

1 Evaluating Prospective Homestay Families in the U.S. and New
2 Approaches to Further Enrich the Exchange Student's Opinion of
3 America

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6

7 **Abstract**

8 Determining the level of effectiveness in exchange programs has become increasingly more
9 important to evaluators. Likewise, bilateral connectivity between the host country's people
10 institutions and the exchange student have benefitted from recent recommendations of
11 comprehensive evaluations. However, the homestay family factor of the exchange experience
12 lags in this area. In that regard, exchange programs could improve significantly from a
13 broader and deeper understanding of the homestay experience, as seen from the host's
14 perspective. In fact, citizen diplomacy is alive and active in the host's homes. People to
15 people contact in these intimate settings can form attitudes, sentiments, and emotional
16 attachments that should be measured as a mode to improve citizen diplomacy practices. From
17 the aptitude of the host family to their level of community engagement, several elements are
18 key to an ambiance where the exchange student can better adapt, learn, interact, feel, think,
19 express ideas, learn about customs and community, familiarize with the language, and overall
20 enhance their experience, hence their opinion about their host country.

21

22 ***Index terms—***

23 Evaluating Prospective Homestay Families in the U.S. and New Approaches to Further Enrich the Exchange
24 Student's Opinion of America

25 **1 Martha Falencik**

26 Executive Summary-Determining the level of effectiveness in exchange programs has become increasingly more
27 important to evaluators. Likewise, bilateral connectivity between the host country's people & institutions and
28 the exchange student have benefitted from recent recommendations of comprehensive evaluations. However, the
29 homestay family factor of the exchange experience lags in this area. In that regard, exchange programs could
30 improve significantly from a broader and deeper understanding of the homestay experience, as seen from the
31 host's perspective. In fact, citizen diplomacy is alive and active in the host's homes. People to people contact in
32 these intimate settings can form attitudes, sentiments, and emotional attachments that should be measured as a
33 mode to improve citizen diplomacy practices.

34 From the aptitude of the host family to their level of community engagement, several elements are key to an
35 ambiance where the exchange student can better adapt, learn, interact, feel, think, express ideas, learn about
36 customs and community, familiarize with the language, and overall enhance their experience, hence their opinion
37 about their host country.

38 "The shape of the world, a generation from now, will be influenced far more by how well we communicate the
39 values of our society to others than by our military or diplomatic superiority."

40 Senator William Fulbright, 1964 1 I. his data-gathering tool seeks to explore ways to attract new homestay
41 families to exchange programs. It also seeks to develop better strategies and practices in the homestay
42 environment which will in turn, enhance the exchange college student's (age 18-24) opinion of American values.

6 EVALUATION RESULTS

43 The short-term desired outcome of this evaluation is to uncover important gaps regarding how-to-preparebefore-
44 you-host-an-exchange -student practices. The desired intermediate outcome is that, once such gaps are rectified,
45 homestay hosts will be better informed T about the important role they play as civilian diplomats in U.S. nation
46 branding and global engagement. Such KPI's 2 b) Isolating the Target Audience as shared trust and dynamic
47 people-to-people interactions with the exchange student would have to be measured, accordingly. Consequently,
48 the long-term goal is that future comprehensive homestay evaluations stimulate better global relations through
49 informed, purposeful, enriched experiences in youth exchange programs.

50 2 Evaluation Methodology

51 I predict that the "Possible Homestay Families" evaluation will expose a lack of knowledge on the respondent's
52 part about the overarching purpose behind exchange programs. These families are mostly willing to host so that
53 they can experience different cultures, foods, music, languages, faiths, even politics, but are unaware of their
54 impact on the exchange students' ultimate opinion of American values, hence their long-term, global impact.

55 Homestay families everywhere can range from two parents with kids to a widowed grandmother. According
56 to Carleton College's website, "twentysomething couples, a single parent with grown children, large extended
57 families, or a retired couple all constitute (prospective host) families." 3 While any of these might be the
58 case, generally, females, being the more nurturing, detail-oriented gender, 4 are the ones making decisions
59 such as hosting an exchange student. In that light, this survey will be sent to 75 randomly selected women
60 homeowners. They live in different urban areas throughout the United States and are relatively close to colleges
61 and universities. This target audience is ideal because women homeowners are more likely to set the tone in the
62 homestay atmosphere.

63 3 c) Building questions

64 The questions will be divided into 5 categories: I. 1-2 Introductory information (number of members in your
65 household, distance to nearest university/college.) II. 3-10 Background information (ethnicity, age, second
66 language spoken at home, religious affiliation, income level, education level, study abroad, travel abroad.)

67 III. 11-16 Preferences (willingness to attend workshops to improve exchange practices, level of community
68 engagement, enjoyment and attendance of cultural activities, conditions that would make it more likely to
69 consider hosting an exchange student, level of family outdoor activities, likelihood of contact with exchange
70 student once they are back in their country of origin.) IV. 17-19 Open-ended (family description, benefits of
71 hosting an exchange student, sacrifices made by hosting an exchange student.)

72 V. 20 Direct global engagement statement (homestay family's level of confidence; their impact on exchange
73 student's opinion of America, hence their global influence.)

74 The survey contains 10 multiple-choice, demographically-driven questions. It asks 6 multiplechoice questions
75 which delve into the prospective homestay family's level of participation in their community and travels abroad.
76 The 3 open-ended questions are structured in such a way that the participants share their personalized, homestay
77 family's dynamics, as well as their expectations of an exchange program experience. The 20 th question is
78 formatted as multiple choice with the desired outcome of extracting a swift and honest answer about the
79 respondent's family dynamics and how they see themselves as a conduit to improve global public opinion about
80 American values.

81 4 d) Attachments

82 Below, pages 17 & 20, please find (a): the "Possible Homestay Survey" and (b): the evaluation participation
83 letter, disseminated to 75 womenhomeowner participants.

84 5 II.

85 6 Evaluation Results

86 The dissemination of 75 "Possible Homestay Survey" emails took place on March 1, 2021. Of the 75, 43 began
87 and completed the survey, with a completion rate of 57%. Of the 43 completed surveys, 23 respondents answered
88 the three open-ended questions. Explanation of percentages with glance analysis (in bold & single-spaced) a)
89 Questions 1-16 Q1: How many people live in your home? 60% of respondents live in a household of three to
90 four family members. 31% of respondents live in a household of four or more. Only 9% of respondents live
91 in a household of less than two family members. I easily assumed that a family of four would be most ideal
92 for people-to-people connections. I thought that the exchange student would by default, have more than one
93 age group to find interests with. As it turned out, some of the open-ended responses debunked my prediction.
94 Q2: What is the approximate distance to the nearest university/college to your home? 55% of respondents live
95 within five miles of a university/college, 21% within 5-10 miles, and 23% of respondents live within 10-15 miles
96 of said learning institutions. Over half of these homes are within 5 miles to university/college, ideal for exchange
97 students to ride a bicycle, bus, or walk to campus. Q3: What is your racial identity? 50% of respondents are
98 Latino/Hispanic, 31% White, Caucasian, 7% Black, African American, 7% Asian, 2.5% Pacific Islander, and
99 2.5% American Indian, Alaskan Native. Asked as a routine demographic question, the outlier (analyzed below),

100 sparked an onslaught of unresolved issues. Q4: What is your age bracket? 50% of respondents are 40-50 years
101 of age, 26% are 50-60 years of age, 14% are 60-70 years of age, and 10% are 30-40 years of age. Q5: Is there
102 a second language spoken at home? 50% of respondents answered yes, 50% answered no. Although exchange
103 students hope to sharpen their English language skills, a second language spoken at home can be a good source
104 of cultural exchange. However, if English is not the homestay's primary language, it can be problematic for
105 the exchange student's English immersion expectations. Q6: Is religion important to you? 55% of respondents
106 said they gave religion a great deal of importance, 21% said a moderate amount, 15% said a lot, 7% said not
107 at all, 2% said a little. For clarity purposes, I should have specified how many religious events the participants
108 attend per week or month. The question was asked with a three-fold intention. First, faith and religion can be
109 a fascinating conversation base between different cultures. Second, religious settings can be a strategic people-
110 to people connection aside from academia. For instance, the exchange student can mingle with youth their age and
111 find outlets to further their American experience. On the other hand, the homestay can become too persistent
112 about church attendance and imposition of their own religious beliefs which can create negative tension between
113 them and the exchange student. Q7: What is your income level? 29% of respondents have a \$100,000-\$150,000
114 annual income, 29% have a \$50,000-\$100,000 annual income, 26% have a Volume XXI Issue IV Version I 28 ()
115 \$150,000-\$200,000 annual income, 7% have a \$200,000-\$250,000 annual income, 7% have over a \$250,000 annual
116 income, and 3% have an annual income of less than \$50,000.

117 **7 Q8:**

118 What is your highest level of education? 33% of respondents have a 4-year degree, 26% have a professional degree,
119 17% have a two-year degree, 12% have done some college, 10% have a doctorate, and 2% have at least a high
120 school diploma. National percentage comparison shows 35% of Americans have a four-year college education
121 level, quite close to this survey's findings. ?? Q 9: Have you studied abroad? 78% of respondents have not,
122 22% have studied abroad. The national comparison is 10%, ??Q14: How effective would it be for you to attend
123 workshops to improve exchange practices? 26% of respondents said it would be moderately effective, 26% said
124 it would be very effective, 22% said it would be extremely effective, 19% said it would be somewhat effective,
125 and 7% said it would not be effective at all. Q12: How often do you attend cultural events? 62% of respondents
126 never do, 23% do quite often, 5% never do, and 5% of respondents attend cultural events very often. I expected
127 a higher number since these families live in culturally rich and accessible urban areas.

128 Q13: Which factor would more likely compel you to consider hosting an exchange student? 60% of respondents
129 said family enrichment would be the factor that would compel them to consider hosting an exchange student, 23%
130 said financial compensation, and 17% said geography of student would be the leading factor. This response was a
131 relief at first. As the analysis evolved, it became obvious that the family enrichment, for lack of training, is quite
132 one-sided. The families are not taking into consideration the grave importance of their influence abroad through
133 what they teach the exchange student about America. portion of exchange program planning. However, a more
134 viable solution would probably be an online, 30 minute required course before hosting an exchange student.

135 Q15: How much do you and/or your family enjoy family activities? 52% of respondents said their family
136 enjoys family activities at an average level, 43% said above average level, and 5% showed a below average level
137 of enjoyment when it comes to family activities. A good counter balance to the low cultural outings rating.

138 Q16: How likely are you to keep in contact with the exchange student once they are back in their country
139 of origin? 67% of respondents said they would somewhat likely stay in contact with the exchange student once
140 back in their (the student's) country of origin, 24% said extremely likely, 9% neither likely nor unlikely. This is
141 an easy gateway of long-term engagement in each other's cultures and current binational sentiments.

142 **8 b) Questions 17-19:**

143 Open-ended statements (abbreviated) Q17: Describe your family 1. We are a fun, loving family of 4, very involved
144 with baseball. 2. We are loving, respectful, and good members of the community. Faith is an integral part of our
145 lives. 3. My family is loving and hard working. 4. We enjoy other cultures, family, friends, and the outdoors. 5.
146 We love experiencing new cultures through food and traveling to different countries. 6. My family is busy, but
147 happy. 7. Loving, generous, and kind. 8. We are a family of 5. We enjoy local adventures, like hiking, camping,
148 and trying new things. We are involved in the community through Boy Scouts of America and various sports
149 teams. 9. My family consists of my husband, two adult daughters, and me. I really enjoy their company, energy,
150 enthusiasm, and conversations. 10. Fun, friendly, active and God Centered. We love food and music. 11. Our
151 family consists of two loving moms and one 13-year-old daughter. We are fun-loving, open-minded people, and
152 we love new experiences. 12. Fun, kind, giving, outgoing, and loving. 13. Active, busy, noisy, multigenerational
153 household. We enjoy sports. We love animals so we have a house full. Saxophone playing, random singing, video
154 games, computer playing, and working out teenagers. 14. My family is kind, generous, and open-minded. 15.
155 Our family is diverse not only in ethnicity but age span of kids. We are warm and inviting to people and love
156 to share experiences together and with the people we love. We are loud, passionate, and adventurous. We are
157 committed and hardworking. We love people! 16. Adventurous, hungry for new experiences, curious. 17. I
158 would consider our family to be steadfast, loving, caring and supportive. I would also consider our family to be
159 somewhat personality eclectic.

10 D) THE OUTSPOKEN OUTLIER BOX 1

160 Everyone is so different and we definitely have differing views. Our approaches to communication and conflict
161 resolutions can vary. 18. We are a typical hard-working blue-collar family. 19. My family consists of my husband,
162 two teenage kids, and myself. We are a close family with similar interests. We enjoy day trips to the beach,
163 taking hikes, and playing sports together. We value education, family, friends, and faith. 20. My family is very
164 small, we are very close. 21. I'm married with 3 sons.

165 I was surprised at the level of detail from these responses. Reoccurring themes are fun, loving, outdoor
166 activities, and conversations. All these are great qualities for homestay hosts.

167 9 Q18: What benefits do you think you would extract from 168 hosting an exchange student?

169 1. Gaining insight to other cultures and meeting new people. 2. Friendship and cultural exchange with someone
170 from another culture. 3. It would teach us about other cultures. 4. Cultural enrichment for us, and for the
171 students we would be hosting. 5. When I was young, my parents hosted exchange students. It was an amazing
172 experience to meet new people and learn about different cultures. In high school, I was fortunate enough to become
173 an exchange student in Japan. I had an awesome experience and met so many people! I would recommend it
174 to all. 6. To learn about another culture, to provide a safe place for a potentially vulnerable person to stay in
175 a country foreign to him/her/them, and to be ambassadors for our country and culture. 7. Teaching them our
176 American life. 8. In my case, I would get someone from France so I could practice my French. 9. Sharing with
177 an international community. 10. My family would love to learn about new cultures. 11. The benefits I see are
178 two-fold: To be able to learn about other cultures in a very personal way and to be able to offer the opportunity
179 for students from abroad to know the beauty and diversity of our beloved city/state. 12. Learn a new culture, a
180 new language and explore new foods. 13. Cultural understanding and appreciation. 14. Learning about another
181 culture and different traditions.

182 15. Sharing our American culture from our mixed family's perspective. 16. I have hosted homestay students
183 from China. I really loved doing it. The students were always great. I enjoyed cooking for them, taking them
184 shopping and site-seeing. 17. Who knows perhaps you can make a lifelong connection with this person and by
185 doing so, that would definitely be a benefit. 18. To learn more about another person and their culture. 19. I
186 learned about the Chinese, Korean, and Middle Eastern cultures. The students taught me about their spiritual
187 beliefs and their foods. 20. We have hosted before. We introduced them to the things around our community
188 that we love so much. 21. The host family can learn about the exchange student's country and customs and can
189 share their customs with the student.

190 Out of 21 responses to this question, 10 vaguely touch on the cultural effect the host family might have on the
191 exchange student. For example, cultural enrichment for the exchange student (4), being ambassadors of sorts
192 (??), teaching them our American life (7), sharing with the international community (9), granting them an
193 opportunity to see the beauty of our state (11), cultural understanding and appreciation of both parties (13), or
194 fostering a life-long connection (17).

195 Q19: What sacrifices do you think you would have to make when hosting an exchange student? 1. Privacy. 2.
196 The biggest sacrifice would be privacy. 3. Time and finances would also be a factor. 4. Maybe time. 5. Moving
197 things out of one of our rooms to make space. 6. Space. 7. Space and time. 8. Getting to know them and helping
198 them feel comfortable in their new environment. 9. Space and open-mindedness. 10. Changing our schedule
199 would be a sacrifice. 11. Privacy. 12. Sacrifice privacy and time. ??) Question 20 Q20: Exchange experiences
200 can improve U.S. public opinion in the student's country of origin. 50% of respondents strongly agreed with this
201 statement, 35% somewhat agreed, 15% neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree and strongly disagree
202 showed a 0% response.

203 I strategically asked this question last so I could quantify the respondents' reaction to the realization that
204 homestay interactions are important in U.S. endeavors to improve global opinion.

205 10 d) The outspoken outlier Box 1

206 I am a single mom who has raised three children. We identify as a black/African American family deeply rooted
207 in California. Coming into my house you will see family photos, lots of books, artwork on the walls from black
208 artists that depict black people, and pets. We live by equity and inclusion of ALL people. Humanity is the
209 core of how the children were raised and how we all live. I work as a corporate executive. I have traveled
210 all over the US and internationally. There is tremendous value in traveling to different countries, so I see the
211 benefit of exchange. It allows for families to learn about other cultures as well as the student to learn about not
212 only American culture, but also black American culture if they were to stay with a family like ours. In some
213 instances, as a black family, our dinner conversation may be a little different than non-black families because our
214 day-to-day experiences and exposures are going to be different. Other than that, we are a regular family that
215 agrees, disagrees, laughs, plays, studies, and many other things that families do. They get to be immersed in the
216 language and culture of an urban American family.

217 I see very little sacrifice in having an exchange student.

218 Personal Feedback on Student Exchange Program: We had an exchange student from Germany who was
219 welcomed into the family with open arms. The young lady really struggled in getting comfortable. She didn't

220 want to socialize with us in the evening and spent most of her time in the room. I had a conversation with my
221 daughter to try to get more insight. It became evident to me that the lady was uncomfortable because she was
222 with a black family. I know that Germany is not a diverse country and different ethnicities are not prevalent
223 in the country. Understandably, the program contact would not disclose the race or ethnicity to an exchange
224 student, but maybe they should have. The young lady requested to leave our home. I know my daughter may
225 have had certain feelings about that, but I am certain she never knew why. I did not share my thoughts with my
226 daughter.

227 I am not sure if a black family as a host for exchange students is popular, but I would suspect not. I would
228 suspect that most exchange students come from families with money and I would also suspect that most exchange
229 students are from European countries or Asian countries. There are many assumptions that I have made based
230 on our personal experience and I would love to see data that eliminates my assumptions. It would be great to
231 see more black families in the exchange student program that can host non-black students who feel comfortable
232 enough to stay with such a family in order to dispel some of the racist beliefs that non-Americans have about
233 black American families.

234 **11 III.**

235 **12 Final Evaluation analysis and Recommendations**

236 Taking every response into consideration, be it multiple choice, open-ended, or the outlier, the pressing observation
237 gathered from this survey was the general prospective homestay host's lack of knowledge regarding their integral
238 participation in citizen diplomacy. The central recommendation concluded from the survey's results would be the
239 implementation of prospective homestay host training by a team of experts by whom? and longitudinal study
240 types of measuring success in the homestay piece of the exchange student's experience in the United States. A
241 recent study on homestay training, "Homework before hosting: the importance of host-training for sustainable
242 tourism development," found the biggest challenge to be that "hosts do not have the skills and knowledge for the
243 purpose of the homestay concept ... this challenge could be overcome by host-training to a large extent." ?? When
244 it comes to comprehensive prospective homestay evaluations, public diplomacy practitioners walk in uncharted
245 waters. Nevertheless, these types of evaluations are crucial in order for exchanges to have successful short-term,
246 intermediate, and long-term outcomes. I came across a very straightforward theory of change illustration in an
247 article for the Council of American Ambassadors website, a Spectrum of PD objectives with realistic timescale:
248 8

249 **13 Figure 1**

250 This TOC depicts exactly what my argument lays out. The results of the "Possible Homestay Survey" indicate
251 favorable levels of people-to-people contact within their family units and communities. These groundzero practices
252 are often more trustworthy than the PD central offices, according to the council of American Ambassadors. 9

253 A very high percentage of respondents in this survey thought that attendance in to workshops would indeed,
254 improve exchange practices. This leads me to think that online training would even be more of a viable practicum
255 to propose to homestay families. In fact, I should have formatted the question as online training instead of
256 workshops being that "today, three quarters of Americans have broadband internet service at home, They can
257 be easily emulated in an exchange, once the homestay host is properly trained and becomes 'aware' of the
258 civilian diplomacy task ahead. With ongoing training, PD practitioners would implement longitudinal measures
259 to ensure that 'interest' in the to stay engaged with the global community through exchanges is active, alive,
260 and well. The "Possible Homestay Families" survey also shows that they would likely keep contact with the
261 prospective exchange student, another great bit of raw material to train, measure, and gain successful global
262 dividends. In addition, new exchanges and ongoing evaluations will aid in long-term attitude shifts, behavioral
263 shifts, and the all-desired call to action in which homestays are completely immersed in civilian diplomacy. These
264 factors further strengthen my argument that with proper training, the homestay family will add to their civilian
265 diplomacy tool box and enhance global opinion about American values. Are you saying that there usually is
266 no training? 10 Financial compensation seemed to be the least compelling factor when considering becoming a
267 and that the current pandemic has allowed for digital engagement to be that much more evolved. ?? Council
268 of American Ambassadors 10 Demographics of Internet and Home Broadband Usage in the United States | Pew
269 Research Center homestay family. However, an article about Australian homestays, "International education:
270 homestay theory versus practice," posits that in essence, running a homestay is running a business and as such,
271 "it is their (the homestay's) responsibility to ensure that they are adequately trained in areas of cross-cultural
272 communication and conflict management." ??1 Contrasting the results against my initial hypothesis, I stand by
273 my belief that training prospective homestays should not be neglected because it benefits not only the homestay
274 family and the exchange student in question, but also the civilian diplomacy practices Looking back at my survey
275 questions, I should have considered asking how the homestay would manage uncomfortable conversations and/or
276 cultural differences with an exchange student. This could have shed some light on, not only how to diffuse these
277 scenarios but, how to elevate tense conversations that can potentially turn into insightful moments that mark the
278 exchange student's perceptions of American values. On that note, training homestay families about this business

13 FIGURE 1

279 transaction can be a relevant motivator to join future training and longitudinal measuring in order to tackle these
280 kinds of complex, cross-cultural issues and turn them into successful cultural diplomacy.

281 Volume XXI Issue IV Version I I would be remiss not to touch on the survey's outspoken outlier. This homestay
282 would have served well from pre-hosting training unclear. By the openended responses, I can tell this which? is a
283 competent, inclusive, engaging, charismatic, enthusiastic, and curious family. The fact that it is a black-American
284 family should have added to the German exchange student's American experience. Lack of training on both sides
285 is likely to blame for the debacle. What a missed opportunity! It would be interesting to, in the near future, train
286 a small focus group, two or three black-American homestays, and measure their success pre and post hosting an
287 exchange. Long-term success would be much harder to measure but worth while exploring. My name is Martha
288 Falencik. I am a Masters of Public Diplomacy student at the University of Southern California, Annenberg
289 School of Communication and Journalism. I covet your participation in an evaluation I am currently conducting
290 for a required course on "Public Diplomacy and Evaluation." Due to my experience as to many foreign exchange
291 students over the years, as well as my own opportunity to study abroad, I have developed a keen interest in
292 educational and cultural exchange programs. Through this survey, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of
293 the conditions that would make it more likely for families to consider hosting exchange students, as well as
294 better practices that would enhance the exchange students' experience in this country, hence their opinion about
295 American values. This ONLINE survey will take less than 10 minutes of your day. Below, please find the link
296 where you will answer 17 multiple choice questions and 3 open-ended ones. Please, keep in mind that this survey
will not reach further than my professor and that any of the information given is strictly confidential. ^{1 2 3 4}

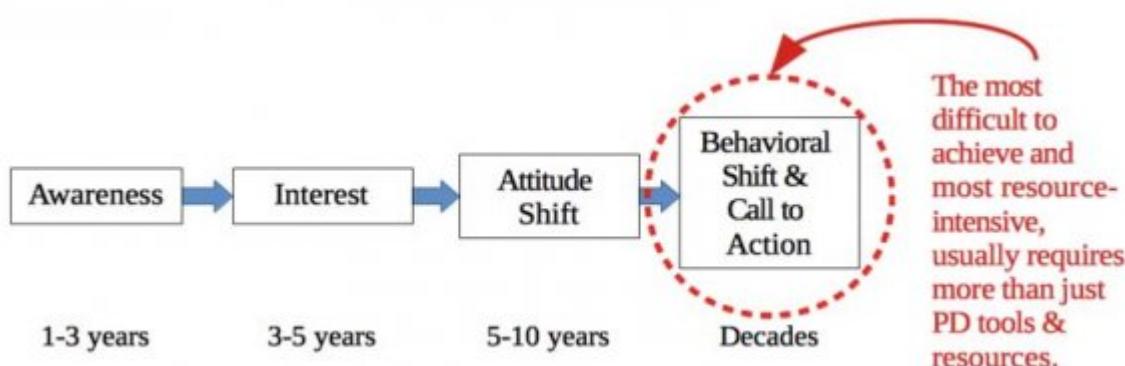


Figure 1:



Figure 2:



Figure 3:

297 5
298

¹Educational attainment in the United States -Wikipedia 6 55 Study Abroad Statistics [2021 Updated] (ivypanda.com)

²Evaluating Prospective Homestay Families in the U.S. and New Approaches to Further Enrich the Exchange Student's Opinion of America

³Homework before homestay: The importance of host-training for sustainable tourism development (diva-portal.org)

⁴RIC03173.doc (psu.edu)

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Volume XXI Issue IV Best regards,
Version I Martha Falencik
 Master of Public Diplomacy Candidate I 2021

[Note: 36()]

Figure 4:

299 What is your income level?

300 .1 ?

301 Less than \$49,999

302 ? \$50,000 - \$99,999

303 ? \$100,000 - \$149,999

304 ? \$150,000 - \$199,999

305 ? \$200,000 - \$249,000

306 ? \$250,000 or above

307 What is your highest level of education?

308 ? Less than high school

309 .2 ?

310 High school graduate

311 Have you studied abroad?

312 ? Yes

313 ? No

314 How much have you traveled abroad?

315 ? A great deal

316 What is your level of community engagement?

317 ? Far above average