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Can Cultural Awareness Help Minimize and Prevent Cross-Cultural
Conflict between Hosts and International Students?

Executive Summary

Discovering the effect one's cultural awareness can have on one's ability to resolve cross-cultural conflict is extremely beneficial as it has the potential to help develop future cross-cultural conflict prevention methods. If one's level of cultural awareness can be linked to one's ability to prevent conflict between cultures, then it is plausible that the more culturally aware we are as a globe, the less likely we are to get into international conflict.

A project was proposed to British Study Centres in Brighton, England. The aim of the project was to see if a host's level of cultural awareness affected their perceived ability to resolve and/or prevent conflict with their foreign students. British Study Centres is an international language school offering English as a Second Language courses to foreign students from all over the world. It is an award winning and internationally recognized language school, having been awarded the 'Star' English Language School Europe award in 2010. Available from the British Study Centre's website, <http://www.british-study.com/about-us.php>. In addition to offering English courses, British Study Centres also offers two types of accommodation to enrolled students: student houses and home-stay accommodation. Home-stay accommodation involves students being placed with a host in the Brighton area. British Study Centres in Brighton has two Accommodation Officers (the researcher among them) whose job description includes the recruitment of hosts and the placement of students into their requested accommodation. The Accommodation Officers are also on hand to provide any support to students and hosts and are responsible for resolving any conflict that might arise between them. Due to the number of cross-cultural interactions, British Study Centres was an appropriate environment to conduct a project of this type.

This project questioned British Study Centres' hosts about their level of cultural awareness and their perceived ability to prevent and resolve any cross-cultural conflict with their foreign students. This project is extremely valuable as it not only provides first hand

data but also gives insight into the unique cross-cultural relationship between host and student. This type of research is necessary and relevant as trust across borders and between nationalities is becoming more and more crucial in today's world. As "we seem to be entering an age demanding more trust within organizations, between organizations, and in international affairs" (Das, 2004. p 86), there needs to be a better awareness of not only how to produce trust, but also how to maintain it across cultures.

A questionnaire was sent to all the hosts who had accommodated a British Study Centres student in the last 12 months. Each host received a package in the mail that included the Questionnaire (Appendix 2), a Letter of Implied Consent (Appendix 3), the outline of the project, an Invitation to Participate (Appendix 4) and a labeled return envelope. The hosts were given instructions to return all questionnaires to British Study Centres anonymously. The researcher mailed out 150 questionnaire packages of which 42 were returned (a 28% return rate). The data collected from the returned questionnaires represented a large range of viewpoints and experiences. Many hosts were open about their past hosting experiences and the struggles they encountered having foreign students in their home. The data was placed into a spreadsheet so that responses to each question could be appropriately compared to one another.

On average, respondents reported having more than six years experience and hosting for over 30 students. This highlighted that the hosts who chose to participate in this project tended to be some of the more experienced hosts at British Study Centres. Respondents also reported a high level of enjoyment, with 92% of hosts reporting they enjoyed hosting foreign students. This result indicated that although hosting is done primarily for money, hosts seem to enjoy having foreign students in their homes. Results also indicated that 59% of participants claimed they spoke another language. This is much higher than the average

population of England, as according to the European Commission's report, only 18% of the population of the UK spoke two languages (2006, p. 9).

All respondents reported that they had travelled abroad before. Furthermore, 33% of hosts said that they had not studied any culture before but felt that they had learned some sort of cultural awareness through their travels. Respondents were questioned as to whether they trusted one culture more than another. A high 71% said that they did not trust any culture over another. The Arabian culture was the only culture to be repeatedly identified as problematic to hosts. Many hosts reported never having hosted for an Arabian student before, but felt that it would be too difficult due to cultural differences and therefore chose not to host them. This brings to light that past experiences may not have created mistrust between hosts and Arabian students, but a perceived difference in values and cultural norms created the mistrust. Although, a few of those hosts could not pinpoint occasions when it did, the majority agreed that knowing more about a certain culture could aid in the prevention and/or resolution of cross-cultural conflict between themselves and their foreign students. Respondents also highlighted that there may not be a singular approach to identifying cross-cultural conflict, as countless hosts said it was impossible to stereotype a culture as each student was different and brought their own array of difficulties and differences.

Both groups in question could potentially be labelled as more culturally aware than the average population. Also, the setting in which this study took place boasts support and advice from an award winning international language school. These two bias' need to be taken into account. Overall, this project identified a link between cultural awareness and the ability to prevent and/or resolve cross-cultural conflict in the setting of hosts accommodating foreign students.

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Introduction

This project centres on discovering if there is a link between a host's level of cultural knowledge and a host's ability to resolve and prevent cross-cultural conflict. This project questioned British Study Centres' hosts, who accommodate foreign students in their homes, about their level of cultural awareness and their perceived ability to resolve and prevent cross-cultural conflict with their foreign students. The basis of this project was to survey a group of hosts about their level of cultural awareness, if it is linked to their perceived ability to resolve conflict with other cultures and if this influences their level of trust of certain cultures.

This type of research is necessary and relevant as trust across borders and between nationalities is becoming more and more crucial in today's world. As "we seem to be entering an age demanding more trust within organizations, between organizations, and in international affairs" (Das, 2004. p 86), there needs to be a better awareness of not only how to produce trust, but also how to maintain it across cultures. Through the small sample of current hosts working for British Study Centres in Brighton, England, the aim of this project was to seek some insight into whether a host's level of cultural awareness is linked to a host's perceived ability to resolve conflict.

This project was completed through British Study Centres in Brighton, England. British Study Centres is a recognized and award-winning international language school, boasting students from an array of different countries. British Study Centres has a reputation for high levels of academic and accommodation standards. However, it experiences occasional conflict between the recruited hosts and their international students. This project was proposed to British Study Centres to give the school some insight into why conflict between these groups may arise and also if hosts' level of cultural awareness has any effect on lowering levels of cross-cultural conflict between host and student.

This report begins by presenting appropriate background of the project, followed by a literature review. The reasoning, methodology and significance of the project are then outlined. The findings are then presented, followed by a discussion of the results and recommendations.

Background

British Study Centres was founded in the 1930's and has since grown into four separate schools across England, located in Brighton, Bournemouth, Oxford and London. Each school is an accredited educational institution, only employing trained and experienced English as a Second Language teachers. British Study Centres' boasts not only excellent staff, but is also recognized world wide as a leading language school, winning the 'Star' English Language School Europe award in 2010. Available from British Study Centres web site, <http://www.british-study.com/about-us.php>. Students range from all over the world and all staff at British Study Centres promote cultural sensitivity and understand the value of such an internationally diverse school.

At British Study Centres Brighton there are two Accommodation & Welfare Officers, the researcher among them. Their job description includes taking care of students' welfare (in England welfare refers to one's well being and happiness) and arranging students' accommodation. Two types of accommodation are available at British Study Centres for enrolled students: student houses and home stays. Home stay involves students living with a registered British Study Centres host.

Previous academic studies have been conducted around home stay accommodation and the cross cultural conflict involved. These studies, such as Clashing Cultures, A Model of International Student Conflict (Ellen 2007) provide insight into the cross-cultural dimension of the conflict that can arise in the home between host and student. Studies, such as Culture

and Migration: Psychological Trauma in Children and Adolescents (Wiese, 2010), mainly focus on children's struggles in adapting to life in another country. There is, however, a gap in the literature about hosts' viewpoints on cultural knowledge aiding in resolving cross-cultural conflict with their foreign students. There is limited information from the *hosts'* point of view about having international students in their homes and how they can best prepare for aiding and minimizing cross-cultural conflict.

As of April 2012 there were approximately 170 students enrolled at the British Student Centres Brighton, from a wide range of nationalities. Table 1 provides more details of the top ten nationalities in the school at that time.

Table 1: Top Ten Nationalities at British Study Centers Brighton as of April 2012

Nationality	Percentage of Students
South Korean	14%
Swiss	13%
Brazilian	11%
Spanish	7%
French	6%
Turkish	6%
Italian	6%
Japanese	6%
Columbian	5%
Kuwaiti	3%

Source: <http://www.british-study.com/adults/english-language-schools/brighton/>

Of the two types of accommodation offered at British Study Centres, approximately 25% of students who request accommodation stay in student houses, while the remaining approximate 75% are in home-stay. The accommodation team works to match up enrolled students with the type of accommodation requested prior to their arrival in England. The accommodation team is constantly recruiting new hosts and all potential hosts are interviewed and their homes inspected before being placed on the register of current hosts.

There is a strict procedure for recruiting hosts and all potential hosts must provide substantial evidence that their home is a safe environment (Gas Safety Certificates and proof of smoke and fire alarms in the home), as well as pass an interview with an Accommodation Officer as to why they would be a responsible host. The interview centres on potential hosts' experience with other cultures and their knowledge of living or working with people who are not fluent in English, their current home life situation and their reasoning for hosting foreign students. It is ultimately the Accommodation Officer's decision whether or not to employ a host, however, new hosts do not receive any official training in how to host foreign students.

The accommodation team is also responsible for resolving and mitigating any conflict reported to them by students and hosts. This involves the accommodation team working very closely with hosts to support and assist them with any conflict they experience while hosting foreign students. There is also a 24 hour emergency phone number available for students and hosts.

Literature Review

The terms conflict, culture and trust influence one's basic understanding of cross-cultural dispute resolution. A better comprehension of their meanings, definitions and impact on one another will aid in better understanding of the complexity of this project. There are numerous academic materials that highlight the impact culture has on the ability to trust others (Bruer, McDermott, 2011; Wu, Jenai & Laws, 2007).

Trust, having been defined within numerous contexts, has abundant explanations to its necessity and complexity. Ranging from, "an expectation of beneficent treatment from others" (Yuki, Maddux, Brewer & Takemura 2005, p. 50), to being involved in "future expectations" and only "under conditions of risk" (Das, 2004, p. 87), the interpretation of trust is varied and complex. Defining trust has posed worldwide debates and continues to lack a concrete, universal definition as it is a concept that is difficult to describe. For the purpose

of this research, trust is defined as “an actor’s willingness to place something valued under another actor’s control” (Hoffman, 2006, p. 17). This definition is used as it sheds light on the complexity and vulnerability of placing something of value into the hands of another. This definition is also appropriate for this project as it highlights the unspoken trust between hosts and the students. Hosts are willingly opening their home to strangers, while the students trust their host to accommodate and protect them in the home. Both parties are willingly placing their trust in the other’s hands; a rare agreement made between strangers.

Conflict can be referred to as the “disagreements and frictions among the team members generated by perceived incompatibilities or divergence in perceptions, expectations and opinions” (Curseu & Schruijer, 2010, p. 66), or more simply put, as “a difference within a person or between two or more people that touches them in a significant way” (LeBaron & Pillay, 2006, p. 12). Conflict is visible in many dimensions, can affect numerous aspects of daily life and can have varying degrees of intensity. Seen in international news reports and daily life in some countries, cross-cultural misunderstandings are plentiful and frequent. Conflict, present between countless nations for an array of reasons, can have a highly damaging effect on the trust process. Conflict, reputation and history are all linked and can have a negative effect on the trust process preventing peaceful and meaningful relations from moving forward.

Culture, another concept difficult to define, infiltrates countless aspects of human daily life and routine. We are all influenced by the culture we live in as culture surrounds us, shapes our decisions and can dictate many of our actions and reactions. Culture can therefore be defined in numerous contexts and from an array of viewpoints, forcing its definition to be continuously argued worldwide. However, for the purpose of this paper, culture will be defined as, “the shared, often unspoken understandings in a group”(LeBaron & Pillay 2006, p. 14). This definition is appropriate for this type of research as it describes the idea of a

‘group’ as a culture and labels how most cultural norms are often unspoken and learned over time. A more poetic take on the power of culture is how “it is the underground rivers of meaning-making, the places where we make choices about what matters and how that connects us to other in the groups to which we belong” (LeBaron & Pillay 2006, p. 14). Studying a certain culture’s natural reactions or viewpoints of conflict gives insight into the cultural norms and understandings of the group. This brings to light how, at times, the reasons behind cross-cultural conflict can be lost on those involved, unless they are aware of the cultural norms of the parties.

The link between conflict and culture is well researched as, “culture is essential to an understanding of conflict, since culture is a part of every relationship and conflict only arises in relationships. Since each of us has multiple cultural identities, all conflicts have cultural components” (LeBaron & Pillay, 2006, p. 5). Due to the impact and influence culture has on our daily life, the conflict that can arise from two opposing cultures can be extremely dramatic and unsettling.

Cultural misunderstandings, stemming from a lack of knowledge or openness to strangeness and difference, can result in conflict and mutual distrust. Therefore, when examining trust across cultural borders, it can be assumed that nations similar in culture, or who share cultural understandings, are more likely to trust one another and avoid conflict. As mentioned above, the need to trust other nations and rely on international support is becoming more of a necessity in today’s world, and a mandatory risk to undertake. Gormley-Heenan and Macginty point out how security is a high concern for nations, and therefore mutual trust between nations may be done for selfish, protective reasons. Trust across borders and through cross-cultural dimensions can be difficult to attain, precarious to maintain and therefore too fragile to abuse.

Alongside cross cultural conflict, conflicts between opposing personalities are plentiful, frequent and at times, independent of cultural differences. Avruch (2003) warns of over-emphasising cultural differences in conflict, arguing how “overvaluing cultural impacts can be deleterious for the weaker, disempowered, or subordinate parties in the conflict or dispute”(p.366). On the other hand, personality, Triandis and Suh (2002) argue, “is shaped by both genetic and environmental influences. Among the most important of the latter are cultural differences” (p.135). Culture and personality are inevitably intertwined in some fashion as although “biological factors have an important role in shaping personality, they do not account for most of the variance. Ecology, among other factors, shapes the culture, which in turn shapes the socialization patterns, which shape some of the variance of personality” (Triandis & Suh, 2002, p.135). Therefore, it is fair to say that culture has the potential to infiltrate the majority of conflicts, those between opposing personalities and cultural beliefs.

If culture can potentially effect and/or influence conflict, then being more aware of cultural differences may hold tremendous benefits. Academics have studied the benefits of being more culturally aware in order to avoid cultural misunderstandings and cross cultural conflict. Olk (2003) describes a study of “how far the knowledge of British culture seemed to affect the translation performance of German degree-level students of English” (p.167). The article outlines the importance of cultural knowledge in translating languages as some vocabulary can hold different meanings in different cultures. The students in this study, all of whom were German, were asked to translate an English article into German. Olk’s study reported that there were numerous misunderstandings and false assumptions on the part of the German students as they did not fully understand the cultural impact some English words such as ‘class’ holds in English society. The conclusion of this study reported that “insufficient cultural knowledge led to factually incorrect solutions” (Olk, 2003, p. 171), proving that cultural knowledge can have an effect on decreasing cultural misunderstandings.

Furthermore, in the context of doing business with clients abroad, Gabriel (2012) argues, “working in different countries or dealing with visiting overseas clients requires building a specialized set of skills. Adapting to the overseas client’s technical requirements can be achieved by simple researching the country’s climate, culture, technical sophistication, etc” (p.70). Gabriel continues by suggesting that “when dealing with a new culture, it is advisable to watch and develop an understanding of preferences, interests and what is forbidden” (p.70), in order to better relations. By reviewing Olk and Gabriel’s articles, it can be suggested that the more knowledge one has of a specific culture, the less likely they are to have any cultural misunderstandings. Although this statement has not been fully verified, both these articles support the argument that there is a link between cultural awareness and cross-cultural communication. Freebairn (2011) argues “that there are substantial differences in culture around the world, and the best way to understand them is to spend time working within them, to live a day as they do” (p. 10).

If cultural awareness potentially could aid in better communication between nations, then there is a need for research to be done on how best one can gain such awareness. Several academics have emphasized travel as more than just a vacation or a hobby, but as a path to explore and learn about difference cultures and potentially gain a different perspective on the world. Rick Steves, a travel writer, presents a lecture entitled ‘Travel as a Political Act, Part II: Going from Casual Tourist to Global Citizen’. Forest (2009) reviewed his lecture and commented how Steves “provides many examples of how travel can broaden one’s mind, whether challenging or confirming preset ideas” and emphasizes how Steves challenges fellow Americans to travel abroad more, “arguing for the importance of seeing things for oneself” (p. 115). Furthermore, Morgan (1996), through a review of four different travel books, summarizes how “all four books consider travel less as a physical act, and more as a culture with its own language, literatures, and ways of creating meaning” (p. 190-191). Both

of these reviews, Forest and Morgan, highlight the value of travel as a means of broadening the mind and learning about cultural differences. Solomons (1996) emphasizes that travel is not only for enjoyment but can also provide the traveller with a “wide knowledge of other countries’ cultures, history, economy, politics, education and social systems” (p. 1).

Although not a proven method of gaining cultural knowledge, travel is a potential gateway for cultural knowledge to spread and assist in decreasing cultural misunderstandings.

Communication has been linked to preventing conflict in numerous different settings. Najafbagy (2008), emphasizes how miscommunication between cultures can create conflict while “honest and effective communication based on cultural understanding, would contribute positively to the solution of political, economic and social problems among nations” (p.146). Najafbagy further emphasizes the need for cultural understanding and effective communication between nations in order to prevent conflict. This bridge between cultural understanding and the prevention of cross cultural conflict is extremely valuable as it highlights the need for better cultural understanding and more effective communication between cultures.

Relevant Theory

The use of theory validates the research and literature review data, as it explains human understanding and behaviour within multiple contexts and sheds light on the reasoning and complexity of the relationship between trust, conflict and culture.

There are many theories as to the impact opposing cultures have on the ability to trust. One theory is *Yamagishi’s structural theory of trust*, which concludes, that “key cultural differences are believed to influence the willingness to trust strangers”, and that “regional factors account for cross-cultural difference in the dynamics of trust and

commitment” (Kuwabara, Willer, Macy, Mashima, Terri, & Yamagishi, 2007. p. 462) ¹. This seems to suggest that cultures that are similar to one another are more likely to trust one another.

A *social constructionist* understanding of conflict would suggest that the human race attaches emotion and consequences to behaviour; therefore whilst we are living in a socially constructed world, all conflict is socially created (Lederach, 1995). A culture dictates a group’s values, norms and attitudes. These are culturally accepted and influence how a group views not only conflict, but also trust.

In the context of a comparison of cross-cultural trust between Japanese and Americans, Kuwabara (2007) applies the *social identity theory* by offering;

A cognitive explanation for difference in trust and trustworthiness.... based on two behavioral assumptions. First, actors have a cognitive need to reduce the complexity of the perceived environment by classifying together objects that are sufficiently similar, including self and others. Hence, we tend to overlook in-group differences while exaggerating out-group differences. Second, social identity theory posits a need to affirm self-esteem by attributing positive qualities to the member of the group with which once identifies. (p. 463)

Social identity theory explains human’s inclination to protect oneself by interacting with those similar to them (Piotrowski 2010). Social psychology explains our need to socially identify with a culture and the impact it has on our worldview of others and ourselves. This links to the application of the *cultural and behavioural theory* through explaining the impact

¹ The conclusions surrounding Yamagishi’s structural theory of trust have limitations as they were created in the context of an experiment using a “Web-based ‘virtual lab’, to study trust and trustworthiness between Japanese and America in real-time interactions” (Kuwabara, Willer, Macy, Mashima, Terri, & Yamagishi, 2007. p 466), and need to be taken in this context and not used to explain all theories of trust within every relationship.

culture can have on a society and the explanation of people being creatures of habit and ritual. We behave as our culture expects us to, because if we choose to violate cultural norms and values, we will be outcasts and less likely to be trusted within that culture. This need for protection and trust is natural and essential in human life.

Project Outline and Reasoning

Discovering the effect one's cultural awareness can have on one's ability to resolve cross-cultural conflict is extremely beneficial as it can potentially help develop future cross-cultural conflict prevention methods. If one's level of cultural awareness can be linked to one's ability to prevent conflict between cultures, then it is plausible that the more culturally aware we are as a globe, the less likely we are to get into international conflict. This project was created as there seems to be a constant need for new conflict prevention methods, especially between two cultures. Countless wars have been, and still are, fought between nations and governments, many focusing on the negative aspects of cultural differences. If we can gain a little insight into what can be done to prevent such conflict, then there may be some hope for international peace and understanding. Although completed on a small scale, this project holds huge value, as it is firsthand data and insight into the potential benefits of cultural awareness.

This project was created to not only aid British Study Centres in better understanding the problems it is encountering between hosts and foreign students, but also to enrich the academic field of dispute resolution. This project examines the concepts of conflict, culture and trust through a unique approach of questioning British hosts who have lived with foreign students. The findings of this project have been collected via the British Study Centres environment so all conclusions need to be viewed in that context.

Methodology

This project was completed through a mixed method research paradigm. A mixed methods approach is the combination of both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Data is collected and analysed through quantitative methods, followed by a qualitative analysis. This paradigm is appropriate for this type of research as collecting solely quantitative or qualitative data would not do any justice to the topic at hand. The uniqueness of this project is that it not only asks hosts how they feel, but goes further by examining why hosts may be feeling that way. As Terrell (2012) phrases it, “Quantitative tell us ‘if’; qualitative tells us ‘how or why’” (p.258).

The University of Victoria has approved the ethics of this project. An application was sent to the Ethics Board outlining the project’s purpose, logistics, limitations and significance. Please see Appendix 1 for the approval certificate.

The questionnaire (Appendix 2) had a total of 20 questions. Questions 1 through 18 were developed with the aim of identifying respondents’ level of experience (how long they had hosted for, how many students they had accommodated for), their viewpoints on the terms conflict, culture and trust (hosts were asked to not only define the terms but also to comment on their link to one another) and their level of cultural awareness (travel experience, languages spoken, views on other cultures). Questions 19 and 20 were identified to hosts as questions that British Study Centres’ staff were able to review. These questions focused more on specific feedback to the school about procedures. All questions were developed in hopes of gaining insight into what common misconceptions or struggles hosts encounter whilst having a foreign student in their home. Hosts hopefully also gained some self-reflection on their own cultural awareness and how that might affect their ability to resolve conflict with a student from another culture.

Hosts that had accommodated a British Study Centres' student in the last 12 months (150 total) received a questionnaire package, which included the questionnaire, the Letter of Implied Consent (Appendix 3), an outline of the project, the Invitation to Participant (Appendix 4) and a paid return envelope. The mailing addresses of hosts are stored in British Study Centres files and Mr. John Veale, the Director of the School, granted permission of their use for this project. Hosts were also given contact details for all parties involved in the research (Researcher, Academic Supervisor, Project Client, and the University of Victoria Ethics Board), and were informed that they were able to question or contact any of them at any time during the duration of the project.

The data was analysed via a spreadsheet of all respondents' answers. Each question was given a column and answers to that specific question were compared with one another. The questionnaire posed as many open-ended questions as possible and hosts were encouraged to elaborate on their answers. The structure and design of the anonymous questionnaires hoped to encourage and appeal to hosts to be honest and open about their cultural views. Some hosts did not answer all the questions, while others referred back to their previous remarks in the questionnaire. After the data from a questionnaire was placed into the spreadsheet, the questionnaire was shredded to avoid any confidential issues.

Significance

Research of this type is important because as seen through news reports, Internet and worldwide travel, our world is fast becoming more international and connected. In the hope of a more peaceful and understanding world, we need to discover and create new methods of overcoming cross-cultural conflict and mistrust between nations. This research project is a small, but useful window into the reasoning, development and possible solutions of cross-cultural conflict.

Academically, this project presents a valuable literature review of conflict, culture and trust as well as the benefits of cultural awareness and communication. Firsthand data collected from the questionnaires contains valuable insight into real life cross-cultural situations and possible insight into new dispute resolution methods.

British Study Centres also benefits from this project by gaining insight into their hosts' viewpoints on conflict, culture and trust. A further benefit to the hosts themselves is through personal self-reflection on their ability to resolve conflict and to voice what struggles they may by having hosting foreign students in their homes. This project was also able to determine the level of support British Student Centre's hosts perceive to have. Hosts were able to report any (negative or positive) feedback to British Study Centre anonymously, an avenue that has not previously been available to them.

This project is significant and valuable to the academic world and to British Study Centres as it aims to create discussion and surrounding the terms conflict, culture and trust as well as the benefits of cultural knowledge and communication.

Findings

The researcher mailed out 150 questionnaire packages of which 42 were returned (a 28% return rate). The data collected from the returned questionnaires represented a large range of viewpoints and experiences. Many hosts were open about their past hosting experiences and the struggles they encountered having foreign students in their homes. The data was placed into a spreadsheet so that responses to each question could be appropriately compared to one another. The following pages outline the results of the collected questionnaires.

The first few questions on the questionnaire centred on how long respondents had hosted foreign students, why they hosted and if they have enjoyed having foreign students in

their homes. The range of time respondents had hosted was from two months to 27 years. The median was four years and the mode three years. Table 2 provides more details.

Table 2: Number of years respondents had hosted for.

Number of Years Hosting	Respondents	
	Number	Percentage
Less than 1	3	7%
1 to 2	7	17%
2 to 3	4	10%
3 to 4	4	10%
4 to 5	4	10%
5 to 10	13	31%
10 to 15	3	7%
15 to 20	2	5%
More than 20	2	5%

The questionnaire did not ask hosts to distinguish between hosting for British Study Centres and for other language schools. Therefore, the results from this question indicate hosts' experience of having foreign students in their homes, not necessarily the length of their relationship with British Study Centres.

The next question asked hosts to recall how many students they had hosted in total. Again, this question did not specify only British Study Centres' students, but all students that hosts' had accommodated. Table 3 provides more details.

Table 3: Number of students respondents had hosted for

Number of Students Hosted	Respondents	
	Number	Percentage
1 to 5	4	10%
5 to 10	11	26%
10 to 20	8	19%
20 to 50	9	21%
More than 50	10	24%

Of the 42 respondents, 92% of participants said they enjoyed hosting. This percentage was calculated through a yes or no response. Hosts were also asked why they chose to have foreign students in their homes. A total of 33 of 42 (78%) responses mentioned that money was a factor for hosting.

Another result that came from the questionnaire was that 59% of participants claimed they spoke another language. This is much higher than the average population of the United Kingdom as according to the European Commission's report, only 18% of the population of the UK spoke two languages (2006, p. 9).

All 100% of respondents reported that they had travelled abroad before. Furthermore, 33% of hosts said that they had not studied any culture before, but felt that they had gained some sort of cultural awareness through their travels. One host commented that "the information (they) have comes from (their) travels and discussions with students and friends about their lives at home" even though they had not studied any particular culture. Another said that they "learn at least a little of the culture, traditions and try out local experiences" whenever they travel. (Please note that quotes by hosts were given anonymously therefore the source cannot be identified or named).

On a scale of zero to ten, participants were asked how much conflict arose with their foreign students (zero being no conflict and ten being a high level of conflict). Out of the 42 respondents, three hosts reported zero level of conflict, 20 reported only a one as their level of conflict and 12 reported a two or higher. The highest level of conflict was a five, of which two separate hosts reported. Table 4 provides more details.

Table 4: Reported level of conflict between hosts and their students

Reported Level of Conflict	Respondents	
	Number	Percentage
Less than 1	4	10%
1 to 2	25	60%
2 to 3	8	19%
3 to 4	2	5%

4 to 5	3	7%
5 to 10	0	0%

To put these results into context, hosts were asked to define the word ‘conflict’, and, 71% of hosts used negative words such as ‘disagreement’, ‘clash’, ‘argument’, ‘fight’ or ‘aggression’ to describe conflict. One host defined conflict as a “collision, disagreement or argument (that) occurs between the parties involved”. Another host referred to conflict specifically as “a clash of cultures - an absence of mutual respect, autocracy, lack of empathy”.

Respondents were questioned whether they trusted one culture more than another and 71% said that they did not trust any culture over another. Most specifically hosts (43%) replied with a simple ‘no’ when asked if they trusted a certain culture over another, however, others gave more insight into their reasoning. A few hosts (19%) reported that they trusted all their students until proven otherwise. However, a common reply from hosts was that it was not their culture that made a student untrustworthy but more their personality and their upbringing. Numerous hosts emphasized that personality and upbringing had a larger effect on conflict in the home than cultural differences. One host mentioned how they were “not sure if differences (were) cultural or just upbringing or a misunderstanding of the perimeters of the relationship”. Another host commented that “any conflict that has arisen has tended to be more about personality”.

When asked if hosts did not trust a certain culture, Eastern Europe was mentioned four times as a culture that was difficult to trust, with one host mentioning that “in the past (they) had problems with students from the eastern block of Europe. Stealing; this may have been learning behaviours from communist times”. Germany was mentioned twice and South America, China, France, Japan and Korea each mentioned once. One host, when responding to the question if culture ever influenced the conflict between host and students answered

“yes the French. Arrogant, disdainful and lazy. There is a reason why the English dislike the French”. These were one off responses, however, the Arabian culture was mentioned a total of seven times. One host reported that they had “not hosted any young men from strict Muslim countries and not likely to given that (they) fear culture clash could occur” while another said they had not experienced any conflict due to culture but “would anticipate conflict with some Arabic students”. Furthermore, one host reported:

Although this is a little unfair as it is purely theoretical rather than coming from our own experience, we don't host male Arab students mainly due to feedback from friends who host students too. We've been told they sometimes lie about smoking (re; say they don't but they do) plus some of their extra-curricular activities can only be called 'seedy' (and I am making a judgement here, I'm aware) by feedback from friends about how their male, Arabic students spend their time. Again, this is probably quite accepted behaviour... but we'd rather not condone it so chose to remove ourselves instead.

The majority of hosts who referred to the Arabian culture as a less trustworthy culture, referred to Arabian men specifically. The reasoning that hosts gave to specify Arabian men as less trustworthy than women, was due to Arabian men's views on gender equality. One host reported that “sometimes some Arabic students can be very dismissive of women”, while another noted that they had “one Arabic man who (she) found difficult as (she felt) he did not respect (her) as a single woman”. Another host reported that he/she does not host for “Iranian/Arab students because of their attitude to women”. Many responses from hosts did not give a complete picture as to how hosts came about their views, however, it is noteworthy that Arabian men are seen as catalysts to conflict arising in the home.

The research question that this project centres around asks if the transfer of cultural awareness can aid in the prevention and resolution of cross-cultural conflict. Hosts were

asked if they believe that the level of their cultural awareness could influence their ability to resolve and/or prevent cross-cultural conflict: 50% of hosts said yes, 26% said they were not sure, and 14% said no. Although the question was worded to provoke a yes or no response (with an explanation of the answer preferred), some hosts reported that they were unsure of their thoughts on the topic. When hosts were asked if they believe knowing more about another culture makes it easier to resolve conflict with a student from that culture, 45% of hosts said yes. Of the hosts that responded yes to this question, a common trend in their reasoning surrounded communication. Numerous hosts emphasised that the benefits of knowing more about another culture can help understand where their students were coming from, and can create empathy and more tolerance to cultural differences. One host answered: “Yes, it can do, as there is a better understanding of how other cultures live and therefore can empathise with differences between a student’s home and that in England”. Another host answered in a very similar fashion: “It certainly makes it easier to be more tolerant and to know how to approach discussion if you have some insight into a student’s culture; you are less likely to say the wrong thing or cause offence”. Whilst another host reported: “Yes, knowing the culture in a country and what they are used to can explain habits. One can then explain our culture and expectations”. Overall, of the 45% that responded yes to this question, the majority of explanations centred on better communication and conflict prevention.

There were however respondents (41%) that said that they were not sure in what capacity cultural awareness affected cross-cultural conflict. This can be summarized by one host’s response of: “Possibly!” Other respondents said that they agreed that cultural knowledge could aid in preventing conflict, however, they had never experienced it themselves. A small 14% of respondents said that they did not feel as though cultural awareness would help prevent cross-cultural conflict.

Discussion

On further review of the returned questionnaires, a few conclusions can be reached. Due to the 28% return rate, it is fair to say that hosts who chose to participate in this research may have had either a keen interest in the subject matter, a strong opinion on the questions asked or the need to provide feedback to British Study Centres. Another issue is that participants were informed that it would take about 30 to 40 minutes to fill out the questionnaire, making participation in this project time consuming. The returned questionnaires may only express the opinions and feedback from hosts who had the time to participate, had strong opinions on the subject matter or felt the need to give feedback. This needs to be taken into account when making broad conclusions on the data collected.

A bias that needs to be addressed is that the research was done in England. When analysing the data and constructing conclusions, the English culture needs to be taken into account. A leading member of the European Union, England is a very internationally aware country. All British citizens are able to live and work in any other European Union country at any time. This potentially increases the transfer of European students and travellers alike. As an international language school in England, British Study Centres works with the United Kingdom Border Agency to control the number of student visas that are awarded each year. British Study Centres is inspected by the United Kingdom Border Agency to check that all procedures are in place to allow Visa National students to study at the school. However, as mentioned above, if a student is a member of the European Union, no visa is required to enter, live or study in the United Kingdom. This union of countries allows for an easier flow of travellers between borders. Respondents of this project were all residents of England, and therefore according to the above statement, may be more exposed to travellers and foreign students. This bias needs to be taken into account when analyzing the data about participant's viewpoints on foreign students in their homes.

As seen in the findings, 31% of respondents had reportedly hosted for 5-10 years and 24% had hosted more than 50 students in total. These are quite high results and may indicate that the hosts who chose to participate in this project tended to be some of the more experienced hosts at British Study Centres. Along the same lines, the high level of enjoyment reported (92% of hosts reported enjoying hosting foreign students) indicates that although hosting is done primarily for money purposes hosts seem to enjoy having foreign students in their homes. If the majority of participants are happy, it can be anticipated that they may not have experienced a great deal of negative conflict during their years as a host. This is important as much of the questionnaire centres on the concepts of conflict and trust. If participants are 92% happy with their students, respondents may not give a full spectrum of hosts' problems.

The majority of respondents (78%) reported that they hosted as a means of remuneration. Therefore, the majority of hosts are not taking in students for the sole factor of enjoyment but in order to gain profit. Another factor that needs to be addressed is that it is not the public's viewpoint on foreign students that is being analyzed here, but the viewpoint of those who choose to have foreign students in their homes.

An Accommodation Officer interviewed all applicants prior to acceptance as a host at British Study Centres. In order to be employed as a host at British Study Centres, applicants had to show signs they respected cultural differences and were able to understand the need for cultural sensitivity. This project's results cannot be compared to the public's opinion of cultural conflict as the 42 returned questionnaires were all received from a select, interviewed and vetted group of people.

A high 59% of participants claimed that they spoke another language. As reported above in the literature review, this is much higher than the average population of the United Kingdom. The Special EUROBAROMETER emphasized how "language is the path to

understanding other ways of living, which in turn opens up the space for intercultural tolerance. Furthermore, language skills facilitate working, studying and travelling ... and allow true intercultural communication” (p. 3). Although learning a language is not always linked to learning about that language’s culture knowing another language can, for obvious reasons, aid in communication, especially across borders.

Another result from the questionnaire was that 100% of respondents reported having travelled abroad. The desire to travel abroad is becoming more universal and common, however, it is not a requirement for becoming a host at British Study Centres. If even a small amount of cultural exchange (learning, understanding or merely being exposed to another culture) can occur when travelling, travel, potentially, could be a method of learning about another culture. Studying a culture in an academic setting has obvious benefits, however, as written in the literature review, there is a researched connection between travel and cultural awareness.

Question 14 on the questionnaire asked if hosts believed that the level of their cultural awareness could influence their ability to resolve and/or prevent cross-cultural conflict: 50% of hosts said yes, 26% said they were not sure, and 14% said no. Earlier, in the literature review, academic material highlighted how ‘at times, the reasons behind cross-cultural conflict can be lost on those involved, unless they are aware of the cultural norms of the other group’. The results of this project indicate that there is some truth to this theory as 50% of hosts expressed that the level of one’s cultural awareness can impact one’s ability to resolve and/or prevent cross-cultural conflict. Hopefully these results highlight the benefits of travel and learning about cultural differences.

Such a low level of conflict between hosts and their foreign students (the majority of hosts reported a one level of conflict on a scale of zero to ten) may be a result of some outside factors. The students at British Study Centres are all adults and have made a choice to come

and study English as a second language in Brighton. These students come to England to learn English for an array of different reasons, rarely however, as part of their home country's mandatory school curriculum. These students are freely electing to live in a foreign country and study English. British Study Centres students therefore may not reflect the full scope of their own nation's viewpoints. It can be assumed that students who choose to study in their home country outnumber those who choose to study abroad. Therefore, the students that hosts come into contact with, have all made a decision to travel and experience English culture. This also places foreign students into a unique group who may not reflect the norms of their home countries. The low level of conflict reported by respondents may also suggest that two different cultures living together do not always result in conflict. These results give an optimistic view on the lack of cross-cultural conflict between hosts and the foreign students they accommodate.

Respondents were questioned whether they trusted one culture more than another. A high 71% said they did not trust any culture over another. As seen in the findings, the Arabian culture was the only culture to be repeatedly identified as problematic to hosts. The Arabian culture holds a dominant presence in our world news and global politics. Unfortunately, respondents to the project seemed to portray the Arabian culture in a negative light. Many hosts reported not having hosted an Arabian student before, but chose not to as they felt it would be too difficult due to cultural differences. This brings to light that it may not have been past experiences that have created mistrust between hosts and Arabic students, but a perceived difference in values and cultural norms.

Returning to the concept of trust, but also taking into account the above results, a question that needs to be proposed is whether or not a bad experience with a certain student can damage a host's viewpoint on that entire culture. As seen above, some hosts anticipated conflict with Arabian men prior to hosting them, whilst some hosts do not host students from

certain cultures due to past experiences. One host said they “would be rather not host a student from a culture that I have had previous problems with”. There is no further explanation to this answer, however, another host elaborated on the same point by stating that they would “probably ask not to host another student from Iran” due to past problems with a female Iranian student. It is disappointing that some hosts have taken one bad experience and labelled an entire culture. In the literature review above, it was written that conflict, reputation and history are all linked and can have a negative effect on the trust process. Hosts that label their past experiences with one student as common to all students of that culture appear to be not only destroying any future trust with that culture but also stereotyping cultures.

Feedback from respondents specific to British Study Centres policies and procedures is outlined in Appendix 5.

Recommendations

This project provided valuable and significant firsthand data that centered on discovering a link between cultural awareness and cross-cultural conflict resolution. As well as supplying insight into the experience of having foreign students living in their homes, hosts also provided valuable ideas on the creation, reasoning and repercussions of cross-cultural conflict. This project demonstrated numerous different trends and conclusions, potentially aiding in the progression of dispute resolution methods.

Firstly, trends surrounding the presence of culture, its power and impact on conflict and trust were demonstrated through this project. Hosts or participants of this project were identified as more culturally aware than the average public for an array of reasons. Hosts expressed a gain in cultural knowledge from living with their foreign students, but also from travelling abroad. Travel, potentially, could aid in reducing, preventing and resolving cross-

cultural conflict. This idea is further studied in the article *Education travel; The Overseas Internship* (Klooster, 2008) where the benefits of gaining cultural awareness of students travelling abroad to study is also highlighted. This article references a study done in 1988 by Carlson and Widaman where students who chose to study abroad were compared to those who remained in their home country to study. The research was collected via 800 different American college students and proved that the group of students who had studied abroad “showed higher levels of international political concern, cross-cultural interest, and cultural cosmopolitanism than those who did not” (Klooster 2008, p.693). This indicates that study into the cultural benefits of travelling and studying abroad need to be explored as they hold the potential to aid in cross-cultural conflict resolution and prevention methods.

Secondly, hosts reported that there was minimal conflict between themselves and their foreign students. The majority of hosts reported a one with zero being no conflict and 10 being a high level of conflict. This project assumed a higher level of conflict when two cultures were living together, however, hosts’ feedback indicated that conflict arose with students of certain personalities, not necessarily students from certain cultures. This result demonstrates that when faced with conflict between two cultures, personality differences need to be taken into account as well as cultural differences. Furthermore, if international schools focus on solving conflict differently for each culture it may aid in understanding certain dynamics of the conflict, however the personalities of the parties involved need to be considered as well.

Thirdly, respondents were asked what methods they used for resolving conflict between them and their students. The idea of communicating, talking and/or explaining the conflict out loud was referred to by 50% of hosts. This recommendation needs to be taken seriously as due to the low level of conflict reported between hosts and students, the high level of experience of participants and the valuable insight they have in living with other

cultures, the participants of this project have first hand knowledge of how best to resolve and/or prevent cross-cultural conflict with foreign students. If communication with their foreign students was a key factor in preventing conflict from arising or escalating in the home, then further exploration into communication across cultures would be extremely valuable.

Lastly, trust between host and student was challenged in this project. The majority of hosts did not state any mistrust between students of a certain culture; however, when mistrust was identified, this was mostly towards the Arabian culture. This brings to light the need for further study into the reasoning behind mistrust between the Arabian culture and the English culture. There are obvious reasons for this mistrust, such as the current conflict in the Middle East, however, how this has trickled down to the reluctance of hosts to live with a student from an Arabian country needs further attention.

Overall, this project identified a link between cultural knowledge and the ability to prevent and/or resolve cross-cultural conflict in the setting of hosts accommodating foreign students. Bias' such as both groups in question were identified as more potentially culturally aware than the average population and that the setting in which this study took place boasts support and advice from an award winning international language school, need to be taken into account. It is however, suggested and taking into account the limitations of this project, that the more culturally aware a person becomes, the more likely they are to be able to prevent and/or resolve cross-cultural conflict. In our globally connected world, this is an extremely valuable insight and could have potential connections to future conflict resolution methods.

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Appendix 2- Questionnaire

Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire. Please answer as many questions as you feel comfortable doing so. Please use a separate sheet of paper if you need more space. Any feedback is appreciated and will be kept confidential and anonymous. Please return the questionnaire using the pre-paid envelope included. If you have any questions about this questionnaire you may contact the researcher (however, you cannot remain anonymous if you do so). The researcher's contact details are at the bottom of the Letter of Implied Consent.

1- For how long have you hosted foreign students? (This includes other schools you may also host for other than BSC.) _____ years _____ months

2- Approximately how many students have you hosted in total? _____

3- Why do you host foreign students?

4- Do you enjoy hosting? Please explain your answer.

5- What are the nationalities of past/current students you have hosted for? List as many nationalities as possible.

6- Have you travelled abroad before? If yes, where and why did you choose to travel there?

7- Do you speak any other languages besides English? If so, which ones?

8- What is your definition of the word 'culture'?

9- Have you ever studied any other culture(s)? Example- learnt about other cultural norms, traditions, etc. If so, which culture(s) and in what context did you gain the knowledge?

10- What is your definition of 'conflict'?

11- On a scale of 1-10 (1 being very little and 10 being extremely often), how much conflict do you experience with the foreign students you host? _____

12- In your opinion, has any conflict between you and your foreign students ever been influenced by their different cultural norms and understandings? Please explain your answer in as much detail as possible.

13- Do you feel as though you get into conflict more with students from certain cultures over others? If yes, please explain which cultures and why you believe that is.

14- In your opinion, do you think that know more about another culture makes it easier it is to resolve conflict with a student from that culture? Please explain your answer

15- What methods do you think are best for resolving cross-cultural conflict? Why?

16- Do you trust students from a certain culture more than other cultures? Please explain your answer in as much detail as possible.

17- Have you gained any cultural knowledge from hosting foreign students? If yes, please explain what you have learnt and how you gained that knowledge.

18- What is the hardest part of hosting foreign students?

19- Are you happy with the support you receive from BSC? Please explain your answers.

20- How can BSC improve their support to hosts? What else would you like BSC to do for their host families?

Any other feedback you wish to give:

Thank you very much for your time and effort. Please use the supplied envelope to return the questionnaire. All returned questionnaires will be kept confidential and anonymous.

Appendix 3- Letter of Information for Implied Consent

Letter of Information for Implied Consent

“Can the transfer of cultural knowledge aid in the resolution and prevention of cross-cultural conflict and help build trust between nationalities?”

You are invited to participate in a study entitled “*Can the transfer of cultural knowledge aid in the resolution and prevention of cross-cultural conflict and help build trust between nationalities? Questioning the experience and knowledge of British families hosting international students in their home and their viewpoints on the importance of cultural knowledge to resolve conflict and build trust with their international students*”. that is being conducted by Amy Van Rensburg.

Amy Van Rensburg is a Graduate Student in the department of Dispute Resolution at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada and you may contact her if you have further questions at avanrens@uvic.ca.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research project is to question host families in regards to their level of cultural knowledge and their ability to trust and resolve/prevent cross-cultural conflict. The goal of the project is to see if there is a link between hosts' knowledge of a certain culture and their ability to trust and/or resolve conflict with a student from that culture. Hosts are sent an anonymous questionnaire (see attached) asking them an array of questions centred on conflict in the home between hosts and foreign students; their perceptions of certain cultures; reasoning behind their levels of trust towards different cultures and their ability to resolve and prevent cross-cultural conflict with foreign students.

Importance of this Research

Research of this type is important because we live in an extremely well-connected cross cultural world. There is becoming more and more of a need to find ways to prevent and resolve cross cultural conflict. This project hopes to test the theory that the more one is informed about another culture (more aware of their cultural norms, traditions, and views on conflict), the better equipped they are to aid in the resolution and prevention of cultural disputes.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because as a current host family at BSC, you live with foreign students in your home and have first hand experience of cultural differences and potential/real cross-cultural conflict. You are also being asked to participate, as BSC would benefit from your feedback and knowledge of the difficulties of being a host and help BSC better aid and support you as a host family.

What is involved

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include filling out the attached survey and returning it anonymously.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, as it will take approximately twenty to thirty minutes to complete.

Risks

All returned questionnaires will be treated anonymously and confidentially. No answers will require author identification or any further explanation. The researcher, as an Accommodation Officer at British Study Centres, will not follow up any answers and/or refuse to place future students with hosts due to questionnaire returned (or not returned). Hosts confidentially is required for this project as hosts are encouraged to give honest feedback without feeling they may lose students from BSC due to their answers.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include voicing your opinions in regards to your enjoyment of hosting and how BSC can aid you better. You hopefully will also gain some self-reflection on your own ability to build trust, resolve and prevent cross-cultural conflict between you and your foreign students.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you decide to participate you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or explanation. If you do withdraw from the study, please note that any returned questionnaires will be collected and all answers will be put into a spreadsheet, which will be used for insight into common trends/problems with hosts. Also any insight into the link between your cultural knowledge and your ability to resolve cross cultural conflict will be noted.

Researcher's Relationship with Participants

The researcher has a relationship to potential participants as one of BSC's Accommodation Officers. To help prevent this relationship from influencing your decision to participate, the following steps to prevent coercion have been taken: all returned questionnaires must be completely anonymous; all data will be kept completely confidential, only common trends and overall results will be shared with colleagues; all questionnaires will be shredded after the answers have been inputted into the results spreadsheet; and no answers given will require any further explanation from its author. *It in no way will affect further placing of students with hosts due to complete anonymity of the author and confidentiality of the research.*

Dissemination of Results

All results will be studied and used towards an academic thesis for the researcher's Master of Arts in Dispute Resolution at the University of Victoria. Any feedback in regards to BSC policies or host support systems will be taken into account by the Accommodation team and school Director and addressed appropriately.

Contact

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study for any questions or concerns include:

*Amy Van Rensburg
University of Victoria
Researcher*

avanrens@uvic.ca

**Please note, contacting the researcher directly cannot be anonymous for obvious reasons. If you wish your question to remain anonymous from the researcher, please contact any of the project members below. The question, if necessary, can be passed onto the researcher for answering, anonymously and with confidence.*

*John Veale
School Director
British Study Centres
John.veale@british-study.com*

*Academic Supervisor of Project
University of Victoria
Lyn Davis
lyndavis@uvic.ca*

*Human Research Ethics Board
University of Victoria
ethics@uvic.ca*

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (+1-250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

By completing and submitting the questionnaire, **YOUR FREE AND INFORMED CONSENT IS IMPLIED** and indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

Please retain a copy of this letter for your reference.

Appendix 4 – Invitation to Participate

Invitation to Participate

Dear Host,

You are invited to participate in a study entitled:

“Can the transfer of cultural knowledge aid in the resolution and prevention of cross-cultural conflict and help build trust between nationalities? Questioning the experience and knowledge of British families hosting international students in their home and their viewpoints on the importance of cultural knowledge to resolve conflict and build trust with their international students”

that is being conducted by myself, Amy Van Rensburg.


Alongside being one of your Accommodation Officers at British Study Centres here in Brighton, I am also a Graduate Student in the department of Dispute Resolution at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada. I have completed all the necessary class work, and now have to conduct a final project in order to receive my Masters degree.

British Study Centres has been kind enough to allow me to conduct my project through the school over the next few months. You are being asked to participate in this study because as a current host family at BSC, you live with foreign students in your home and have first hand experience of cultural differences and potential/real cross-cultural conflict. You are also being asked to participate, as BSC would benefit from your feedback and knowledge of the difficulties of being a host and help BSC better aid and support you as a host family.

Please find enclosed a Letter of Implied Consent, which outlines the project and all the safe guards that have been put in place to avoid risks and protect all participants. Also enclosed is the Questionnaire and its instructions.

I am extremely passionate about this project, and the topic of cross-cultural conflict is very close to my heart. Your participation and return of the questionnaire would be truly appreciated and be tremendously helpful in getting me one step closer to a Master of Arts in Dispute Resolution!

Thank you in advance,



Amy Van Rensburg

Appendix 5- Feedback for British Study Centres

At the end of the questionnaire, hosts were asked to provide feedback specific to the level of support they received from British Study Centres and the Accommodation team. This feedback is key to British Study Centres as it allowed hosts to give anonymous feedback to the school, an avenue that has never before been provided. Please see Appendix 5 for a table for the results.

Overall, hosts gave very positive feedback and felt they received adequate and appropriate support from British Study Centres and the Accommodation Team. Majority of host, 81% of respondents, said they were satisfied with the support they received from British Study Centres. Respondents were also asked for some insight into how British Study Centres could improve their support to hosts. A majority of hosts, 90% reported they were happy with the level of support. This feedback emphasis how well British Study Centres is supporting their hosts and how well received the Accommodation Team at British Study Centres is amongst their hosts.

A few concerns around British Study Centres support were highlighted. One host mentioned that ‘arrival times (of students) were sometimes an issue’. Another host reported that they felt the school’s emergency number was not answered 24 hours a day, as it should be. Three hosts requested that they be given more information about their students prior to arrival. British Study Centres will know that this is slightly out of their hands, as most students come from agents abroad. These foreign agents are partners to British Study Centres but also their own business and may not allow any more information of their clients to be released. Therefore, to take this feedback from hosts into account, it might be beneficial for British Study Centres to request more information from their agents about future students. If that is not possible, then to relay that information back to hosts so they are informed of British Study Centres efforts and limitations.

Student wellbeing was brought up by a few hosts, as there were five requests for British Study Centres to provide more support and ideas for student activities outside of school hours. Hosts reported they felt students were staying at home too much as there were not enough after school activities for their students to participate in. British Study Centres does have a Social Program and there is at least one activity after class every afternoon or evening. British Study Centres promotes these activities to students on a weekly basis and encourage students to participate. It is however, not mandatory for students to participate in any social activities. Taking hosts feedback into account, it may be advisable for British Study Centres to promote the social program on a daily basis instead of just weekly. If every social activity were to be announced at lunch hour and described in more detail to students, it may encourage more participation from students. This however, is a huge undertaking and may not be possible due to British Study Centres staff constraints during student lunch hour.

Communication was another common trend present in hosts' feedback. Four hosts mention that they would enjoy more communication from the Accommodation Team prior and during a student's stay. One host suggested more phone contact between hosts and the Accommodation team to check that both parties are happy. This type of check in is done in terms of the student's well being through numerous different venues. Students are interviewed on the first day of arrival and asked if they are happy with their accommodation. During the first week of their stay, students are asked to fill out a First Week Questionnaire asking if they are still happy with their accommodation and host. If students are enrolled during the middle of term, they are then given a Mid Term Questionnaire, which again questions their satisfaction with their accommodation and host. Hosts on the other hand are not given any questionnaires or check-ins during a students stay.

Feedback from this project suggests that it may be advisable for hosts to also have a venue to express their concerns. The accommodation team at British Study Centres

encourages hosts to call the school at any time for advice or assistance, but maybe an anonymous forum (online, perhaps), might be advisable so hosts can give feedback about any problems they may be having with their students. This might aid in getting more appropriate support to hosts. However, this again might not be possible due to staff and budget constraints at British Study Centres, and may not be necessary. As seen in the responses to question 19, hosts when asked if they felt the current level of support from British Study Centres was adequate said they felt very supported and majority of them did not ask for any further changes or advances.

Feedback from participants to Question 19: Are you happy with the support you receive from BSC? Please explain your answers.

BSC are on hand if necessary, and will give advice if needed.
Yes, always responsive to our questions in a timely and effective manner
Yes
Could be better. Not enough information about students. No feedback really. No contract whilst student in places.
mostly-sometimes feel you take the students views more seriously than the families which puts us off saying anything
Yes
yes-extremely. Very fortunate to have lonely students thanks to all
yes, I have always had my questions and concerns dealt with promptly and with professionalism. Arrival times are sometimes an issue. I think there should be an agreed arrival time - quite difficult with family to commit to organize a welcoming committee all day.
yes, they communicate exceptionally well
yes. No problems
yes. Any problems sorted out quickly
yes, friendly and understanding
yes, very happy. Ive always felt supported and that there is always someone at BSC if I should have any problems
I have had a really good experience with BSC. Everyone in the homestay department is very friendly and helpful

yes, as I didn't need any additional support
yes
yes, very happy but I would like the students to be told that they are not allowed to stay in every night. Some nights of course
Yes. students do survey on us, it would be good if we could do survey on them
yes, they immediately speak to students if there are any issues
yes - I feel I could call at anytime if I had a problem and that my concerns would be listened to
yes
yes
Yes, when there has been a problem it has been dealt with straight away.
yes, they are always sensitive to any difficulties and respond promptly and professionally.
yes, very helpful
mostly happy
yes, all staff are polite, efficient and friendly and are responsive
generally yes
yes, I feel you are always there is we have enquires or problems. You also provide a good frequency of students
yes, you're a lovely lot! We always know that messages will be picked up, call returned, emails answered, but we've always been listened to, supported and advised
yes
yes - charlotte is wonderful
yes, the staff is very friendly and approachable
yes
yes, I am happy find them very helpful if I have any queries
yes, very helpful - I always get quick responses to questions and a flexible approach to any problems or changes
yes, very. Charlotte and Amy are always on the other end of the phone and will always support you in anyway they can quickly and efficiently
yes -very good
yes and no! yes concerns the bookings system, the BSC office. The no concerns the emergency number. In number MUST HAVE RESPONSE 24/7 or it is not an emergency number
yes

Feedback from participants from question 20: How can BSC improve their support to hosts? What else would you like BSC to do for their host families?

Resolve issues with students about payment of accommodation and not involve host family.
Perhaps more support for students. Re: socializing at the beginning of their stay
see above and make sure the students know that they should respect us as their host family not just a rite of passage because they are paying.
maybe a bit more information about our student other than age and level of English
very happy with BSC support
I think they do enough
see above in regard to arrival times
none, so far they have been brilliant
maybe find out why students do not want to stay with us as we have pets
don't have many problems so not sure apart from more students
more notice when students become available for hosting so it gives us time to sought out commitments. The earlier we know if we are getting any students the better. This will keep us from using other schools.
I really cant think of anything more that BSC could do for me. I only have s/c or B&B students - so more mature than younger ones - but never had any real problems
I honestly would find it hard to suggest anything. I think it is a nice gesture to invite hosts families to the 10 yr celebration. I am looking forward to have a look at the college.
nothing, I'm happy
Make it clear they are not on holiday and to go out
some regular phone connection to check on progress - I do feel that once they've placed a student with a host it would be good to check both parties are happy
would be nice to meet other hosts- perhaps have a social occasions. Hosts would then provide one another with support. Also hosts would have an opportunity to be more engaged with the school - making it more of a 'community' and a stress of purposes/participation beyond 'letting rooms'
I would prefer them to come in pairs or groups at the same time to avoid having single students

Encourage students to participate in activities, visits away from classes. On the odd occasion we have had an adult student who has gone to classes in the morning but been in the house for 4 weeks without going anywhere else. We don't want to force a student to go out but it would be helpful to explain at school that sometimes host families do like a couple of hours without feeling the need to entertain a student at the weekend! It's such a waste for a student to spend all recreation time in our house!
perhaps be more aware of swiftly rising household bills (including water, energy and food) and make an annual increase to student fees to accommodation this
it s fine at the moment. Thanks
more contact from BSC would be helpful. A phone call just to say hello and let us know if there are students available or not
encourage families to involved their students in more cross cultural activities
be able to move a student quickly. why things do not work out or why one has personal emergency.
feel quite supported, so actually no suggestions. I would however, lie to see more places to visit provided by the school for students. So we get a bit stuck with out own tourist info! Perhaps for the school to provide more information about what to see/do in Sussex plus other places to visit.
just keep the students coming! As not many of them. email first- it might be helpful to have a little more information on our students before they arrive - some now give flight details etc which is really useful to track arrivals/delays
I am very happy with all the support I receive
previously - I think the balance is right - I have only ever had on problem and that pretty much was because of the rather rude attitude of the students (nothing to do with BSC or students...)
cant think of anything at present
tell students to close bank accounts before leaving the country and the importance of not wasting water
Find support very good
I'm really happy with things as they are –thanks!
we think they do a great job at supporting their host families. They are always friendly and support us all the way.
some of my students have had extended their stay beyond their time at BSC. It would be helpful if the school communicated clearer to students and hosts that this is not possible.
BSC are always at the end of the phone, ready to help if needed