The Perfect Match: How inclusion in homestays can help students soar

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Role of housing in study abroad

Matching students with homestays

DEI training in Milan

Impact of housing

Case Studies
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Are homestays beneficial?

Studies have shown that immersive homestay experiences have been beneficial for both students and homestays in terms of **linguistic and intercultural competence development** as well as **personal growth and identity construction** (Llurda, Gallego-Balsá & Barahona, 2016; Grieve, 2015; Scally, 2015; Shiri 2015; Castañeda and Zirger 2011; Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2010, 2009; Vande Berg & Paige, 2009; Schmidt-Rinehart & Knight, 2004)
Nevertheless, the homestay advantage is not guaranteed (Kinginger 2013) as individual psychological traits (attitude, personality) as well as social identities (race, gender, sexuality, religious background, socioeconomic class) affect learning in the study abroad context, and in some instances, study abroad not only reflects but may reinforce gender, race, ethnic, geographical and socioeconomic inequalities (Kubota, 2016; Kinginger, 2013; Diao, Freed & Smith, 2011; Jackson, 2008; Kinginger & Blattner, 2008; Iino, 2006; Pellegrino, 2005; Wilkinson, 1998).
Current Global & Local Contexts

Role of housing in study abroad
Increase of students from groups who have been traditionally underrepresented in education abroad, such as racial/ethnic minorities, first-generation college students, students with disabilities, students from lower socio-economic households, students in underrepresented majors, community college students, student athletes, and males.

Source: https://opendoorsdata.org
Study Abroad Data: The Educators (2020)

High degree of homogeneity among professionals serving in education abroad offices on campus and onsite:

- **68.3% White/Caucasian**, 8.8% Black/African American, 7.8% Hispanic/Latinx, 6% Asian/Asian American
- **77.9% Female**, 20.4% Male, 1% Non-Binary/Third Gender
- **79.9% Heterosexual/Straight**, 5.5% Gay, 1.4% Lesbian, 6% Bisexual
- **76.1% No disability/Impairment**, 9.4% Mental Health Conditions, 9.4% Chronic Illness
- **39.2% Christian**, 26.5% Not religious, 13.9% Agnostic, 8% Atheist, 3.3% Jewish, 1.1% Muslim

Source: https://www.diversitynetwork.org
Our Session: Goals

Within our current context, we acknowledge that structural inequalities exist and affect our students’ experiences abroad, and we argue that homestays can play a key role in supporting students.

Students, who connect with their hosts and engage in meaningful interactions regarding each other’s backgrounds, will thrive in academics, internships and other parts of the program. As their wellbeing rises, they will increase their intercultural competence and their overall experience will be enhanced. With the help of the attendees, we will review different scenarios and find the best response to different situations.
How to match students with homestays

Giulia Squatriti

Program Coordinator
EDUCO
Paris
Is it possible to find the Perfect Match?

Student Housing Questionnaire

• The basics: identity, smoking or non, allergies, dietary restrictions, religious practices (if any)
• Disabilities
• Student profile and interests

➢ Try to accommodate specific requests, if possible (e.g., children, young adults, piano, pets, religious homestay, accommodations for disabilities, etc.)
Is it possible to find the Perfect Match?

What we look for in homestays

- Open-mindedness, patience, empathy
- Experience abroad if possible
- Young adults at home if possible
- No strict rules
- Active
- Interested in cultural/linguistic exchange
- Space
- Focus should not be on compensation
Tips for homestays

• Do as you would do for your own children
• Establish clear rules at the beginning of the semester
• Accept and value the student’s point of view which may be different to your own
• Be aware that the student experience in the USA is very different compared to the student experience in Europe, for example
• Help the student feel they belong
• Help the student understand your culture
• Understand, accept and value the student’s differences and the student’s culture
Is it possible to find the Perfect Match?

Tips for students

• Learn about your host country's social norms
• Follow your homestay's rules
• Always ask first
• Help your homestay
• Participate in their daily lives
• Remember to accept and value cross-cultural differences
• Remember this is a learning experience for both your homestay and for you
• Communicate with your homestay
Tips for housing coordinators

- Prepare both homestays and students
- Communicate with both homestays and students
- Listen to, advise and support both homestays and students

- 81% of surveyed students said their homestay was The Perfect Match.
DEI training in Milan

Manuela Nigrelli
Housing Coordinator
IES Abroad
Milano
Homestay on board process

- Word of mouth among families
- Homestay Networking Events
- Leaflets
- Connections with Host Associations
- Notices on university bulletin boards
We are committed to a policy of equal opportunity and do not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, sex, reproductive status, disability, age, national origin, citizenship, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran status and/or any other status protected by applicable laws.
Homestay training

- Meeting in person
- Housing Inspection
- Group sessions
- Senior-Junior Homestay support (Mentor <---> Mentee relationship)
- Homestay Team building activities
- Students’ Success Coordinator monitoring
- Ongoing assessment throughout the term
- Equity: selecting families that have a not-for-profit agenda guarantees both high-quality and affordability
Homestay hosts

- Not a mere housing provider
- Not a mere meals provider

But also
- A mediator between cultures and generations
- A student’s success supporter
- An unconditionally helpful and supportive friend

➢ ARE THEY EXPECTING THIS?
➢ ARE THEY PREPARED TO DO THIS?

➢ How to increase adequate situational awareness and emotional intelligence in an adult audience: Case studies
Ciao Manu ma lo sai chi è arrivata a trovarci per qualche giorno ospite da noi! Victoria la ragazza di Hong Kong che avevamo ospitato anni fa 😊

Fa piacere che dopo anni si mantengano tutti questi legami, ormai una ragnatela bella fitta di relazioni e affetti 😊

Student coming back to the homestay family after a few years

Student coming back to the homestay family with his fiancé after many years
DEI training in Milan
Preventing misunderstandings or uncomfortable situations & building life-long relationships:

- Keep your voice low
- Respect the student's comfort zones
- Avoid direct (negative) communication
- Be patient!
- Remember the student has a different cultural background
- Listen actively
Preventing misunderstandings or uncomfortable situations & building life-long relationships:

- Empathy
- Substitute judgmental responses
- Remember staff is always available to help you manage uncomfortable situations
- Build memorable moments to share:
  - cooking activities, visit the mountains, play music or sports, introduce the student to your friends, invite them to family celebrations, have a weekend out of town...
- Help the student understand that offensive or hurtful behavior may be unintentional
Impact of housing on students' study abroad experience
Survey sent to several students from many different Study Abroad programs (IES, EDUCAO, Boston University, Accent, APUAF, APUNE...)

And from different countries
France, Spain, Italy
MY HOMESTAY...

1. 90.5% ...helped me understand my host culture
2. 90.5% ...truly valued my identity and differences
3. 89.7% ...helped me understand intercultural differences
4. 76.2% ...diversity met my expectation
5. 0% I suffered identity-threatening situations in my homestay
Survey sent to numerous homestays in France, Spain and Italy.

The results are based on many responses.
FOR MY STUDENT...

1. I create an environment in which they feel valued (91.8%)

2. My role was essential to the success of their experience abroad (89.9%)

3. I familiarised myself with DEI terms (75.6%)

4. I introduce my culture and have them participate in it (86.7%)

5. I reflected on how our cultural differences could affect our interactions (77.8%)

6. I made sure to accept and understand intercultural differences (72.3%)
Nearly 90% of hosts believe that their role is essential to the success of the student's experience.

- Provide an environment where the student feels welcome
- Concern for student's well being
- Helpful with language practice
More than 80% of students say that their homestay was essential to the success of their experience

Benefits
• Meaningful interactions
• Meeting their homestays' family and friends
• Emotional support
• Being part of daily life
We asked homestays in three different countries the same question: "Which of the following statements may offend your student?"

As we can see, the responses vary from one country to another.

Let's see how you respond!
Which of the following statements may offend a student?

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Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.
Statements:

- I really like your hair
- LGBTQI+ community is overly active
- Why are you vegan/vegetarian?
- You are my little foreigner!

Countries:

- FRANCE
- SPAIN
- ITALY

Percentages:

- FRANCE: 37.3%, 79.7%, 64.3%, 88.1%
- SPAIN: 64.3%, 47.5%, 78.6%, 85.7%
- ITALY: 11.8%, 41.2%, 64.7%, 52.9%
Case Studies
Case Study

Jade, a black student, lives in a homestay. A couple of weeks after her arrival, the homestay mother touches Jade’s hair and compliments her on her beautiful hair. Beyond her hair, her host regularly compliments Jade’s clothes. Jade feels very uncomfortable and reports this to her study center.

- What is your reaction to this situation?
- Is this acceptable behavior from the homestay?
- How would you respond to the student’s concerns?
- What would you say to the homestay?
What is the first word that comes to your mind in response to this scenario

Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.
“Being placed in housing with a meal plan provided is my top priority, so I am willing to be flexible in my meal preferences. I would prefer a family with older children who do not eat meat. In addition, I am a vegetarian, so milk or ice cream would need to be lactose-free. As an international student, there is a slight fear of not feeling welcomed by my Italian host family, but I still look forward to immersing myself in Italian culture through a homestay! “
Case Study 1

“Being placed in housing with a meal plan provided is my top priority, so I am willing to be flexible in my housing preferences. I would prefer a family with older children or none. In addition to being vegetarian, I don’t consume milk or ice cream unless it is lactose-free. As a Black student, there is a slight fear of not feeling welcomed by my Italian host family, but I still look forward to immersing myself in Italian culture through a homestay!”

Case Study 2

Eva is a practicing Muslim and wears a headscarf. Her homestay mother asks her why this is necessary in the Muslim religion. Eva feels this is a micro-aggression and reports this to the study center.

Case Study 3

In a homestay, the mother does all the cooking, shopping, cleaning, laundry etc and the father does not take part in any household chores. Their student feels this is unfair and talks to the university/exchange program about his feeling that this does not reflect contemporary society. He wants to live with people who share his social and political beliefs.
**Case Study 4**

A student is in the process of changing sex and wants to live with a homestay. They ask to be addressed as they. How do you prepare the homestay for this challenge particularly in countries where language is gender-based?

**Case Study 5**

A non-binary student whose gender is female wants to live with a homestay. Most of your homestays only accept students of a specific gender (male or female). What do you do? Do you tell your homestay?

**Case Study 6**

Tim’s homestay is Catholic and has pictures of the Pope in the dining room. Tim is Catholic too, but he feels that the pictures may make other students uncomfortable. He therefore complains to the housing manager and questions whether this homestay can host students in the future.
Case Study 7

A student from an underrepresented religion complains that their religious celebrations are not treated as holidays in the study abroad country. Furthermore, the student complains that their homestay does not respect the student’s religion and just tells the student they need to adapt. The student feels discriminated and complains to the university/provider.

Case Study 8

Steven lives with a politically conservative homestay. They are lovely people and lovely to him, but they tell him that they voted for the far right during the elections. Steven tells the study center.

Case Study 9

“As a queer student, I am hoping that I will be matched with a host family who is very accepting.”
“I would prefer to not live with a homophobic family as I am part of the LGBTQ community.”
Case Study questions

- What is your reaction to this situation?
- Is this acceptable behavior from the homestay?
- How would you respond to the student’s concerns?
- What would you say to the homestay?
Conclusion & learning objectives

**Homestays**
- Empathize
- Communicate
- Learn
- Share

**Students**
- Prepare
- Be open-minded
- Teach
- Exchange

**Housing Coordinators**
- Prepare
- Be available
- Support
- Inform
Preparing homestays

- Different culture, different communication, different lived experience
- Culture shock, its impact and how to face it
- Importance of active listening
- Role of empathy
- Replace judgmental response with an empathetic response
- Microaggressions
- Unconscious Bias
- Privilege
- Suggested documentary: Human (Yann Arthus-Bertrand – 2015)
Preparing students

- Different culture, different communication
- Host country social etiquette
- Culture shock
- Reading list (or TikTok/YouTube videos) to learn about host culture
Any questions?
Scan me and get the presentation
Thank you!
For your attention and contribution