.

Exchange program coordinators should also encourage families to not compare their own child negatively to the exchange youth. Instead, the family should be encouraged to identify positive behaviors they see in their own child during the homestay. Creating an expectation of finding the positive, not the negative, can improve the family’s enjoyment of the exchange as they are less concerned with finding fault and
more focused on identifying how their own child is growing as a result of their participation.

**Findings and Conclusions**

The findings of the present study helped answer the questions: what is the experience of Kentucky families who participated in the 4-H exchange program; how does the family perceive their relationship with the exchange youth; how does the relationship develop between the family members and between the family members and exchange youth; and what factors do the families perceive would help improve the hosting experience? The data produced a list of seven themes and two outlying themes that helped illustrate the families’ perspective on hosting an exchange youth.

This list of identified themes offers practitioners an opportunity to gain understanding about hosting an exchange youth from both family and individual perspectives. The identified themes and subsequent discussion are meant to assist those who work with exchange programs that require a host family to help ensure a more positive experience for all involved.

The present study helped contribute to currently published literature on families and exchange programs in several meaningful ways. Families who participated in this exchange program demonstrated a higher quality and increased pattern of communication. The families also spent more time together and indicated a greater degree of interaction than before the homestay.

Theoretically, using Berry’s (1980) theory of acculturation, the families demonstrated an integration orientation toward the exchange program. This outcome demonstrates that in the environment and duration of the homestay, the family is not just sharing their culture but also actively embracing elements of the minority culture.
The concept of role expectations of, as indicted by SI theory, the family members and the exchange youth were also significant in the homestay experience. Fathers were more involved than expected. Mothers continued to serve as the primary point of contact for this home based experience. Children had to undertake additional responsibilities through their responsibility toward the exchange youth.

The findings of the present study were consistent with research that indicates the most influential family member in a given situation depends on the specific realm of decision making (Belch, Ceresino, & Belch, 1985). The family’s child can have a significant influence on decision-making (Labrecque & Ricard, 2001; Wang, Hsieh, Yeh, & Tsai, 2004; Wang, Holloway, Beatty, & Hill, 2007). The mother played the most significant role in deciding whether or not the family would host reinforcing her role as gatekeeper (Beutler, Burr, Bahr, & Herrin, 1989; Holmes, Dunn, Dyer, & Day, 2013).

Limitations of the Study

This study involved certain limitations. First, the present study only looked at the exchange experience of those who participated in the 4-H/Labo program. The experience of host families in other exchange programs may be very different from this one. Second, the participants were a purposefully selected, convenience sample from Kentucky. Participants in this program from other states may have a different experience due to variation in program implementation and evaluation. Third, the families who participated in the present study chose to take part in the research. Generally, their experience was positive and may not reflect the experience of other families. Another study that included families that indicated they had an overall negative experience might help provide a more balanced perspective toward these research questions. Lastly, the families were asked to recall specific feelings and memories about an experience that
happened 12–24 months before the interviews. This could have resulted in significant loss of detail and accuracy due to memory degradation or memory revision.

This study’s researcher had a personal and professional connection to this program that influenced the process. He had participated in hosting an exchange youth as a youth and now coordinates the 4-H/Labo exchange for the Kentucky 4-H program. Due to this close connection with the program, reflexivity during the research process was important and practiced. This connection undoubtedly led to bias and assumptions, but also allowed a greater rapport with study participants and an insider’s knowledge of exchanges that helped with the data collection and analysis.

One bias that the primary researcher came to this project with was that exchange programs have value. While this was supported by the study, it should be noted that this may not be an opinion shared by all researchers. Program coordinators or those that have a vested interest in exchange programs conduct most research. Outside review of the efficacy of exchange programs would be beneficial. Gaining an awareness of this other perspective is one example of how the research process has changed the researcher. The researcher is better able to look at experiences critically and move beyond a surface understanding.

When conducting this research, the biggest surprise, grounded in the data, was the profound sense of loss experience by the host families. The researcher has erroneously assumed that departure would be a time of relief when families could resume their normal roles, schedules, and patterns. The significance of loss felt was an unanticipated outcome. This has helped the researcher to become a better program coordinator, and
allowed them to have more sympathy for families when saying their final goodbyes to their exchange youth.

**Implications for Practice**

This study provides grounded research that is useful for understanding the experience of host families taking part in exchange programs. It has focused on a short-term exchange program from the host perspective. Current cost and time limitations have made short-term exchange programs a more appealing option to program coordinators. Additionally, exchange programs that rely on hosts often find interested families in short supply. The findings of the present study can help make the case for participating in these types of programs as well as improve the experience of the hosts.

Exchange programs can be difficult to evaluate. Cross-sectional evaluation fails to capture the experience across the full duration of the homestay. Longitudinal evaluation can be difficult and time consuming. The use of the LIG offers a straightforward method of evaluation that can generate useful and thoughtful discussion. Additionally, it allows an “at a glance” comparison of experiences between host families or host family members.

Communication difficulties and stress/anxiety were often cited concerns by research participants. Being aware of these difficulties can help the practitioner be more pro-active in addressing these with host families. Acknowledging that these are normal feelings and do not necessarily indicate a bad experience can help individuals feel more at ease. Providing participants with tools and coping mechanisms to help minimize these concerns is a suggested strategy for program coordinators.

The feelings of loss experienced by some participants at the end of the exchange is of great importance to program coordinators. For those recruiting and working with
hosts, it is desirable to support the family and minimize any negativity they have toward the program. Additionally, helping host families have a more positive experience can increase the likelihood of them hosting again in the future. Again, acknowledging that this is a normal part of the exchange experience can help the family members become more comfortable when they say goodbye. Creating a support network of host families could also assist by connecting individuals with others having the same experience.

Program coordinators should select appropriate host families, create a close and individualized relationship, and provide networking support with other exchange families. These steps will help program coordinators improve the success and satisfaction of host families.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This study aimed to better understand the experience of hosting an exchange youth from the family perspective. Through data collected from the LIG, in-depth participant interviews and program evaluations, themes related to the hosting experience were identified. There are several avenues for future research.

Future research in this field could further explore the experience of host families. One method for this would be to conduct the research with a larger sample size or from multiple programs. Surveying host family participants for increases in cultural competency using a validated measure may also be a possibility for future research. This study only included the host parent(s) and identified host sibling. Including the other siblings would expand the family perspective on the hosting experience. The discussion of post-homestay experience was generally limited to only a few weeks or months after departure. Another possible path for future research would be to explore the longer-term impacts of hosting after two or more years. Conducting this or similar research on the
host family’s experiences with a statistically significant sample population would help generalize the results.

Host families specifically identified teaching respect, responsibility courage and patience as an outcome of their participation in the homestay. One possible avenue for future research would be to use surveys with internal measures of their characteristics to determine how host families change over the course of the homestay.

**Conclusion**

This study was conducted to understand the experiences of host families participating in exchange programs. It focused on one specific, short-term exchange conducted through the Kentucky 4-H program. Having a well-developed cultural competency and appreciation of diversity is a desirable trait for workers in the modern global economy. Limited resources such as time and money make travel abroad difficult for some people. States with less diverse populations limit exposure to different cultures, foods and language. With these limitations in place, how can one find experiences that will help prepare themselves or their children for a more global workforce?

This study asserts that exchange programs offer benefits to the hosts as well as the exchangees. It brings attention to the experience of hosting an exchange youth and how doing so helps family members grow as individuals, families and members of their community. Through this attention and documentation of benefits, it is hoped that more families will be encouraged to seek out international experiences for the sake of their children’s cultural competency to help better prepare them to take their place in a global modern society. An accessible and worthwhile form of international experience is gained through hosting an exchange youth.

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APPENDIX A:

ORGANIZATIONAL GATEKEEPER—REQUEST FOR ACCESS AND RESPONSE

Dr. Jacobs:

My name is Mark Mains. As you may know, I am currently a youth working on my dissertation at the University of Kentucky. As part of my dissertation research, I am exploring the experiences of families who have participated in the 4-H/LABO exchange program in 2012 and 2013. This study will help to expand the limited literature on short-term exchange programs and how they impact hosting families. This increased understanding could contribute to improvements in the recruitment of host families and in their support during the program.

Participants in the study will include the parents and host sibling. They will be interviewed at a location of their choosing for 60-90 minutes. Their personal information and interview transcript will be de-identified after transcription to maintain confidentiality. Every effort will be made to ensure that individuals and families are not identifiable in the final presentation of data.

To provide more information, I have attached the informed consent form (for adults) and assent form (for youth) that will be provided to the families. This study will be conducted with approval from the University of Kentucky Institutional Review Board.

In addition to the participant interviews, evaluation data from the participating families will be analyzed for additional insight. These evaluation surveys were submitted to the 4-H/LABO program coordinator (myself) anonymously.

You are welcome to contact me via email (mmains@uky.edu) or phone (859.218.0991) for additional information or if you have questions. With this in mind, would you please respond to this email letting me know if I do or do not have approval to conduct.

Thank you and have a good day.

Mark Mains | mmains@uky.edu | 859.218.0991

Doctoral Candidate for Family Science, University of Kentucky
APPENDIX B:

LIFELINE INTERVIEW GRAPH
Hello!

My name is Mark Mains. As you may know, I am currently a youth working on my dissertation at the University of Kentucky. As part of my class requirements, I’m studying the impact of short-term international exchange programs on the host family. If you family is interested in this study, I would like to interview you, your spouse and your son/daughter individually for about 60-90 minutes each. I would like to interview each of you at least once and maybe one additional time. The maximum amount of time would be 2-3 hours per person. These can occur on the same or separate days at your convenience. I would be happy to meet you for these interviews at your local Cooperative Extension Service office or another place that is convenient for you.

I will be happy to send you additional information about this study. Your participation would help us better understand how exchange program impact the host families. If you would like additional information or have questions, please feel free to contact me through email (mmains@uky.edu) or by phone (859.393.1463).

If you would like to participate, please reply to this email to let me know you are interested in finding out more about this study.

Thank you and have a good day.

Mark Mains | mmains@uky.edu | 859.218.0991

Doctoral Candidate for Family Science, University of Kentucky
Interview Guide (Adult Version)

Section A – Lifeline Interview
Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I appreciate your contribution to helping me understand how the 4-H Youth Development/LABO exchange program impacts families. This interview should take no more than 90 minutes. There are two parts to the interview. Part One will be drawing a graph of your experience. Part Two will be some questions and discussion about your experience. Feel free to bring up any topics or questions that you think are important but that I don’t know enough to ask. I want to know more about what you think about the experience of hosting an exchange youth. There is no right or wrong answer and you are encouraged to express your thoughts in your own words. Take as much time as you need. You may stop the interview at any time to take a break or if you decide to quit.

To help me remember our discussion I would like to take some notes and audio record our discussion. With your permission, I would like to start the recorder.

[IF PERMITTED, TURN ON RECORDER]

Now, before we begin our general discussion, I would like you to draw a timeline of your time before, during and after the exchange. I’m looking for the “ups and downs” of the experience. Here is an example of a timeline that shows how one family’s experience could look.

[SHOW EXAMPLE TIMELINE]

Now I would like you to diagram your experience before, during and after the exchange. The part above the middle is for positive thoughts, feelings, and experiences. The part below the middle line is for concerns, stress and negative feelings. Start by putting your pencil on the paper and just draw the ups and downs of your experience during the two weeks before the exchange, during the exchange and the two weeks after.

Now I would like to discuss your timeline a little bit. Can you tell me about some of the “peaks” and “valleys” on the line? Please feel free to provide as much detail as possible. Possible Prompts…

- What does this peak represent? What does this valley represent?
- What caused your feelings to change from (positive to negative or negative to positive) at this point?
- Can you identify the most important experiences, positive or negative, you had about the exchange program? Would you indicate about where this happened on the graph?
Section B – Semi-Structure Interview Questions

A. Tell me about your experience of having an exchange youth.
   Follow-Up Questions & Probes
   - What made you decide to have an exchange youth?
     - Who was the main person in making this experience happen?
   - When thinking about having an exchange youth, what were you excited about?
     - What were you looking forward to doing? How did you imagine your relationship?
   - What were you nervous about?
     - What were some of your concerns? What did you worry about? How did you cope with those concerns or worries?

B. Tell me more about your relationship with your exchange youth.
   - How did they interact with you?
     - How did your relationship change over time? How did they change over time? How did you change over time?
   - How did they interact with your spouse?
     - How was your spouse’s relationship compared to your relationship with the exchange youth?
   - How did they interact with your child?
     - How did you feel about their relationship? How did your child view your relationship with the exchange youth?
   - What role did they have in family? For example, visitor, friend, family member or something else?
     - How did having them around change you? How did it change your family?
     - If they became like a family member….when did that happen? Did anything specific help that transition to occur?
     - If they were more of a guest or visitor...could you have viewed them as family? What factors were present or not present that impacted your relationship?

C. Tell me about some of the good things and difficult things you experienced during the exchange.
   - What were some of the difficulties you experienced? How did you handle them?
     - Did you experience anything that caused stress? How did that stress impact you and your family?
   - What were some of the good things you experienced?
     - What’s your best memory of the exchange? What do you think you will remember the most in 20 years about this experience?

Have you or your family changed from this experience? If so, how?
   - How has your relationship with your other family members changed?
     - Has the activities or the amount of time you spend together changed?
- What do you think you or your family gained from this experience?
  - How do you think this experience has changed you in regards to Japan and Japanese people? What did you learn about yourself or your family through this experience?

This has been a great interview. You have given me a lot to think about. Would you like me to send you a summary of my notes to see if I have recorded everything accurately?

I really appreciate your time today. Before we finish, I would like to request that you complete this information form [GIVE POST-INTERVIEW DEMOGRAPHIC FORM].

Thank you again for your time. If you have any questions or concerns about this project, you are welcome to contact me. You are also welcome to contact your 4-H agent, the Assistant Director of Kentucky 4-H or my advisor for this project. Their contact information is provided on the copy of the consent/assent form you received.

Thank you again and have a good day/night!
Section A – Lifeline Interview

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I appreciate your help in understanding how being a host family affected you and your parents. This interview should take no more than 90 minutes. There are two parts to the interview. Part One will be drawing a line that tells me about your time hosting from the beginning to the end. Part Two will be some questions and discussion about your experience. Feel free to tell me anything you think I should know but do not ask. I want to know what you think about the experience of hosting an exchange youth. There is no right or wrong answer and you are encouraged to tell me your thoughts in your words. Take as much time as you need. You may stop the interview at any time to take a break or if you decide to quit.

To help me remember our discussion I would like to take some notes and audio record our discussion. With your permission, I would like to start the recorder.

[IF PERMITTED, TURN ON RECORDER]

Now, before we begin, I would like you to draw a timeline of your time before, during and after the exchange. I’m looking for the “ups and downs” of the experience. Here is an example of a timeline that shows how one person’s experience could look.

[SHOW EXAMPLE TIMELINE]

Now I would like you to draw a line showing your experience before, during and after the exchange. The part above the middle is for positive thoughts, feelings, and experiences. The part below the middle line is for concerns, stress and negative feelings. Start by putting your pencil on the paper and just draw the ups and downs of your experience during the two weeks before the exchange, during the exchange and the two weeks after.

Now I would like to talk about what you drew. Can you tell me about some of the “high points” and “low points” on the line? Please feel free to tell me as much as you want using as much detail as possible.
Possible Prompts…

• What does this high point represent? What does this low point represent?
• What caused your feelings to change from (positive to negative or negative to positive) at this point?
• Can you identify the most important experiences, positive or negative, you had about the exchange program? Would you indicate about where this happened on the graph?
Section B – Semi-Structure Interview
Questions

A. Tell me about your experience of being a host brother/sister.
Follow-Up Questions & Probes

- What made you or your family decide to have an exchange youth?
  - Who was the main person in making this experience happen?
- When thinking about having an exchange youth, what were you excited about?
  - What were you looking forward to doing? How did you imagine your relationship?
- What were you nervous about?
  - What were some of your concerns? What did you worry about? How did you cope with those concerns or worries?

B. Tell me more about your relationship with your exchange youth.

- How did they interact with you?
  - How did your relationship change over time? How did they change over time? How did you change over time?
- How did they interact with your parent(s)?
  - How was your parent(s)’s relationship with the exchange youth different from your relationship?
- What role did they have in family? For example, visitor, friend, family member or something else?
  - How did having them around change you? How did it change your family?
  - If they became like a family member….when did that happen? Did anything specific help that occur?
  - If they were more of a guest or visitor...could you have viewed them as family? What factors were present or not present that impacted your relationship?

C. Tell me about some of the good things and difficult things you experienced during the exchange.

- What were some of the difficulties you experienced? How did you handle them?
  - Did you experience anything that caused stress? How did that stress impact you and your family?
- What were some of the good things you experienced?
  - What’s your best memory of the exchange? What do you think you will remember the most in 20 years about this experience?

Have you or your family changed from this experience? If so, how?

- How has your relationship with your other family members changed?
  - Has the activities or the amount of time you spend together changed?
- What do you think you or your family gained from this experience?
o How do you think this experience has changed you in regards to Japan and Japanese people? What did you learn about yourself or your family through this experience?

This has been a great interview. You have given me a lot to think about. Would you like me to send you a summary of my notes to see if I have recorded everything accurately?

I really appreciate your time today. Before we finish, I would like to request that you complete this information form [GIVE POST-INTERVIEW DEMOGRAPHIC FORM].

Thank you again for your time. If you have any questions or concerns about this project, you are welcome to contact me. You are also welcome to contact your 4-H agent, the Assistant Director of Kentucky 4-H or my advisor for this project. Their contact information is provided on the copy of the consent/assent form you received.

Thank you again and have a good day/night!
Boomer Franklin, 10/5/2015, 2:54 pm

Boomer and I met in a noisy restaurant as he began the trip to take his family back to western Kentucky. He had just gotten off work for the day. His trip back home would take several hours. It was hard to hear and the recording was compromised. I tried to overcome this by repeating back what he said so it was recorded. Boomer liked to show pictures of the experience on his phone as a way on expanding upon his discussion. Again, I tried to verbally explain the picture as it was shown on his phone. It might be useful to allow people to share pictures for in future interviews to help with explanation and discussion.

His wife, son and daughter interrupted us several times. They were sitting at another table in the restaurant. This seemed to frustrate Boomer. After completing the interview, I sat in my car for several minutes and tried to capture as much of the discussion from written notes as possible.
## Demographic Data Form (v0.1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age: __________</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex: ___ Male ___ Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade In School (if applicable): 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th 9th 10th 11th 12th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Grade Completed (if applicable):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School, Degree</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
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<td>Professional School Degree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doctorate Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaskan Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: ________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Hispanic or Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior to being a host for the Japanese LABO exchange youth, please rate your knowledge of Japanese culture/customs: Very High High Moderate Low Very Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After being a host for the Japanese LABO exchange youth, please rate your knowledge of Japanese culture/customs: Very High High Moderate Low Very Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior to being a host for the Japanese LABO exchange youth, please rate your comfort level with Japanese culture/customs: Very High High Moderate Low Very Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After being a host for the Japanese LABO exchange youth, please rate your comfort level with Japanese culture/customs: Very High High Moderate Low Very Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thank you for volunteering your time this summer and opening your doors to a child from Japan! I hope that both your family and the Japanese delegate have grown from this experience. Your help in improving our program for next year would be greatly appreciated. Please fill out the evaluation below as completely as possible. Have a great year!

Mark A. Mains

1) Would you recommend this experience and exchange program to another family? YES  NO

2) How effective were the orientation materials in preparing you to host? Do you have any suggestions on how the orientation materials or the personal orientations (either face to face or phone) could be improved to better prepare you for this exchange?

3) Do you feel that your Japanese delegate had a positive experience with your family? Why or why not?

4) Please let us know one or two positive experiences that you and your family had as a result of this exchange.

Mark A. Mains, Extension Specialist for 4-H Youth Development, Teen Programs

Agriculture & Natural Resources • Family & Consumer Sciences • 4-H/Youth Development • Community & Economic Development

Educational programs of the Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service serve all people regardless of race, color, age, sex, religion, disability, or national origin.
5) Please let us know some of the challenges that you and your family had as a result of this exchange.

6) I will be meeting with the Japanese Coordinators of this program in the fall. What should I let them know to ensure that future youth are prepared to visit the United States and stay with their host family?

7) How could the State 4-H Coordinator or the State 4-H Office have supported you better during either before or during the home stay?

8) Any other comments or suggestions would be appreciated:

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Mark A. Mains, Extension Specialist for 4-H Youth Development, Teen Programs

Agriculture & Natural Resources • Family & Consumer Sciences • 4-H Youth Development • Community & Economic Development

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APPENDIX I: SAMPLE OF MEMOS

Clark Family, 10/18/2014
1) The host mother felt the Japanese exchange youth found the making of the scrapbook to be very therapeutic. However, it’s possible the host mother’s attention and focus on completing the scrapbook (evening finishing some pages in the hotel) was her method of coping with the departure of the exchange student.

Decker Family, 12/30/2014
1) The Decker family felt very strongly that the host sibling should share common characteristics with the family. They believed this was a factor in the success of the exchange.

2) Ms. Decker believed that her son rubbed off in a negative manner on the exchange youth (idealization of the Japanese child). She also indicated that maybe the natural mother was not as open to showing her feelings (Privileged experience).

3) [Exchange youth] being sick helped the family demonstrate or develop more cultural empathy as they realized how he might be feeling when he was ill and away from family in another country.

Harrison Family, 1/4/2015
1) Ms. Harrison was the only single parent family that participated in this study. She is a highly educated, higher income mother who lives by herself in a rural area of the state. She is devoted strongly to her child and is very high energy. She helps to care for her son during her work time by making sure he is involved in numerous activities. They are a family that spends a lot of time together and stay busy. His father is in the picture and he spends time with him on a regular basis. There seems to be little animosity between Ms. Harrison and her ex-husband.

2) Her transcript was not reviewed after transcription due to time limitations. This transcript was done by the 1st transcription service and is pretty low quality. I had to make corrections to it as I went for readability. Not all corrections were made due to time constraints. The main thought of the transcript was coded. The wording was correct if the passage was identified as something that might be a useful quote. The poor quality of this transcript pisses me off and brings the whole situation of having to pay for transcripts back to light.

3) The dynamic of the two person Harrison family was thrown into turmoil by the addition of their person. Mother and son worked well together and having another person in the home to account for caused some difficulties as they adjusted.
Continued the process of coding. After discussion with my 2nd coder/mentor, I decided I was not recording “codes” so much as themes. I need to be more detailed rather than less detailed. A strategy for review was also developed. I will finish updating my code book. I will then code all transcripts, adding additional codes as they arise from the data. I will review the nodes/codes that have many responses to make sure that I’m capturing the essence of the information and not a theme. When necessary I will recode. I will review the code book for clarity, definition and duplications after every five transcripts (roughly after completing each quarter). When finished, I will provide a set of three randomly selected transcripts (one from each category) with coding and the code book to the 2nd reviewer. After review and discussion additional coding will be completed if necessary. When finished, the updated code book and three randomly selected transcripts will be provided to an outside reviewer with listed codes. From this a kappa will be calculated.
## APPENDIX K:

### CODE BOOK SAMPLE

### Code Book - 8/8/15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number Of Sources Coded</th>
<th>Number Of Coding References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties in Communication</td>
<td>References to communication being a barrier or something that made the exchange program more difficult. Keywords - language barrier, didn’t speak English well, hard to communicate, thought s/he understood, communication issue</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning About Japan</td>
<td>Learning new things about Japanese people, culture, homes, food, etc. Keywords: tried new food, learned new information, learned language, experienced new things, learned to use chopsticks</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified as Family Member</td>
<td>The exchange youth is identified as member of the family. Whether through specific experience or over time, they become like a child or sibling to the family members. They are treated as family members and not guests or visitors. This is distinguished from the more general “responsibility of the exchange youth” by being a more intense, “closer” feeling. Keywords: treat her like brother/sister, like having a son/daughter, treat like family, s/he was my child, s/he was family</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Number Of Sources Coded</td>
<td>Number Of Coding References</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Connection Between Host Sibling and Exchange Youth Through Activities or Projects | Related to the exchange youth and sibling connect or furthering their relationship development through activities.  
Keywords: worked together on (project), playing (game) brought us close together | 23                      | 35                          |
| Coping with Difficulties in Communication                            | References to how the barrier of communication was overcome by the interviewee. Includes concrete things (i.e., writing or non-verbal) or things like persevering, keeping a positive attitude or trying again.  
Keywords: wrote things down, acted things out, used dictionary/phrasebook/translator, found someone to speak to him/her, | 21                      | 36                          |
| Sharing American Culture                                             | Related to the host being able to share their culture with the exchange youth.  
Keywords: showed them my house/community/neighborhood, they did a new activity with me, they got to do special things in Kentucky | 21                      | 25                          |
| Home Stay - Peak                                                     | Descriptive - LIM                                                                                                       | 20                      | 57                          |
| Family Became Closer                                                 | The family becoming closer as a result of participating in the exchange program.  
Keywords: did family things, spent more time together, did more things together, more interactive with each other, got along better | 19                      | 49                          |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number Of Sources Coded</th>
<th>Number Of Coding References</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quotes for Dissertation</td>
<td>Good quotes that can be used in the final dissertation.</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Home Stay - Low</td>
<td>Descriptive – LIM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Departure - Low</td>
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APPENDIX L:

CONSENT FORM

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

THE IMPACT OF SHORT-TERM INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS ON THE HOSTING FAMILY

WHY ARE YOU AND YOUR CHILD BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

You are being invited to take part in a research study about the impact that hosting an international exchange youth has on the hosting family. You are being invited to take part in this research study because your family has participated in the 4-H Youth Development/LABO exchange program previously. If you and your child volunteer to take part in this study, your family will be one of several families selected for the study.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

The person in charge of this study is Mark Mains from the University of Kentucky. Mark Mains is a doctoral candidate and is completing this research as part of his academic requirements. He is being guided in this research by Dr. Amy Hosier, PhD and Dr. Ronald Werner-Wilson, PhD of University of Kentucky Department of Family Science.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

By doing this study, we hope to learn how hosting an international exchange youth in your home has impacted your family and the relationship between family members. This will help us better understand the advantages and disadvantages of participating in this type of program. We will also gain a better understanding of how families change as a result of their participation in this type of program.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

The interviews required for this research will be conducted at location and is convenient and accessible to you. You can choose to meet at your local Cooperative Extension Service, your home or another location. Each member of your family will need to come to selected location(s) between one and two times during the study. Each of those visits will take about 60-90 minutes. The total amount of time each member of your family will be asked to volunteer for this study is between two and three hours over the next two months.
WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?

During these visits, you and your child will be asked to complete a graph that shows the ups and downs associated with the exchange program during the two weeks before, during and two weeks after you participated in the program. This will help us develop and understanding of what situations you experienced. Additionally, you will be asked some general questions about your experience and how it has affected you and your family during the interview. This interview process will be audio-taped.

Interviews will be conducted individually and will take place with you, your spouse and your child.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

Risk is minimal for this study. However, you or your child may find some questions we ask you to be upsetting or stressful. If so, we can tell you about some people who may be able to help you with these feelings.

WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There is no guarantee that you or your child will get any benefit from taking part in this study. Your willingness to take part will contribute to a better understanding of exchange programs and how they impact families.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering. If you decide not to take part in this study, your decision will have no effect on the quality of services you receive from the 4-H Youth Development Cooperative Extension Service or your future involvement in programs through this organization.

IF YOU DON’T WANT TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY, ARE THERE OTHER CHOICES?

If you or your child do not want to be in the study, there are no other choices except not to take part in the study.

WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?

Your only expense will be the cost of travel to the selected interview location (if outside the home).
WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

You and your child will not receive any rewards or payment for taking part in the study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE?

We will make every effort to keep confidential all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law.

When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about your family in such a way that all identifying information (name, location, ages) are changed. You or your child will not be personally identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. A written transcript of these interviews will not include identifying information and will be kept in a secured office space. Audio recordings of this interview will be retained only on the primary computer of the researcher and will be kept in a secured office space.

We will keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law. However, there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court or to tell authorities if you report information about a child being abused or if you pose a danger to yourself or someone else. Also, we may be required to show information which identifies you to people who need to be sure we have done the research correctly; these would be people from such organizations as the University of Kentucky.

CAN YOUR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?

If you or your child decide to take part in the study you still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. You or your child will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study.

The individuals conducting the study may need to withdraw you or your child from the study. This may occur if you are not able to follow the directions they give you or if they find that your being in the study is more risk than benefit to you. There are no consequences for withdrawing from this study. You can withdraw at any time by contacting Mark Mains through phone or email (859.218.0991, mmains@uky.edu).
WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

There is a possibility that the data collected from you may be shared with other investigators in the future. If that is the case the data will not contain information that can identify you unless you give your consent or the UK Institutional Review Board (IRB) approves the research. The IRB is a committee that reviews ethical issues, according to federal, state and local regulations on research with human subjects, to make sure the study complies with these before approval of a research study is issued.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator, Mark Mains at 859.218.0991 or through email at mmains@uky.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the staff in the Office of Research Integrity at the University of Kentucky at 859-257-9428 or toll free at 1-866-400-9428. We will give you a signed copy of this consent form to take with you. By signing this consent form, you are acknowledging that you giving permission for you your child to participate in this research project.

_________________________   ____________
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study  Date

__________________________
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

__________________________
Printed name of child for which permission to participate is obtained

_________________________   ____________
Name of (authorized) person obtaining informed consent  Date
APPENDIX M:

ASSENT FORM

THE IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS ON THE HOSTING FAMILY

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Mark Mains from the University of Kentucky. You are invited because your family participated in the 4-H Youth Development/LABO international exchange program.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate in one to two interviews lasting 60 to 90 minutes each. You will come to a location of your choosing for the interview one to two times.

There is no payment for participating in this research project.

Your family will know that you are in the study. If anyone else is given information about you, they will not know your name. A number or initials will be used instead of your name.

If something makes you feel bad while you are in the study, please tell your parent or your 4-H Agent. If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may stop whenever you want.

You can ask Mark Mains questions any time about anything in this study. You can also ask your parent any questions you might have about this study.

Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be mad if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

______________________________            ________________
Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study   Date Signed
REFERENCES


Knight, S. M., & Schmidt-Rinehart, B. C. (2002). Enhancing the homestay: Study abroad from the host family’s perspective. Foreign Language Annals, 35(2), 190–201.


176


VITA

EDUCATION

MS  Vocational Education, 2002
    University of Kentucky
    Lexington, KY

BS  Agriculture Biotechnology, 1997
    University of Kentucky
    Lexington, KY

POSITIONS HELD

Extension Specialist
Department of 4-H Youth Development
University of Kentucky (Lexington, KY); 2006-Present

Extension Association Specialist
Department of 4-H Youth Development
University of Kentucky (Lexington, KY); 2004-2006

Extension 4-H Youth Development Agent
Kenton County, Kentucky
University of Kentucky (Lexington, KY); 1998-2004

SELECTED PROFESSIONAL PUBLICATIONS

