

International Students: Host Perceptions of their Social Impact on  
Home, School and Community

by

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ABSTRACT

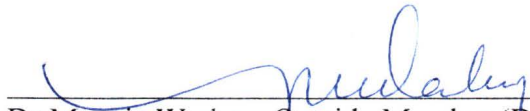
The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of Canadian families in Victoria as they host international students. This purpose addresses the broad question of cross-cultural interaction, but its particular interest is in the effect of international students on the host families with whom they live. Conversational interviews were conducted over a one-year period with five homestay mothers who spoke of how the international students affected the lives of the host families, the schools that they attended, and the community at large. The interviews were transcribed, coded and analyzed and they present a rich picture of interactions. The study reveals an often complex relationship between hosts and international students; it suggests a need for more integration of foreign students in the schools and in the community, and it exposes the potential for increased awareness of diverse cultural perspectives in Victoria.

Examiners:



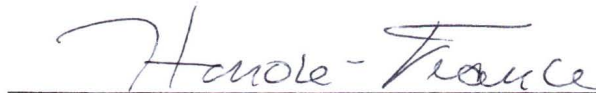

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## **Chapter I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Increasing immigration and human mobility are phenomena which currently present social challenges to Canadians. People with varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds have always shared the resources and opportunities of this country, but never has there been such a challenge to us all to recognize and learn from the diverse life experiences and philosophical, religious and political perspectives available to us. In Victoria, where these influences have yet to be felt as in other cities such as Toronto and Vancouver, we would be wise to prepare for a changing population by focusing on cross-cultural opportunities. These help people from varied cultural backgrounds to learn about each other and to examine their own beliefs, values and assumptions within a broader context. While this process of cross-cultural adaptation can be problematic, the potential for a rich cultural blending is profound.

One example of a cross-cultural program currently being implemented in Victoria is the International Student Program (ISP). In 1992, the Victoria Board of School Trustees authorized the ISP "to bring about a better understanding of many of the cultures that comprise our 'global village'" (International Student Program, Victoria, B.C., Homestay Handbook.) High schools in the Greater Victoria School District received 90 foreign students last year and assigned them to homestay families. The ISP grew by 20% in the 1995-1996 school year and continues to grow rapidly. The program is intended to enrich the students' linguistic and cultural experience in Canada and to provide local homestay families with a valuable cross-cultural exchange.

My interest in the ISP stems from personal experiences as a host, a foreigner, and an English as a Second Language teacher. These have sensitized me to the challenges that people face in a cross-cultural situation. I have also concentrated on the ISP for previous course work as I designed a support program for homestay students and families, a project that involved interviewing several of the program participants. Throughout this work I was struck by the potential of such a program to benefit Victoria by bringing new cultures and experiences into its homes, schools and neighbourhoods.

I believe that the homestay families are central to the entire ISP program because they are in a position to oversee, participate in and influence activities in the home, the school and the community. The ISP Homestay Handbook states that "daily interaction with a host family provides an integral part of a foreign student's education experience in Canada. The sharing and learning in the house go far beyond the academic education...It is the very strong commitment of our Homestay Program that generates the resounding success of our International Student Program." The position held by homestay families who are already linked to the community by circumstance and language gives a powerful voice to this research. Their perceptions illuminate important issues regarding the social impact of international students in Victoria.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Research on cross-cultural adaptation to date has focused largely on the experience of foreigners and sojourners as they adjust to a new environment. It concentrates on the internal changes in these individuals (culture shock) as they strive to adapt and on the learning process that is triggered by their exposure to the unfamiliar. Factors external to the individual in which this adjustment process takes place and in which relationships develop have, to my knowledge, not been considered extensively.

One way to further our understanding of the phenomenon of cross-cultural interaction in general, within the context of a specific community, is to listen to the voices of the homestay families. Therefore, this research examines the perceptions of experienced homestay mothers. The focus is on the perceived impact of the foreign student on the family with whom they live, on the schools that they attend and on the community in which they interact. The nature of the cross-cultural interaction for the host and how this is articulated is examined.

### **PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH**

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of Canadian families in Victoria as they host international students. This purpose addresses the broad question of cross-cultural interaction, but its particular interest is in the effect of international students on the host families with whom they live, the schools that they attend and in the community at large.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH**

Cross-cultural programs are growing in Victoria and the potential for learning for all involved is significant. These programs present opportunities for the development of intercultural communication skills and cross-cultural understanding which are increasingly necessary in today's world. Involvement in the ISP can enrich personal, academic and social development for the host and the community at large. Broader views of the world and international contacts can be further benefits to hosting international students. It would be naive to suggest that friction will not be a part of the cross-cultural learning process. But the Chinese character for 'crisis' consisting of the two words, 'danger' and 'opportunity' illustrates that from this friction there is the potential for a positive outcome.

By using a qualitative approach in this study, I have gained insights into the hosting experience and how the interaction between host and international student impacts the families, the schools and the community. This information has led to a broader understanding of the nature of the cross-cultural learning experience currently taking place in Victoria, which may assist in future program planning. While this study is a small window into the topic, the experiences of this community are an important consideration within the broader context of society as a whole and how we might avoid conflict and get the most out of cross-cultural opportunities.

## **CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH**

This study focuses on participants of the homestay program which is a part of the Greater Victoria International Student Program. In operation since 1992, this program attracts, predominately, students from Asian countries who come to Victoria to obtain a diploma from an English-speaking high school. These students are placed in various high schools in the Greater Victoria school district. They may register for just one school year, or, as is increasingly likely, they may stay on to attend college or university. International students pay \$10,000.00 in annual school fees and \$600.00 per month for the homestay.

At the time that the homestay parents were interviewed for this study, their homestay experience ranged from one year to three years.

## **CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCHER**

I would like to put in context my experience as a child, a teacher, a mother, a student, a foreigner and a host to the shaping and defining of my perception and my research. I refer to the Random House Dictionary (1973) definition of experience as "knowledge or practical wisdom gained from what one has observed, encountered or undergone...all that is perceived, understood and remembered." Just as the perceptions of the hosts in this study are influenced by their past experience and by their accumulated values and assumptions, so are my own.

### **Family Background**

My family on my father's side immigrated to Canada in 1938 from Czechoslovakia. Early memories for me in the 1950's include the gathering together of the different generations of a large and closely-knit family, which by then had acquired several Canadian spouses and children. The senior members of the family demonstrated their love for and commitment to their new country as well as their gratitude for the peace and opportunities that Canada offered. I suspect that my interest in cross-cultural issues and my conviction that immigration is a positive thing for Canada began in those early days.

### **Teacher**

My experiences have influenced my perception of teaching. From kindergartens, to east and west side schools in Vancouver, to a remote village school in northern Nigeria, to adult cooking courses, to ESL classes, I have taught in a wide range of situations. Together, these experiences have given me an appreciation for the value of different perspectives which are reflected not only in each context, but indeed within each unique group of students. I have experienced the challenge that this diversity presents,

but I think that it stimulates the teacher to try to identify common threads which connect all students because these links can help the process of adaptation for all. I further believe that a successful teaching situation is one of learning for both teacher and learner, and that a relationship is built on the experiences and expertise of both. The perceptions of homestay parents regarding the need for increased social and educational interaction at the school are therefore of interest to me.

### **Parent**

As a parent who has been involved at our children's schools over the years, I have learned that good communication among teachers, parents and students is crucial. I believe that, while it is not always easy or expedient to develop and maintain this rapport, programs are enhanced by the collaboration of all involved. I therefore enthusiastically endorse the host recommendations that communication be a future focus of the homestay program.

Further in my role as a mother, it has been important to me to make the family my primary concern. I think that, in our culture, this is the priority of most working, single and stay-at-home mothers. While families today are reorganizing parental roles, I believe that in most homes it is still mothers who shoulder the greatest responsibility for the daily lives of their children. It is therefore no accident that the hosts that I interviewed for this research are women. It is my assumption that, in most cases, it is the mothers in the host families who orchestrate the management of the household. As a parent of teenagers, I also appreciate the challenge and responsibility that the homestay families take on.

### **Student**

As a mature student, I have realized the importance of life experience, different learning styles and collaboration among teachers and students. Having the opportunity to

reflect on my own experience, I have identified recurring themes and concerns and then used them as a basis for further study. I therefore began to explore cross-cultural issues, affective factors in adult learning and the incorporation of life experiences in teaching.

### **Foreigner**

I have lived, studied and worked in England, Nigeria and Switzerland. These experiences have sensitized me to the difficulties of adapting to a new culture and language, making new friends and homesickness. I know what it is like to be a foreigner, but I also feel that, as our society becomes more and more multicultural, this is an invaluable life experience.

### **Host**

In 1980, my family hosted two Vietnamese refugees. This experience exposed us to the joys and challenges of incorporating strangers from a dramatically different culture and situation into our home. Differences such as language, food and life experience created tensions to be sure, but the outcome for us was an opportunity to broaden our understanding of the Vietnamese people. I think that hosting foreigners has made me aware of some of the issues that may arise in other homestay situations.

### **Researcher**

As stated above, I believe there may be difficulties and tensions present in any cross-cultural experience but I also believe in its benefits. Further, strong communicative links among students, parents and teachers will serve to address issues before they become problems and to enhance the educational experience for everyone. It is these beliefs that propelled me to explore the chosen topic. Knowles (1991, p.59.) states that past experience includes "habits, biases and presuppositions that tend to cause us to close our minds to new ideas, fresh perceptions and alternative ways of thinking." I have

purposely placed this research in the context of my life experience and acknowledged my biases. What this brings to the research process must be acknowledged and drawn on to stimulate me to new possibilities and ways of thinking.

## **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

### **International Student/Foreign Student**

In this study, the terms international student and foreign student are used interchangeably. They refer to students from foreign countries who are not permanent residents of Canada and who are registered at one of the local high schools in the Greater Victoria International Student Program.

### **Perception**

"Perception is the conversion of the physical energies of our environment into meaningful experience" (Samovar and Porter, 1994, p.14). First, individuals notice certain things about the world around them, then their cognitive skills allow them to process what they have seen into meaning and action. These perceptions then become internalized and they form the foundation for values, beliefs, assumptions and perspectives.

Perception is culture-bound, and this quality makes examining and/or changing our perceptions extremely complicated. Pratt (1984, p.17.) states that "So often we act out the present against a backdrop of the past, within a frame of perception that is so familiar, so safe that it is terrifying to risk changing it even when we know our perceptions are distorted, limited, constricted by that old view." The culturally-learned frames of perception of both researcher and participants are relevant to this study because they reveal insights into the host experience.

This study looks at the perceptions of homestay parents, what these perceptions may or may not have in common, how they may be influenced by the context in which they occur, and how they may affect meaning-making. It is recognized that these perceptions depend largely on the personalities, experiences and cultural backgrounds of the individuals and that all are equally valid.

### **Social Impact**

In the context of this study, social impact refers to the effect of international students on the interpersonal relationships in the home, at the schools and in the community as perceived by the homestay families. In the homes, social impact is examined in the stories of the daily lives of each family, the relationships that are established and the family's adaptation strategies. In the schools, the social impact is viewed in terms of the perceived effect that foreign students have on interpersonal dynamics: how are the students getting along together? The impact of international students in the community is seen in the perceptions of the homestay parents about how the students are regarded by people in the community.

### **Community**

The Oxford Dictionary (1979) defines community as "a body of people living in one place or district or country and considered as a whole." In this study, community is viewed in this broad sense and refers to Victoria in general. The participants' perceptions obviously reflect only some of the many possible opinions in the community, but they are considered to be noteworthy in themselves.

### **Cross-Cultural and Intercultural**

The terms *cross-cultural* and *intercultural* are often used interchangeably, but a distinction is made between the two in this work. *Cross-cultural* is used to refer to situations in which cultural differences exist. For example, a cross-cultural program brings different cultures together for the purpose of interactive learning. Once the actual interaction takes place, it is referred to as *intercultural* communication.

### **Adaptation**

In this study, adaptation is about change in individuals that is stimulated by exposure to foreign cultures. It is what happens when "an individual chooses to progress from an initial 'tingle of attention' to something unfamiliar towards becoming involved in understanding appreciation and making it a part of one's life, a part of one's self " (Barer-Stein, 1988, p.89). It does not mean that people have to deny or disregard their own cultural values, but it is assumed that they will draw from them in the light of new options or constraints. Adaptation is a key concept in the proposed study because the homestay families, the school and the community are involved in the adaptive learning process as they encounter foreigners.

## Chapter Two

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The literature on topics such as culture shock and cross-cultural adaptation focuses predominantly on foreigners or sojourners and deals with the internal changes that they experience as they adjust to a new environment. It does not address these issues from the perspective of the host, but it is my view that hosts will also experience emotional reactions to encountering new sets of behaviors and values displayed by foreigners. It is possible, therefore, for the existing literature on culture, culture shock and cross-cultural adaptation to form the framework for this study about the cross-cultural interaction in a community. And since the process of adaptation to new cultures is often seen as a learning process (Adler 1987, Kim and Gudykunst 1988, Barer-Stein 1988, Taylor 1994), the proposed research will also draw from the literature on adult and transformative learning.

## **Culture**

Culture has been defined in many ways, but can be considered to be "a historically transmitted system of symbols, meanings and norms" (L.Samovar and R.Porter, 1994, p.36). It represents all that is learned as a result of being a part of a particular group of people. Culture is not inherited through genes, but is acquired through interaction with other members of the group in which a person lives, and is then transmitted from one generation to the next. Individuals internalize this system unconsciously and carry with them this particular way of communicating, interpreting and behaving in the world. Kim and Ruben (1988) call this "internalized cultural imprinting" and argue that this process for individuals remains "largely unrecognized, unquestioned and unchallenged until they encounter people with different cultural attributes" (Kim and Gudykunst, 1988, p.309). When this meeting occurs, people find that previously taken-for-granted assumptions regarding communication and behavior are challenged and this results in what is termed "culture shock".

## **Culture Shock**

Much has been made of the experience of culture shock, which is a state of anxiety that occurs when previously perceived and understood signs and symbols of social interaction are challenged by new ones. It may also be seen as "a synonym for coming face to face with the unfamiliar" (Barer-Stein, 1988, p.88). Researchers such as Oberg (1960), Adler (1972, 1987), and Barer-Stein (1988) have proposed stages of culture shock that foreigners typically go through. Clearly, newcomers face the considerable challenge of having to adapt quickly to the new culture, to incorporate its patterns of behavior and communication. While the position of power held by the host culture gives it the apparent luxury of not having to change, it is my belief that hosts, too, experience a form of culture shock as they absorb foreign cultures into their own. Feelings of frustration, anxiety and anger which typify culture shock will be felt to some

extent, then, by both foreigner and host as they each recognize that their culturally-learned assumptions are not universal. Culture shock is relevant to the proposed study because of its influence on behavior in the home, the school and the community.

### **Adaptation**

Adaptation is "a consequence of an ongoing process in which a system strives to adjust and readjust to challenges, changes and irritants in the environment" (Kim and Gudykunst, 1988, p.107). Cross-cultural adaptation, which is central to the proposed study, is the process that individuals go through when adjusting to new cultural environments. It involves the learning of new cognitive, attitudinal and behavioral patterns, and this learning will take place within the family, the school and the community as the consequence of student exchanges. Since individuals draw from their own values in the light of new options (Spindler, 1994) cross-cultural experiences will be influenced by different sets of values coming together. Some form of adaptation is required of all participants.

### **Cross-Cultural Adaptation**

Yoshikawa (in Kim and Gudykunst, 1988) suggests that the key to successful cross-cultural adaptation lies in the ability to develop a new way of seeing two different perspectives as interdependent and complementary rather than opposing extremes. Drawing from Adler's work on the cross-cultural experience, he proposes a transitional model for studying this process which later forms the basis for Taylor's Transformative Learning Process (see p.19). Yoshikawa sees the adaptive process as a recursive one which can result in a "movement to a state of higher self and cultural awareness" (Kim and Gudykunst, 1988, p.141). After the initial contact with a new culture, he suggests, individuals experience a period of "disintegration" when they are overwhelmed by cultural differences (culture shock). In the next stage, "reintegration", they search for

solutions to the conflict by switching back and forth between the two cultures. Here, stereotyping and judgmental attitudes may be prevalent because the two cultures are being constantly compared. A more flexible outlook characterizes the next stage of "autonomy" when cultural similarities and differences are appreciated and accepted. Yoshikawa calls the resulting cultural blending a "third culture". But it is possible to reach a higher level of awareness, called "double-swing" where "one does not focus on the experiences in the original culture or on the experiences in the second culture. Instead, one is able to experience the "dynamic and dialogical interaction between them" (Kim and Gudykunst, 1988, p.143) and from this synergy emerges a new self-awareness.

Kim (1988) identifies some factors that increase one's ability to adapt to a new culture. He believes that one's "adaptive potential" depends on cultural and racial background (adaptation is easier when cultures are more similar), personality attributes (openness, age, resilience and flexibility), preparedness for change (knowledge about other culture, past experience, personal circumstances) and the nature of the contact between host and foreigner. To assess an individual's adaptive potential, Kim suggests that questions be asked regarding the similarity between the two cultures, the relationship of the host culture to the foreign one, the individual's psychological and informational preparedness, age and education.

### **Adult Learning**

The process of cross-cultural adaptation can be placed within the context of adult learning. Adult learning has been defined in many ways, but for the purposes of this study it will be considered to be an informal process that involves interacting "with one's social and physical environment in such a way as to derive logical meaning, guiding principles and consistent perspective...which results in relatively stable changes in previous behavior, attitudes or values, or the establishment of new ones...changes beyond what could be attributed to normal maturation" (Armstrong, 1994, p.3). The homestay

hosts' social and physical environment will change as soon as a new person arrives, and as the year passes, learning is bound to take place as they demonstrate, notice and react to the values, expectations, behaviors and points of view in the family, the school and the community. According to adult learning principles, the learning that occurs will likely be related variously to the hosts' previous experience with foreign cultures, their motivation for participation in the program, their ability to examine their own culturally-based assumptions in the light of new ones and the circumstances of their particular hosting experience. The learning process will take place over time, and will be individualistic, irreversible, cumulative and continuous (Armstrong, 1994).

Adler (in Kim and Gudykunst, 1988) places culture shock in the broad context of learning. While he acknowledges that the process can be a difficult and painful one, he believes that it is integral to the cross-cultural learning experience because it provides the impetus for learning, growth and creativity. He suggests that "rather than being only a disease for which adaptation is the cure, culture shock is likewise at the very heart of the cross-cultural learning experience. It is an experience in self-understanding and change" (Kim and Gudykunst, 1988, p.303). Exposure to new cultural patterns, then, may stimulate adults to examine previously-held attitudes, values, beliefs and cognitive structures. This learning process holds significant potential for personal growth and social change and can be an exciting outcome of the ISP experience.

Barer-Stein prefers to use the term "experiencing the unfamiliar" in her treatment of the cross-cultural learning experience. She studied the commonalities in the daily life experiences of people living in foreign cultures and found that there was a "universal underlying structure" (Barer-Stein, 1988, p.82) to the process of familiarization. She describes this structure in four stages: hearing, listening, reflecting and heeding. Her subjects reported feelings of anxiety as they faced the unfamiliar and Barer-Stein recognized the difficult nature of their experience, but, like Adler, saw it as a positive force for change. She writes that "To shift from what is comfortable and familiar towards

something that is none of these things, is difficult. It is also a choice to move toward the unknown, a position always clouded with anxiety if not fear. Above all, to make a choice to shift away from what is known and familiar, is a deliberate movement to the possibility of change" (Barer-Stein 1988, p.82).

Barer-Stein noticed in some of her subjects a certain openness to change and suggests that this may well relate to the individual's past experience with openness. She refers to each person's "mental frame of reference" which consists of "past experience and learnings accumulated like some vast but very individual storehouses of knowledge." Access to these storehouses can be achieved, she concludes, through "an inward reflection that burrows to the very essence of our beings of learning" (Barer-Stein, 1988, p.88).

### **Transformative Learning**

Cranton (1994) contends that when adults are able to engage in critical self-reflection, they learn to revise old assumptions and to develop new ways of seeing the world. This process was first articulated by Mezirow (1990) and is called transformative learning.

Mezirow suggests that "changing social norms reinforce our need to critically examine the very paradigms through which we have been taught by our culture to understand our experience" (Mezirow, 1990, p.xiii). He theorizes that critical thinking can change the way we make sense of our experience in the world and creates the potential to affect the character of our relationships, workplaces and socioeconomic system. We should re-examine our frames of reference, he says, and become aware of our "meaning perspectives" which are "the structures of cultural and psychological assumptions within which new experience is assimilated and transformed by one's past experience" (Cranton, p.24). This reflective process, which is influenced by past

experience, is called transformative learning and may be stimulated by cross-cultural interaction. It can lead to a deeper awareness and understanding of diverse perspectives.

Edward Taylor (1994) contends that adult learning in the context of cross-cultural interaction is a process of transformation, rather than formation, which characterizes the learning in childhood. He believes that a foreigner's experience in a new culture can be traced in five stages which he calls a Transformative Learning Process. His theory implies that all adults follow a similar pattern of learning while experiencing a new culture. The five stages begin with the individual's past experience which provides the context for learning readiness. This is followed by a time of fear and frustration caused by the dissonance between two cultures (culture shock). These emotions then force the individual to reflect on the experience and to develop behavioral learning strategies which are personally relevant. The final stage is the development of a new intercultural identity. Here, foreigners are able to understand the perspectives of the host culture and to no longer see their own cultural identity linked only to one culture.

The literature on the transformative learning process provides a useful context for cross-cultural learning and is valuable for its emphasis on critical thinking and the potential for the development of new and more inclusive world views for both the researcher and the respondents. The intensive and open-ended interviews and conversations that are the techniques for data collection for this research have revealed such critical thinking.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE LITERATURE

When placed within the context of adult learning, the literature on cross-cultural adaptation contributes to the framework for this study. The literature suggests that host parents, as adult learners, are personally motivated and undergo learning processes that are influenced by their personalities, past experiences and cultural backgrounds. Further, the process of adaptation includes a stage of uncertainty as homestay families and foreign students experience the unfamiliar, but holds the potential for the development of greater intercultural understanding and a changed world view.

While the emotional impact of cross-cultural interaction, or culture shock, is profound for the foreigner, it may also be experienced to some extent by the host. It is important to recognize the underlying emotional issues for the individual respondents, but this research does not attempt to identify or to trace stages of internal adjustment as suggested by the literature. Rather, the stories of the homestay parents are examined for information about how individual families, local schools and the community at large are adapting to and learning from the cross-cultural opportunity that the ISP provides.

## Chapter Three

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Design**

This study draws from the naturalist paradigm which holds that there are multiple interpretations of reality, and that these realities are best studied in the field, using interactive research methods. The research design remains flexible in order to accommodate the unpredictability of human experience and interaction and the idiosyncrasies of individual contexts. This approach is particularly well-suited to the complexities and diversities of cross-cultural interaction as expressed by individuals with various experiences, personalities and circumstances.

The naturalist paradigm also holds that the researcher is the key instrument which points to the importance of the context of the researcher as well as the researched. The context of the researcher is relevant in that it leads to the choice of study to begin with and the underlying values to some extent create the framework for the research design. It is the responsibility of the researcher, then, to acknowledge this while remaining open to

new and unanticipated possibilities, being sensitive to the data and being willing to adjust the research plan when necessary.

Naturalistic inquiry is value-laden. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.10.) define a value as "that criterion, or touchstone, or perspective that one brings into play, implicitly or explicitly, in making choices or designating preferences". In this sense, they state, values encompass assumptions, theories, perspectives and personal and socio-cultural norms. The perceptions and personal values of those involved in this research are important in understanding the phenomenon of cross-cultural interaction because people act and interact in ways that reflect these values and those of their society. It is also recognized that the values of the researcher implicit in the questions raised in the study may, to some extent, influence the answers.

### **Preliminary Research Procedures**

The idea to focus this research on the perceptions of the homestay hosts originated during conversations with a personal friend who was involved in the ISP. I was impressed with her commitment to the program and her parental concern for her foreign student. During the course of her involvement, she had been introduced to other participants in the program, and was therefore able to suggest to me some people who might be willing to talk to me about their experiences. I contacted five women by phone and explained to them the research topic and the approximate level of involvement that would be asked of them, and four agreed to take part. In all, then, I had five respondents, including my friend.

Permission for conducting this research with human subjects was obtained from the University of Victoria Research Administration Office. Permission to conduct a study using subjects from the Greater Victoria International Student Program was obtained from the program administrator. A consent form (Appendix) which briefly outlined the focus of the research, the method of data collection, the approximate time frame and the

rights of voluntary respondents, was signed at each first meeting. Pseudonyms were used to protect their anonymity, and it is understood that the tapes and transcripts will be destroyed.

## **Research Respondents**

### KATE

Family Make-up: Kate is married, with 5 children. At present, four children live at home, ages 7-12, all female.

Homestay Experience: She has been hosting international students for 3 years. The students range in age from 15-18, all female. She and one of her children have been foreign students themselves.

Countries Represented: Japan, China.

### PAULA

Family Make-up: Paula is a single mother with 2 teenage daughters, ages 16 and 18. The 18 year-old is living overseas at this time.

Homestay Experience: She has been hosting international students for 1 1/2 years. The students range in age from 16-19, one male, the rest female. She has traveled and lived in many countries.

Countries Represented: Japan, China, Russia

### JAN

Family Make-up: Jan is married with 2 children, a son aged 12, and a daughter aged 14.

Homestay Experience: She has been hosting for 2 years. The students range in age from 15-18, all female.

Countries Represented: Japan, China

## CARLA

Family Make-up: Carla is married with 2 children, a son aged 6 and a daughter, aged 8.

Homestay Experience: She has been hosting for 2 years, one year with the Greater Victoria School Board Homestay Program, and one year with the homestay program of a local language school. The students range in age from 12-18 all female.

Countries Represented: Japan, China, Taiwan

## DANA

Family Make-up: Dana is married with 3 children, a 4 year-old son, a 9 1/2 year-old daughter and a 13 year-old daughter.

Homestay Experience: She has been hosting for 2 years. Her first two female students, here on short term language programs, were beyond high school, ages 19 and 21. Her third and fourth students were 15 and 16, both female.

Countries Represented: Japan

### **Data Collection - Step One**

Conversational interviews were used as the technique for data collection. These interviews took place between December, 1995, and January, 1996. Four of these one-hour interviews were conducted in the homes of the women and one took place in my home. The respondents all said that they were comfortable speaking with a tape recorder running. After brief pleasantries were exchanged, I opened the interviews with a brief statement about the intent of the research, and asked for the respondents to begin by telling me what it was like having a foreign student living in their home. Topics such as settling in, meal-times, and bonding with the family were introduced by the women, and I responded with a supportive comment or a question that was triggered by their stories. We gradually worked our way from the home to the school experience, with points being raised by all women regarding the lack of integration of international and local students and the inconsistent communication between home and school. Their perceptions of the impact on the community centred around the economic and social questions in the community regarding a growing program that people know little about. While concerns were raised about some facets of the program, I had the impression that the experience for the homestay families was positive overall.

After each interview, I made field notes about how I thought it went, with comments about the setting and the host. In each situation I felt welcome and I sensed the sincere interest of each woman in the subject of the research and the success of the ISP.

### **Data Analysis - Step One**

I began by transcribing the five interviews. I had thought that this procedure would be largely mechanical, but I soon realized that it was an important step in working with the data. As I played and replayed the tapes in order to record the texts accurately, I became more familiar with the women's voices, conversational styles and personal experiences. Also, I found that I reacted in different ways to the substance of the interviews when I reproduced them in black and white than I had at the time of the actual interview. Words and thoughts somehow took on new and deeper meaning in the transition to the written word. I became aware of the nuances of language and inflection that differentiated the speakers into five distinct voices.

Once the transcribing was completed, I read and re-read the documents until I felt that I was ready to begin the inductive process of analysis. I began by underlining key phrases. These were units of information that seemed meaningful for the speaker and to the focus of the study. In the margins I wrote code words so that the phrases could later be grouped together with others of similar meaning. Examples of code words are: "host motivation" or "student's needs" or "community reaction". Working with each interview separately, I listed the codes and looked for ones that seemed to go together, thus forming categories. This process resulted in 12 categories being formed. These were:

- |                                       |                                   |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| *Early Adjustment Strategies          | *Role of Host Mother/Family       |
| *Description of Self/Family Life      | *Economics and Community Concerns |
| *Integration/Segregation              | *Recommendations for School       |
| *Description of International Student | *Myths, Assumptions, Perceptions  |
| *Impact on Family                     | *Difficulties                     |
| *Benefits to Homestay                 | *Teenage Issues                   |

I used the computer to separate the data into these categories. Going line by line through all of the transcripts, I moved the underlined key phrases from the original file, to Windows which were created and named for each category. I noticed that, in some cases, the same information could be filed under more than one heading, which indicated to me that the categories needed to be further reduced. For example, a reference to an early adjustment problem could be categorized under the headings "Early Adjustment", "Difficulties" or "Teenage Issues". Three obvious headings would be "Impact on Homestay Family", "Impact at School" and "Impact on Community", but there was valuable information that did not fit in these categories. While the impact on the international student would be another thesis topic that would involve interviewing the students themselves, there were some interesting perceptions on this from the host perspective. These perceptions, which addressed the roles of age, personality and language in the student's adaptation process, seemed important to me because they point to individual differences which have little to do with culture but a great deal to do with human beings. Therefore, the fourth category, "Impact on International Student" was added. The fifth category, "Host Perceptions of Asian Culture" included stories, experiences and opinions that the hosts mentioned. This part of the data was important to the research focus because it contained some insights into our own cultural attitudes and values.

### **Data Collection and Analysis - Step Two**

I wrote the first draft of the chapter entitled, "Findings: Perceptions of Homestay Hosts", using the voices of the five women and connecting them with only enough of my own words to make the work flow in a logical and legible fashion. I gave a copy of it, along with a copy of their own interview transcript, to each of the five women that I interviewed. I was interested in their reactions to it; if they had changed their views in the time that had passed since our interviews took place, or if they had further

observations or comments triggered by reading what the others had said. Most importantly, I wanted to know that they were satisfied that I had reported their words accurately and responsibly. I spoke to each woman several times. This methodological step of the research proved to be immensely valuable because it revealed insights that had not come out of the initial interviews.

At first, most of the women remarked that their words took on deeper meaning for them once they saw them in black and white. This matched my own reaction to the written word. They reported to me that the process of reading their stories prompted them to re-consider and evaluate their statements and opinions. Some of them elaborated on what they had told me or on what someone else had said, and I added these ideas to the chapter in my own words. Some of them commented that it was helpful for them to see that many of the concerns raised were shared by others.

I realized when talking to these women that they feel that their ability to be completely open about their experiences is somewhat hampered by the fact that they depend on the homestay program for some of their income or that they simply do not want to be associated with certain statements in case readers may judge them harshly for their views. Our conversations regarding money or perceptions of the Asian culture made me realize that we find it hard to talk about these issues without the threat of repercussions or judgments within our own culture. I reflected further on this issue and have addressed it in the final chapter.

### **Data Collection and Analysis - Step Three**

The respondents' interest and support in this research suggested to me that, should they be willing to give even more of their time, their ideas regarding recommendations would be extremely valuable. Therefore, after I had written the chapter entitled, "Key Perceptions and Recommendations", I invited all of them for lunch to go over it. Three of the five were able to attend and the synergy that took place was truly remarkable. In two hours, we revised and elaborated on the ideas that I had, and ended up with what we agreed was a more complete chapter.

Interviews, phone conversations, feedback from and collaboration with the respondents, were research techniques that enabled me to create a picture of the homestay experience and to come closer to understanding the nature of the social impact of international students in Victoria.

## **Chapter Four**

### **FINDINGS: PERCEPTIONS OF HOMESTAY HOSTS**

The research data provide a useful overview of experiences, sources of frustration, joy and satisfaction, and suggestions for the future. It is divided into the categories of Impact on Homestay Family, Impact on International Student, Impact at School, Impact on the Community and Host Perceptions of Asian Culture.

#### **1. IMPACT ON HOMESTAY FAMILY**

##### **1.1 Family Interaction**

International students impact the host family in varied and significant ways. Already established family roles and behaviors must be revised in response to the new situation. The students' need for security and love in the new environment must be recognized and responded to, and this support requires time and patience for all concerned. Children in the host family participate and respond in different ways and the end result can be a new concept of 'family'.

### 1.1.1 Family as Support

Foreign students arrive with varying emotional needs, but most seem to need the security that being a member of a family can provide. Kate states that her family feels the emotional impact of this.

The kids came and they were brand new and they were scared and they really sort of relied on the home, and they didn't know anyone else and they relied on our home to really love them and need them.

And she believes that it is the role of the host family to provide support for them.

Kids come with a real different set of emotional needs of what they want from the experience, and I think that the host family has to really be prepared to try and offer it to them.

Paula recognizes that many foreign students are experiencing being away from home for the first time. Their emotional needs have to be recognized and met.

...when the kids come, I know they're scared; I know they're confused; I know they're all that stuff. And they're young kids; they're on the other side of the world from their parents. They don't know who I am. And so, I give them a lot of attention when they first come.

### 1.1.2 Family Dynamics

The family is disrupted by the introduction of a new member who requires a lot of attention, and some readjustment takes place. Everyone takes time to get acquainted, and Paula says there is

a period of time where there's a lack of comfort for them and for us, because everybody's settling in.

Carla's young children, who have been used to having their mother's full-time attention, find that they suddenly have to share her. But

Now they're used to it. We're sort of coming into our third year with it now, and they're used to sharing Mommy.

The demands on her time leave Carla sometimes wondering how to fit everyone in.

Where do I and my husband fit into all this? We all know that with schedules, it's hard to fit in time for just normal stuff, without throwing one more person in there, another schedule, another, you know, just another work load. One more demand on your time.

Paying attention to the needs of the foreign student takes more time away from her children and sometimes Carla wants to spend time just with them

without feeling guilty that I'm leaving somebody out or hurting their feelings.

Another impact on the host family is the loss of privacy. Carla finds that

when you have somebody else in your home, there's obviously obstacles about privacy, about the fact that we are a very close family and sometimes I just want to be one on one with my children...There's a privacy issue I think within everybody's home, that gets violated with this...

### **1.1.3 Role of Host Children**

Children in the host family can have an important role in the homestay experience. Kate's young children enjoy the opportunity to show the foreign student around and to develop a strong friendship with her.

...they've also had a relationship where the student was older than they were, they were showing her around, you know, so they loved that, that they had to teach someone who was older. But very much always, a real respect for the student, they care for them...They like her and want her here.

The host children may also help the student by modeling behavior and communication patterns. In Jan's household, the student learns from watching the other children interact with their mother.

I think they tended not to speak as freely in the beginning but the kids really were a big impact on them as far as seeing how they interacted with me. If they needed something they asked and eventually we started off asking and then they started to come around and say 'Could I do this?' or 'Could I do that?' or 'Gee, you know it seems you gave me single sheets for my double bed.' whereas I knew that if I'd done that at the beginning they might not have said anything. They would have put sheets on the bed and be done with it. You know, they started to be comfortable about approaching me with questions.

While the interaction between the family and the student can have its strains, the experience for Jan's family is that they have revised their concept of the family unit.

A family of four just doesn't exist anymore...and she's missed when she's not there. My kids really, really enjoy having a participant who becomes so much a part of our family that it's hard to think of life without her.

## **1.2 Benefits to the Homestay Experience**

The perceived benefits to the homestay experience are often what prompts the participants to be involved in the first place. These range from personal, to family, to global interests. Overall, the experience is considered to be worthwhile and is described as "interesting", "positive", "phenomenal" and "a new adventure".

The desire to learn about other cultures, and for their children to have the opportunity to learn is seen as a significant benefit of the program for the family. Kate's family has enjoyed the exposure to new customs and language.

...they love the exoticness and finding out about that country and often, when we've got a student here, one of the kids will be studying that country at school and they'll really rely on the knowledge from the student...We've had one student who taught the kids Japanese and they got all the workbooks and everything. We had Japanese lessons here every week and they loved it. Um, a lot of exchange of cultural information...

And this is satisfying to Kate, who is happy that

They have had the opportunity which I always wanted them to have to really get to see other cultures, to see how different kids, just kids as individuals are in their life, and who they are in terms of their nationality that effects that.

Dana has a similar view, and, looking back on their experiences, reflects that

the kids have learned a lot, being a little bit more open to other cultures. And I think that's important, you know. In Victoria, there's not such a multi-ethnic community...so I'd really like them to understand other cultures... You learn to live with other cultures; the world's just not the same.

The cultural learning that takes place in the home has potential long-range personal benefits too. Kate is pleased that her children

are so aware of different cultures through the eyes of the students. My second daughter wants to go to Japan; that's her dream right now. She just wants to experience the culture that she's just had a taste of.

Carla has a practical reading of the advantages to her family's better understanding of other cultures:

North America has got such a direct route to the Pacific Rim, all the Asian countries, that for us to try to ignore the fact that it's going to be very heavily populated by Asian students and that our children are going to run into all sorts of business dealings with them and life dealing with them. I want them to understand that they are human beings, that they may think a little bit differently than you and I, but they're people and they should be treated with compassion and respect and that it is a global society, and this was my feelings for getting involved with it initially.

On a personal level for Dana, an unexpected benefit to the program is that

...it gives me a chance to sort of see what's around the corner with adolescents.

According to Kate, the benefits enjoyed by participation in the homestay program relate to the extent of host participation.

It could be the most exciting thing happening at the school and I don't know if it is. I've heard mixed comments and I think it definitely depends on how much the host family participates and what their reasons are.

### **1.3 Difficulties of Hosting**

#### **1.3.1 Early Adjustment**

The respondents consistently report that the early stage of each homestay experience is difficult for everyone. The foreign student experiences culture shock to some degree and recognizing and dealing with this can be a challenge for the family. The symptom of culture shock most often mentioned by the hosts is silence. Dana comments

that the students appear to be "shell-shocked". But she recognizes that her family must appear strange to a foreigner who is used to a completely different family dynamic and culture.

She comes from a single parent family living with grandma and mom. It was probably not only culture shock but family shock, living with us. We're really out-going and loud and we rush here and we rush there, and we have to take this into account.

Dana observes that culture shock appears to last two to three months and that language plays an important role in getting over this difficult stage. As the student's language ability improves, misunderstandings which create further difficulties within the family decrease.

But I think ordinarily it [language] usually gives kids more confidence to get out there and do things. And so, you can talk more about stuff that goes on. But there's that two or three month period, I think, when you wonder if they really want to be in Canada, or are they going to be able to survive and enjoy the experience? You kind of wonder, and wish it were a shorter period than that, but it seems to be that. But I think that after two or three months their hearing gets better for English, there aren't too many misunderstandings about what needs to be done.

Carla finds the students' silence difficult, but does not attribute it to culture shock. Rather, she sees it as an expression of rejection of certain house rules or expectations.

...a lot of times they seem to draw into themselves. So what they do is they withdraw completely from the family. And for the most part, make it so unpleasant to be around them, that you don't want them in your home anymore. I mean, they withdraw in silence, non-communication. I don't know how many times we sat at the table with our first girl and she just made it very clear she wasn't going to answer anything...It's impossible to have a pleasant dinner-time conversation with having somebody sit at the

table like that with you.

### 1.3.2 Different Behavioral Expectations

The respondents attribute some of the difficulties they experience to cultural differences. Customs and behaviors that are learned at home are not necessarily appropriate here and so conflicts may occur.

Carla believes that different cultural expectations are at the root of some of the difficulties that she has experienced in her home.

But it seems to me that for the most part, the boys and girls are not used to a sense of community inside the home. When you talk about helping to clear the dishes, or the fact that everybody has chores, sweeping floors and doing bathrooms and changing sheets, there is a real reticence to contribute. If you ask them to do it there's not only disdain, there's outright arrogance about it being beneath them.

Paula notices that some students are not used to participating in ordinary household tasks.

It's very mellow around here, actually. I don't do anybody's laundry. Everybody does their own laundry. A lot of kids around here, they've never done anything, nothing. The Chinese girl we have now didn't know how to cut an apple with a knife, because when she wants an apple at home, she tells her mother and it arrives.

Carla thinks that the students must be accustomed to more freedom in their culture than she is comfortable allowing.

I think a lot of times when students come over they're used to an independence in their countries that is not an independence that is easily granted here. Being able to go on a subway, from age 6, to go from one side of Japan to the other, and not worry about personal safety because

there's this overwritten societal rule that protects the safety of the children. So that, when you say, 'No, you can't go downtown and come home at midnight. The buses don't run; it's a scary crowd down there when the bars start letting out,' they don't understand that. They don't like being under house rules that way. It's what I've found in my home.

Carla perceives a difference in the students' sense of family life.

They're just not used to participating. When I talk to a lot of the students they talk about how they never sit down at meals with their family. Everybody's going a different way, and that may be very Canadian as well. They just don't have a sense of family the same as we do.

Another behavioral difference that she reports is that some foreign students use table manners that are unfamiliar to her family.

I mean, when \_\_\_\_\_ first came to us she was used to, it's part of her culture to eat with her mouth open. Canadian culture doesn't eat with their mouth open. And when we sit across from somebody at a dinner table whose food is coming out and who is particularly noisy, it's very upsetting to everybody.

A frequently voiced concern which is often linked to cultural and behavioral differences is that the foreign students use a lot of water for showering. Jan observes that

...they wanted to shower, like 2,3 times a day, and I honestly don't know whether that's so much cultural as, we had a real handy and ready supply of hot water, and they loved long showers. Although I'm told that they really have a very high personal cleanliness level.

### **1.3.3 Teenage Issues**

Teenage issues are a major source of difficulty in the homes. Here, it seems that the cultural barriers all but disappear because the worries and concerns of teenagers are universal. Paula thinks that:

...a lot of the things that are happening from what I hear from the foreign students - a lot of the things, the ways they're uncomfortable, the ways they're hurting, really, if you could translate it properly, it's exactly the same thing as our kids are suffering from...I think if there's any truly multi-cultural experience on our planet it would be putting people from any culture with their teenage kids together in the same room. Because it's the same, it's expressed differently, but it's the same energy.

Carla reflects that teenage issues may explain some of the problems she experienced with one of her students.

And I think our second girl, it was more, we looked at it more as a teenage thing as opposed to a cultural withdrawal, and some of that you've got to understand. You don't know the history of these people that have been parachuted into our homes. They're teenagers with all the angst that goes with their age, and you have to give them a little bit of rope.

The teenage issues that are reported by the respondents are curfews, alcohol, drugs, and sex. The parental concern and response raises the issues of control, respect and safety.

#### **1.3.3.1 curfews**

All respondents report that they have addressed the issue of curfews with their foreign students. The tremendous responsibility that the hosts feel for the safety of the students must be balanced with an appreciation that teenagers require some freedom.

Jan's policy is

She is in her final year of high school, and as long as she keeps me aware of where she is, how she's getting there, you know, all the things that I need to feel comfortable. And she's treated like a responsible adult and so she acts accordingly.

Carla recognizes that the students need some independence:

...these are young adults away from their family home. You can only give them so much pressure and rules, and you don't want to anyway.

#### **1.3.3.2 alcohol**

Depending on the age and personality of the student, alcohol may be an issue. In Paula's house, this subject has been brought up by a student.

She asked me if she was allowed to drink. I said, 'Alcohol?' And she said, 'Yeah.' Well, immediately I know that, what, I'm going to stop them? Right, I'm going to say, 'No, you're not.' And then she's going to say, 'Oh, my house mother said no, so I'm not.' I don't have to look in those eyes for one and a half seconds to know this is not the question.

Paula directs the conversation to drinking and driving. She ensures the student that she will always pick her up or she can take a cab. There is no excuse for getting in a car with someone who has been drinking.

#### **1.3.3.3 drugs**

As the parent or host parent of a teenager, Paula believes that she has to be very perceptive, to listen closely to what the students say and to hear what they are really asking. The issue of drugs came up at the dinner table one night.

I mean, she'll say things, we're eating dinner, and she'll say 'Paula, have you ever smoked marijuana?' I know she wouldn't be asking that question if she wasn't considering smoking marijuana.

Paula's forthright answer stresses that drugs are both dangerous and illegal and that the student has a lot to lose - she could be sent home with a mark on her passport that there was a drug charge, and this could affect her life forever.

#### 1.3.3.4 sex

Paula worries that foreign students often come with a desire for more freedom than they are permitted at home and that this sometimes leads to promiscuous behavior. She feels strongly that all teenagers need sex education and that this is particularly needed for students living away from their own parents.

And it's like a lot of the kids are sexually active - who's teaching them about that? You know, I put the fear of God into them around sexual issues. Because I've worked in hospitals, I've watched people die from AIDS. I don't have to make that up. The energy that I put behind that is real. Like, 'Sorry guys, this is the lay of the land, and you need to know that'.

Dana notices that her female foreign students sometimes lack the awareness of culturally appropriate male/female behavior. She illustrates this with a story about Valentine's Day.

I had heard that they had gone out and bought very expensive gifts, chocolates and Valentine cards, and given them to one specific male student each, and asking them to be their boyfriend. And I was just ready to faint, because my student was, um, very naive socially. Bright and all those other things, but she had not an inkling, you know, what that might mean in the Canadian context. I understand that this is just sort of a general thing that girls do on Valentine's Day in Japan and it can be expected from everybody. You know, everybody gives some special thing to somebody that they think is neat. And so it doesn't carry the same weight, because everybody's doing it...But here, where it's not done generally, it was a little concerning because I think that just the conversation I had with this student was like, they expected to be holding hands on a date at about 17 or 18. And this is not the Canadian experience...and so this one family that I talked about this with, said that she's got an older son at Camosun, and he

says that, well, they wait for the Japanese girls to come to find girlfriends to fool around with. So, I phoned the school and said. 'Look, somebody needs to tell these girls that dating in Canada is obviously going to be a whole lot different than in Japan, and they might wind up in a situation they aren't prepared for'.

#### **1.3.3.5 control, respect and safety**

Paula believes that it is a mistake to try to control teenagers.

I think one of the biggest issues is the issue of control. And I think that probably one of the cruelest things we do to our children - we panic, we worry about our kids, so we think the way we're going to be good parents is by controlling. Doesn't work.

Paula puts "a lot of stock in safety, as opposed to control." She gives her own teenagers and her homestay students the information that she believes they need in order to make their own choices. But they also have to know that she has needs and rights as a parent and that their choices will also affect her. She reports saying to her student:

Well, of course my dear, you know I think I have the right to say 11 O'clock. I'm not controlling you...I'm paying myself respect. I need to know you're safe, that's all.

Dana also points out that safety is a major concern for her as a host parent.

We're trying to teach these kids that you never go out at night alone. If you're downtown shopping you have to have a friend and you come back together. And if you're a bit of a distance away we'll drive you. You do stand out, and you don't have the language skills so that makes you more vulnerable to somebody being intrusive or inappropriate.

For Paula, respect is fundamental in dealing with teenagers:

When you work with teenagers, you do not want to be in a position where they don't respect you. Because even the nicest among them can be the biggest pain in the butt. And especially if there's lack of respect. So, that was really important.

### **1.3.4 Money**

The respondents report that money is the source of some of the difficulties that they experience in the home. Some international students come from affluent homes and are given a great deal of spending money. This sometimes leads to resentment on the part of family members who may have more spending restrictions.

## **1.4 Recommendations**

### **1.4.1 Family Activities**

Kate's family enjoys the ritual of welcoming a new student to their home.

We usually do some sort of, the first couple of nights that the new student has arrived, we do some sort of special dinner and the kids welcome the new student and give them a toast and make some wishes for the year and ...well, each kid will (the kids developed this) they make a toast for the year for success at school, comfort in the family and the feeling that this will be their family for the year.

At the outset, the student's transition into a new home is eased, Kate believes, if the host family adjusts their lives around the needs and emotions of the newcomer. This process can, in turn, help the student to adjust to new routines and expectations and to begin to bond with the family.

I feel that, initially, the first month that they fit into the home, if they're going to adjust well, if they're going to, sort of, fit in and not feel melancholy or homesick, just to minimize the impact of the transition. If there's a way for us to make our lives just a bit smaller during that period, so that we can really meet the needs, especially of the student.

She describes what she means by making life "smaller":

I really try to cut back for everybody, so the person settling in can have a chance to absorb things and really find out what they need to know and show them the ropes, and be able to explain things, and not make any assumptions and understanding how things work, either socially or even practically in the house and in the community and getting to school and that sort of thing. And so that also, if they're new that they can also begin to bond with the family.

Paula describes her home as a safe place where people can feel relaxed and comfortable. It is important to her that the new student understands this and feels welcome. She describes her approach to familiarizing the newcomer as "front-loading" attention.

So, for me, my philosophy is that home is a safe place, it's a place that's meant to be comfortable, it's meant to be relaxing and it's meant to be safe. It's where you can take your shoes off and relax. And so, it's really important to me that that's what this house is about...so I give them a lot of attention when they first come. I really watch them. I'm really sensitive to where they are and I do everything I can to really make them welcome.

Everyone in the house participates in the act of welcoming.

And what I notice is that the kids help each other.. they help the new one in. So everybody has their place in that.

Planning outdoor activities is an enjoyable way to bring everyone together for Jan's family.

We do a lot of activities outdoors, so, because they arrived in September, it was easy to organize picnics, walks, sightseeing, taking a row boat out, those kinds of things. And that made everybody feel very comfortable and start to get acquainted with each other. So we kept it quite social at first.

These group activities, Jan believes, are a good way to find common ground.

We seem to kind of keep the cultural differences fairly set aside and find common ground, things that people like to do, that regardless of your culture, are comfortable.

Dana concentrates on finding out what the student's interest are and planning activities that they can enjoy together.

So, engaging in conversation, seeing where which relationship is going to work best first. And she's beginning to warm up a bit now, she'll bake with me. We're grateful to find one thing, and she likes grocery shopping. We've taken her down to the beach. So, it's trying to find an activity that you can do that fits into your life that they can share with you.

#### **1.4.2 Household Routines**

Jan finds that the handout provided by the school gives her some practical hints about what to expect and a reference point for communication.

I found I needed a little guidance because having come into routines very gradually with your own children you realize that these children don't necessarily have similar ideas about routines and responsibilities. So I relied on the handout given by the school quite a bit, to go through that and see what it was like. Because I couldn't expect them to step into our routine quite comfortably. So they had an orientation at the school and I would ask them things when they

came home...if they needed something or needed guidance. So it was baby steps, one step at a time, feeling each other out.

Students are expected to participate in the same household routines as the other children do. This creates a sense of community from which everyone learns in Jan's house.

Once these students were comfortable and saw the routine and flow of our household, they then participated in the schedules that we all take on. They have certain responsibilities just like everybody else in the family. They're expected to help out with certain things...keeping your room clean, doing the laundry, participating in meal preparation, clean up. It's a social time, that time, meal-preparing time. So, you learn a lot about each other at that time.

While another person places strains on the facilities in Paula's house, she finds that everybody works it out together.

We only have one bathroom, we have two bathrooms, but one has a shower, and so you can imagine everybody's getting ready for school at the same time...And it's funny, that was an area I thought I was going to have to be making rules and stuff around. But, what I've done, is absolutely nothing. It's real simple, somebody's in the bathroom, you're not. They work it out.

A shower schedule works best in Jan's situation, but flexibility within this structure is also important.

With two students last year it was a little more imperative that we had a shower schedule because everybody seemed to want one at the same time. So, I gave them a choice of whether they wanted an evening shower or a morning shower, and I didn't care when it was particularly. I mean, certainly one o'clock in the morning would not be appropriate, and they knew that, but if they were busy studying and they didn't get it together until ten-thirty, then ten-thirty was fine. I think the idea of being flexible was what's really been helpful for us as a family.

Meal-time routines and menus naturally vary from one household to the next, but in the case of all respondents, the foreign student is treated as one of the family. Paula finds that it helps to have a food list on the refrigerator on which everyone may put a request.

### 1.4.3 Communication

Good communication among family members is important, but can be complicated in the homestay situation. Jan suggests that clear and repetitive instructions help to avoid misunderstandings.

I think if you're clear and repetitive about your needs as a family, they understand very quickly. And quite often if there is mis-communication it's mainly because I think some-times we take for granted that they will just pick up what we say the first time and so I think the need for repetition is very important...If I needed to show how the laundry machines worked or the computer, I would come in and show them again each time that they started the task, rather than just leave them on their own because quite often I think there was maybe misunderstanding or confusion.

It also helps to facilitate communication by speaking slowly or writing important things down.

If you have something written down everybody understands it. The writing is very concise, they have a good written understanding of the language, but the speaking is very difficult. And I think it's like any other culture, you feel very comfortable to speak quickly in your own language and if you can just slow down a little bit, then you're understood.

Dana learned that it's important not to always assume that you have been understood.

Her language was pretty good. So, I found myself assuming that she understands me when sometimes she doesn't.

Communication is enhanced by being sensitive to changes in the student's behavior. Jan notices that silence or many phone calls at once sometimes indicates that there is a problem.

[She's] just a little quieter than normal. Quickly retreating to their room after dinner. Sometimes an activity of phone calls to other students would trigger something in my mind that, gee, there's something going on here and that maybe I should be asking questions, maybe they're not comfortable coming and talking to me about it.

A letter from a previous student helped Dana's new student to relax in her new home.

I found what really helped her - our last student corresponded back and forth about four times already and she sent her a note. She didn't know her, she just knew she was going to stay with us...the new student seemed quite relieved. So I was thinking I might ask her to write a more generic letter, just kind of explain that we're probably very different from Japanese families but we really want them to have a good time, and we really want to integrate them...we're loud and we're this and we're that, but we're good people. The students can worry a lot, so that helped make her feel more relaxed.

## **2. IMPACT ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENT**

The hosts notice that, apart from the cultural differences as discussed in the preceding section, the success of the homestay experience for international students depends largely on their age, personality, and language ability.

### **2.1 age**

It appears that the younger the students are, the more they rely on the host family. Carla's twelve year old student from Taiwan requires considerably more attention than her older students.

But now, at 12, and motherless, she's demanding in her own way too. She's what I call "in my face" all the time, she wants to be with me constantly, she's my little shadow... We've heard reticence to step outside these doors because here she was, she might as well have been on another planet, she was on another planet. She was very cautious about going outside and because she was so young, in the school, the youngest one the school had for 2 years, it was hard for her to make friends... But she enjoys the family time too. I think this family time is something that she's really just reveling in at the moment.

Kate has noticed that the older students that she has hosted seem less mature than their Canadian counterparts, and they rely a great deal on her young children.

A lot of the students who are older, for instance from Japan, they're less assured as kids their own age here and so my kids are younger than them and, you know, they're more mature than kids that age in their home country and they can relate their duties and they can go swimming or bike riding or take the bus to Macdonald's. So they rely on the kids.

Kate finds that while older students may require less structure, they still want to be treated as one of the family.

No matter how old or mature the kids are they still want to be one of the kids in the family, and if someone's bringing presents home they have to be considered one of the kids. You can't treat them as if they're maybe 18 or 19 and therefore older and if someone's bringing chocolates for one of the kids, I always say: 'Well you know, we have five kids.' And they need to know that; they need to know. There's a part of them that's still very young and wants to be a part of the family.

Dana's family hosted two 19 year olds who were here for a language and cultural exchange and they found that these students required much less of their time.

Both of these students were more mature, really keen to absorb anything

they could, language-wise, culture-wise. So, by virtue of their age, and by virtue of the desire to grab a hold of things, we didn't have to structure too much for them.

## 2.2 personality

Some personalities seem to adapt more easily to the new environment. The shy individual has greater difficulty than the extrovert, and therefore, requires more patience and understanding from the host family. Carla reports that she knows a family who

has a girl that is so shy she absolutely is scared of her own shadow the whole year that she was inside their home. And the homestay mother chose not to move her, as uncomfortable as it was inside her own home, because she felt it would absolutely shatter this little girl.

Sometimes shy students can experience such anxiety that they exhibit physical symptoms.

Dana observed that:

The first week she came she was just totally anxious and so she had friends come over. You know, her pupils were dilating.

But Dana believes that the host parent should try to encourage the shy or reticent students to participate, even when they are quite resistant.

This student we have now we have to encourage, and get her to do something. She wanted to get out there by herself and she's watching Japanese movies over and over and over. So we took her square-dancing, and not everyone likes square-dancing, but it was just fun, wear your ordinary clothes. And so, she came with a girlfriend, and she didn't want to participate, and so her friend was going to. And she pulled her friend back. And we had to tell her that if you come to Canada, you've got to try to be a little bit more open; you can't just sit back. She's always

making excuses for not going somewhere...And so finally she went and she had a great time. But it's kind of like, there's a balance between saying, 'I don't feel good about a student who is that resistant, with seeing that resistance,' but at the same time I've got to keep trying to help her get over it.

Kate notices that the longer the students have been here the more outgoing and independent they are likely to become. They are more involved in their social lives and extra-curricular activities and therefore rely less on the family for support.

But the student this year had been here for a year and has a boyfriend and all his friends and has very little school that she goes to, just two classes, and she's very involved with her social life and she doesn't sort of connect with the family...She's very social. She works hard on the courses she's in, you know. She does a lot of extra-curricular activities too, selling advertising for the yearbook, or things like that.

Some international students can be difficult to handle. Kate observes that some students are sent here because they are problems at home.

And there are a number of kids that are sent over because they're a hassle. But there are some kids that are a hassle and are problem kids here and if their parents had the money to send them somewhere else they might do that.

### **2.3 Language**

International students vary in their level of English proficiency. Most have had some exposure to the language in high school at home which has given them some grounding in vocabulary and grammar, but little conversational practice. But a young student, like Carla's 12 year old, is considerably hampered by less experience with English.

She literally arrived on my doorstep not even knowing her name in English...I mean, her English was non-existent. I don't even know if she'd ever heard English spoken.

Dana sees that learning the language contributes very positively to the overall experience and that this is a source of great pride.

The first 2 or 3 months are so difficult. Our first student was more open to the experience of living in Canada, but with the language she really changed. That was wonderful to see. To see the radiance and confidence. You could see that with this experience she was occupying a different position within her family. It was great. She'd come to Canada on her own, she learned the language...

Kate recognizes the challenges the students face at school. Struggling with a new language and often a full load of academic courses, students can experience emotional difficulties. Kate believes that this is due to the high academic expectations of the Japanese culture.

She's a really brilliant student, and here she could hardly speak any English, and she was taking all these subjects in a different language, and she was getting top grades and she was doing phenomenally. But it took a big toll at the end of the year and she was up to some very strange behavior. And a totally different personality. I think it's very typical of Japan, the kids at high school are very stressed out.

These host perceptions of the impact of age, personality, language and culture on the success of the homestay experience for the foreign student point to the interrelationship of the three variables. Carla, referring to her young student's difficulties, comments that she's a "shy girl, it's personality as well as cultural as well as age".

### **3. IMPACT AT SCHOOL**

#### **3.1 Segregation**

All of the host parents report that it is their perception that the international students are segregated at school. Concerns centre around their observations that all students, Canadians and individual groups of foreign students, are isolated from the outset. Explanations range from a human tendency to stick with what is known, to the school programs which do not concentrate on integration.

While the reasons for segregation may be numerous and complicated, the end result can be loneliness and isolation for many foreign students, and a missed opportunity for local students for cross-cultural learning.

The tendency for people to bond with others with similar cultural backgrounds can cause problems for everyone. Newcomers feel isolated because of their differences, and sometimes they are made to feel unwelcome, so they find consolation by associating with those from their own culture. This tendency is noticed by local students who feel deliberately excluded and talked about. The process of segregation, whether it is imposed or self-inflicted, leads to the formation of several separate cliques within the school. This dynamic is further complicated, Jan has heard from her children, by the fact that there are too many Asian international students in one school.

Some of the students, international students who are involved in the program, feel that there are too many international students in the school; that they don't get the opportunity to assimilate into the school population like they could because there's too many people from their own culture, and they tend to have to really work at pushing out from that. So their comment is, 'If there were fewer

of us, we'd have an easier time learning English, being accepted into the groups that the Canadian children gather into'.

Being accepted into these groups comes more easily when the students' English improves, especially because, as Kate sees it, the Canadian students are not very patient with language difficulties.

Once they start to speak English, then they will be invited to different parties and things like that. It's like the Canadian kids aren't very patient. Like when I lived in Italy, I didn't speak any Italian and everybody just had infinite patience trying to figure out what it is I wanted to say. But the Canadian kids don't have that patience.

Kate feels that English language deficit appears to be the barrier to integration of the international students on the part of the Canadian students.

And what I find is that the Canadian kids don't extend themselves to international students until they speak the language.

Perhaps partly due to this exclusion by local students, Kate states that

They bond with the kids from their own country, not to say that's a bad thing, but it can sort of create an isolated little world for them...I know there's some sort of mini-cultures within a culture. I know for instance that all the Chinese kids who are here are very tight. They have very tight social strings on each other - who's allowed to visit with whom, who's allowed to make friends with people outside the group. It's a very strict culture, and there's a lot of controls put on each other. It concerns me that they're not welcomed into the community of high school easily.

She understands that this self-imposed segregation is the easiest solution.

It makes sense, you want to be with people you're familiar with, but it's hard

to really get involved in the culture. It makes sense that that's who you're drawn to because that's the easiest.

Paula concentrates on integrating the various students in her home with her own children. But she feels that crossing cultures comes more easily to foreign students than to local ones.

It's very different having the kids at home and the kids at school. It's very hard on the foreign students. They come here thinking they're coming to Canada; they're going to know what it's like, and then they end up with kids that are either Japanese or Chinese...I think the foreign students cross cultures more easily than our kids do. So you'll have Chinese girls with Japanese girls, or I mean there's more, a lot more, cross-cultural communication in the international community than there is in the Canadian.

Jan explains how the Canadian students feel and how they react to segregation.

The complaint from the Canadian students is that these students are segregated somewhat into groups, they tend to stick together, they speak their mother language, which is Japanese or Cantonese or whatever, and it makes the Canadian students feel very uncomfortable. They don't know whether they're being talked about or not. And nine times out of ten they're probably not being talked about, but there's the perception there, that they're not being included in the conversation because they can't understand what's being said. And I think their reaction, instead of making an effort to include the international students, has been one of rejection because they fear what's being said about them, that maybe there's negative statements being made.

Carla comments on the dynamic of group-forming within the school.

My second student felt that the kids packed around too much. The Asian students packed around so much that none of the other students wanted to

have anything to do with them. And it's that horrible Catch-22. The Canadian students won't have anything to do with them, so the Asian students stick to themselves, so the Canadians can't have anything to do with them.

### **3.2 Money**

Money can be a source of conflict and misunderstanding at the school. It was reported to me, in the interviews and in casual conversations, that there have been comments heard at the school regarding how the money generated by the international students is spent. People are noticing that the program is separated physically in another building at one school, and that there is new furniture and equipment provided for the foreign students. They believe that this is in sharp contrast to the school environment provided for local students. It is ironic that economic concerns are the reason for the existence of the ISP (as perceived by the respondents and others), and that money is also the source of dissatisfaction among local students, parents and members of the community.

### **3.3 Recommendations**

Homestay parents are in a position to observe foreign students at home and at school and are, therefore, a valuable resource for information about the program as a whole. The respondents in this study make recommendations regarding the focus of the program, the orientation to the program, the curriculum and other school activities, and the communication among all involved.

#### **3.3.1 Focus of Program**

Jan believes that, since the program is young and growing, the focus has been mostly on the administration of courses and too little on the important cross-cultural

experience that she, as a homestay parent, is exposed to. She recommends a shift in focus to the bigger picture which would include increased opportunities for interaction.

And that's where I think the focus hasn't been. It's been on getting the program up and running, the courses, what they're going to do when they get here, rather than on the complete picture...The cultural exchange happens in the homestay, they're two separate things...That's where the negative impact has come. I think in the highest portion and that's really unfortunate because both groups are living it every day, that's where they spend so much time. And I think there hasn't been enough interaction between the students coming in on the cultural exchange, and those students who live here now.

Kate agrees and suggests that the school should focus more, at the outset, on the value of the cross-cultural experience. Contrasting the way we welcome foreigners to her own experience as a foreign student, she feels that we fall short in this area.

If the school were to really find a way to celebrate the cross-cultural aspect of these different countries...I went to an international high school in Italy, and there, every holiday from every country was celebrated and discussed. People really enjoyed the fact that there was all these different people going together at one school and it was a really exciting thing, to know people from different cultures. There was not a sense that these were the Americans at the Canadian-American school; this was the core group of kids and the rest of the people were different. It was all one big, sort of melting pot. But there was this real sense of celebration of everyone else's cultures. I don't think that's really happening here.

### **3.3.2 Integration**

Jan reports that the activities for international students at the beginning of the year are separating them from the rest of the school. Her recommendation is that activities should be planned to include all students in order to set a pattern of integration.

At the beginning of the year there seem to be a lot of activities which include the international students only, instead of the school body as a whole, and I think that tends to right off the bat, make those separations very noticeable and continuing.

Some of the school courses include all students, but Jan points out the irony that the courses that are segregated because of language are the ones in which valuable communication may take place.

I think that Math and Science are common to the school, but the English and Socials programs, most international students start off in international student classrooms only. The sports programs are certainly all inclusive, the leadership programs are, and all the arts and drama are. So there's ample opportunity, but I think that language is the biggest single barrier and those classes where there's lots of communication are the ones that are segregated.

One integrative technique that is employed at school is called the "buddy system" whereby one foreign student is matched with one Canadian student. While Jan thinks that it is a good concept, she feels that further development of it is necessary.

They do have a buddy system up at the school but it kind of works erratically. A student at the school can put their name on a list to become a buddy to an international student, and I think it works in fits and starts. I think the concept's good, but I don't know how sustaining it is as a program. I really question that... I think at the beginning of the year they have a skating party for buddies and international students but what I think should be happening is perhaps a more organized outline for Canadians to understand, you know, how to help someone like this, how to make them feel comfortable, how to feel empathy for them when they're in a problem or how to be a buddy. So, the concept's good but I think it's too loose.

Carla, too, recommends that local students should be taught about how they can help foreign students. She adds that the international students should be offered a more concentrated introduction to Canadian culture.

I would like to think that the program was properly introduced in the school partially with the Asian students understanding some of the cultural differences so that they're comfortable in the homes, what their expectations are in school. As well, you know, educating some of the Canadian students about how to offer a hand too.

Emphasis should be placed, Carla suggests, on informing international students about life in Canadian homes. This would help to avoid misunderstandings due to different expectations.

We can try and communicate as best we can through language barriers and age barriers and all the things that you do. But if you have a program that was outlined that said "You are expected to be courteous, you are expected to contribute to chores around the home, you are expected, you know...

She recommends that the delivery of this information could take the form of a class:

But I think there should be some sort of a class that the students go to, they sit down with someone who speaks to them in their own language, plus English or whatever it needs, to properly communicate to them about table manners, about cooperation, about courtesy, about those basic things that we take for granted, but that you need to know when you come into a Canadian home.

Jan agrees that it is not just the foreign students who require orientation, but the Canadians need to be prepared to participate in the exchange.

The Canadian students aren't given any orientation. That to me is a big

deficit to that program, is that it's all very well and fine to give orientation to international students to tell them what to expect, but on the same hand, the Canadian population of that school should also be given an orientation, so that they can prepare themselves to step in and help out or learn something new, be open to new ideas, be open to educating themselves about a different culture...If there was an orientation, if there were follow-up meetings, if there were work groups, if there was an ongoing cultural exchange program...

### 3.3.3 Communication

Communication, or lack of it, underlies many of the difficulties that are experienced by homestay families. The respondents state repeatedly, and in many different ways, how improved communication would help to strengthen the program. Their recommendations point to ways in which the school and the homestay family can work together.

Jan expresses the need for the school to provide a support program for homestay families. This would provide the opportunity for participating families to get together to communicate, as partners with the school, about their experiences, and could be a valuable venue for cross-cultural education.

That would be a valuable resource for me to have. Who are the other families who have homestay students? If I have a problem and I don't know how to solve it, has anybody else in the homestay program gone through what I've gone through, so you help each other, you use each other as resources. To me, it's like any network, the more people you know that are experiencing what you are experiencing, it enhances your life and their life, and the students' life...If there was an orientation, if there were follow-up meetings, if there were work groups, if there was an on-going cultural education program. In the end you would be learning something about a different culture. You'd have empathy and understanding...you'd understand more about yourself and someone else's culture, and so it would be very beneficial.

Dana is adamant that there should be more interaction between the school and the home.

You know, I want them to have some good experiences and that kind of stuff. But I would expect more of the program in terms of interaction with the parents. Not just interaction when there's a problem.

She would like to see on-going communication between the homestay parents and the school regarding the progress of the student. Early feedback, she feels, would be an efficient and proactive way of dealing with issues as they come up, instead of waiting until they become big problems.

But more formalized connections, I think they'd get more feedback and they could react more quickly and not just address individual problems. Because if you bring in a whole lot more students you're going to have that multiplied. And so you should get feedback early, because the parents are really the eyes and ears about what's going on. But if you don't have that connection, then it may or may not end with someone getting frustrated...so I would see that that would be really critical to do. Then I think...you begin to have some kind of basis upon which to recognize problems early...and to move on that. I guess the school will do their thing, the parents will do their thing...But I think that doing it in Victoria well is to plan better that way.

Dana illustrates how a small problem can become a big one if it is not addressed early.

We had a student who was always late and I finally got the message when she'd been late about 15 times, and then 4 or 5 or 6 absences, and I said, 'Oh, are we skipping school to go shopping?'" Turned out what happened was she'd go out for lunch, and kind of wander around, and then 'Oh, my goodness.' And then she hadn't signed in, so they put her as absent. But I only found it out by the by or if you get a report card back.

The job of parenting foreign students is complicated by linguistic and cultural differences. Dana suggests that improved communication between the hosts and the school would help to bridge these differences.

I understand that this year they did a sex education class for 2 hours, and my student and a student just down the block went, and the thing is, I got this notice, and I didn't sort of proactively reach out to find what the content is, but it would be useful for me to know that because, should she ever date or any kind of matters that come up, I need to know what she already understands. And it could have opened up an avenue of conversation if she had just come home and I had outlined some of the content, you know, 'What did you understand?' I didn't know with English being difficult at the best of times, to try and talk about something that's very intimate and that might possibly be a little bit embarrassing to go through...without having an outline, like I've got a tool, but I don't feel like I have a context for talking about it with her. And it's a real issue, the students I've had have not been sexually active in Canada, but what if you had one who was, and needed to talk about what's going on, or what their expectations were. So, you know, it's like, it gives us one more tool. And so, again, I guess having a student here is seen in isolation...and with my own kids I don't need the same things from the school system as I would for them. Because there's a language difference and a cultural difference. To keep these kids as safe as possible...and I'm busy, and I can't chase it down. And they could have a parent meeting and say, 'Oh we have a sex education course', and give us more details. So that gives us some sense of what their social context is, because we can only guess. You know, we've become fairly intimately acquainted with our own students but we can't get the expectations about their peers, or generally about their friends, or about dating, or sexuality. I know I want them to be safe in Canada, but I don't know what their expectations are, their cultural background.

Related to the recommendation of enhanced communication between school and home, is Dana's suggestion that there be a more formal acknowledgment at the end of the year of the accomplishment of all participants of the program. The school, the homestay family and the student should recognize that, as a team, something valuable has been achieved.

But I think that I didn't have the satisfaction in terms of feeling that I was a partner with the school. You know I didn't have the sense that it all kind of culminated together, so that we could all say, ' Congratulations, you've done this,' I found out that at the end they have this little lunch when they give the kids certificates. Some parents can come at lunch and some can't, but they don't invite them. So, I almost think there should be something separate. If you have to kind of nudge the parents a lot, but get somebody out there to represent the family and acknowledge this kind of thing. That way you feel kind of a partnership.

#### **4. IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY**

Homestay parents interact daily with friends, neighbours, acquaintances and various community workers. They tend to talk about their homestay experiences and see and hear how other people are talking about and reacting to the presence of foreign students in the community. Their perceptions of the impact of international students on the community can be examined in two categories: Socio-Cultural and Economic.

##### **4.1 Socio-Cultural Impact**

The observations of the homestay hosts are that Canadians react negatively to foreigners and that our community does not treat children in a special way, particularly when compared to how other cultures relate to foreigners and children. Further, the absence of preparation for the international program in the community and its rapid growth has led to the perception that Canadian students are somehow being displaced. Kate reports that one of her students had difficulty making Canadian friends, and she worries that this indicates a community-wide cultural opposition to the program and an inability on the part of Victorians to welcome foreigners.

She was...not forming friendships with her fellow Japanese students and she was making herself available for all these other wonderful friendships

in this country, and she was doing a lot of things. And I asked her how it would be different in her country and she said that if there was someone from another country at a Japanese school all the students would be calling them, inviting them over for dinner, seeing how they are. And I'm aware that when I was an international student, I was just treated like royalty by the town. Our culture, the kids in our culture, do not know how to welcome international students...But it's a cultural thing, you know, the whole community appears to be opposed to this kind of thing. This is an opinion of mine and others may have a different opinion. But I'm very aware that this community has a lot to learn about welcoming people from other countries. It doesn't just happen naturally, and to me that's a worry.

Paula thinks that people who have traveled to other countries may be an exception to this because they have learned "international good manners" and may, therefore, apply them in this context.

As a traveler, you know, like in any other cultures, who you are as a traveler, at some level you're more honoured, you're brought in, There's, I don't know how to say it, better manners. We don't have that. I think probably the only exception to that is people that have traveled to other countries and know what it's like to be on the receiving end of other cultures.

Having lived in other cultures herself, Kate perceives that our community is not very friendly to children in general.

I've lived in Europe and all over where there's a real love of children and a real welcoming of children and I don't think that this community...I shouldn't blanket the community, because there are lots of people who are like that, but there's enough experiences that kids have where, you know, it's not too friendly sometimes.

Jan thinks that there are worries in the community about the numbers of foreign students and that this may be due to the fact that the community is not adequately prepared.

There is a perception in the community that these students are taking places for Canadian students and that really isn't the case at all. I think in 1968 the graduating class at the school was over 500 grade 12 students graduated. The total school population this year, I think is 1100 and something. So the school itself certainly has the resources for more students, so I think the perception that they are taking places that otherwise students could have is a complete fallacy. But I don't think the community was prepared in any way.

Carla speculates that the community is reacting negatively to the program because it is growing so quickly.

When I talk to others, Canadian families in the neighbourhood, they feel the program is being shoved down their throats. We've gone from a Canadian suburban school (albeit fairly large, one of the largest in Victoria, so obviously a cross of multi cultures of the school, just by virtue of its numbers) to a program that has got 90 students. When you look at a school of 600 and you take that percent, it's a big percentage. And they are obvious, a very visible minority.

[Note: These figures have grown considerably since this statement in January, 1996.]

## **4.2 Economic Impact**

According to the homestay hosts, the ISP is seen by many in the community as extremely lucrative. While businesses in the community enjoy the spin-off benefits, many parents wonder how local students are benefiting by the added funds.

Jan believes that the school board introduced the program to begin with to bring more money to the district.

I think this was the bright idea that the school board had to build up their depleting funds. These students pay \$10,000.00 a year to come for a one-year Canadian education on top of their \$600.00 a month room and board, and so potentially, I mean, if you look at, I think there's 150 international students throughout nine high schools in Greater Victoria, and they probably bring about 2 million dollars into the economy as a whole.

She thinks that the economic benefit is evident for local businesses.

I think there are some people in the community who are just absolutely thrilled that these students are here, because they are impacting on the community in a positive way. Certainly, the cycle shops and the video stores and, you know, all those things that are targets for teenage consumers, it's been great.

Carla hears opinions from people in her neighbourhood that the money coming into the program should be directed toward helping local students.

The money that's being spent and the energy that's being spent on developing programs within the school, better be channeled to something that would help their own children. Here we are spending so much time, energy and money to develop an English Second Language program in the community, or an assimilation program in the community, and they feel that they want time, energy and money spent to making sure their kids get a good education, making sure they're directed about where they're going to be going, making sure there's enough money for them to go to colleges. As opposed to putting money into that program.

Carla questions why community awareness has not yet been a focus of the program and wonders if cultural benefits have been overlooked in favour of economic ones.

I don't know why they're not doing P.R. You've got something that's going on that's as big as that in the community, and as large a cash cow, if that's what you want to call it, why aren't you out there touting how wonderful it is? Why aren't you out there asking how the community can help support it, or why don't you

just call it what it is. It's a cash cow. And we don't care how we get the money, or care how it affects the community or the school. We've got students coming in that are lined up around the block to come over to a Canadian experience. And if you don't like it, we're going to shove it down your throat anyway. I mean, it seems to be almost two attitudes, two ways, you can do it positive, or you can not do it positive.

### 4.3 Recommendations

Jan feels that more attention should be directed toward community awareness programs to facilitate the acceptance of foreign students.

I think that on the cultural level there hasn't been an acceptance and I think before or during the implementation of the student program there should have been some awareness brought to the community or some, I don't know what, how it should have manifested itself, but there should have been something to prepare the community, that they should have stepped in as a partner to welcome these children and to participate because then I think the assimilation for everybody would have been a lot less painful.

When asked if she thinks it is now too late for such action, Jan replies:

No I don't; I don't at all. I think any time along this path is an opportunity to step in and create a partnership with the school, the community, the homestay family and the international student population.

It is important, Jan emphasizes, that the community be included in the introduction of the program, "both of the community to the students and of the students to the community." She makes some suggestions about how the community might begin to be involved so that the benefits of cultural exchange could be more widely enjoyed.

There's so much knowledge about cultural exchange that every homestay

family learns and, to me, I picture it as staying in the confines of that house, where it really needs to be released into the community, and I don't know how you do that. I don't know whether you organize something in the community, at a community hall, to introduce the community to these students, or a drop-in centre, I don't know, some sort of bulletin board that both community, school and students could access, a networking project.

The significance of the impact of international students on this community, Jan suggests, is particularly relevant because:

The interesting thing about this program is it's not one of those kinds of programs where students come here for a year and go home. I mean, certainly some of them do that, but I think more and more are choosing to stay and carry on their education at the college or university level, so they're becoming Canadians in many many ways. Some of them are becoming landed immigrants. I think if they're coming at this age the introduction culturally is so important, it could be really important for us as a country too. And how we handle it or manage it, is really important.

Dana has noticed that there are some ways that the school can help to avoid misunderstandings in the community. She gives an example of the responsible handling of one issue.

I saw [program administrator] handle a situation where the student had left and the homestay family had asked her to please not make any long-distance calls in the last month because 'you won't be here when we get the bill.' And she charged up a bill, so [program administrator] said 'We'll pick it up.' So, in that sense, that was good, if he hadn't done that, the parents would have said, 'Oh, that program, the students run up these phone bills'.

Dana has observed positive community involvement in sports.

The baseball team, here was one student on it who didn't speak English that well, and baseball wasn't her sport, but they just really welcomed her.

It was a real wonderful thing for her.

Dana remarks that so far she has heard some positive feedback from students, but cautions that as the program grows...

I've heard from students so far that they're pretty welcome at school, they make their way around the community; they manage to open up bank accounts...and they seem to do O.K. I haven't worried about anyone being treated poorly because of being an international student. But if there were more students...

## **5. HOST PERCEPTIONS OF ASIAN CULTURE**

Out of the realities of their homestay experience, host perceptions about the Asian culture emerge. Interaction with foreign students exposes the hosts to different social backgrounds and expectations, different ways of communicating and different body language. Cultural comparisons and frictions are unavoidable, but out of this process the hosts have an opportunity to broaden their cross-cultural understanding.

### **5.1 Different Social Backgrounds and Expectations**

Carla links cultural roots to the feeling of superiority that she notices in the Japanese and Taiwanese.

It's the propaganda that they have in their homes and their education system that makes it clear they're a superior race. Inside their country their position in the world. And the Taiwanese have also, have a very high sense of self regard. And if you learn, if you understand anything about the Chinese history, between the Taiwanese that have gone off from mainland China, you can understand a bit of that too, that their own race of entrepreneurs that are little pioneers that have had some, really had to force some independence against China.

Carla's experience with what she terms a "superiority complex" was with a Japanese student with whom she had been having considerable difficulty.

She turned to my husband in the most contemptuous way and said, 'Carla's half Greek, isn't she?' And when he said, 'Yes', she said, 'What's the other half?' And he said, 'Well, I believe it's English,' and she said, 'Oh, it's my understanding that all half-breeds are crazy.' So it was this superiority complex that she had over me as well that was really obvious in anything I did. And having spoken to other women that are involved, Japanese specifically, more so than others, I think the Taiwanese as well...I hate to generalize, I hate to generalize with statements like that, but the women that I've talked to that have had Japanese students in their home, or Taiwanese students, have found a superiority position with the students they've had difficulty dealing with. General statement. I hate to make it , but it's what happened in my home.

Some of the respondents told me that they have heard that the school and economic systems in Hong Kong cause families there to look for a more readily available and affordable high school education. Providing this for their children is necessary to maintain status.

Still, Carla finds it surprising that many Asian students are sent so far away from home

Wouldn't your heart just break if it was your daughter being shipped away to another planet? I find it heartbreaking. It's a cultural thing that they can do, that I can't do. All these families that are sending away pretty young, pretty shy...

The stress on high school students is noted by Kate.

I think it's very typical of Japan, the kids at high school are very stressed out.

Paula sees the homestay experience as an opportunity to learn about how other cultures see us well as how we see them. The following story illustrates the mutuality of this learning process.

I once had this old friend of mine here and she's a very beautiful woman and we'd all been talking and then my friend left the room and I said to one of my foreign students, 'Don't you think she's beautiful?' And there was this dead silence. And she looked at me and she said, 'You know, Paula, I can't tell, you guys all look the same to me!!' At first I was shocked and then I started laughing. And she wasn't being funny, you know what I mean? It was an honest response. She said, 'You know, usually I can tell if someone's really ugly or I can tell if they're really beautiful, but otherwise everybody looks the same. You've all got big eyes, you've all got...' And she went on like that.

## **5.2 Communication**

Jan notices that her Japanese students have demonstrated a strong desire to please her, and that part of her role as host mother is to help them to become more vocal about their own needs.

They want to please, they want to do the right thing and they're actually taught in Japan, by their teachers in Japan, that you behave, you , there's a big emphasis on how you conduct yourself outside your country. So, culturally, I think there's a huge feeling of wanting to please and even when you're in great discomfort you will not say that you're in discomfort. So, I think the onus is left on the homestay family to break through that and really work with that student and make them feel comfortable about standing up for their own needs and their own wants in a situation.

This need to please can lead to a misunderstanding if students indicate that they have understood something only to avoid telling Jan they have not understood.

They will nod agreement or let you think they understand when they really don't and you have to pick up on that.

At first, Paula noticed that her Japanese student was not able to communicate about her feelings as a Canadian girl might.

There's a lot of stuff that they do not tell, that we would naturally talk about, and she will now, it's quite amazing.

### 5.3 Body Language

At first, Paula's Japanese student was afraid to make eye contact with her.

It's not appropriate to look someone in the eye, not appropriate. Now, you don't know me, but you've known me long enough to know I'm an eye contact person. I mean, I can sit there over dinner and it's just like, you're drilled, you're drilled, you're drilled. We've talked about that recently, we've talked about the fact that in her culture you look at the chin, and all I can say is, 'If you look at the chin, how do you see the eyes? How do you see the person if you're looking at their chin? But, the thing is, she's now accustomed to it, she stays with it. She always looks me in the eye, always.

Hand-holding, Paula realizes, also has different cultural interpretations. The unexpected response to this demonstration of support by Paula, is that her foreign student does not react at all.

She has warts on her face and she had to have them taken off, and she was very clear she wanted me to come with her, every step of the way. 'Do you want me to come in the office with you?' 'Yes,' she wanted me to. So I asked her all the way through. It was real clear to me that she was scared, that she wanted me to be there. So when he actually took the thing and he told her 'This is really going to hurt', I took her hand. So, I had one hand on her shoulder and I was holding the other hand. What I would do whether this

was a male friend, it was my child, whether it was, I mean, that's me, you know? That's my way to support somebody. It was the weirdest thing, because he was burning her and she said it was hurting, and her hand, it was like she didn't have any bones in it. It was like completely limp, like totally limp, and was...you know, when you get burned you kind of go [tense] that's why you give the hand, so you have something to hold on to. And it was worse than no grasp, it was literally like no...Afterwards I talked to her about it and I said, ' ', you know at the doctor, I knew that was going to hurt and I knew you were really scared, and when I took your hand and put my hand on you, I was trying to support you. But what I realized after is that your hand was so limp that I think I crossed your boundary. I think that not only were you having a hard time getting burned, you were having a hard time with the fact that I was holding your hand'. And she said, 'Yeah'. And I said, 'Sweetie, I realized that after, but I didn't know at the time.' It wasn't comfort to her at all. She was reacting to her chin and she was also reacting to my hand, you know. And I said to her, 'Honey, I'm so sorry, I realized after, but at the time it was so natural for me, that's what support looks like to me.' And she said, 'I knew that.' She knew that I was doing that, but it was so foreign for her that it was in her body and her hand.

## **Chapter Five**

### **KEY PERCEPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **IMPACT ON FAMILY**

##### **Perception:**

**Each member of the family is impacted by the hosting experience.**

##### **Recommendations:**

\*A homestay support program should be provided for that includes all members of the family. This would begin as soon as a family signs on to the program and would involve periodic meetings throughout the year with members of the family, a coordinator, current and veteran homestay families and cross-cultural experts. Issues of concern would be raised and discussed, experiences would be shared and communication with the school would be facilitated.

\*Families should be given a list of the names and activities of interest of other homestay families and international students. This would help family members to connect with others in the program as well as to identify things that they might plan to do together. Carpools and emergency contacts should also be established.

### **Perception:**

**The homestay experience provides an opportunity for the family to learn about other cultures and prepares them for living and working in an increasingly multicultural society.**

### **Recommendations:**

\*Families should be supplied before their arrival with information about the students' countries and daily lives by way of books, and letters and pictures from the foreign families. A memorandum of the students' usual routine in their home countries and medical histories should be compiled by the students and their parents and sent to the receiving families.

\*The school should provide more opportunities for intercultural exchanges among Canadian and foreign students. This can be done through projects and assignments that require collaborative learning, extra-curricular activities and involvement of the multicultural community. Programs should be planned in conjunction with such annual events as the annual Folkfest in Victoria.

**Perception:**

**International students experience culture shock.**

**Recommendations:**

Host parents should be supplied with more information about culture shock through literary articles and presentations by international students and/or experienced hosts.

\*International students should be given an introduction to Canadian customs before they come through letters from the host families, a series of orientation courses within the first month of their arrival, and contact with experienced foreign students here.

\*Past international students could be asked to write a letter to the new student about their homestay family.

**Perception:**

**Money is the source of some difficulties.**

**Recommendation:**

\*The clarification of issues such as the payment of monthly homestay fees and the precise financial responsibilities of the homestay families should be addressed and included in the homestay manual. The possibility of the school collecting and disbursing the monthly payments should be considered.

\*There should be limits placed on the spending money allowed for foreign students.

**Perception:**

**There are culturally different behavioral expectations in the home.**

**Recommendation:**

\*General information regarding behavior expected of the student should be made clear before they join the program.

\*An orientation course should begin by bringing homestay families and foreign students together to exchange expectations and perspectives on family life. Topics such as family routines and food preferences would be shared, with an interpreter present to facilitate mutual understanding.

**Perception:**

**Teenage issues are universal.**

**Recommendations:**

\*This should be recognized in program planning as an important area of common ground.

\*Opportunities should be provided to bring local and foreign teenagers together to talk about concerns that they all have. The similarities and differences amongst cultures would be illuminated by such discussions and culturally-appropriate behavior exchanged.

\*Courses should be provided to help parents and students deal with issues such as sex, alcohol and drugs.

**Perception:**

**Overall success in the program is related to affective factors such as personality, social skills and motivation, all of which influence language acquisition.**

**Recommendation:**

\*International students should be carefully screened for these factors so that those who may be poor candidates for coping with this challenging program would be ineligible for admission.

**IMPACT AT SCHOOL****Perception:**

**International students and local students are segregated.**

**Recommendations:**

\*There should be more cross-cultural opportunities provided by the ISP for all students from the beginning and throughout the school program .

\*Local students should be offered an orientation course which would prepare them to welcome foreign students. Experienced homestay families and international students could help by giving their perspectives in discussions about the benefits and challenges to cross-cultural interaction.

\*The buddy system should be expanded and improved to encourage intercultural

friendships. More students should be involved and local students should be taught ways to make the most of this association. Incentives for participation such as citizenship awards and volunteer credits should be offered. Buddies should have a drop-in centre for informal interaction in groups.

**\*The schools should plan for more integration in the classrooms:**

- Academic planning and teacher workshops should focus on specific techniques, such as cooperative learning groups, that promote student interaction.

-In addition to the appreciation of cultural diversity, the teaching of racial equality should be integrated into the school curriculum. Emphasis should be on cross-cultural similarities - human values, attitudes and social conventions common to all people. Teachers should be sensitized to this way of thinking.

-All students should be encouraged to participate in extra-curricular activities, such as teams, clubs and drama events.

-The schools should draw from experience in the community to help with cross-cultural programs.

**Perception:**

**Communication between school and home would enhance program.**

**Recommendations:**

**\*Parents should receive regular feedback from the school regarding the**

foreign student's social and academic progress.

\*A group for homestay parents and teachers should be established to exchange ideas as partners in this program. This would follow the model of PAC groups and would liaise with the already established PAC group.

\*A newsletter should be produced by local and foreign students, with help from school faculty, to inform parents about school programs and extra-curricular activities. This would improve communication by providing a starting-point for discussions at home on topics of current interest.

\*A ceremony at the end of the year should be planned to acknowledge all participants - parents, teachers, foreign students and Canadian student buddies.

\*Teachers and homestay families should have an opportunity to share their experience and opinions regarding the program in an evaluation at the end of the year.

### **Perception:**

**International students are provided with newer and better facilities and equipment than are local students.**

### **Recommendation:**

\*The administration should take steps to communicate to local people about the benefits of the ISP to Canadian students, the educational philosophy of the program, and their financial commitment to foreign students.

## **IMPACT ON COMMUNITY**

### **Perception:**

**The community is not accustomed to welcoming foreign students.**

### **Recommendations:**

\*The ISP should be actively involved in public relations in the community.

Public forums should be held to inform people about the ISP and the benefits of cross-cultural exchange.

\*Articles about the program should be featured in community newspapers and news programs.

\*Student groups should make presentations in the community and invite community involvement in and sponsorship of school events.

## **Chapter Six**

### **CONCLUSION**

Throughout the course of this research I have been repeatedly impressed with the interviewees' commitment to the International Student Program, their dedication to making it work for them and with the sacrifices they make on a daily basis. This commitment is evident in the interviews, in my frequent conversations with them and in their consistently enthusiastic willingness to participate in the research process. While these women are only five of a large number of participants, the stated personal benefits of involvement which motivate them and the cross-cultural learning that appears to be taking place seem to relate to the objectives of the program. These five families are enjoying and learning from the cross-cultural interaction, and they are enriching the linguistic and cultural experience of the international students. Their perceptions on the social impact of international students on home, school and community provide insights that relate to welcoming foreigners in Victoria. Their concerns and suggestions regarding the cross-cultural learning that is taking place at the school and in the community reveal areas where more attention is required so that the most is made of the opportunities presented by the program.

## HOME

### Host/Guest Relationship

I found that the relationship between the homestay family and the international student is much more complex than the term "hosting" implies. To me, hosting means that there is a temporary and often superficial relationship established between the host and a guest. The role of the "host" is one of the active knower, or the expert, who accommodates the guest. The more passive role of the "guest" is to be taken care of by the host. It was reported to me that sometimes students treat the home like a hotel. This interpretation of the respective roles can lead to resentment on the part of the receiving families. If there is no effort made by the student to share in household tasks, the host begins to feel used and is irritated by the behavior of the guest.

Different cultures may view the roles of host and guest in different ways. The expectations and behaviors that follow from varying cultural interpretations of the two roles can lead to misunderstandings in the context of the homestay program. Varying degrees of formality and informality may exist. The "make yourself at home" style in some North American homes may be unfamiliar and uncomfortable for some foreigners who prefer a clearer distinction between the two roles. It is critical that there be clear communication regarding the intent of the program with all participants before the students arrive.

The fact that international students pay monthly for the homestay, adds a further complication to the host/guest interpretation. The "guests" in this case may realistically assume that because they pay for room and board, they do not owe anything more to the family. Unfortunately, this attitude ignores the benefits to the student of learning about local culture and language through living and interacting with the family. International students should expect to behave as a member of the family. They should be advised

what that means in our culture, and homestay families should treat the student as part of the family unit.

It is important to acknowledge that the relationship between the family and the international student is a profound and intimate one, one of sharing personal space over a prolonged period of time. I now realize that 'living with international students' is a more accurate way to describe the relationship, and that 'homestay parent' is a better term than 'homestay host'. This conception of the interpersonal dynamic implies a mutual and on-going process of adaptation which more accurately characterizes the experience.

### **Culture Shock and Adaptation for Homestay Families**

It appears that culture shock is indeed experienced by the homestay families as well as the international students as they all adapt to a new situation. Thelma Barer-Stein's term (1988) "coming face-to-face with the unfamiliar" is as applicable to the homestay family as it is to the foreigner. We all tend to fear the unknown and our fear can be manifested in various ways. Being offended by unexpected behavior, making assumptions about the meaning of the behavior, or withdrawing from the other person are natural, but ineffective, manifestations of our fear. Strategies for communication and an appreciation for the mutual benefits of diversity are essential in our increasingly multicultural society. Programs such as the ISP and accompanying support groups can help to familiarize us to new ways of thinking and living with people from diverse backgrounds.

We can draw from the literature on cross-cultural adaptation to further our understanding of cross-cultural interaction from the perspective of the homestay parent. Kim (1988) suggests that the way people adapt to a new situation depends on their cultural background, personality attributes, past experience and preparedness for change. I found when conducting this research that the people who were flexible and who had previous experience with traveling and/or 'hosting' had developed strategies for dealing

with a newcomer and an openness to diversity that helped them to adapt well to living with international students. These people would be a valuable resource for a support program for homestay families.

One of the respondents suggested that the students experience 'family shock', and I would add that I think the family does, too, as they adjust to a new family member. The adaptation experiences of all members of the family indicate that living with international students requires patience and compassion and that everyone in the family must make a concerted effort to make it work. Some difficulties will be caused by the bringing together of two cultures with varying behaviors and expectations. But it is important to be aware that bringing together people with different life experiences and personalities, regardless of their cultural background, can also be the source of tensions which contribute to 'family shock'. Possible irritants such as different eating or showering habits can be equally present when living with a foreign student or a neighbourhood friend. Therefore, it is necessary to recognize and separate what is cultural from what are individual behaviors. It is not just different cultural habits that make us uncomfortable; it is also unfamiliar individual ones that may be at the root of family shock.

The respondents all indicate that a high value is placed on the family unit, family-focused activities and privacy within the family. I think that these values are strongly present in homes in North America and that our behavior and expectations reflect them. These cultural values may complicate our ability to adapt to international students in our homes because we have a preconception of what this family unit looks like, and the newcomer disrupts this. Therefore, it is important that homestay families are prepared for the adjustment to one more individual in the family unit as much as to a person from another cultural background.

### **The Potential for Transformative Learning**

Mezirow (1990) and Cranton (1994) theorize that individuals will reflect on new situations and make sense of them in ways that can lead to a deeper awareness and understanding of diverse perspectives. Matejko and Williams (1993, p. 2.) state that "when we engage with others, we build ourselves - one might interpret, then, the opportunity for increased diversity in social encounters as the simultaneous opportunity for growth and self-expansion." This deeper awareness and growth is present in Paula's story about taking her student to the doctor and holding her hand when the painful procedure started. She immediately sensed that this way of offering emotional support was not what the student was used to receiving. However, instead of being offended and withdrawing, Paula later told the student that holding her hand had been her way of showing support, but she realized that she had "crossed her boundary". The girl told Paula why she reacted the way she did. This honest communication proved to be the turning point in what developed into a lasting and profound relationship between the two. This story teaches us that learning about cultures is a mutual process that requires that we ask questions in order to understand the other more deeply. The potential for transformative learning lies in this kind of interaction.

## **SCHOOL**

### **Integration**

A resounding theme that emerges in this study is the perception that the social impact of international students has been to create separate groups of students within the school. The impact of these groupings is that local students feel uncomfortable with the presence of these 'strangers'; international students have few opportunities for cultural exposure and linguistic development; and all students are deprived of the benefits of

cross-cultural learning. This perception suggests that far from bringing cultures together, which is one of the program objectives, the program is separating them further.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, it is crucial that programs and activities at the school be planned with integration of foreign and Canadian students as the primary objective. However, I believe that integration has to be much more than a program. It has to be a value which is then manifested in program planning. If the administration and the staff do not truly appreciate the value of integration and mutual learning, programs in themselves will not necessarily result in an integrated school population. Therefore, opportunities should be sought to familiarize faculties with cross-cultural issues, to hire people to work in the schools with expertise in this field, and to recognize the value of the androgogical model for education which is based on the richness of group learning. This kind of learning places the responsibility for integration on international students and local students alike and, in so doing, presents a valuable opportunity for all to benefit from the exchange.

### **Communication**

Another perception is that communication among all of the partners in this program is crucial. I think that we have to begin by asking homestay families, students, and school district administration and staff what their expectations are about this program. We invite foreign students into our homes, schools and community, but what are our respective roles and responsibilities? It appears to me that the homestay parents are not clear about where their jobs begin and end. As homestay 'parents', are they responsible for the health, education and emotional support of these students as they are for their own children? If so, they need more resources for guiding them, more personal information from the students' families and on-going support from the school.

As more and more students are staying on for further education at college and university in Victoria, it appears that the scope and mandate of the program is changing.

No longer are all international students temporary visitors in our high schools; they are becoming long-standing members of our community. An evaluation of the program with these changes and the growth of the program in mind would be timely. Communication among administration, staff, students, homestay families and the community would be greatly enhanced with further clarification around their respective roles and the broader program objectives.

## **COMMUNITY**

A thought-provoking perception of several of the participants in this study is that this community does not know how to welcome foreigners. I think that one reason for this is that, since immigration to Victoria of visible minorities has been slow, we have had little opportunity to interact with people from other cultures. Experience and practice in living with and getting to know foreigners will help us to learn how to be more open to them. Paula's story about the foreign student who commented that we all look alike to her is a reminder that we all tend to have misconceptions of the "other" until we have had this practice.

One strategy that our culture uses to demonstrate our openness to others is political correctness. But in our preoccupation with politically-correct language, we can pretend that we are not discriminating because we feel that we are not offending anyone. We don't talk openly about our feelings or experiences because we are afraid of being labeled a 'racist', or being judged in some way. This makes it difficult to get to the heart of cross-cultural issues. Again, experience with programs in the community which introduces us to people from other cultures and which encourages us to come face-to-face with the unfamiliar can help us to talk about differences in constructive ways.

My sense from this research is that cultural differences are basically different manifestations of similar human values. While we must recognize and appreciate

differences, I believe that we also have to build constructively on these similarities. As human beings, we all value respect. It is important to us all that our group and/or individual identities and human rights are respected.

The need for physical, financial and emotional security also crosses cultures. A major benefit to all participants in the ISP is the enhancement of intercultural experience, skills and appreciation which strengthens the sense of personal security and well-being.

We have a social need to communicate with each other; therefore, we have to find ways to bridge linguistic and cultural differences in our communities. English as a Second Language classes and programs such as the ISP are helping to do this as they build on the reciprocal nature of communication. With improved language skills foreigners are becoming more equipped to adapt to our culture, and our community is learning from their diverse cultural perspectives. The human values that we all share can be the foundation upon which we construct a strong multicultural society.

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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM FOR THE STUDY ENTITLED,  
"INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS: HOST PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR  
SOCIAL IMPACT ON HOME, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY"

I understand that this research project is studying the experiences of homestay families in the Greater Victoria International Student Program. I understand that I will be asked about my experiences and interactions with my visiting student in two interviews that will take place between March and June, 1996.

I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without explanation.

I understand that any data collected in the study will remain confidential; interview results will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Furthermore, I understand that my name will not be attached to any published results, and that my anonymity will be protected by using code names to identify the results obtained from individual subjects. I understand that the anonymity of any individuals mentioned during interviews will be protected by me and by the researcher.

I understand that my interviews will be audiotaped and that the tapes will be erased immediately after the experiences that I talk about are coded in written form by the researcher. I also understand that if I do not wish to have my interviews taped, I can refuse to do so.

Signature

Date

VITA

Surname: Owen

Given Names: Diane Louise

Place of Birth: Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Educational Institutions Attended:

University of Victoria	1992-1997
University of British Columbia	1991-1992
University of British Columbia	1967-1972

Degrees Awarded:

B.A.	University of British Columbia	1971
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Title of Thesis:

International Students: Host Perceptions of their Social Impact on Home,  
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Author



Diane Louise Owen  
March 27, 1997