

# The Homestay:

## Very Contemporary Issues and Solutions

We take a fresh look at the classic homestay situation and the issues we face today in the field, from expectations to politics, from guns to gay marriage, and the solutions we have or could have for managing them.

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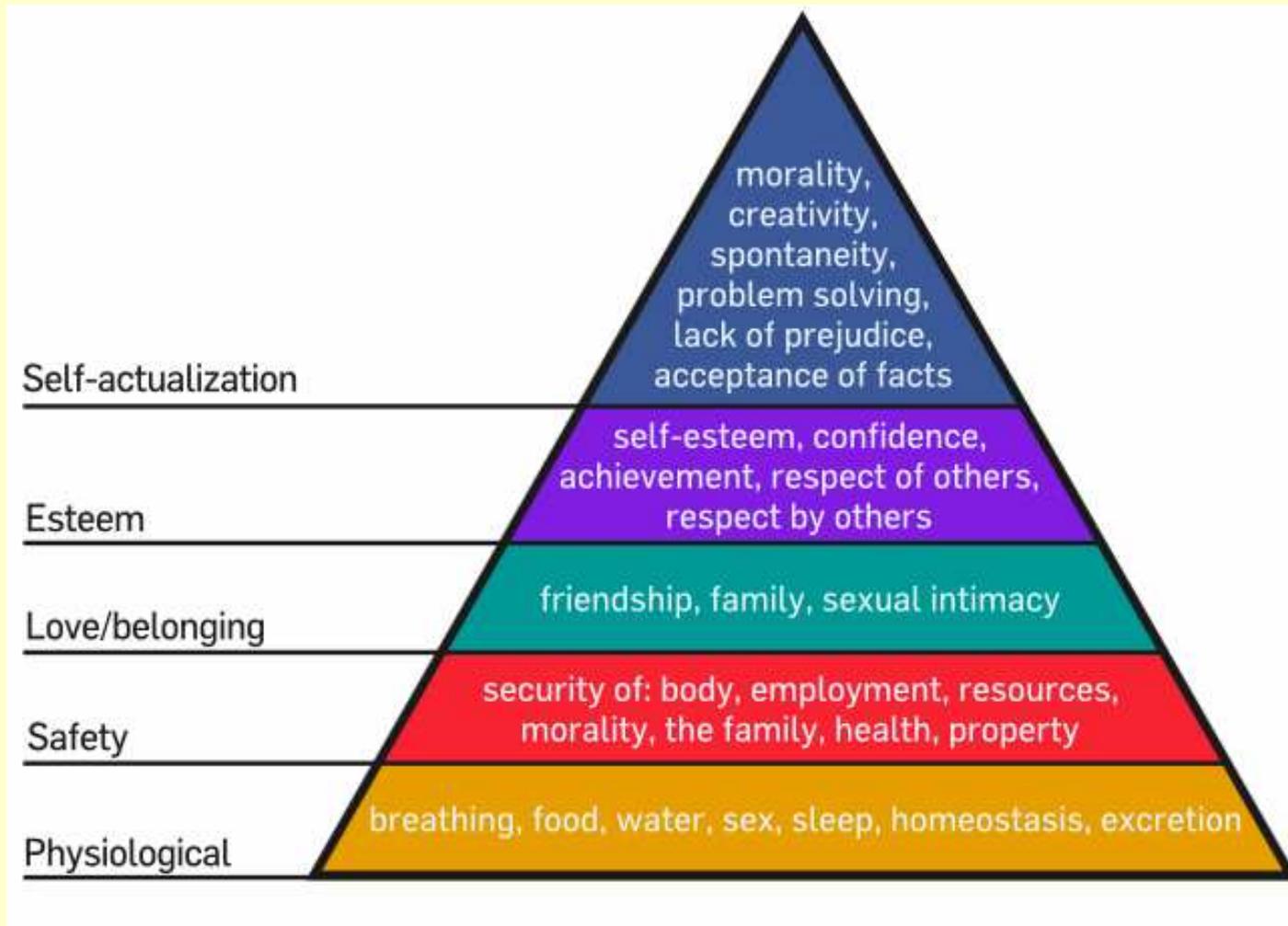
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# Roles in the homestay

- Who defines these roles? Who should define them?
- Are our expectations of students' capacity to adapt realistic? If not, should we lower our expectations?

# Maslow's hierarchy of needs



# Building blocks for solid homestays

- **Understanding**

Homestay is an exchange, an adult relationship (not something to be simply consumed). Ask students: *What positive elements can you bring to this homestay?*

- **Student orientation**

Who are my hosts? What are they getting out of the homestay?

- **Host orientation**

Who are these students? What is his/her daily life? What is the mission of the home school?  
What is the program's mission?

- **Tripartite housing contract**

Responsibilities of all three parties clearly outlined

- **Tripartite in-home visit**

Show value of/attention to all parties. Ask: *Have you ever disagreed on a subject? What an excellent opportunity for both of you!...*

## Case study: *"My hosts are racist"*

A student comes to your office, proclaiming "my hosts are racist" and he/she (choose any/all of the following):

(a) wants to change hosts

(b) does not say he/she wants to change hosts, but is clearly uncomfortable with the situation

(c) The student's mother has contacted your superior to complain.

What do you do?

## Case study: *Mariage pour tous*

Before leaving the US, Johnny has volunteered the information that he is gay to your program, but did not indicate that you may share this information with his hosts. Johnny arrives in France and all is going well in the homestay until a few weeks after his arrival. His hosts are helping organize the opposition to the *mariage pour tous* rally and they brought up the subject at the dinner table. Johnny is uncomfortable with the comments made by his hosts. During a phone call to check in with the hosts, Madame indicates to you that something is not quite right, but she is evasive.

What do you do?

## Case study: *Presidential elections*

You are responsible for the homestay placements in your program. At the end of the 2012-2013 academic year, in your homestay evaluation, you asked the students to comment on how they perceived the French presidential elections as a resident in a homestay. The large majority offered comments along the lines of "I liked hearing my hosts talk about the elections and the issues at hand, but I didn't feel comfortable contributing to the conversation."

How would you avoid this situation in the future?

## Case study: *Blind student*

Your home university has informed you that you will be welcoming a blind student and his guide dog in a homestay in the Spring. Since then, your home university has offered little information or support.

What do you do?

## Case study: *NRA*

You have a card-holding NRA (National Rifle Association) member in your program. After the tragic shooting in Newton, her hosts expressed their opposition to the current policy of firearms sales in the US and, in the student's opinion, implied that the US is full of violent armed psychopaths. Your student thinks that her hosts are naive, relying on authorities to come to their rescue in case of an aggression. The student seems to be loosing interest in her relationship with her hosts because of this situation.

What do you do?

## Case study: *Ethnic neighborhood*

You have interviewed and visited a new potential host family. The family is of Northern African descent, lives in an ethnic neighborhood and are practicing Muslims. The family meets your program's criteria and you would like to place a student with them.

How do you go about placing a student with this family?

## Case study: *Homogeneous hosts*

Your program has been welcoming American students for 20-some years and has a solid host family pool. The vast majority of your hosts are white Catholics who live in privileged neighborhoods. Your home university proclaims itself as encouraging diversity.

What do you do?

## Case study: *L'affaire Merah*

You run a program in Toulouse. In March 2012, the city endured the violent events perpetrated by Mohammed Merah, and was placed under *vigipirate écarlate* for the first time in history. On several occasions during the month, you met with students to talk about the situation, but students offered little comments or questions other than those directly related to their personal security. In your opinion, the students seemed rather blasé about the events; your hosts confirm that your students didn't seem to be effected much. In the meantime, in the city you could feel an almost tangible general malaise but also touching displays of solidarity that you would have liked your students to embrace, just as the other citizens of Toulouse were doing.

How do you analyze the situation? How would you approach it?

## Case study: *Preparation*

More and more you see that your students are less and less prepared for their study abroad experience, and even less and less for the homestay experience.

How do you try to improve this situation, both pre-departure, and once the students are on-site?

## Case study: *Role in the homestay*

Students often speak of their expectations of the homestay, but when you ask them what does the family expect of them, they have a hard time finding an answer. Similarly, you find that students are unable to define *their role* in the homestay.

How do you improve this situation, both pre-departure and once on-site?

## Case study: *Where do we go from here?*

You are planning orientation sessions (or literature) for your students and your hosts. Concretely, what will you tell them about how to handle differences of opinion, given each party's culture and generational/socio-economic, etc. background? What key phrases/questions would you suggest that they use? What advice do you give each party?

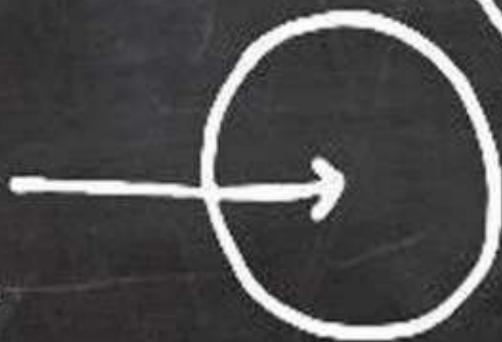
Question bis:

Where do we draw the line? When does a program say no? When does a societal issue become an ethical one?

# Taking it a step further

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Where the  
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