



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

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Giulia SQUATRITI



**Role of  
housing  
in study  
abroad**

**Matching  
students  
with  
homestays**

**DEI  
training  
in Milan**

**Impact of  
housing**

**Case Studies**



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Role of  
housing  
in study  
abroad

## 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)

# Role of housing in study abroad

## Are homestays beneficial?

Nevertheless, the homestay advantage is not guaranteed (Kinging 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).

# Role of housing in study abroad

# Current Global & Local Contexts

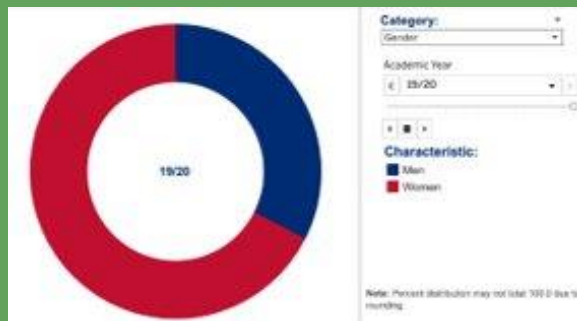
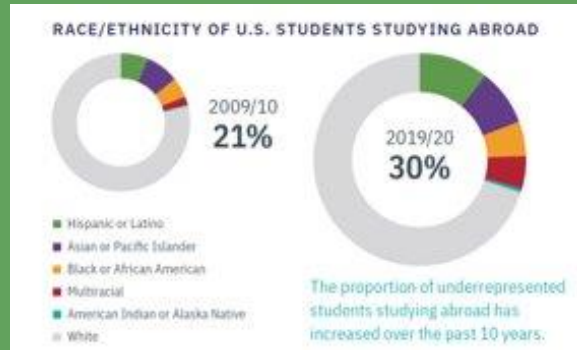


Role of  
housing  
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# Study Abroad Data: The Students (2020)

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 socioeconomic households, students in underrepresented majors, community college students, student athletes, and males.



# Role of housing in study abroad

## 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

Role of  
housing  
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abroad



## 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.

**Role of  
housing  
in study  
abroad**

Giulia Squatriti



*Program Coordinator*  
EDUCO  
Paris

How to  
match  
students  
with  
homestays

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  
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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

# Is it possible to find the Perfect Match?

## 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



# Is it possible to find the Perfect Match?



## 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 FAMILY

DIVENTA UNA FAMIGLIA OSPITANTE

Thank you so much for welcoming me into your home so welcomingly I really appreciate everything that all of you have done for me up to this point, and really can not thank you enough! I am forever grateful  
Love Jord

"UN'ESPERIENZA CHE CONSIGLIEREI A CHIUNQUE, PERCHÉ APRE IL CUORE"  
(HOMESTAY FAMILY 2019)

### CONTATTACI

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IES  
ABROAD  
Milan

### TESTIMONIANZE

"GRAZIE A QUESTO SCAMBO I MIEI FIGLI PARLANO ORA UN OTTIMO INGLESE"  
ILARA, 42 ANNI, MAMMA DI DUE RAGAZZI

"ABITARE CON UNA FAMIGLIA HOMESTAY MI HA AIUTATO A INTERARMI CON FACILITÀ NELLA CULTURA ITALIANA. IL SOSTEGNO DA PARTE DI COLORO CHE MI HANNO OSPITATO È STATO PER ME FONDAMENTALE E NON MI HA MAI FATTO SENTIRE SOLA. NON RINDETERO MAI ABBASTANZA LA MIA "MAMMA ITALIANA" PER AVERMI APERTO LE PORTE DELLA SUA CASA E SPERO DI POTER RICAMBIARE UN GIORNO L'OSPITALITÀ RICEVUTA"  
(ORACE, 21 ANNI, IES STUDENT)

### CHI SIAMO

IES ABROAD È UN'ORGANIZZAZIONE NON-PROFIT FONDATA A CHICAGO NEL 1956 E SI OCCUPA DI SCAMBI CULTURALI PER STUDENTI PROVENIENTI DA TUTTE LE UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STATI UNITI E CANADA. ATTUALMENTE QUESTO CONSORZIO OFFRE OLTRE 30 PROGRAMMI UNIVERSITARI IN EUROPA, AMERICA DEL SUD, AFRICA, ASIA ED OCEANIA

IES ABROAD MILANO SI RIVOLGE A RICERCATORI, O SEMPLICEMENTE AGLI STUDENTI CHE HANNO INTERESSE PER LA CULTURA ITALIANA. IES ABROAD MILANO OFFRE CORSI E SVOLGE TUTTE LE PRATICHE PER L'INSCRIZIONE PRESSO LE UNIVERSITÀ MILANESE. I GIOVANI CHE ADESIONO AL PROGRAMMA ALLUDIANO PER UN SEMESTRE PRESSO APPARTAMENTI STUDENTESCHI O SECONDO IL NUOVO PROGETTO HOMESTAY, PRESSO UNA FAMIGLIA ITALIANA. LA PROPOSTA FORMATIVA DI IES ABROAD, DEL TUTTO ANALOGA AL PROGRAMMA EUROPEO ERASMUS, GARANTISCE UN'ATTENZIONE PARTICOLARE ALLA PERSONA E AI SUOI BISOGNI. L'HOMESTAY È PER QUESTI RAGAZZI LA POSSIBILITÀ DI ESSERE ACCOLTI DA UNA VERA FAMIGLIA ITALIANA E CONDIVIDERNE LO STILE DI VITA.

### PERCHÉ DIVENTARE UNA FAMIGLIA HOMESTAY

- PER MIGLIORARE IL PROPRIO INGLESE E CONTRIBUIRE A INTRODURRE GLI OSPITI A LINGUA, ABITUDINI E VALORI ITALIANI DETTANDO ALLO STESSO TEMPO UN PONTE OLTREOCEANO PER SÉ E PER I PROPRI FIGLI.

- PER RICEVERE UN REGOLARE PAGAMENTO MENSILE PER CIASCUNO DEGLI STUDENTI OSPITATI.

- PER POTER USUFRUIRE DI UN SOSTEGNO PRATICO COSTANTE DA PARTE DELLO STAFF DI IES ABROAD MILANO.



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OUR PARTNERS: Colleges, Universities & International Institutions



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# Homestay on board process

- Word of mouth among families
- Homestay Networking Events
- Leaflets
- Connections with Host Associations
- Notices on university bulletin boards

# DEI training in Milan

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

# DEI training in Milan

## 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



22 marzo 2019

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 😊

08:59



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



09:01



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





# 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

# DEI training in Milan

## 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

Isabelle Brière



*Assistant Director*  
**Boston University**  
**Paris**

**Impact of  
housing on  
students'  
study  
abroad  
experience**

**STUDENT**

RESULTS

# HOUSING SURVEY

Survey sent to several students from many different Study Abroad programs (IES, EDUCO, Boston University, Accent, APUAF, APUNE...)

And from different countries  
France, Spain, Italy



# MY HOMESTAY...

90.5%

1

...helped me understand my host culture

90.5%

2

...truly valued my identity and differences

89.7%

3

...helped me understand intercultural differences

76.2%

4

...diversity met my expectation

0%

5

I suffered identity-threatening situations in my homestay

# HOMESTAY

RESULTS

# HOUSING SURVEY

Survey sent to numerous homestays in  
France, Spain and Italy.

The results are based on many responses

**FOR MY STUDENT...**

91.8%

1

...I create an environment in which they feel valued

75.6%

3

...I familiarised myself with DEI terms

77.8%

5

...I reflected on how our cultural differences could affect our interactions

89.9%

2

...my role was essential to the success of their experience abroad

86.7%

4

...I introduce my culture and have them participate in it

72.3%

6

...I made sure to accept and understand intercultural differences

❖ 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

# Impact of housing on students' study abroad experience

❖ 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

# Impact of housing on students' study abroad experience

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!

# Impact of housing on students' study abroad experience



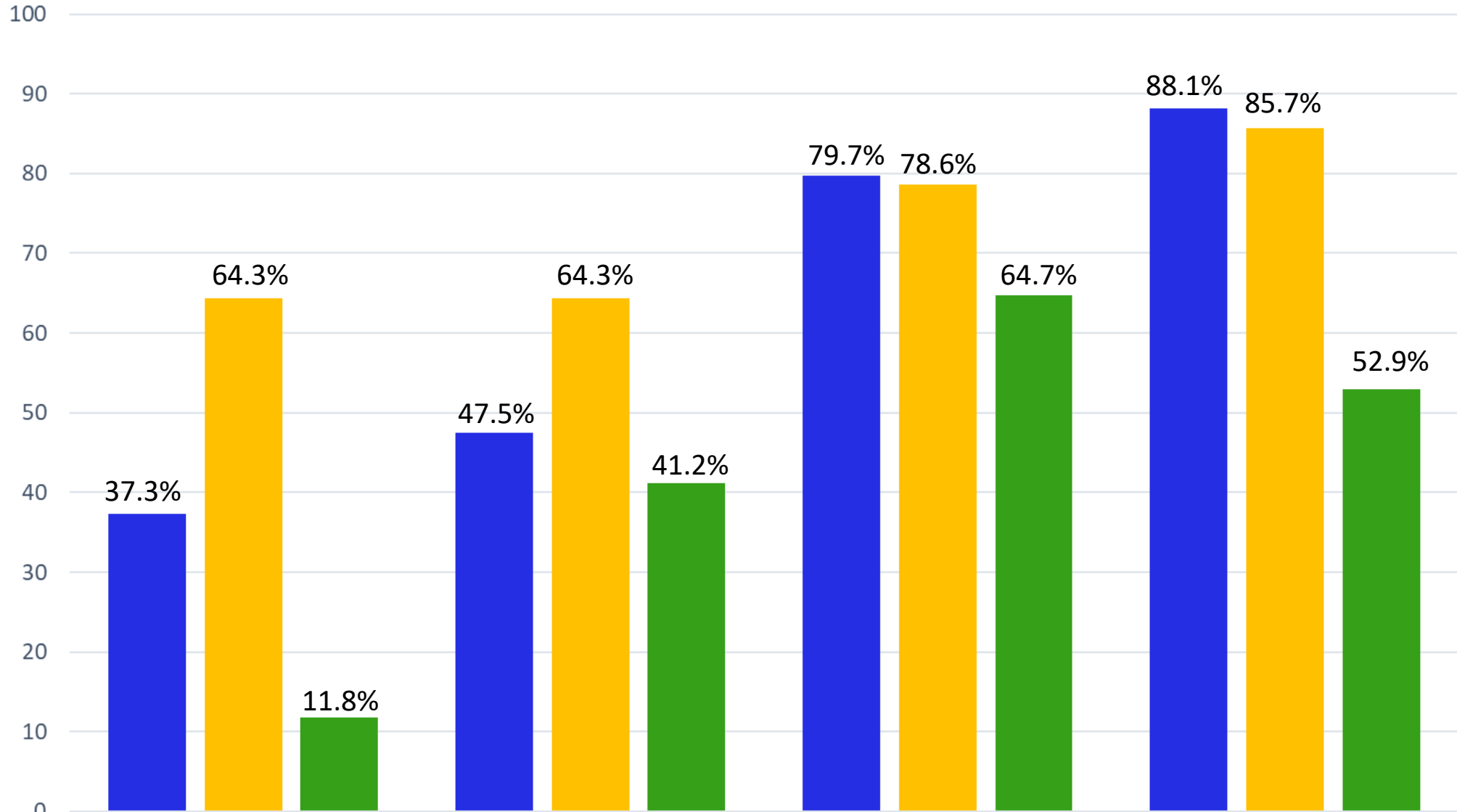
slido



**Which of the following statements may offend a student**

ⓘ Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

FRANCE SPAIN ITALY



Statements:

I really like your hair

LGBTQI+ community is overly active

Why are you vegan/vegetarian?

You are my little foreigner!

# 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?

**slido**



**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.

# 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 preferences. I have a family with older members, none. In addition, I am vegetarian, I do not drink milk or ice cream, and I am lactose-free. As a result,

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!”

Please review and discuss the *Case Study* found on your card

What's concerns?

# 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.

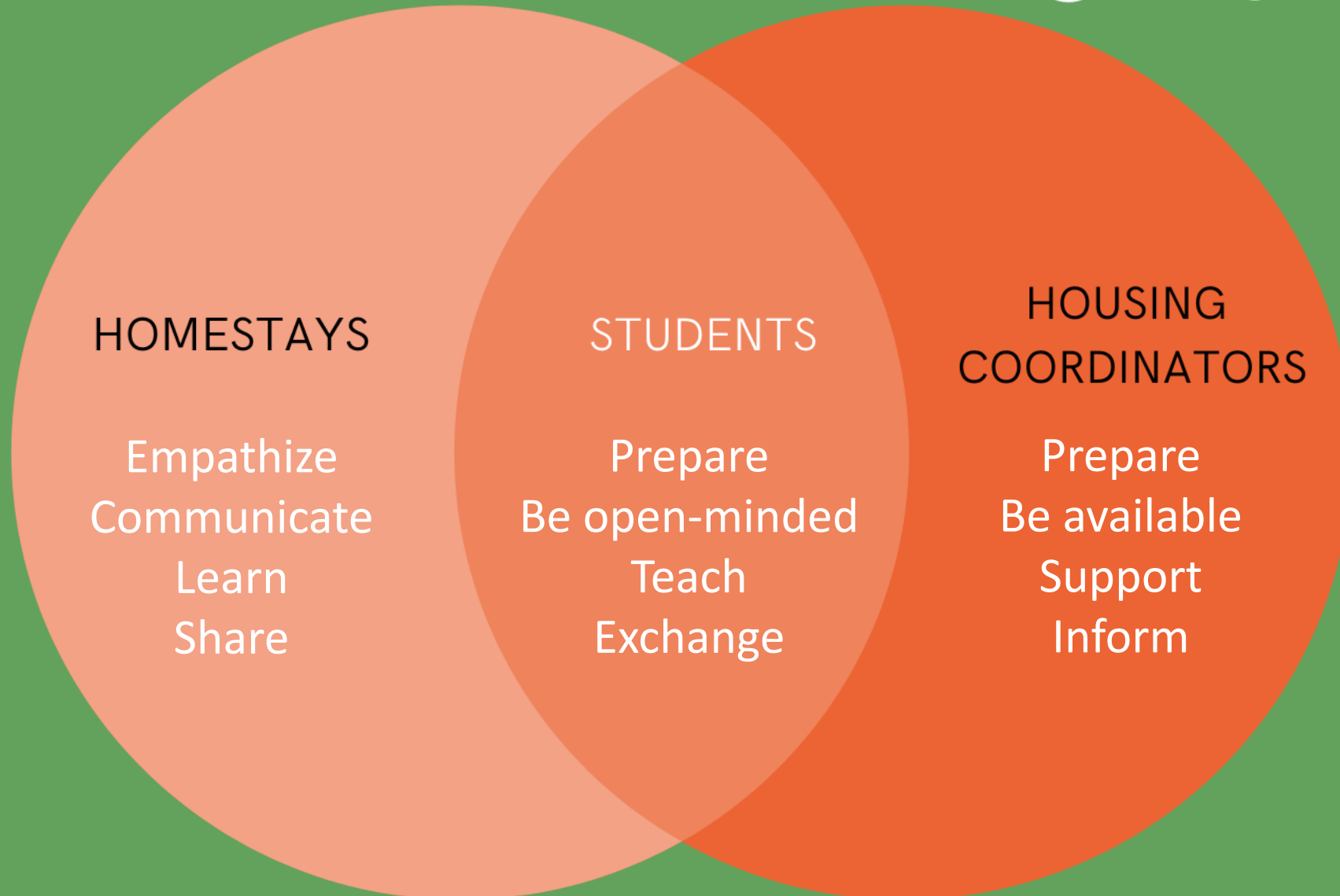
## Case Study 9

"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



# Tools for the Perfect Match

## 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)

# Tools for the Perfect Match

## 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**



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**Thank you!**

**For your attention and contribution**