Navigating Identity and Expression in a Global Context

LGBTQ+ & Allies Abroad
What do we ask ourselves when we prepare to study abroad?

• Where in the world can I study abroad?
• Will I struggle taking courses in a foreign language?
• Can I still be independent living with a host family?
• How can I make friends or get involved abroad?
• Will my courses transfer?
• How will my financial aid work abroad?
• How can I get a visa? What if my passport is expired?
• Will I struggle with culture shock?
• Is study abroad safe? How does insurance work abroad?
What are some questions LGBTQ+ individuals might ask?

- Will I be accepted?
- Will I be safe?
- Will my preferred pronouns be used?
- Will I be able to express myself?
- Will I have trouble in transit?
- Will I experience discrimination?
- Will I have support from my host university?
- Will I disclose my gender identity or sexual orientation to my host family or friends I may meet abroad?
What is your “study abroad drag?”

- For many students, study abroad can be a time of reinvention or personal discovery.

- What personality traits, ways of being or acting within a space, or other unique attributes might you adopt throughout your study abroad experience?
The LGBTQ+ Experience Abroad

What is it like:
• Adjusting to life in your host country
• Living with a host family
• Learning to operate in a new language
• Putting your “home” identity into context abroad
Activity: Regional Dilemmas

- Break into groups—each group will be assigned a scenario

- Examine how you think you would respond to this scenario
  - You can approach the question either from the perspective of the individual or from the perspective of an ally

- Base your response on your study abroad region specifically
  - Ex. How would you react to this situation on-site in your host country?
  - Ex. How might I assist a fellow student experiencing this situation in your host country?
Activity: Regional Dilemmas

1. A student who identifies as gay is two weeks into their study abroad experience. Although they were initially just excited to be in a new place, the “honeymoon” stage has worn off and the student is beginning to notice some cultural differences that may take some getting used to. Imagine what these differences might be (positive or negative) and how the student might approach them. For example, people in the host country might be more or less open about sexual preference and/or gender identity. How would that impact the student on a day to day basis?

2. A student who identifies as transgender has been assigned to live with a host family. They are nervous about how their new host family will react to their gender identity and the student is not sure if they want to disclose this information to the family or not. How might the student handle this situation? Consider that how you might approach the situation may differ depending on your individual comfort level.

3. A student who identifies as gender fluid is having trouble adjusting to life in their new host country. The student has been regularly harassed while walking from their housing to classes due to the way they choose to dress and present on a given day. It has gotten to the point that the student’s grades and emotional state are deteriorating—they have considered withdrawing from the program and returning to the U.S.

4. A cis individual is going abroad for the first time. The student has not travelled extensively outside of their home town and is surprised by the cultural differences they witness abroad, particularly local customs and practices surrounding LGBTQ+ identity. How might they reconcile their more familiar, home identity with foreign and perhaps confusing concepts they have never experienced before? What are some ways they could learn about and adjust to their new environment?
Discussion

• To what degree did region/location influence your responses?

• Do you feel that your response or reaction is appropriate, or were you unsure how to respond in the moment?
  • If so, what research might you conduct in order to feel more informed or prepared?
SEXUAL ORIENTATION LAWS IN THE WORLD - 2019

From criminalisation of consensual same-sex sexual acts between adults to protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation

The data presented in this map is based on ILGA's Human Rights Annual Report 2019. This data is not always up to date and does not reflect all countries.

Protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation

- Criminalisation: Prohibition
- Household registration
- Limited / Discriminatory Protection
- No Protection

Legal recognition of families

- Adoption of children
- Same-sex marriages

Criminalisation of consensual same-sex sexual acts between adults

- Up to 15 years of imprisonment
- Up to 3 years of imprisonment

Legal barriers to the exercise of rights

- Legal barriers to registration or operation of organisations focused on LGBTI rights
- Legal barriers to the recognition of same-sex marriage
- Financial barriers to access to goods and services

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Dos and Don’ts

DO

• Research attitudes in your host country before departure
• Know what resources are available to you and who to contact in the event of an emergency
• Think about the best way to respond in moments of crisis

DON”T

• Assume that attitudes towards gender identity and sexual orientation in the U.S. are universal
• Let your concerns go unspoken
• Let a cultural misunderstanding put you in a dangerous situation
Attitudes Towards Queerness: Doing Your Research

Where to look:

- The State Department’s LGBTQ Travel Guide
- ILGA.org
- CET’s Diversity and Inclusion Page
- Diversity abroad resources
- Your host university or program provider
- Returned students

What to look for:

- Laws surrounding gender identity and sexual orientation
- Cultural norms and practices re: presenting your identity or sexual orientation in public and private spaces
- Cultural norms and practices surrounding love and dating
Difficult Situations: Transphobia in Russia
Difficult Situations: Transphobia in Russia
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lQnKs7uges&t=1s
Discussion:

What were some of the root causes of this cultural clash or misunderstanding?

What might Peppermint have done to mitigate this situation or to protect herself in an unfamiliar environment?

What are some key takeaways from Sasha’s experience living as a queer individual in Russia?
Global Queer Identities

- How can you use your time abroad to learn not just about your host culture, but about the iterations of LGBTQ+ community within that culture?
- How might your experience abroad impact your perceptions of LGBTQ+ culture in the United States?
How to be an Effective Ally

• Awareness: Be aware of norms or bias that give certain people advantage or visibility while marginalizing others.

• Knowledge/Education: Begin to understand vocabulary, concepts, policies, laws, and practices and how they affect LGBTQ+ people.
  • Use preferred pronouns

• Skills: Acquire skills by attending workshops and conferences, consulting people in advisory capacities, and role-playing with friends or peers.

• Action: Show camaraderie and solidarity on a regular basis.
Resources Available to You

Scholarships and Student Guides:
- GoAbroad's LGBT Student Guide
- State Department's Travel Guide
- ILGA Trans-Legal Mapping Report
- The Advocate
- NAFSA The Rainbow SIG
- Scholarships for LGBT Students
- CET Diversity and Inclusion
- Diversity Abroad

Building Community Abroad:
- IES Abroad's Finding Community
- Global Gays
- Global Pride Calendar
Identity-Based Workshops

HEALTH & SAFETY
Qatar Ballroom 212
Learn about health, safety, and associated risks while abroad from non-US perspectives.

LANGUAGE HACKS
Kendall Cram 213
Gain awareness of useful language learning strategies and enhance language learning.

LGBTQ+ & ALLIES ABROAD
McKeever 210
Safe and fulfilling international experiences for LGBTQ+ students and allies.

LIVING LIKE A LOCAL
Stibbs 203
Maximize language development, manage homestays, and build relationships across cultures.

POWER AND PRIVILEGE
Rechler 202
Conceptualize how identity might impact experiences and interactions abroad.

THAT'S WEIRD
Race 201
Examine the dynamics between new experiences, language, stereotypes, and social media.