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Volume 35, Issue 1, pp. 152-187  
DOI: 10.36366/frontiers.v35i1.736  
[www.frontiersjournal.org](http://www.frontiersjournal.org)



# A Systematic Literature Review on LGBT+ U.S. Students Studying Abroad

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## Abstract

Little focus has been afforded to LGBT+ students' study abroad experiences. We conducted a systematic literature search and synthesis which identified 13 articles either with a focus on or inclusion of participants who were LGBT+ studying abroad. We coded included articles' key information, including participant demographics; program duration, location, and academic focus; study methodology; and study results. The majority of studies used qualitative methods, and we note that gay and bisexual male students are severely underrepresented. Key findings also include issues of homophobia/transphobia, race and ethnicity disparities, community policing, sexual assault and rape, and methodology. We suggest that researchers on LGBT+ abroad focus on gay and bisexual male participation and focus on how queer community is formed abroad and regulated by its members. Furthermore, we recommend future research include demographic questions inclusive of LGBT+, employ more mixed methods or quantitative approaches, and measures emphasizing intercultural and academic gains for LGBT+ students.

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Accepted date: October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022

## Abstract in Spanish

Menos atención se ha concedido a las experiencias de estudios en el extranjero de los estudiantes LGBT+. Conducimos una busca sistemática literaria y síntesis que identificó 13 artículos con un enfoque o con una inclusión de participantes LGBT+ durante un estudio en el extranjero. Codificamos la información integral de los artículos incluidos, incluyendo a los demográficos de participantes; la duración de los programas, la locación, y el enfoque académico; la metodología del estudio; y los resultados del estudio. La mayoría de los estudios utilizaron métodos cualitativos, y notamos que los estudiantes varones gay y bisexuales fueron subrepresentado. Los resultados claves también incluyen problemas de homofobia/transfobia, las disparidades racial y étnica, vigilancia comunitaria, la agresión sexual y/o la violación, y la metodología. Sugerimos que los investigadores quienes enfoque se centran en los participantes LGBT+ que estudian en el extranjero enfoquen el énfasis a la participación de estudiantes varones gay y bisexuales en particular y presten atención a cómo la comunidad queer se forma y se regula la comunidad por los miembros LGBT+ durante su tiempo en el extranjero. Además, recomendamos que la investigación futura incluye las cuestiones demográficas que son inclusivo de los LGBT+, utilizar los métodos mezclados o cuantitativo, y las medidas que enfatizan los logros interculturales y académicos para los estudiantes LGBT+.

## Keywords:

LGBT+, Queer, study abroad, literature review, international education, global mobility

## Introduction

The research base on study abroad is multidisciplinary and includes a range of outcomes, including intercultural awareness, language acquisition, academic content learning, and wellbeing (Brunsting et al., 2023; Miller-Perrin & Thompson, 2014; Twombly et al., 2012; Varela, 2017). Currently, there is increased interest in examining the relationship between identity and study abroad outcomes (AIEA, 2021), with a strong emphasis on students of color (Sweeney, 2013), first-generation college students (Goldstein & Lopez, 2021), and gender (Salisbury et al., 2010). By examining identity, study abroad practitioners and scholars may achieve a more nuanced understanding of students' experiences and development during study abroad. Conversely, little attention both in research and practice has been afforded to LGBT+ students studying abroad, their unique set of needs, particularly regarding safety, the coming-out process, and navigating heteronormative cultures, practices, and policies.

Therefore, this article examines the existing scholarship that centralizes LGBT+ identity and the critical issues impacting those students' time abroad.

This literature review examines empirical research studies that focus solely on U.S. domestic students going abroad or, more specifically, when >50% of participants in the included studies are U.S. students. There are a number of socio-cultural factors that distinguish U.S. LGBT+ communities from other cultures and countries beyond the U.S. context. This is largely seen in the unique cultural milieu inherent to the U.S. (Andersen & Fetner, 2008; Worthen et al., 2016), but also in the current state of queer visibility, U.S. religiosity (Worthen et al., 2016), and the differing level of rights that U.S. LGBT+ people have gained over the past ten years (e.g., U.S. Supreme Court case rulings that enacted legal marriage and Title IV gender and sexual orientation protections) which were already extant in other countries, especially in Europe. Worthen et al. (2016) found that the "USA is least tolerant" (p. 242), owing to many states, particularly from the Bible Belt, espousing "biblical literalism" (p. 244), leaning broadly conservative, and holding "anti-feminist" beliefs (p. 244). Furthermore, Worthen et al. argue that "politically conservative people are less likely to support LGBT people because they challenge core aspects imbued within conservative paradigms," (p. 243). Thus, we focus specifically on the U.S. context to advance research and practice and view this as one of many research articles needed to understand study abroad experiences and outcomes for LGBT+ students worldwide.

Understanding the impact of study abroad on queer students not only promotes a critical insight into the institutional governance over policies, marketing, and study abroad engagement (at home and abroad) within the university environment, it also invites a re-examination of the way society privileges heteronormative structures, systems, and daily life (Sullivan, 2003). Re-examining the dominance of heteronormativity provides a method to make more inclusive to all persons the process of study abroad, opening spaces for participants who are not necessarily affluent, white, and/or straight. Moreover, the unevenness of participation in study abroad in the U.S. has lent itself to a predominantly white and female experience (Brunsting et al., 2023), with female students (n = 27,488) accounting for 76% of the total participants compared with male students (n = 8,607) representing 24% of the total participants across 373 included studies in a larger literature review (Brunsting et al., 2023). The Institute of International Education's (IIE) data on OpenDoors

illuminates the disparity between men and women studying abroad from 2000 to 2020, as well as the predominance of white students studying abroad (84% in 2000 to 70% in 2020) versus students of color. However, we do not have data with respect to students' economic backgrounds, sexual orientation, or recognition of trans/non-binary/queer as gender categories amongst the recorded data (opendoorsdata.org, 2021).

In a critical essay published in 2020, Capobianco issued a call for research and inquiry into LGBT+ in international education broadly, inviting future examination of literature and development of research studies that pertain to specific subsets within the field of international education (i.e., Study Abroad). Capobianco (2020) synthesizes current scholarship in the international education field that focuses on LGBT+ or queer, deconstructs higher education into the macro-, meso-, and micro-levels and recommends a restructuring of these institutional systems, policies, and professional practices, embedding queer theory as a guiding framework for this reorganization and restructuring. The current review heeds this call by conducting a systematic review of the literature specifically within the field of study abroad scholarship to advance more intersectional (Crenshaw, 1988) approaches to study abroad. Furthermore, examining the scant literature available surrounding LGBT+ and study abroad, it is important to collate the interdisciplinary nature of the studies, as they draw from disparate fields with distinct research foci. Synthesizing the literature and conducting a systematic survey of empirical studies centering LGBT+ participants in education abroad programs highlight not only emerging gaps within the literature but also the work needed by study abroad providers across North America to be more inclusive to the queer community. Bryant and Soria (2015) suggest a similar approach to Capobianco (2020) that is more inclusive of LGBT+ students by recommending re-evaluating the way advising these students occurs, but also, like Capobianco, recommending resources designed specifically for LGBT+ students and working in tandem with LGBT+ campus support offices to incorporate more queer focused approaches to heighten inclusivity.

This systematic literature review includes 13 articles that highlight experiences of LGBT+ study abroad participants and/or directly pertain to issues surrounding the LGBT+ community. Before moving into the relevant literature, it is integral to establish key terminology relevant to the queer community; however, while this is meant to expound upon the relevant language used

within the community and the larger academic discourses surrounding LGBT+ identities, it is not an exhaustive list and will focus primarily on the terms employed throughout the articles included in the review. Furthermore, these terms are ever-evolving and may or may not be employed by each person identifying as LGBT+; these terms are not intended to essentialize or reify rigid categories. Rather, just as queer and LGBT+ are non-monolithic, fluid categories, so too are the individuals that self-identify as such.

## Defining LGBT+ and Queer

Due to the dearth of scholarship surrounding LGBT+ identity within the research field of study abroad, it is imperative to understand how LGBT+ and queer are defined to provide a lexis of associated terms with the larger queer community. There are many different accepted acronyms employed by the LGBT+ community; TLGB, LGB, GLBT, LGBTQIA+, LGBTQQ+ are others that work to incorporate the multiplicity of identities contained therein. The acronym adopted for this literature review is LGBT+ and stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and others. For the purposes of this literature review, “queer” will often be employed as an umbrella term encompassing LGBT+ and is distinctive from queer as a sexual orientation/gender category label. This is consistent with the way queer theorists and other queer scholars utilize “queer” to be an all-encompassing term (Halberstam 1995, 2005; Sedgwick, 1990).

## Sexual Orientations

Consistent with the scholarship reviewed in this article, the sexual orientation identities discussed herein are lesbian, gay, bisexual (male and female), pansexual, and sapiosexual. Lesbians and gay men are gendered terms that indicate same-sex sexual attraction, relationships, same-sex intimacy, and community formation; lesbians are women attracted to women, where gay men are men attracted to men. Bisexuality is the sexual attraction to both genders, with Pansexuality defined as the sexual attraction to all genders. Sapiosexuals are individuals who are sexually attracted to intelligent people or intellectuals. Asexuals, who are not represented in any of the included scholarship, are individuals that have no sexual attraction to others, but may form lasting bonds and sexual relationships with other individuals or choose to remain uncoupled.

Breaking down the orientations, the definitions surrounding gender were left intentionally vague, as gender plays a critical role in the aforementioned identities. What this alludes to is the notion that gender within

the queer community is not necessarily fixed, and that those self-identifying as a specific gender may or may not align themselves with a queer sexual orientation (Monro, 2000). For example, a person assigned female at birth who transitions to a male identity, may identify as either straight (attracted to women only), bisexual (attracted to men and women), pansexual (attracted to men, women, non-binary or genderqueer/queer people), or gay (attracted to men only).

## Gender Identity

Another critical component of the queer community is gender identification. Notions of the idea that gender is fixed are challenged by key scholars working in this area, particularly Judith Butler (1990, 2004), Jack Halberstam (2005, 2018), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990, 1992), Susan Stryker (2006), and Nikki Sullivan (2003). This is not an exhaustive list of scholars challenging the notion that gender is fluid; gender is culturally and politically constructed, ruled by “juridical” powers that regulate and “fix” or ascribe the social constructs of the masculine and feminine. Moreover, the space limits the discussion of the biologic distinctions between sex and gender. Further, disrupting cultural assumptions around gender, and by extension sex, destabilizes the rigid binary that dictates two sole genders: “male” and “female”. With this context under consideration, gender identity therefore – as it is lived today – encompasses a multiplicity of presentations. For the purpose of this study, the terms *cisgender*, *transgender*, *genderqueer* (or simply *queer*), *non-binary* or *gender non-conforming*, and *gender expansive* are the identities presented in the scholarship that follows.

*Cisgender* individuals are those that identify with their sex assigned at birth; *transgender* is the inversion of *cisgender*, where individuals “transition” to a gender that conforms to their true ontological self. In other words, those transgendered individuals no longer attribute their sex at birth to their true identity and re-present themselves as their lived identity. Thus, someone who self-identifies as transgender may transition from male to female (denoted as MTF) or from female to male (FTM). Although *genderqueer* and *non-binary* are similar identities (Monro, 2019), *genderqueer* people signal that their identities exist in a way that they “are a mixture of male and female” (Monro, 2005, p. 13). Where *genderqueer* and *non-binary* differ are in how *non-binary* people disengage from the notion of rigid gender structures and may exist in a state where they sometimes merge female and male constructs or refuse gender

categorization altogether (Monro, 2019). This signals that those NBGQ (Non-Binary Genderqueer; Monro, 2005, 2019) individuals hold similar ideals around identity transgression, but view gender in slightly different ways. Furthermore, as Monro (2000, 2005, 2019) argues, gender identity is in a constant state of flux and can bend to the ways both the ontological self and socio-political discourses encourage modes of transgression or conformity.

### Hetero- and Homonormativity

It would be remiss to discuss the queer community without an understanding of the ways in which heteronormativity, and by extension homonormativity (Duggan, 2003), dictate the systemic structures regulating power, policies, and institutional operations. Heteronormativity is the force that governs all aspects of society through a patriarchal, heterosexual (heterocentrist), neoliberal lens, privileging systems and institutional/societal structures that center heterosexuality as the status quo, excluding in the process transgressive identities. In other words, if queer people exist, heteronormativity does not permit challenging the heterocentrism embedded within quotidian norms and structures (Halberstam, 2005; Ward & Schneider, 2009; Warner, 1991). This assimilative approach (Sullivan, 2003) allows specifically passing bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender individuals to integrate within a rigidly structured, privatized neoliberal lifestyle, emulating what it means to be heterosexual within a queer space. In other words, for queer persons to adopt a “normal” acceptable lifestyle, they should adhere to the notion of the nuclear family (read heterosexual), become a working and productive member of society, and purchase a family home (Duggan, 2003).

Homonormativity, a term coined by Lisa Duggan (2003), assimilates queer people within the system of heteronormativity, whereby stereotypical LGBT+ identities (bisexual, gay, and lesbian) adopt a heterocentric model, accepting the neoliberal strictures of society and moving within the mainstream, mirroring modes of heterosexual identity. In other words, they adopt the nuclear family ideal, exist within heteronormative spaces (such as suburbia), and accept neoliberal tendencies that center the home, family, and work. Moreover, homonormativity operates as a regulating framework for being gay, lesbian, or bisexual, meaning that conforming to a rigid means of existing (typically, white, middle- or upper-middle class) fixes, stratifies, and regulates discourses of queerness and how queer people should appear or be represented (Duggan, 2003).

## Current State of the Field

At present, there are no literature reviews that examine the existing scholarship surrounding LGBT+ and study abroad. In terms of scholarship, the seminal works using empirical data to investigate the intersection of queer identities and study abroad are Brown (2014) and Bryant and Soria (2015). Brown interviews a lesbian mature student studying Korean in South Korea, investigating how her identity affects her experiences abroad and the interpersonal relationships fostered throughout her time in South Korea. Bryant and Soria (2015) assess quantitative data from the Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) survey, taking a quantitative approach to examining the likelihood of study abroad participation of LGBT+ students. Their data concludes that lesbian, gay, and bisexual (male or female) students are more likely to complete a study abroad than their straight counterparts. Furthermore, their data analysis suggests that those lesbian, gay, or bisexual students were more likely to study abroad with either a third-party provider or another institution. Despite this statistic, Bryant and Soria did not have the institutional data to examine why those students were more likely to study beyond their university's study abroad programs, suggesting that more research is needed in this area to understand the motivations behind this phenomenon.

When examining those students who identify outside the traditional gender binary, questioning, queer, and trans students, Bryant and Soria (2015) found that these students were more inclined to participate in global mobility programs that embed service learning, internships/work experience, or have volunteer opportunities. Similarly, the authors also suggest that bisexual, queer, or questioning students were more drawn to programs that center cross-cultural learning experiences as well as "informal educational experiences," (Bryant & Soria, 2015, p. 96). These findings provide a commencing point to further investigate through empirical research the above from both Bryant and Soria, as well as the findings from Brown (2014).

Although this is the first systematic literature review examining a body of study abroad specific scholarship, there has been a call to examine the interplay of LGBT+ identities within a broader international education framework (Capobianco, 2020). Capobianco explores this concept, evaluating the state of LGBT+ at the macro- (societal), meso- (institutional), and micro-levels (individual), highlighting the landscape through which LGBT+ individuals must



navigate in the international education context (study abroad, international students, public policy, for example). Despite this, there has not been a sustained focus specifically on study abroad. The current manuscript heeds and extends Capobianco's call by examining the existing empirical research to begin examining the state of LGBT+ participation in education abroad programming.

## Research Questions

The aims of this literature review seek to explore the following questions:

1. How many peer-reviewed empirical research studies have been published which either (a) include U.S. LGBT+ study abroad participants' outcomes or experiences or (b) centralize issues pertinent to LGBT+ identity?
2. To what extent is LGBT+ identity a factor in the articles?
3. What common findings emerge across the included studies?
4. What key gaps exist within this scholarship?

## Method

For this study, we undertook a systematic approach to uncover all accessible and existing scholarship around LGBT+ and students attending U.S. institutions studying abroad. We first determined inclusion criteria to support identification of articles aligned with the study research questions. We then used a multiple-gated approach to identifying articles by: (a) drawing articles from an extant research database on study abroad (Brunsting et al., 2021), (b) conducting a broader electronic search to capture articles with LGBT+ content that would have been excluded from the more stringent inclusion criteria of the AREA Database, and (c) updating both searches in February 2022 to ensure the review included all current scholarship.

## Inclusion Criteria

In order to meet inclusion, the articles must clearly include: (a) empirical data drawn from student participants attending U.S. universities who study abroad, and (b) include LGBT+ participants, explicitly mention LGBT+, or focus on a critical LGBT+ issue (e.g., HIV or AIDS; Diesl et al., 2013). As mentioned above, we focused our review on students attending U.S. universities due to the unique combination of laws, cultural norms, and prevalence of religion throughout the cultural, historical, and political U.S. landscape that LGBT+ students in the U.S. experience. Because the U.S. is so diverse in thought and acceptance for LGBT+ individuals, and with the recent spate of anti-LGBT+ legislation surfacing in states such as Florida, there is extra need to focus on

research specifically aimed towards U.S. queer students in education abroad. For the purposes of this review, we follow the Forum on Education Abroad (2011) definition of study abroad: “a subtype of education abroad that results in progress toward an academic degree at a student’s home institution.”

## Article Search and Identification

### Focused Electronic Search for LGBT+ Abroad

The first author ran an initial search in October 2021 and conducted a final search prior to article completion in February 2022. The first author employed the following search terms for Academic Search Premier: (Field 1): U.S.A. OR USA OR “United States” OR American; (Field 2) “study abroad” OR (sojourner AND student) OR "educat\* abroad"; college or university; and (Field 3) LGBTQ or lesbian or gay or homosexual or bisexual or transgender or homosexual or queer or sexual minority. We note that selection of these terms, while not reflective of current consensus around inclusive and respectful word choice, were made to ensure all relevant literature might be identified. The search yielded 12 results, of which three met inclusion criteria.

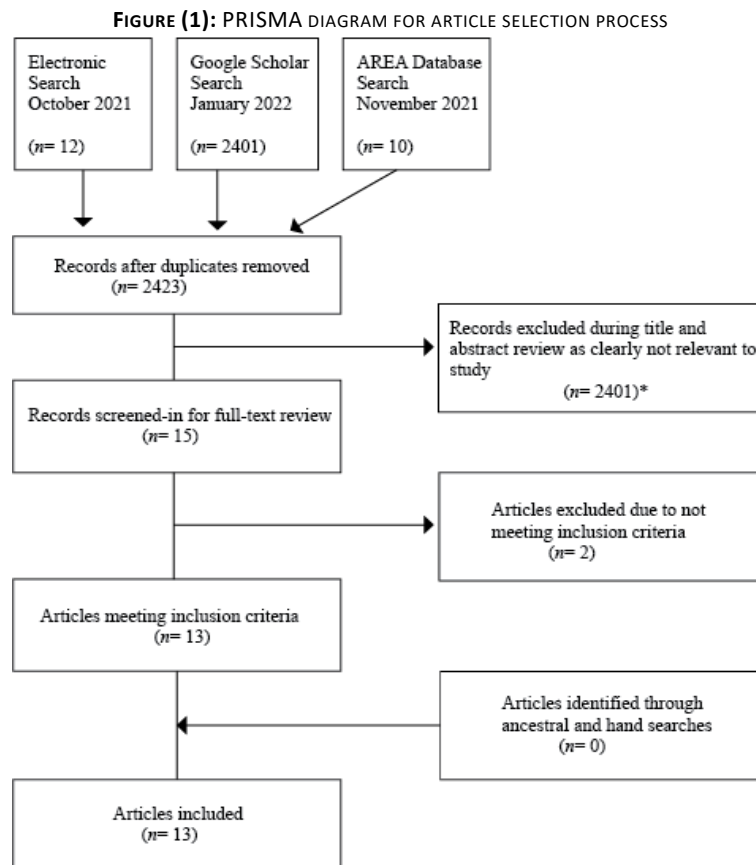
### Articles Identified via AREA Database

We also reviewed the AREA Database to identify articles meeting inclusion criteria. Articles included in the AREA database met the following search criteria: (a) include participants attending U.S. institutions of higher education; (b) represent empirical research providing sufficient methodological detail to provide confidence in qualitative coding practices and quantitative analyses; (c) include analyses of at least one study abroad outcome: academic, intercultural competence, personal and developmental wellbeing, and career; (d) published in peer-reviewed journals between 2002 and August 2021. The authors conducted electronic searches at multiple timepoints of the following databases: Academic Search Premier, APA PsycINFO, Business Source Premier, and ERIC. Search terms included all possible combinations of the following: (Field 1) U.S.A. OR USA OR “United States” OR American, (Field 2) “study abroad” OR (sojourner AND student) OR "educat\* abroad", and (Field 3) college OR university. The authors identified 1576 potential articles after duplicates were removed via the electronic searches. The authors then reviewed titles and abstracts to determine whether the article had the potential to meet inclusion criteria; interrater agreement was 90%. Articles passing this stage (n = 687) were downloaded and the full text was reviewed for inclusion. The authors identified

267 articles meeting inclusion criteria via the electronic search. Included articles reference lists were searched and reviewed for additional articles. This process continued iteratively as new articles were identified. Ultimately, the authors identified 373 articles meeting inclusion criteria, and coded a range of article information (e.g., participant demographics; program location, duration, and content; method; and outcomes). The full method used in the systematic search is outlined in Brunsting et al. (2023).

Eight articles in the AREA Database met inclusion criteria, of which seven were new and one (Michl et al., 2019) had already been identified through the focused electronic search. At this point, 10 articles met inclusion criteria between the two searches.

### Broad Electronic Search Via Google Scholar



Note: The studies excluded from Google Scholar were an additional search layer after the comprehensive search conducted for the AREA Database (Brunsting et al., 2021). As Google Scholar aggregates any academic resource, many of the returns were not research studies, were focused on other subjects with either study abroad or LGBT+ mentioned tangentially or not the clear focus, and many were not US domestic student focused.

The first author conducted a broad electronic search on Google Scholar to ensure all potential literature was identified, using the following search combinations individually: (a) LGBT + “Study Abroad”, (b) Queer + “Study Abroad”, (c) “Study Abroad” + LGBT, and (d) “Study Abroad” + Queer. A total of 2401 articles were identified via this electronic search. After a title and abstract review followed by a full text review of potential included studies, an additional three studies were identified for inclusion, bringing the total included studies for the current study to 13.

### Ancestral Review and Journal Search

After identifying 13 articles meeting inclusion through the electronic search process, the first author conducted an examination of the works cited/bibliographies to identify additional potential articles; however, none were identified that meet inclusion criteria via the ancestral review process. The first author also conducted an article-by-article search (frequently referred to as a hand search) of *Frontiers: International Journal of Study Abroad*, as multiple articles meeting inclusion criteria were published in this journal. This involved sorting through each issue within a date range of Fall 1995-February 2022. Thus, the authors are confident that the comprehensive, systematic, and expansive search provided all reasonable likelihood of identifying relevant articles meeting the focus of the current review.

### Coding

We tabled each of the included articles, coding them based on demographic data, queer identity categories, location/destination, methodological enquiry, and purpose of study. We recorded key information from the articles, including: (a) total number of participants, genders, races, ethnicities, and LGBT+ participants (including breaking down the total number of gay, lesbian, bisexual men, bisexual women, transgender, non-binary/non-conforming/genderqueer, and queer); (b) binaristic coding for destination to one or multiple locations: East Asia/South Pacific, South Asia, Europe/Central Asia, Latin America, Middle East/North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and North America; (c) binaristic coding for study focus, whether it was LGBT+ focused, included LGBT+ participants, or LGBT+ relevant (e.g., studies on HIV/AIDS; Diesel et al., 2013); (d) recorded the qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods methodologies in text format; and (e) extracted the key findings from each article. Finally, once the primary author coded the included articles, a graduate research assistant conducted reliability to minimize data miscoding.

## Results

Upon systematically examining the literature, 13 studies met inclusion, according to the parameters highlighted in our methodology and our first research question. The 13 included articles were coded to incorporate a variety of variables to ensure a holistic understanding of the critical information relevant to the wider field of study abroad, the impact of LGBT+ identity during the study abroad sojourn, methodological implications, and study focus (see Table 1 and 2).

TABLE (1): KEY INFORMATION FROM ARTICLES MEETING INCLUSION CRITERIA

Authors	Participants	Location	Methodology	Findings
Paola & Lemmer (2013)	<b>Total:</b> 6 F: 4; M: 2 A-A/B: 1 Multiracial: 1 Nat. Am.: 1; White: 4 LGBT+: 1	South Africa	Qualitative: case-focused analysis and issue-focused analysis	The sole lesbian student suffered heightened culture shock, because of her identity, and had unsuccessful experiences fostering relationships within the broader LGBT community. She focused her efforts on fostering community on campus as it was an apparent safer space for her.
Kimble et al. (2013)	<b>Total:</b> 218 F: 218 A-A/B: 3; API: 27 Hispanic: 10 Other: 14 White: 164 LGBT+: 17	Europe, Australia, Asia, Central and South America, Africa	Quantitative: Cross-sectional	More than 38% of female students studying abroad received unwanted sexual attention, were sexually harassed, or were sexually assaulted in large part perpetrated by host country men. No reflective data surrounding LGBT identity.
Diesel et al. (2013)	<b>Total:</b> 8 F: 8; Asian: 1 White: 7 LGBT+: 0	Cameroon	Quantitative: quasi-experimental pre-/post-test	Short-term study abroad coupled with an immersion course on HIV/AIDS helped students accept individuals living with this condition and advanced sympathy for the nursing students on the program.
Brown (2014)	<b>Total:</b> 1 F: 1; White: 1 LGBT+: 1	South Korea	Qualitative: Activity Theory using interviews and reflective journaling	Lesbian identification affected the language learning process through class teaching materials, perceived homophobia in South Korean culture, and through self-agency to display sexual orientation through dress and style.
Bryant & Soria (2015)	<b>Total:</b> 19,715 F: 11,379; M: 8,197 NBNCGQ: 47 Transgender: 22 Queer: 70	No country data	Quantitative: Unclear	Students who self-identify as gay, bisexual, or lesbian are more likely to participate in study abroad than their heterosexual peers. Trans, queer, and questioning students are more drawn to service learning, volunteering, and internship experiences abroad, while

	A-A/B: 1030 API: 3104 Nat. Am.: 78 Multiracial: 887 Hispanic: 2273 Other: 887 White: 14,616 LGBT+: 1,174			bisexual, questioning and queer students seek out cross-cultural or informal study abroad options.
Muszkat-Barkan & Grant (2015)	<b>Total:</b> 10 F: 5; M: 5 Jewish: 10 LGBT+: 2	Israel	Qualitative: grounded theory	Lesbian student made full attempts to integrate within the community but often felt excluded or not accepted by Jewish culture, yet saw the value in plurality of belief systems and used these unacceptances as means to foster discussion.
Willis (2015)	<b>Total:</b> 19 F: 19; A-A/B: 19 LGBT+: 2	Morocco, Ghana, Spain, Italy, Ireland, Nigeria, England	Qualitative	Lesbian and bisexual female students experienced homophobia while studying in Sub-Saharan Africa. Because of these experiences, the students did not feel comfortable or safe coming out.
Kronholz & Osborn (2016)	<b>Total:</b> 122 F: 91; M: 26 Transgender: 1 A-A/B: 7; API: 3 Multiracial: 5 Nat. Am: 1 Hispanic: 27 Other: 6; White: 79 LGBT+: 1	Spain, England, Italy, Panama, China, Israel	Mixed methods: statistical procedures and CIP Theory	Students studying abroad were more likely to think positively about future careers, but they were unable to identify specific career tracks in general.
Apgar (2018)	<b>Total:</b> Unclear	Germany	Qualitative: Unclear	Digital mapping of LGBT+ spaces in Berlin allowed students to apply socio-historical understandings of LGBT+ history and equality initiatives on a 3-week study abroad.

Michl et al. (2019)	<b>Total:</b> 3 F: 2 NBNCGQ: 1 Latinx: unclear White: unclear LGBT+: 3	Europe, Asia	Qualitative: Thematic Analysis	Trans and gender expansive students experienced reluctance to come out, their genders were policed, lacked a sense of queer community, experienced sexual harassment and sexual assault, received little information surrounding their identity within the host culture; however, they all celebrated their experiences abroad and would study abroad again.
Pai & Wilson (2019)	<b>Total:</b> 121 F: 71; M: 50 A-A/B: 25; API: 6 Hispanic: 75 Nat. Am.: 1; White: 13 LGBT+: 1	Unstated	Mixed method: Quant pre- & post-trip survey; Qual reflection question in e-Portfolios	Acceptance of different perspectives on LGBT+ identities but associates this position with religious background and young age.
Mnouer (2020)	<b>Total:</b> 1 M: 1; Latino: 1 Hispanic: 1 LGBT+: 1	Morocco	Qualitative: Narrative Inquiry	Understanding and reflecting on self-narratives help students make meaning of their time abroad and upon re-entry to their home country.
Donahue & Wise (2021)	<b>Total:</b> 7 M: 3 Transgender: 1 Queer: 3 A-A/B: 1; Hispanic: 2 White: 4 LGBT+: 7	Bolivia, Uganda, India	Qualitative: Phenomenology	LGBT+ students in service-learning programs chose to disclose identity amongst peers, but not among host country adults (host families, bosses, organizations). Structural and social barriers affected their time and disclosure of identity. Students took a "learner" centered approach to integration about their identities. Language was a barrier as they were not well-versed in language and/or no grammatical constructs to avoid gender.

Note: A-A/B = African-American/Black; Asian/Pacific Islander = API; F = Female; NBNCGQ = Non-Binary/Non-Conforming/genderqueer; M = Male.



Authors	LGBT+ Participants	LGBT+ Focused	LGBT+ Relevant
Paola & Lemmer (2013)	<b>Total:</b> 1 Lesbian: 1	No	No
Kimble et al. (2013)	<b>Total:</b> 17 Lesbian: 5; Bisexual (F): 12	No	No
Diesel et al. (2013)	<b>Total:</b> 0	No	Yes
Brown (2014)	<b>Total:</b> 1 Lesbian: 1	Yes	No
Bryant & Soria (2015)	<b>Total:</b> 1174 Bisexual: 409 Lesbian and Gay: 429 Queer: 70; Transgender: 22 Genderqueer: 47	Yes	No
Muszkat-Barkan & Grant (2015)	<b>Total:</b> 2 Lesbian: 2	No	No
Willis (2015)	<b>Total:</b> 2 Lesbian: 1 Bisexual (F): 1	No	No
Kronholz & Osborn (2016)	<b>Total:</b> 1 Transgender: 1	No	No
Apgar (2018)	<b>Total:</b> Unclear	No	Yes
Michl et al. (2019)	<b>Total:</b> 3 NBNCGQ: 3	Yes	No
Pai & Wilson (2019)	<b>Total:</b> 1 (unclear breakdown)	No	No
Mnouer (2020)	<b>Total:</b> 1 Gay: 1	Yes	No
Donahue & Wise (2021)	<b>Total:</b> 7 Gay: 2; Bisexual (M): 1 Transgender: 1; Queer: 3	Yes	No

Note. F = Female; M = Male; NBNCGQ = Non-Binary/Non-Conforming/Genderqueer

TABLE (2): LGBT+ PARTICIPANTS AND STUDY FOCI

## LGBT+ Identity: Gender and Sexual Orientation

The second research question queries the role LGBT+ identity plays across the included studies. Of the 13 studies, only two articles included gay men

(n = 3) and bisexual men (n = 1) in their studies (Bryant & Soria, 2015; Donahue & Wise, 2021; Mnouer, 2020), where the total LGBT+ participants of all included scholarship totaled 1209. Bryant and Soria (2015) include a larger sample of gay or lesbian (n = 429) and bisexual (n = 409) participants; however, it is not possible to discern an exact number, as they do not disaggregate based on gender (see Table 2). From these 2 articles, only Mnouer (2020) focused explicitly on gay male identity during study abroad; the remaining studies included lesbian or bisexual female participants. The only study that did not have any LGBT+ participants but was still included in the study is Diesel et. al. (2013), which was included in the literature review as the study's focus on HIV/AIDS directly pertains to the queer community. As pertains to gender, four studies discussed transgender, genderqueer/non-binary/gender-non-conforming, or queer participants (Bryant & Soria, 2015; Kronholz & Osborn, 2016; Michl et al., 2019; Donahue & Wise, 2021). Again, Bryant and Soria did not include a further gender breakdown with regards to presented gender identity, so it is inconclusive as to how many FTM or MTF participants participated in their study. Only Michl et al.'s (2019) study explicitly focused on gender identity and/or gender-non-conformity for LGBT+ participants.

### Study Focus

As highlighted above, we coded a range of variable factors, including study focus, in order to understand how many studies focus explicitly on queer students' experiences abroad, providing us insight into how much or how little attention has been attributed to this space. This includes both the findings of the included studies and the focus on LGBT+; had LGBT+ participants but did not focus explicitly on LGBT+ participants; or, focused on issues relating to LGBT+ identity, but not necessarily a direct focus on LGBT+ participants. Five of the thirteen studies directly focused on LGBT+ as the central component (Brown, 2014; Bryant & Soria, 2015; Michl et al., 2019; Mnouer, 2020; Donahue & Wise, 2021). Six studies had LGBT+ participants but did not focus directly on LGBT+ identity as their main findings (Kimble et al., 2013; Kronholz & Osborn, 2016; Muszkat-Barkan & Grant, 2015; Pai & Wilson, 2019; Paola & Lemmer, 2013; Willis, 2015). Apgar (2018) investigated the impact of queer historical spaces in Berlin, working directly with a student who identifies as part of the LGBT+ community, but it is not clear where the student falls within the queer spectrum of identities. Diesel et al. (2013) did not have any LGBT+ participants; however, the work focused on nursing students exploring the HIV/AIDS epidemic in

Cameroon to assist students with their perceptions around individuals with HIV or AIDS, which by extension in the U.S. would include working directly with queer populations that have HIV or AIDS. Thus, understanding how LGBT+ participants pertain to the studies' foci and/or how the academic content relates to health and identity issues surrounding queer communities speaks to how the scholars centralize notions of LGBT+ identity.

### Race/Ethnicity

Although research question two focuses specifically on LGBT+ identity, race and ethnic identity were integral variables across the studies. Twelve of the 13 articles provided participant race/ethnicity information (see Table 2), which is a higher percentage (92%) than the 38% of study abroad articles including race/ethnicity published between 2001-2021 in the AREA Database (Brunsting et al., 2021). Throughout the 13 studies, the largest segment of participants was white, consisting of 74% (14,888); Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders represent the second largest group of participants with 16% (3,140) across the 13 studies; African-Americans/Black students were the 3<sup>rd</sup> most represented group with 5% (1087). Native Americans were the most underrepresented with only 0.4% (81) of the participants. Although Bryant and Soria (2015) draw from a large participant sample taken from the Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) survey data to conduct their study, they did not, however, separate out the total percentage of study participants who studied abroad, so the figure is somewhat overrepresented across all races and ethnicities. The total number of students included in their study that studied abroad in some capacity is 46% (9,274). It is therefore impossible to calculate the exact number of participants based on race or ethnicity across the 13 studies. Furthermore, their study does not indicate the races or ethnicities for those who identify as part of the queer community, so it is unlikely to determine an accurate picture of who these students are racially/ethnically or their queer status. Despite providing total percentages for each racial or ethnic category, it would be guesswork to calculate an accurate figure even with these provided numbers.

### Common Findings and Research Gaps

The key finding and research gap central to all 13 studies is the underrepresentation of gay and bisexual male students as participants in study abroad scholarship. Only two studies represent gay and bisexual male students (Donahue & Wise, 2021; Mnouer, 2020). However, other findings and research gaps have emerged, which begin to answer research questions three and four.

RQ3 focuses on common findings and RQ4 questions the research gaps that emerge across the 13 studies. Common findings that arise from the studies center on destination, homophobia/transphobia, community policing, and sexual assault, while research gaps center on homophobia/transphobia and methodology.

## Destination

Study abroad site is varied across the 13 studies. East Asia, Europe/Central Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa represent the most visited regions of the world for these studies with mentions across five different studies each; Latin America and Middle East/North Africa (MENA) also had heavy participation rates represented across four studies each. The two most underrepresented regions were South Asia (one study; Donahue & Wise, 2021) and North America, including Canada (zero studies). Sexual orientation and gender identity surfaced in some of the responses regarding place, particularly present in the works of Apgar (2018), Brown (2014), Donahue and Wise (2021), Michl et al. (2019), Mnouer (2020), Paola and Lemmer (2013), and Willis (2015). For each of these studies, sexual orientation, particularly lesbian and gay identities, warranted homophobic responses from the local culture (Willis, 2015) or required the student to remain closeted due to safety concerns and the illegality of being gay (Mnouer, 2020). Destination and host culture language also made the notion of gender identity more challenging, as the local language is innately gendered (grammatical gender), which rendered more fluid identities challenging to discuss (Michl et al., 2019). Gender expression and sexual orientation identity markers (represented through dress and physical presentation, such as shorter hair or androgynous clothing) presented challenges for Julie in Brown's study (2014, p. 10): "before arriving in Seoul, Julie made the decision to feminize her appearance by wearing more feminine-looking clothes and by shaving her legs." Further, Julie felt that "she was unable to fit into any socially legitimized female identity, unlike in the USA where 'there are people who look like me and they are dykes'."

Although the studies represent a vast reaching range of countries and regions, these challenges were not isolated to one region of the world, rather were represented across Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, MENA, and East Asia. While the students made every attempt to fit in with both their host culture and the other international students studying abroad, their sexual orientation

and/or their gender expression posed challenges locally and amongst the other students studying abroad.

### Homophobia/Transphobia

Out of the 13 articles, four (Brown, 2014; Donahue & Wise, 2021; Michl et al., 2019; Willis, 2015) explicitly highlight incidents of homophobia or transphobia, which we mean to encompass all forms of discrimination against non-cisgender identifications (e.g., transgender, non-binary, queer). For Julie, in Brown (2014), the homophobia she experienced was perceived through looks and stares from the local population in South Korea. However, as Julie feminized her appearance, along with her integration into the international student community, she began to refigure her presumptions that South Korea was an innately homophobic country. In Willis' (2015) study, two female students experienced homophobic responses to advances made from local host country men in Ghana and Nigeria, where their denial of advances made towards them made them reassess their previously held assumptions around fitting in within an African country. Michl et al. (2019) illuminate the experiences of transgender and gender-non-conforming/genderqueer/non-binary students' experiences in Europe and Asia, where some of the students experienced hostility and harassment from the local culture. This is consistent with the findings in Kimble et al. (2013): "perpetration of nonconsensual sexual contact was primarily carried out by nonstudent local residents (86.8%)," (p. 428). Finally, Donahue and Wise (2021) highlight the experiences of multiple students who either withheld their identity to their host families or local work for fear of retribution or came out and fielded questions around their identities. Some students remained closeted the entire duration of their experience as they witnessed anti-LGBT sentiments in the local culture, at their internship, or within their host family. The only transgender student in Bolivia was victim of transphobia at immigration control at the airport, because they did not match the gender identity in their passport. However, despite this abuse at the airport, the transgender student was open with their host family who were supportive and accepting.

### Community Policing

An element that arose in Michl et al. (2019, p. 42) which is worth noting is the community policing (described as "gender-policing") certain students experienced from members within the queer community: "gender-policing was more violent in their host country than in the United States." The student who

experienced this gender-policing stated that “it was honestly, mainly queer men.” This finding from Michl et al. (2019) is important to highlight, as transphobia can be exhibited by those from without and within the LGBT+ community, which further emphasizes that queerness is not a monolith. Although this was specifically an incidence of gender-policing, by proxy, it is a form of intra-community policing that illuminates the norms and structures inherent to a community that is malleable, amorphous, and formed of various identities. Moreover, it reinforces how queer communities reify heteronormativity through homonormative systems and stratifications, instituting intracommunal hierarchies, rigid social norms (e.g., erotic capital; Hakim, 2010), reinforcement of “passing” (i.e., appearing to be straight or emulating straightness; fitting within the gender binary), and focusing on neoliberal pursuits (e.g., buying a house, getting married, having a corporate or well-paying job, fitting in with the straight community, assimilating into society).

### Sexual Assault/Rape

Homophobia and transphobia were not only expressed through verbal actions, but also through physical and sexual assault and rape. Kimble et al., (2013) and Michl et al. (2019) are two critical examples within the included literature that highlight students who were victims of physical and sexual assault and/or rape.

### Methodology

Eight of the 13 studies employed qualitative methods; two studies utilized a mixed methods approach; and the remaining three were quantitative. Of the three studies employing quantitative approaches, only one study (Bryant & Soria, 2015) was explicitly focused on the LGBT+ study abroad experience; the remaining two included LGBT+ participants in the study (Kimble et al., 2013), but their identity was not a critical component, or did not have any LGBT+ participants at all (Diesel et al, 2013). Those using qualitative methods (Brown, 2014; Donahue & Wise, 2021; Michl et al., 2019; Mnouer, 2020) employed a variety of methodologies: activity theory using interviews and reflective journaling, thematic analysis, narrative inquiry, and phenomenology. The remaining studies that employed mixed methods and qualitative were not focused directly on the LGBT+ experience during study abroad; rather, their identity was peripheral to the aims of the studies.

## Discussion

RQ1 focuses on the volume of research studies that intersect LGBT+ and education abroad, whether explicitly or through an exploration of pertinent issues directly affecting the broader LGBT+ community. After narrowing down the total included articles to 13 studies, we were able to understand that little focus has been placed on LGBT+ and U.S. university global mobility programs. Five of the 13 studies were explicitly focused on LGBT+ experiences abroad. Highlighting the importance of further research in this area, Bryant and Soria (2015) suggest that queer students are more likely than their heterosexual peers to participate in education abroad. Moreover, in the six articles that included LGBT+ participants, their identities were not a critical factor, rather a chance occurrence that had cursory mention or relevance to the overall article with some of the studies not including any relevant data or insight into how participants' self-identifications impacted their experiences. As highlighted in the results section, there were eight key common findings and research gaps across the articles, including: gender/sexual orientation, sexual assault/rape, community policing, homophobia/transphobia, country destination, methodology, study focus, and race/ethnicity. Critical findings drawn from the results are that more studies need to examine the experiences of gay and bisexual male students, community policing can impact those students who fit outside the gender binary, and more quantitative research should be undertaken.

Below, we will further expound upon the results section, providing suggestions for future researchers and practitioners investigating queer students' experiences abroad. The areas that we examine further are: (a) gender and sexual orientation, (b) gay/bisexual male participants, (c) intersectional identities, (d) country choice, (e) campus climate and SERU data, (f) methodological approaches, and (g) community abroad.

### Implications for Researchers

#### LGBT+ Identity: Gender and Sexual Orientation

As other studies have highlighted of U.S. (Salisbury et al., 2010) and other contexts (Cordua & Netz, 2021; di Pietro, 2022; Van Mol, 2022), gender based on participation is unbalanced, with the majority of students studying abroad being primarily cisgender female students. Because women are more likely to participate in study abroad over men (IIE, 2020), questions arise around

whether or not the program options, country destinations, and the social sphere in which men exist limit their participation in traditional study abroad programs. Despite this, across all of the studies, there was a higher proportion of transgender, non-binary, gender non-conforming, or genderqueer participants (99 total students). Most of these trans (inclusive of non-binary, non-conforming and genderqueer) students are accounted for in Bryant and Soria (2015), but Kronholz and Osborn (2016) and Donahue and Wise (2021) also included trans students. Interestingly, Kronholz and Osborn's study focused on the influence of study abroad on future career trajectories but did not explicitly focus on LGBT+ identity in their analysis, whereas for Donahue and Wise, queer was intrinsic to their study. This begets questions about how these students came to study abroad, particularly for Donahue and Wise, because in their study, they highlighted experiences in non-traditional locations (India, Bolivia, and Uganda), which pose additional barriers for queer students, particularly those that do not conform to traditional modes of gender expression; we discuss these barriers in more detail below.

Because Bryant and Soria (2015) did not distinguish between gay and lesbian students or account for gender when considering their bisexual participant data, an exact number of gay or bisexual men could not be obtained. Therefore, it is critical to examine what is driving the higher number of trans student participation. Furthermore, it is critical to engage male students, and particularly gay and bisexual (male) students to ensure they have more representation in the overall study abroad process.

### Gay/Bisexual Male Participants

The most underrepresented student across all the studies are gay and bisexual men. There were a total of four participants that were explicitly identified as gay and male or bisexual and male. Again, Bryant and Soria do not disaggregate their bisexual or gay/lesbian categories, so an exact number cannot be ascertained; however, there is one article (Mnouer, 2020) that centralizes the voice of a gay male participant travelling to Morocco. Donahue and Wise included two gay male students and one bisexual man. Due to this dearth of scholarship, there is a critical need not only to expand research studies centralizing LGBT+ participants, but an even more pressing need to understand the time spent abroad by gay/bisexual and male participants. Since "bisexual and gay or lesbian students were significantly more likely to study abroad compared to their peers," (Bryant & Soria, 2015, p. 97), the focus and attention



in scholarly work on study abroad has privileged other areas of inquiry, rather than examining why this could be, what they experience while studying abroad, what their motivations for studying abroad are, and how better to engage these students during their times abroad, preparing them for their travels, and helping them to integrate into the local host culture. Although institutions have created resources available to queer students, there is still greater work to be done, not just for the broader queer community, but specifically gay/bisexual and male students.

As stated previously, integrating excursions and infusing the curricula with LGBT+ history and culture is incredibly important, but it is also extremely important to centralize gay/bisexual male contributions to that history and local culture, reduce heteronormative assumptions around passing (read, “straight acting”), and consider the impact of country selection. This is especially crucial as there are 69 countries that outlaw gay sexual orientation expression (through the sex and relationships, for example), including Egypt, Jamaica, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Uganda, Uzbekistan, and Tonga, to name a few; many of these countries have the death penalty in place for gay and, by extension bisexual, men: Afghanistan, Brunei, Iran, Mauritania, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, and Yemen (Botha et al., 2020). The experiences highlighted in many of the studies that include LGBT+ participants in some of the countries included in the list provided by ILGA (2020) centralize female students (lesbian and bisexual women), and in many of these countries, same-sex sexual activity between two women is not explicitly prohibited by these draconian laws, and therefore may not experience the same legal actions that their male counterparts could.

### Intersectional Identities

For the four studies that explicitly focused directly on LGBT+ identity as a key component of their research study on time abroad, racial and ethnic distribution of participants aligns similarly to IIE’s OpenDoors data (2021). However, only four of the articles (Brown, 2014; Michl et al., 2019; Mnouer, 2020; Donahue & Wise, 2021) provide clear racial and ethnic demographic information for their study participants. As stated above, Bryant and Soria (2015) do not provide a clear breakdown of LGBT+ students’ racial/ethnic makeup. It is clear that future research must include better demographic data in their scholarship to provide a more holistic picture of who is studying abroad, their experiences, and how their intersectional identities factor into those experiences. For example, in Willis’ (2015) study, students who believed their

racial identity would provide them a space to “fit in” in Ghana or Nigeria, no longer being a minority race as they were in majority black countries, received homophobic responses to their professed sexual orientations (lesbian and bisexual women), ostensibly challenging their previously held assumptions about “fitting in”. Conversely, where white gender expansive students experienced transphobia or community policing from within the queer community, they may not have had to experience racial or ethnic micro-aggressions that the black/African-American students experienced in similar European/Western study abroad destinations (Willis, 2015).

That being said, intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1988) plays a significant role in how students exist within their home communities as well as within their host countries. The experiences, even from those within the same queer communities, will differ greatly due to a variety of other social and economic markings.

#### Campus Climate and SERU Data

One of the underdeveloped areas in the topic of LGBT+ student study abroad can be the potential effects of institutional features. For example, Bryant and Soria (2015) found that LGBT+ students do not necessarily hesitate to participate in study abroad compared to their peers. However, their sample was collected from large-research intensive universities, and the applicability of the findings to other types of institutions, such as community college or liberal arts college, has not yet been established.

Additionally, scholars have not examined the association between the campus climate of a home institution and LGBT+ student study abroad participation. Campus climate for LGBT+ students is positively associated with the general academic engagement of those students (Woodford & Kulick, 2015). Nevertheless, little is known about whether a similar relationship appears for study abroad. For example, one may be interested in whether a positive campus climate may influence LGBT+ student participation or the destination of study abroad. That is, we recommend scholars to further examine the potential factors of institutional characteristics as well as student-level factors. Understanding the institutional-level elements that encourage or discourage LGBT+ students from joining study abroad should be critical to creating a campus environment where those students can engage in any academic activities, including study abroad.

## Methodological Approaches

Across the 13 studies, there is a wide range of qualitative modes of analysis and methodological framing, with no one methodology being most employed. There were a total of eight studies that employed qualitative methods, three that used quantitative modes of analysis (Bryant & Soria, 2015; Diesel et al., 2013; Kimble et al., 2013), and two mixed methods approaches (Kronholz & Osborn, 2016; Pai & Wilson, 2019); only one of the three quantitative studies focused exclusively on LGBT+ identity (Bryant & Soria, 2015). This indicates that there is a clear need for future research to employ quantitative methods to capture broader data around the LGBT+ experience abroad, beyond Bryant and Soria's query into whether queer students are studying abroad. Furthermore, because Bryant and Soria analyzed pre-existing data from SERU's national survey, there needs to be explicitly LGBT+ driven cross-sectional and longitudinal studies conducted to begin understanding a plethora of questions surrounding not only queer identifications in the study abroad process, but also their motivations, their sense of community formation (or the lack thereof), social and cultural integration, and queries around their safety within their host communities, but also their perceived acceptance amongst other students studying abroad. Moreover, the imbalance of qualitative and quantitative modes of inquiry suggests that what scholars are most interested in is the stories behind student experiences while abroad, indicating that further mixed methods research would balance understanding larger numbers of experiences from those LGBT+ individuals during their abroad period, but also provide qualitative sampling to highlight some of those personal narratives as representative of the larger data pool drawn from a quantitative approach. Additionally, ethnographic and participant observation methods would provide insight into experiences as they occur, rather than having students draw from memories that may or may not have been masked, altered, or forgotten. Despite the researcher/subject positioning inherent to ethnography, the method/methodology could serve as a legitimate tool to allow student participants to remember and relive their experiences through the joined experiences with the researcher and be codified in scholarship that could provide the subject with an agentic voice, especially if the researcher takes care to espouse non-colonialistic positionings while weighing/respecting the importance of interpersonal relationships built between the researcher and subject. Furthermore, it is imperative that the researcher understands the balance of closeness versus distance between researcher and participant

although this is dependent on the type of ethnography employed (e.g., “going native”; O’Reilly, 2012).

### Limitations and Next Steps for Research

Although this is the first systematic literature review on LGBT+ abroad from U.S. institutions, it is not without limitations. First, despite our systematic approach, it is possible that extant studies were not identified that might meet inclusion criteria. We encourage researchers to ensure future publications more clearly report participant demographics, especially with respect to LGBT+ identities to support progress of the field. Second, we did not include master’s theses or dissertations. Third, we did not focus on potential influence of duration of the study abroad experience on participants. Excluding duration of study as a variable was intentional as the critical focus of the literature review centers on the relevant themes arising from the scholarship, of which study length was not a central component of the studies. However, we encourage future research to consider how length of time abroad may have unique influences for LGBT+ students.

While we outlined a range of possible directions practitioners and researchers may take throughout the discussion section, it is important to highlight three specific areas for future directions in practice and in research. The first area is reducing heteronormative assumptions when designing and implementing study abroad programs, which is particularly important in the advising component of study abroad. What this means for those in this profession is that practitioners make every effort to reduce gender -assumptions surrounding a student’s identity. For example, limiting questions around significant others, not assuming that everyone has opposite sex attraction. Furthermore, in the overall design of programs, helping faculty to implement lessons that would include critical cultural and historical sites relevant to the LGBT+ community. Although not every space will have queer histories, adding additional excursions or embedding queer theorists and scholars into the curriculum will provide a lens through which to view history from non-normative perspectives.

The second area that is integral to understanding the lived experiences of queer students and their time abroad is to conduct research that hinges upon quantitative measures. While surveys can yield excellent results, this should not be the only measure by which greater understanding can be made. Using

institutional data— such as Bryant and Soria (2015) did through the SERU survey – could be instrumental in how quantitative approaches may be designed.

Finally, employing a mixed method approach in study design would be the most effective protocol to facilitate greater understanding of LGBT+ experiences in education abroad programming, generating both quantitative and qualitative data that can be used to provide a more holistic insight into queer participants of global mobility. This could apply not only to study abroad but also to international students studying in the U.S. or other countries who self-identify as LGBT+. Moreover, specific qualitative approaches such as ethnography would illuminate those experiences as they happen, reducing the burden on participants to retell their experiences through memory. Ethnography is an ideal way to immerse the researcher within the group, inviting participation with the students in their daily activities, allowing the scholar to critically examine how LGBT+ students live their multiple identities beyond their home campus.

## Implications for Practitioners

### LGBT+ Identity: Gender and Sexual Orientation

We recommend that practitioners and faculty incorporate LGBT history into program and excursion design, with excursions to local socio-cultural and historical sites tied directly to the LGBT+ community. While these could be standalone programs aimed explicitly at those within the queer community, the practicality in filling a program—especially at smaller institutions—could prove ineffective; thus, incorporating LGBT+ community-related elements into pre-existing programs could prove useful. Moreover, engaging campus LGBT+ groups to gain their insight into how to motivate LGBT+ students is a critical means to increase queer student access and participation. Finally, infusing program curricula and excursion foci with LGBT+ scholars, history, queer theory, and queer culture could prove to be a useful means to not only encourage these targeted students to participate in greater numbers, but also provide a contextualization and point of reference for cisgender and heterosexual students to glimpse into the queer community to better understand their LGBT+ peers.

### Intersectionality

Practitioners should increase their awareness of how host cultures may receive queer minority students, but also gain a better understanding of the

racial/ethnic makeup of study abroad destinations, as well as the reception of non-white students within the multilayered social strata of their choice location. For example, the hostility towards Islam in certain European countries may impede successful integration within the host culture, but students may also identify as both Muslim and LGBT+. How those identities play out in the student's choice destination should be weighed by both administrator and student. Capobianco (2020) offers a similar suggestion, albeit through a queer theoretical lens, entreating practitioners to re-examine their micro-level policies and procedures, attuning their approaches to advising, marketing, and programming to the needs of sexual and gender minority students. Furthermore, resources aimed towards LGBT+ students would play a major role in guiding students during their exploration phase; the resources should not only consider the majority represented students, but also those racial and ethnic minority students that wish to explore destinations that are majority white and/or Western. The ILGA (2020) is a useful and accessible resource that scrutinizes the tolerance towards the LGBT+ community in each country; it can be used in tandem with other data that elucidates race/ethnicity and intra-racial/ethnic relationships.

### Country Choice

Country selection has been explored in some detail throughout this article; however, it is an incredibly important component of the study abroad process that should be at the forefront of both the student and the study abroad administrators' minds. As highlighted in the previous sections of the discussion, there are inimical barriers not necessarily experienced by cisgender and heterosexual majority students. With that said, there are other intersectional aspects of a student's identity that may be in contradistinction with the majority population of the student's study abroad destination (e.g., religious status or lack of religion, patriarchal societies, racial/ethnic identity, gender hierarchies). Despite this, there are destinations that have criminalized same-sex attraction and gender non-conformity, and in some instances as examined above, even capital punishment may be enforced. Understanding how the local culture views LGBT+ identities is critical not only to students' integration into the host country but also for their overall safety and wellbeing during their time abroad. Homophobia and transphobia are experienced even within "tolerant" societies: according to English charity Stonewall (2018), their LGBT in Britain - University Report found that "three in five trans students (60 per cent) and more than one

in five lesbian, gay and bi students who aren't trans (22 per cent) have been the target of negative comments or conduct from other [UK] students” (5). These statistics indicate that, even in supposedly “tolerant” societies, discrimination can and does exist, that disclosure of one’s identity plays an integral role in how other students perceive these identities, and that not only weighing up country choice is critical but so too is understanding that their host country specific regions will be most accepting and accommodating to their self-identification.

Thus, practitioners should examine their program offerings, understand the current trends in racial and queer discrimination within the host country and within that university/town/city. Although this may at first seem a herculean task, after the initial construction of such a resource, annual updates could be implemented and minimal statistical changes may occur. Furthermore, working with students to research their city/country choices, understand for themselves how to navigate these findings, and learn how to seek local campus resources at home and abroad could build their ability to approach their travel with confidence and aid them in developing academically and professionally.

### Community Abroad

Relevant themes that emerged from the studies surround notions of community formation, existing queer support networks at home, and community policing from other LGBT+ members in the local culture. In the work of Paola and Lemmer (2013), notions of race and community were at odds, where the sole lesbian student included in their study experienced rejection from the local LGBT+ community, and therefore did not form any sense of belonging amongst individuals that identified as both South African and LGBT+. Similarly, in Brown (2014), the mature student softened her appearance to blend in more with the cisgender, heterosexual local culture, as well as to form meaningful bonds with her own study abroad cohort. For some of the gender expansive students included in Michl et al. (2019), their gender identity was at odds with the local queer community, particularly from gay men, indicating that they could not integrate within their local LGBT+ spaces and social structures. Mnouer (2020) highlighted how the sole gay male student traveling in Morocco did not openly express his identity during his time abroad, reiterating the aforementioned theme of little integration into the local LGBT+ community. Finally, for the students in Donahue and Wise (2021), the majority of the participants did not come out to the local community for fear of rejection, other than one male student who was working in a local LGBT+ charity.

Recurrent throughout the included studies is students' perception of their lack of integration into the local queer culture and a stronger sense of bond with students also studying abroad. Part of cultural integration in study abroad is developing a sense of belonging amongst the local populace, which has not been demonstrated in the previously conducted research. While it is important to form lasting relationships amongst a student's study abroad peers, it is also crucial for their learning development and personal growth to form connections across cultures. Thus, practitioners could assist LGBT+ students in this process by aiding them with the research process around what to expect during their time abroad, exploring local LGBT+ events, connecting with the LGBT+ resource centers on campus, and collaborating with the local study abroad office at their partner institutions to allow students to meet with other LGBT+ host students. Fostering a sense of connection to the campus program before departure could provide a student a level of understanding of what to expect as a queer person studying at their visiting institution. Further, the student can gauge how visibility, acceptance, and tolerance is on their new campus community, but also what exists in the local community in which they will be living. However, this scenario can only work in traditional, campus-based programs, and may not apply to faculty-led or provider only programs where the student studies and lives with other study abroad participants.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this literature review uncovered 13 studies that provide critical information on LGBT+ students studying abroad. Of those articles, only five of them focus explicitly on the queer experience abroad. This indicates that further research is needed within the wider education abroad scholarship, but also within the overarching field of international education. Gay and bisexual men are a critical area of further investigation, as there were only four students represented across the 13 studies. Practitioners, faculty, and study abroad advisors should pay particular attention to how heteronormativity plays a role in the design and implementation of education abroad programming. Finally, further quantitative and mixed methods research are recommended, with a strong focus on ethnography in mixed methods studies. This will advance the field for both scholarship and education abroad in practice. Focusing on the above could prove fruitful for attracting LGBT+ students to study abroad and allow for positive experiences for those queer students.



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