

Gays Going Global:
Institutional Scripting and Inclusion of Homonationalist Student Identities in Study Abroad

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ABSTRACT

Previous research has discussed the extension of social, economic, and political rights, including same-sex marriage, to the lesbian, gay, and bisexual communities. Yet, as Duggan (2002, 2003) and others argue, these sexual rights are extended only to individuals on the condition that they conform to the pre-existing heteronormative framework. Puar (2007) argues that this new normativity, called homonormativity, is part of a larger nationalist project that constructs and defines the terms of national belonging by extending sexual citizenship to the “good gay citizen.” One way that individuals can work towards their inclusion is through consuming homonationalist “prepackaged experiences” that spread American ideals through travel. One example of this includes study abroad programs, where students serve as representatives of the home nation by spreading skills, culture, and ideologies to the international realm through subtle actions. Preparatory orientation programs serve as a sight where students are instructed on how to be responsible representative citizens of their nation (Virginia Tech Global Education Office 2014). Utilizing analysis of a study abroad website, participant observation of an orientation program, and eight interviews with study abroad staff and lesbian, gay, and bisexual identified students, this study examines how study abroad perpetuates homonationalist motives and ideals through the construction and inclusion of the “good representative student.” I find that by privatizing and excluding sexuality from the study abroad experience as a “non-factor”—claiming that it is a matter of what students *do*, not who they *are*—homonationalism can be considered a consequence of current orientation practices.

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*This is for anyone who has ever felt less than “normal.”
It gets better.*

Normal is overrated anyways.

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Introduction

In the foundational piece “Thinking Sex,” Gayle Rubin (1984) argued that the normalization of (hetero)sexuality cuts across multiple systems of privilege and oppression and is used to regulate the actions, beliefs, and preferences of all people. The normalization, or normativity, of (hetero)sexuality is a product of the

social division between the dominant heterosexual majority and subordinate homosexual minority... [that] has been maintained, until recently, by primarily repressive practices. These practices create the idea of the heterosexual and the homosexual as antithetical human types and enforce the normative status of heterosexuality by means of polluting, suppressing, and isolating the homosexual. (Seidman 2010:321)

Through heteronormativity, or how the human social world organizes around heterosexuality, a moral hierarchy of good and bad sex is created, which Seidman (2010), Duggan (2002), and Puar (2007) argue works not to eliminate the homosexual, per se, but to preserve the division and power of the heterosexual norm.

Recently, however, an apparent “inclusive” shift has occurred, where previously denied sexual rights have been extended to the lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB)¹ communities including same-sex marriage, adoption, equal housing, and occupational protections. Duggan (2002:172) defines this ideological and politicized shift as the “(new) homonormativity,” referring to a “politics that does not contest heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency, and gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption.” These sexual rights, Duggan (2002) continues, are only extended to certain LGB individuals “on the condition that every other key aspect of the gay self exhibits what would be considered ‘normal’ gender, sexual, familial, work, and national practices” in order to strengthen heteronormative hegemony and social boundaries of acceptability (Seidman 2010:324).

Puar (2007) argues that these rights and subtle forms of comportment are policed in order to include certain individuals within the larger nation. Called *homonationalism*, or a homonormative nationalism, this process constructs and defines the terms of belonging to the nation by extending sexual citizenship to the “good gay citizen.” Only those lesbian and gay individuals that uphold the ideology and practices of the nation including homonormative values of marriage, work ethic, democracy, and neoliberal, globalized consumerism are included within the community. This serves, however, as a double-edged sword: by defining who belongs to the nation— who “we” are—these boundaries also define, by omission and exclusion, those whom “we” are *not*. In other words, the homonationalist inclusion of the “good gay” does not dismantle the boundaries of the national community, but rather serves to perpetuate the markers of difference. The inscription of the homonormative citizen into the national narrative perpetuates the ideology and identity of nationhood; only those willing to conform to the nationalist framework are included.

One way that Duggan (2002) and Puar (2007) emphasize that individuals can work towards their inclusion is through consumption and travel. Both serve as patriotic duties that improve the economy and spread national ideologies in a world where the United States is seemingly losing its competitiveness due to a “flat playing field” in the neoliberal and globalization era (Parker 2011). Individuals actively consume a nationalist ideology surrounding the meaning of life, identity, values, and “prepackaged experiences” that standardize the American way of life, and in turn, this helps define the national community (Pike 2000). One example of this includes global education² in schooling (Baumann 2013; Bolen 2001; Davies and Reid 2005; Dolby 2007; Parker 2011; Pike 2000; Roman 2003). By studying abroad, students serve as representatives of the home nation, spreading the skills, culture, and ideologies of the

community to the international realm through subtle actions. In the months leading to departure, students meet with both staff and peer advisors, attend study abroad fairs, and participate in pre-departure orientation programs. These preparatory events offer instructions and advice for students to be “responsible citizens of their nation” (Virginia Tech Global Education Office 2014) including, but not limited to, coursework, safety, and culture. How universities promote study abroad, then, is of interest to understand how national sentiments, boundaries, and identities are constructed.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how study abroad within higher education perpetuates homonationalist motives and ideals through the construction of the “good gay student.” Because education functions as an institution that socializes students into particular social roles and beliefs, it is imperative to examine how certain sexual practices are constructed as “good” and certain sexualities as “normal.” If homonormativity is a part of a larger national shift extending sexual rights and citizenship to only particular LGB individuals, then this educational homonationalist project should be able to be observed in students’ preparation for study abroad. As one purpose of these programs is to educate students on how to be global citizens and representatives of the U.S. and the university, this may involve a homonationalist component by reconstructing boundaries and policing the inclusion of the good gay student.

Therefore, this thesis utilizes study abroad as a case example to examine whether and how institutions promote the construction of an ideal “good gay student” identity during the study abroad orientation process. The data for this study are obtained through in-depth interviews of LGB undergraduate students at a southern land-grant university who have studied abroad during their course of study as well as key staff members involved in the Global Education Office. In addition, analyses of a study abroad website and orientation serve to better

contextualize the institutional scripts that are produced in study abroad. This qualitative study examines subtle patterns of inclusion regarding sexual identity and how these are constructed in accordance to homonationalism. Acknowledging that LGB students are increasingly more visible and involved in educational programs and institutions, an analysis questioning how student behaviors, ideologies, and identities are policed through seemingly abstract and minute ways is needed to understand their inclusion and improve policies and practices in higher education. In what ways is sexuality included, both overtly and covertly, during study abroad orientation? On what terms do LGB students feel included, informed, and supported in regards to their sexuality in the study abroad office? How is the ideal student identity scripted and what does that script say? Is homonormativity and homonationalism enacted through study abroad, and if so, how?

Literature Review

Normative (Hetero)sexualities

In order to distinguish between ourselves and others based on personal characteristics, we construct boundaries that allow us to define group belonging (Yount 2009). Boundary constructions, however, become problematic when value is unequally attached to differing characteristics, thus creating a hierarchy appreciating one characteristic over another, one person over another. Yount (2009) and Rubin (1984) warn that social boundaries often manifest in unequal access to social opportunities and resources, with one group rationalized as “natural” or “good” and others constructed in juxtaposition as “unnatural” or “bad.”

In distinguishing differences between sexualities, heterosexuality has been constructed as the natural, normal, and superior sexuality to which all other sexualities are compared.

Heterosexual normativity, or heteronormativity, can be defined as the institutions, structures of

understanding, practical orientations, and regulatory set of behaviors that privilege heterosexuality to be “normative, normalized and desirable, and how heterosexuality is continuously taken for granted” (Currah 2013; Rothing 2008:255). In other words, heterosexual relationships and identities are constructed and valued as the established, original source from which all other sexualities diverge, therefore justifying why they remain inferior deviations (Butler 1993, 2004). As heterosexuality is integrated into family arrangements, healthcare, occupations, and education, individuals’ lives are shaped and lived in accordance to heteronormativity. Ward and Schneider (2009) emphasize that heterosexuality and heteronormativity are not synonymous, and that to understand the latter requires an analysis of the ways that heterosexual bodies, norms, relations, and practices are articulated and naturalized in relation to nonnormative genders and sexualities through power relations. Not only does heteronormativity validate heterosexuality as the norm, but it also constructs non-heterosexual practices, relationships, and identities in juxtaposition to this norm. Non-heterosexual identities are constructed outside of the boundaries of acceptable norms and structures defined by heteronormativity, which in turn uphold the boundaries, naturalness, and legitimacy of heterosexuality. Those sexualities that do not fit the boundaries of acceptability and ideas of “natural” are thus marked as “unnatural” and “bad” and are denied the same privileges, rights, and opportunities as the favored majority.

Butler (1999) theorizes the naturalizing of heterosexuality through the performative construction of a gender-sex-sexuality tripartite system called the *heterosexual matrix*. She argues that this matrix is a “grid of cultural intelligibility” (Birden 2005) through which certain heterosexual bodies, genders, and sexualities are naturalized and normalized on the basis of “natural” biological determinism and dichotomous gender roles:

The heterosexualization of desire requires and institutes the production of discrete and asymmetrical opposites between “feminine” and “masculine,” where these are understood as expressive attributes of “male” and “female”. The cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible requires that certain kinds of “identities” cannot “exist,” that is those in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire do not “follow” from either sex or gender. “Follow” in this context is a political relation of entitlement instituted by the cultural laws that establish and regulate the shape and meaning of sexuality. Indeed, precisely because certain kinds of “gender identities” fail to conform to those norms of cultural intelligibility, they appear only as developmental failures or logical impossibilities from within that domain. (Butler 1999:23-24)

In other words, the binary concept of biological sex differences is continuously accepted and enacted as a undeniable fact thus creating two separate sexes, genders that have traits associated with corresponding sexes, and appropriate (hetero)sexual attraction between the two. As this ideology of binary sex-gender-sexuality is endlessly incorporated and enacted as a fact, the fact appears to be natural and real, though it also remains a social construction. Thus, the “reality” and naturalization of heterosexuality as an identity is constructed, setting itself up as the original, natural, and the basis for comparison. This gives heteronormativity power by allowing heterosexual behaviors and social arrangements go unquestioned, developing the expectation that all humans are naturally heterosexual, and providing the justification for discrimination and prejudice against those who are not heterosexual (Yount 2009). Consequently, those genders, sexes, and sexualities that lie outside of the matrix, Butler (1999) contends, are marked as unviable and deviant, outside of the realm of acceptability.

Not only does heteronormativity regulate and police non-heterosexuality, but it also forcefully maintains social boundaries through controlling all forms of identity, social arrangements, and behaviors. Lesbian feminist Adrienne Rich (1980) explains that compulsory heterosexuality also controls women, both forcibly and subliminally, through the structures of the family, work, and heterosexuality, as a product of male power over women. According to

Birden (2005:7), compulsory heterosexuality is “an ideology that suppresses homoerotic attraction, expression, and bonding, as well as gender expression that deviates from essentialized ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ social norms that means that range from literal physical enslavement to the disguise and distortion of possible options.” Rich (1980) discusses the practical means in which men have been historically enforced to be coupled with women including childcare, financial support, and rape. For example, she cites Catharine A. MacKinnon’s study *Sexual Harassment of Working Women: A Case of Sex Discrimination*, finding that under capitalism, women are segregated by gender in the workplace and unable to excel or become independent from men, let alone be in charge of men. Women are continuously hired into low-status, low-paying positions that are often sexualized, thus allowing men to control both women’s sexuality through sexual harassment and child-care opportunities, as well as their monetary and occupational gains, which requires women to either remain at home and depend on their husbands or endure the harassment, both of which continue heteronormativity and male power. Thus, heterosexuality not only constructs itself as the original and normative sexuality, but it forcibly defines its boundaries through political, economic, sexual, and social forces. In other words, heterosexuality, and subsequently heteronormativity, Rich (1980) argues, is not an issue of natural preference, but forceful maintenance of boundaries and control.

The New Normal: Homonormativity

Over the last two decades, researchers have noted an “accelerating series of rapid social and political changes surrounding homosexuality” including liberalized social attitudes, more frequent and more positive representations of homosexuality in the media, opening of capitalism and consumerism to certain queer individuals as a niche-market, and new forms of legal equality

including—but not limited to—same-sex marriage (Brown 2012:1065; Duggan 2002, 2003). In June 2013, the United States Supreme Court, in two landmark decisions on the same day, ruled the Defense of Marriage Act and California’s Proposition 8 unconstitutional, allowing same-sex couples to file federal taxes jointly and access military benefits, family and medical leave, and green cards (Human Rights Campaign 2013). Additionally, as of March 2015, 37 states and the District of Columbia (DC) have legalized same-sex marriage (Human Rights Campaign 2015). Beyond the courts, legislation has disbanded “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell,” a policy barring gay individuals to serve openly within the military (Office of the Press Secretary 2010), and Congress has approved the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, barring discrimination in hiring and employment of LGBT individuals (Human Rights Campaign 2013). And for the first time ever, U.S. Census data on marriage include same-sex couples in 2014 (Cohn 2014).

While this extension of rights serves to include lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals, researchers argue that they are included within the pre-existing dominant framework, rather than challenging or dismantling it (Duggan 2002; Puar 2007; Seidman 2010). Assuming that a lifestyle is accepted because of its conformity to the prevailing institutions and ideologies, rather than challenging them, Duggan (2002) explains that the homonormative “gay constituency” is anchored in neoliberal values of assimilation, domesticity, privatization, and consumption, and as such, upholds heteronormativity. Within neoliberalism, she argues, values of pro-corporation, “free” market, independence, and privatization of economic and market practices are highly valued. In discussions of neoliberalism, however, these economic values tend to be decoupled from their cultural politics, such as sexuality. Pairing the economic, political, and social effects of neoliberalism, Duggan (2002:179; 2003) describes the homonormative invocation of “a phantom mainstream public of ‘conventional’ gays who represent the responsible center” that

serves to shrink the gay public sphere that contests the current liberal framework and reroutes sexual difference to the domestic and private sphere. Differences in sexuality, in other words, are moved from the public eye and are privatized to the home sphere to perpetuate an image of unity. This process of demobilizing highly politicized and radical groups by granting access to the previously defined mainstream—shifting from liberation to privacy (Brown 2009)—is often completed through the extension of seemingly small, common-day, or even invisible rights and freedoms to those that conform to the established standard behaviors. Brown (2012:1066) advises that when conceptualizing homonormativity, one must consider how “social relations—capitalism, neoliberalism, *homonormativity*—are reproduced through the everyday practices of millions of people.” It is the minute details of these behaviors that are policed in order to control and maintain the hegemonic hierarchy that upholds heteronormativity. In other words, the particular social and political rights that are now being granted to lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals are not seen, at first glance, as acts of control because they are continually structured as the original, natural, and normal type of behavior that everyone should aspire to, yet they actively reaffirm prevailing social relations.

With the exception that the gay couple has two men or two women, the included LGB couple strives to be the same as a heterosexual couple where they “keep to themselves and their yards are immaculate” (Tolin 2003:18 as cited in Lippert 2010:41) including a private, monogamous marriage that, to an extent, follows traditional gender norms. Heteronormativity calls for the official marriage license as the marker of legitimacy, rather than unofficial domestic partnerships or civil marriages (Binnie 2004). By extending access to marriage to same-sex couples, their inclusion reaffirms traditional heterosexual norms by strengthening the value and legitimacy of heteronormativity as the only form of love, rather than accepting the wide variety

of other available sexual arrangements and practices. Additionally, as Seidman (2010) describes, this affects not only marital arrangements, but also other forms of comportment including gender roles and performance, sexual practices, family arrangements, consumption, and work organizations. Similar to how compulsory heterosexuality controls women through social arrangements, homonormativity is a form of policed control over lives with the limited extension of inclusion to lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals. How life is arranged still upholds heteronormative values and hierarchies. Within the home, for example, as same-sex couples are married, healthcare and workplace benefits are now granted to these additional couples, yet those couples still depend on the breadwinner's occupational role while the other partner is relegated to the domestic sphere.

Young (1990:139) also discusses a similar concept called respectability politics and the "professional," where modern sexuality is "repressively desublimated" through its entrance into the private sphere. In other words, distinctions between different sexual practices and identities are repressed because every person's sexuality is privatized and depoliticized in the name of unity and professionalism. This new distinction between the public and private requires individual assimilation into the dominant culture—"acceptance into the rosters of relative privilege"—by individuals taking it upon themselves to adopt and enact professional, or respectable, forms of comportment such as dress and language while simultaneously suppressing their individual expressiveness and uniqueness (read: difference) (p. 140). It could be argued that sexual respectability politics serve as one facet of homonormativity. Rather than the highly visible, confrontational politics of difference within the LGBTQ rights movement, homonormativity requires a private, individualistic politic in which the gay couple is no longer

excluded from formal opportunities to participate so long as they remain at home, complicit with the institutional, or professional and respectable, framework (Lippert 2010).

While it appears that the margins of the socially acceptable life have shifted with the incorporation of the “good gay” into the relative mainstream, these changes are a part of a larger dual movement that also quarantines and excludes the “bad gay” or queer (Agathangelou, Bassichis and Spira 2008; Puar 2007). Included in the mainstream are those who do not challenge or dismantle prevailing hegemonic heterosexual ideologies and institutions but rather expand and continually uphold the existence of boundaries through an iterative process of defining and policing who does and does not belong. Puar (2007) explains that in this dual process of inclusion and exclusion, those that are included are demobilized and privatized in order to demonize the “other” through the strengthened power and boundaries of the mainstream. Contextually speaking, the incorporation of certain gay lives has become a national project that determines to whom the rights and privileges of sexual citizenship can be extended, as well as what it means to belong to the community, while fostering an atmosphere of excellence.

Homonormativity on a National Scale

Puar (2007) highlights an apparent contradiction between the supposed extension of freedoms and rights that belong to citizens—thus allowing them to freely express and live their lives—and the regulatory scripts that control who can belong to the community.

Homonormativity acts not only as a politics of demobilized gay constituencies, to borrow Duggan’s (2002) phraseology, but also as a discourse defining and policing the borders of the American community. Puar (2007) defines *homonationalism* as the homonormative nationalism, where nationalism is devotion to the nation (Hogan 2009). To truly belong to the nation, in this

sense, requires conforming to an idealized, homonationalist identity of “American.” But America as a nation is more than a geographical body or collection of bodies within a physical territory. Hogan (2009:1) argues that nations are “discursive constructs, created and sustained, in part through ‘stories, images, landscapes, scenarios, historical events, national symbols and rituals which...give meaning to the nation.’” Nations are abstract collectivities, rather than concrete geographical locations, that allow symbols and signs to assign and communicate repeatable ideologies that are shared amongst all members of the nation. In other words, nations build upon and actively reconstruct the idea of sameness within community boundaries. The boundaries of the national community, consequently, are not physical lines on a map, but are metaphorical, social, and cultural. This lends to Anderson (1983:6-7), who argues that nations are an “imagined community:”

It [the nation] is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion... The nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind [sic]. (see also Johnston and Longhurst [2010]; Yuval-Davis [1997], [2011]; Hogan [2009] for further explanations)

We see this through seemingly mundane, yet significant, practices like language, where pronouns such as “us” or “we” are used to delineate the group and who belongs as opposed to “them” and those who do not belong (Hogan 2009). Although the members of a community will never meet everyone, they are in a sense bound together through a shared symbolic system concretized by circulating discourses of national belonging.

If all of the members of the imagined community never meet, representations of who belongs and does not belong to the community, what Armstrong (as quoted in Yuval-Davis 1997:23) calls symbolic “border guards,” are used to define group identity. These “border

guards,” Yuval-Davis (1997) explains, can identify people as members or non-members through cultural modes of dress, language, production, religion, kinship, and consumption. In the essence of the term, border guards protect and distinguish the boundary between the community and “others.” These borders, and subsequently the communities within them, are inevitably gendered, racialized, and sexualized (Hogan 2009). That is, the icons, representations, traits, experiences, and contexts central to the discourse of national identity are linked to a distinctive shared ideology that determines community belonging. Only particular ideologies that perpetuate certain ideals of gender, race, and sexuality are acceptable.

In terms of sexual belonging, the homonormative extension of acceptability within the heteronormative framework is applicable to only certain non-heterosexual individuals. These individuals are “good gay citizens” in that they are included in the mainstream, lured by promise of these freedoms and recognition, so long as their sexual differences remain within the private sphere as defined by domesticated heteronormativity. This emphasizes the neoliberal economic and political values and practices that the “good gay citizen” must embody. The gay individual is a “good citizen” of the mainstream community by being a stably employed and productive, contributing member of society through work ethic, paying taxes, following laws, voting, and public service. The “good gay citizen” does not depend upon the government for assistance; he or she exemplifies the American Dream where anybody who follows the rules and works hard can succeed (Agathangelou et al. 2008; Duggan 2002; Lippert 2010; Puar 2007). Thus, he or she qualifies to be a “good gay citizen” because he or she is succeeding in society regardless of the institutional barriers that he or she faces. By contributing to the nation and following the established norms and expectations, rather than “taking away” through welfare or other assistance, the “good gay” works towards his or her entrée into the established American image

alone, rather than collectively. The “good gay citizen,” therefore, acts as a symbolic border guard and emphasizes the discourse of belonging; the small, everyday processes of policing and including behaviors within the acceptable realm of homonormativity define the bounds, norms, ideology, and culture of the national community.

Further, the deployment of nationalism and border guards is not only about who is a part of the community, but it is about an exercise of power that justifies and perpetuates the hierarchy in which the national community remains superior. Yuval-Davis (2011:18) writes, “The politics of belonging involves not only constructions of boundaries but also the inclusion or exclusion of particular people, social categories and groupings within these boundaries by those who have the power to do this.” The establishment of belonging, in other words, is relational, in that who gets to belong is decided in relation to who does not belong. Puar (2007) defines three specific deployments of homonationalism as a politics of belonging and exercise of power including sexual exceptionalism, queer as regulatory scripts, and global dominant ascendancy of whiteness. In an iterative process, these deployments act to distinguish excellence of both national citizenship and particular sexualities through regulated scripts of conduct. In the context of post-9/11 and globalization, the significant rise in these three homonationalist deployments results from the need to perpetuate economic and military security and superiority (Parker 2011). The expansion to include the *gay* body, then, is used to argue U.S. exceptionalism on the global scale, yet this inclusion must follow homonationalist regulatory scripts such that the American identity is not threatened or changed. In order to belong, the “good gay” does not threaten the exceptionalism of the community with ideas of difference, but rather culturally and symbolically reproduces prevailing hegemonic institutions.

Puar (2007) and Duggan (2002) argue that one way that certain lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals can be included in the mainstream is through consumerism and tourism. Boccock (1993:50 as cited by Bolen 2001:183) defines consumerism as the “active ideology that the meaning of life is to be found in buying things and prepackaged experiences.” In other words, the good gay can buy their way into the national community by purchasing an all-inclusive, predefined way of life—homonationalism. As a part of a specific niche-market, the gay consumer becomes responsible for their own well-being and success by “pulling one’s self up by the bootstraps” and achieving the American Dream. The ability to unreservedly purchase, consume, and travel as an openly gay American is an expression and perpetuation of American nationalism including ideals of consumerism, freedom and democracy, and neoliberalism. Puar (2007:62) argues that the national identity is reoriented towards excellence through the inclusion of the “good gay citizen” and gay tourists who represent a form of U.S. exceptionalism “expressed through patriotic consumption designed to recover the American nation’s psychic and economic health.” Consumerism and citizenship are equated and reinforced through the convergence of the market and state (Puar 2007). In American narratives of nation, ideologies of freedom and independence are especially associated with physical or geographical mobility (Hogan 2009). As mobile travelers, the openly gay citizen serves as an American patriot in their own respect. By travelling as patriotic gay Americans, the American nation can be seen internationally as a mobile, modern and undeterred community that will prevail, as well as gain global competitiveness with additional worldly intelligence. This homonationalist exceptionalism is largely completed, researchers argue, through an increasingly, and counter-intuitively, internationalized educational focus including study abroad (Bolen 2001; Dolby 2007; Parker 2011; Pike 2000).

Gays Gone Global: Nationalism within Study Abroad

Study abroad serves as a special type of education *and* consumerist travel where students can embody the role of national representative and consumer purchasing prepackaged experiences abroad. In 2004, the Bipartisan Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program cited global competency and “national needs” as the core reasons for global education including globalization, economic competitiveness, national security, educational value of study abroad, and active engagement in the international community (Dolby 2007; Smith, Smith, Robbins et al. 2013). Study abroad serves as a strategic imperative for the United States: it prepares students to be global students and ambassadors of their home nation and helps students realize what it means to be American (Dolby 2004; Lewin 2009; Pattison 2010; Penn and Tanner 2009; Sison and Brennan 2012; Smith et al. 2013). Beyond students’ exposure to different social and cultural environments, students gain greater intercultural competencies; access greater international work opportunities and language skills; improve academic performance; explore roots; gain self-awareness and independence; and access leadership roles and professional development that then are brought back to the home nation to help advance the standards of citizenship (Bowers 2012; Pattison 2010; Penn and Tanner 2009; Sison and Brennan 2012).

As the number of students abroad steadily increases annually, with 283,000 U.S. students abroad during the 2012-2013 academic year (Institute of International Education 2013), the diversity of the student population still remains the same: the majority of students going abroad study in Western destinations (55%) and are overwhelmingly white (80%) and female (64%) (Smith et al. 2013). Students typically go through a streamlined process involving recruitment, advising and application, orientation, time abroad, and return (see Figure 1 for an example

flowchart) (Virginia Tech Global Education Office 2014). But no research, however, has critically examined how LGB individuals are increasingly *included* in the study abroad process.

Baumann (2013:439) states, “Schools are places where students learn to imagine the nation, and constitute sites for the banal, or not-so-banal, everyday performances of nationhood.” Schools function to reproduce, and are influenced by, the predominant framework of values and control mechanisms within the national culture (Pike 2000), arguably including values of nationalism. Bourdieu (1973) contends that schools reproduce dominant cultural rules and norms through the day-to-day processes and structures that serve to maintain social relationships. Institutionalized practices, policies, and structures of schools as organizations serve to teach and maintain the nation. As the world markets become increasingly globalized, education mirrors global ideologies with nationalist underpinnings in order to maintain national excellency and hegemonic power through the small practices and policies within the school (Baumann 2013; Parker 2011; Pike 2000). National culture provides the overall context within which teachers and school administrators “derive meaning” in education (Pike 2000). How students are taught in schools, in other words, is to serve at the function of nationalism: to carry the national culture. The student role could become embodied with a homonormative sexual identity, and in order to maintain the social order, certain students, sexualities, and practices are included within the school context based on their conduct. Through this, the student body is scripted and included through seemingly mundane, minute, and routine homonationalist institutional structures and practices.

If the purpose of study abroad is to create global citizens prepared for an interactive life after graduation, study abroad offices construct the programs to help guide and aid students towards this goal through pre-departure orientations (Dolby 2007). Study abroad literature argues

that one of the purposes of study abroad is to create global representatives or ambassadors of America, providing the “opportunity to reflect on ‘the awareness of the values and way of life of your own country, your own place in that country, and its place in the world’” (Dolby 2004:150). Study abroad enables students to encounter themselves and understand what it means to be American while including and policing certain markers of habitus and national boundaries. As students go abroad, they not only experience foreign cultures, but they also embody the role of national representative, bringing the culture and ideologies of their home to the host country. If this representativeness has validity, then one may expect that one purpose of the study abroad orientation is to create good global and homonationalist student citizens that represent the ideologies of the home institution and nation. In acknowledging the importance of study abroad and global citizenship, we must see whether and how institutions promote the construction of homonational student belonging in study abroad.

Previous research in study abroad has examined the barriers to participation and experiences of students with low socioeconomic status, racial “minorities,” and females (Brux and Fry 2010; Pattison 2010; Penn and Tanner 2009; Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen et al. 2009; Salisbury, Paulsen and Pascarella 2011; Smith et al. 2013), but not for LGB students. What is of interest when considering scripting a homonationalist identity are the steps leading up to the students’ time abroad, including recruitment, advising, and orientation. During these steps, students are consistently in conversation with the institutional ideologies, practices, and policies of the global education office. How this interaction is structured, Parker (2011:413) and Dolby (2007) argue, is based on the values of nationalism: “A resilient nationalism...suffused even those curricular initiatives that we might suspect are beyond its grasp, such as global education.” Pre-departure materials, orientations, and advising, in other words, are written and distributed

with the purpose of instructing students on how to behave as representatives of the school and nation (Dolby 2007). For example, in a fall pre-departure orientation slideshow, one school covers routine details such as passports and visas, academic credit, and packing while also covering “student conduct” citing that the student is still considered a member of the home institution wherever they are in the world. They offer advice regarding subtle forms of how students should act regarding vocalizing opinions and intonation, dining, dressing, as well as interacting with locals. A good homonationalist representative embodies and enacts these small, minute details of comportment that are constructed and taught through the orientation process. In turn, the boundaries of acceptable behavior are policed in order to uphold homonationalist ideologies.

Research Questions

Acknowledging that study abroad provides an “opportunity to reflect on the awareness and values of one’s own country and place in that country” (Dolby 2004:150), the preparatory process that constructs global citizens could also be a process that constructs homonationalist identities: scripting the “good” sexual student. No previous research has critically considered how the orientation process of study abroad encourages a kind of homonationalist inclusion through subtle forms of policed inclusion. Yet in order to understand and improve the quality, access, and inclusion of all students to education and study abroad, an understanding of whether and how these constructs are promoted is necessary. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to extend theories on homonormativity and homonationalism to examine whether and how LGB bodies are scripted and policed through compliance of certain behaviors, norms, and ideologies. I consider study abroad as a possible empirical case example to interrogate this homonationalist

inclusion, as the purpose of study abroad is to create global citizens that represent the nation. If citizenship is defined by homonationalism, then study abroad should integrate homonationalist ideologies. Thus, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How, if at all, is homonationalism enacted through the study abroad orientation?
2. How is the ideal student representative identity scripted and what does that script say?
3. How does study abroad orientation cultivate and encourage admittance and inclusion of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students?
4. On what terms do LGB students feel included, informed, and supported through the preparation for study abroad?

Methods

Overview

In order to examine how homonationalism polices the inclusion of certain lesbian, gay, and bisexual lives through the construction of the “good gay,” I utilized a case example studying LGB experiences studying abroad. According to the Global Education Office website at Virginia Tech (VT; a large southern, research-1, land-grant university), “When students of all backgrounds and disciplines explore, learn, and engage with other cultures, they begin to... understand what it means to become responsible citizens of their nation and of the world” (“About the Office,” Virginia Tech Global Education Office Website 2014, hereafter GEO Website). How does study abroad encourage a kind of homonationalist inclusion through subtle forms of inclusion? In what ways are non-heterosexual students included and accepted in study abroad? To examine the experiences of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students in study abroad orientation and question how sexuality is approached, data are drawn from in-depth interviews

with self-identified LGB study abroad students and key Global Education staff members as well as participant observation in the fall study abroad orientation, supplemented by information from the Global Education Office website and recruitment materials.³

Website Analysis and Participant Observation

I first analyzed the materials publically available on the Global Education Office website. This textual analysis serves as one form of an institutional script indicating how study abroad is constructed, marketed, and oriented to students looking to participate. Looking at the entirety of the Global Education Office website, I read for the type of language that is used to describe study abroad, written rules or suggestions for behaviors, and how participants are generally portrayed.

With some of these images in mind, I embedded myself as a participant observer in the Global Education Fall Pre-Departure Orientation on November 18, 2014. With permission from the Assistant Director of Global Education, I was permitted access to the orientation on the condition that I acted as a “participant observer” during the orientation, sitting amongst the students and participating as other students did throughout the presentation, in addition to not audio recording the orientation. As a participant observer, I was able to witness firsthand what orienting activities and information students preparing to study abroad were exposed to. I easily accessed the scene and “blended in” as a student due to my young appearance amongst the fellow students, most of which are members of the upper classes. Using a notepad and following the PowerPoint downloaded from the Global Education Office website on my iPad, I took jottings throughout the event as I focused on the range and depth of topics covered, what kind of students and faculty are present, the questions asked and their corresponding answers, and how advice differs for different groups of people and regions of study. After the event, I typed my

formal field notes to inform specific questions regarding what occurs during orientation as well as facilitate my coding and analytic strategy.

Interview Participant Recruitment

My participation in the orientation provided questions for a series of in-depth interviews with staff and LGB students. Because gaining access to research participants is difficult, convenience samples within queer research are all too prevalent, which often leads to samples with similar characteristics (Bettinger 2010). To obtain a more representative sample, I recruited participants from a variety of on-campus locations including the Global Education Office, Multicultural Office, and student groups. Emails were sent to all students who have studied abroad through Virginia Tech in the past five academic years (2008-2014), sent by staff members of the Global Education Office on December 1st,⁴ allowing for students who openly self-identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, as well as those who self-identify but have not disclosed their sexual identity publically, to be able participate in the study. Additional emails were sent to the seven on-campus groups for LGBTQ issues through their listservs sent by the organization presidents. Flyers with tear-off tabs were posted in the Global Education, Multicultural Offices, and in high-student traffic areas on campus. Additionally, a short notice was included in the weekly graduate student email about services, events, and research projects sent by the Graduate School on the listserv, as well as postings on student group Facebook and Twitter pages. All of these recruitment methods advertised the study as being interested in the study abroad experiences of LGB students, specifically looking at how the recruitment, orientation, and advisory process for LGB students was approached (see Appendix A for examples).

The staff emails explained that the purpose of the study is to understand *diverse* students' experiences studying abroad, rather than LGB student experiences—and to have them consider how sexuality should be a part of diversity. Rather than just discussing sexuality, by including diversity as a whole, we are able to compare how other forms of identity that are often more visible are institutionally policed and included through student behavior. The emails also explained that the study will attempt to understand the history, functions, and purpose of the study abroad office, as well as the role and opinions of the advisors. I chose to include staff members to gain a better understanding of the functioning and purposes of study abroad, student advising, and a more contextual history of the offices from an institutional perspective.

Study Sample

As students contacted me, I ensured that the students (1) self-identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, (2) have participated in study abroad through the school in the past five years, and (3) are eighteen years of age or older. This was necessary to construct a sample of adult LGB participants that have gone through the entirety of the study abroad process recently enough to potentially have experienced homonationalist structures. I chose to include only lesbian, gay, and bisexual students, rather than also including heterosexual and students with other sexual identities, for multiple reasons. First, there has been no previous research that critically examines the inclusion of non-heterosexual students within study abroad, thus it is interesting and possibly will contribute to a larger literature that has overlooked this population. Secondly, we are in a moment of broader culture where homonormativity and homonationalism are present. Other research has parameterized non-heterosexuality in terms of exclusion in education in classes and curriculum, for example. But, given that society is moving towards this homonationalist

inclusion in other realms of social life, study abroad is uniquely positioned to examine lesbian, gay, and bisexual *inclusion* and institutional scripting at the school, which lends to further research in other institutional settings. While heteronormativity, homonormativity, and homonationalism may impact and police other sexualities or provide an interesting comparative, by only including lesbian, gay, and bisexual students, this provides insight regarding their own inclusion on the basis of their minority sexual identity among other forms of identity and behavior.

Further, it was important that the lesbian, gay, and bisexual sample self-identified in order to ask questions about their feelings and experiences of inclusion. Sexuality and sexual identity are difficult constructs to define, and it was important not to generalize and concretize the multiplicity of sexual attractions, behaviors, and beliefs (Meezan and Martin 2008; Parks, Hughes and Werkmeister-Rozas 2008). According to The Williams Institute Sexual Minority Assessment Research Team (2009), researchers asking questions about sexual orientation need to consider if they are interested in questions regarding sexual attraction (the sex or gender someone is attracted to), sexual behavior (the sex of sexual partners), or self-identification (how one personally identifies) (see also Meezan and Martin 2008; Parks et al. 2008; Stein 1989). By including participants who self-identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, this does not limit the sample by their sexual practices, preferences, attractions, or whether or not they are “out” but does only include individuals who would potentially not have been in the previous majority, yet as they experience and conform to homonationalism, they are included.

Lastly, previous research has reported a possible selection bias in interviewing only students who have studied abroad, rather than also including those who chose not to (Pattison 2010). In attempting to understand students’ decision whether or not to study abroad based on

their sexual identity, as Pattison (2010) found, students who chose not to study abroad due to fear or exclusion on the basis of their sexual identity were not included in the sample. Unlike Pattison (2010), it was imperative that this study included only students who chose to study abroad, as I am interested in how the institution encourages a kind of homonationalist inclusion through subtle forms of policed behavior during study abroad orientation. Thus it is possible that, in order to have been included and potentially represent the nation through compliance, students might be exposed to the “good gay student” scripts during the orientation process. In other words, to examine *inclusion*, my study sample needed to have experienced the study abroad process in order to have the ability to be included.

With these parameters set, I initially received 28 responses to my call from students. Of these, ten (10) students scheduled interviews with me. These interviews were conducted between December 8th-28th ranging between 1-3 hours. Interviews were conducted either in person (n=3), via Skype (n=3), or over the phone (n=4) at the participants’ convenience and preference. Upon reviewing recordings, it is important to note here, the four interviews conducted over the phone were not recorded, as there was a technological problem with my recording earpiece. After discussing this issue with my chair and committee, it was decided to proceed with analysis utilizing the six successful recordings. Within this sample of six students, two students were graduate students during their time abroad. Students studied abroad between the years of 2010-2014, with all but one student studying during the summer session. Four students travelled abroad on VT faculty-led programs, where the student travels with a group of students from the same institution and takes classes abroad taught by a VT professor. Interview participants, three males and three females, five of which identify as white and one as Black, spent between 2-52 weeks abroad, with the average of 12 weeks abroad. Three students studied in Europe, one in

Africa, one in Asia, and one in South America, though many have previously spent time in other locations and two have studied abroad in multiple places. Within this sample, three students identified as gay, two identified as bisexual, and one identified as a lesbian, though, as I will explain in the Findings section below, many felt that defining their sexuality as one identity was limiting (see Table 1 for additional demographic data.) All names have been changed to pseudonyms and identifying information has been changed to protect the confidentiality of the study participants.

The staff portion of the sample included two key Global Education Office staff members. Members of the Global Education Office and all presenters at the pre-departure orientation were recruited by an email invitation to participate in the study, yet only two individuals accepted to participate in the study. Those that respectfully declined to participate cited inexperience in the topic to participate. Both of the two key staff participants had previously spent time abroad either for work or study, and both staff members were relatively new, yet integral, members of the Global Education Office. Both self-identified as heterosexual or straight. All other biographical information regarding the Global Education Office representatives has been omitted to ensure their confidentiality due to the office staff size being so small.

Interview Schedule

Upon agreeing on a location to meet and receiving verbal and written consent (see Appendix D), I conducted a qualitative semi-structured interview with each participant ranging between 1-3 hours long. Each interview was recorded on a digital voice recorder or Skype recorder in addition to hand written field notes taken during the interview. Utilizing a semi-structured interview format was beneficial because it allowed for me to ask a number of baseline questions regarding demographics, orientations, recommendations, sexuality, and nationalism all

while providing flexibility to probe and ask follow-up questions of the interview participants to further develop their thoughts and to direct the course of the conversation (Bailey 2007). I found that as time passed in the interviews, students recalled more information and detail, because they were relying on memory, and they would want to go back to earlier questions to provide and fill in answers.

Each subset of the sample, students and staff, were asked questions regarding their experiences and role within the study abroad experience, as well as opinions about the necessity to consider non-heterosexuality and diversity in the process of studying abroad from recruitment, advising, and orientation to students' stay away and return. Student interviews included questions regarding basic background information, their study abroad experience, sense of belonging, and ideas for institutional change. Specifically, I first asked questions regarding how students got interested in study abroad and how they chose where to study abroad; their opinions of and experiences with study abroad advisors and orientation; and if information about sexual orientation was disclosed or available when preparing to study abroad; and others (see Appendix B). Additionally, questions regarding more specific details regarding subtle forms of inclusion and behavior were asked to gauge how students' comportment and representative narratives were constructed. Questions included information about dress, relationships, gender roles, and other forms of inclusive behaviors modeled by the orientation.

Staff interviews additionally contained questions about their role in advising students in the study abroad process; the benefits and issues regarding diversity (including race and gender); institutional changes in study abroad; and how the study abroad office works more generally including the writing, planning, and implementation of the study abroad materials and orientation. They additionally were asked questions regarding how sexuality and other forms of

conduct are addressed in the office as well as how they would advise LGB students looking to study abroad.

Data Analysis

After each interview, the recording was transferred to a digital file on my password-protected computer and transcribed word-for-word within Microsoft Word utilizing ExpressScribe software. As transcriptions were completed, I listened through the recording one final time to ensure accuracy in the transcription as well as to take notes, jottings on my thoughts, and highlight key quotes from the interview. Utilizing these notes and my thesis proposal, I identified key codes that would be utilized in my analysis. While the forms of compartment within homonationalism-- and homonormativity more broadly—are subtle and difficult to see, they follow heteronormative and hegemonic rules. Consequently, I developed codes from major themes in the literature including exceptionalism, “dos and don’ts,” safety, representation, and personal responsibility, and built upon them as needed.

Transcriptions were then uploaded and analyzed utilizing Dedoose version 5.2.1, an online, cloud-based, password-protected and encrypted qualitative analysis program. Dedoose is a beneficial program to use for multiple reasons including the capability to not only code text, but also to link transcripts to “descriptors” or demographic data for easy filtering and sorting during analysis, hierarchical as well as parent/child coding, code weighting, and pre-programmed interactive charts, tables, and figures such as cloud trees and code frequencies.

Once in Dedoose, I coded the data twice: first for larger thematic sections with an open coding approach utilizing the preliminary codes from in the literature review and from emergent patterns in the interviews, and second to recode the data for any newly developed or changed

codes to ensure higher reliability using a more refined and focused coding approach (Bailey 2007). As I coded, I searched for recurrent distinct themes involving experiences being LGB-identified including coming out, feelings of inclusion, the intersectional experiences of gender, class, and race, and queer space or queer culture. Additionally, I looked for sentiments of American nationalism regarding community, identity and citizenship, social and political rights, and superiority or exceptionalism. Finally, I also examined the study abroad portions of the interviews, looking at stated “dos and don’ts” in regards to behavior, blending in, global interactions, opportunity and responsibility, representativeness, safety, and recommendations for improvement. See Appendix C for the codebook.

Upon excerpting and coding the interviews, I analyzed and organized the data in major thematic patterns regarding pre-departure orientation programs that construct and are constructed by student identities, as well as how certain students are included in the educational organization based on their sexuality and conformance to homonationalist ideologies. Of these excerpts, I utilize representative quotes, or quotes that are poignant or representative of the data, to elaborate and illustrate the following emerging themes.⁵

Below I discuss my findings in three parts: what are the institutional scripts and narratives offered in study abroad orientation; what are the experiences and opinions of LGB students of their time preparing to study abroad; and in what ways is study abroad orientation homonationalist?

Researcher Statement of Reflexivity

Queer methodology, and queer theory more broadly, is a relatively new concept and practice that has only emerged within the past thirty years. When thinking about my positionality

as a researcher, specifically the ways in which I orient my thinking and conduct my research, I align myself within the critical queer theory and methodology paradigm. Plummer (2011:203) explains, “Queering qualitative research is not so much about methodological style as a political and substantive concern with gender, heteronormativity, and sexualities. Its challenge is to bring stabilized gender and sexuality to the forefront of analysis in ways they are not usually advanced.” This is done by researching people “living daily lives” through ways of talking, feelings, actions, and bodies as they move around in certain social worlds that construct ways of living, constraints, inequalities, and exclusions (Plummer 2011:198). The role of the researcher is to highlight, challenge, question, and deconstruct these dominant discourses (Kong, Mahoney and Plummer 2003; Plummer 2011). Rather than just studying study abroad, orientation programs, and student inclusion at face value, I critically question and deconstruct this process under the lens of normativity and nationalism. Within this thesis, I purposefully sought to challenge the stabilized concept of study abroad and sexuality.

But, as Plummer (2011), Kong et al. (2003), and Bailey (2007) attest, it is equally the responsibility of the researcher to recognize their own part in the research process through reflexivity, as research is never neutral and value-free due to the natural inquiry of human values. Reflexivity requires “critically thinking about how one’s status characteristics, values, and history, as well as the numerous choices one has made during the research, affects the results” (Bailey 2007:6). Yet depending on the academic field, little qualitative research is actually transparent about the research process and reflexivity (Bailey 2007). I made the ultimate decision to include a section with my own in order to strengthen the argument and case for homonationalism and to show that any findings are a possible result of the current practices and policies in place as well as relational to who I am as a researcher and the research process itself.

In reflecting, I asked myself four questions regarding my own positionality and its effects: (1) *What were my motivations, reasons, and concerns driving me to this research?* (2) *Who am I as a researcher?* (3) *How did my position impact or constrict my interviews and findings?* and (4) *What did I do to account for or correct that impact?* As I conceptualized this project, I was coming from three separate areas of interest—intercultural competency, education, and sexuality. One of my colleagues from my undergraduate studies identifies as trans, and as he was studying abroad, he decided to keep a blog about the conflict between his gender identity and living in a foreign culture while simultaneously representing a women’s college. This concept of being a “representative” resonated with me as I questioned whether or not my alma mater supports its trans and queer students going abroad. Additionally, after my undergraduate studies where I spent four years in a affirmative and inclusive environment where churches fly the gay pride flag, the walkways are painted in rainbows, and the town has a large LGBTQ population, I left this inclusive environment as a non-identified (by choice) but on-the-queer-spectrum person to southwest Virginia. It came as a shock to me how LGB identities are included and visible in a very different way. Based on this experience, I was driven to couple my interests and questions regarding institutional support, identity, and study abroad to not only empirically discuss LGB experiences, but to critically *queer* dominant discourses in order to challenge—and to hopefully improve—practices within education regarding sexual variety.

To this extent, I entered this project as a relatively young queer student who had never studied abroad. I was able to establish a rapport with students once I came out to them, which fostered an environment of mutual understanding and safety while also providing my respondents the space to share their own unique experiences and be considered the knowledgeable one about study abroad (though my attending the orientation did help with

contextual understanding). But unlike my respondents, I was still separated by my status as a graduate student, who, as many of my respondents stated, thought about things (being sexuality in study abroad) that they never thought about. I also entered this study with a critical stance on the ways in which sexuality is constructed. I have the belief that queer is not only an *identity*, but an active identification that sits outside of the realm of normality that, related to its history, should remain visible, loud, different, and political. My sexuality, in other words, is a political stance against dominant and normative ways of thinking and acting, in relation to my gender, self-presentation, and personal affiliations. Identifying this way as a researcher, I am aligned with a certain queer paradigm that calls for a politics of difference rather than assimilation. Within my research, this personal concern and ideology of course influenced my research. From the very questions that I asked in interviews discussing sexuality (which the respondents did not naturally discuss) to the lens that I employed in my analysis, I interacted with my respondents and looked at my evidence in order to dismantle the scripts that were presented (see Note 9 regarding a personal conflict regarding the differences between my political views and those of my respondents).

That is not to say, however, that my research was biased, unethical, or unrepresentative. The manner in which I have analyzed my data and written my findings is a conscious decision to account for my positionality as a researcher. I made the decision to first include these reflections to be transparent about my analytical processes and paradigmatic frames. Additionally, I have spent significant time thinking through and justifying the methods, study sample, and explicit language that I use to protect and represent my sample (including LGB identified students as well as the use of non-heterosexual and queer terminology). I utilize “I” language throughout my findings to distinguish when the findings are based on my own interpretation compared to my

respondents' responses. Additionally, I have structured my findings so that the first two sections offer my representatives their chance to voice their opinions at face value. The final section is where I chose to apply my analytical interpretation of the evidence in addition to support from the literature to back up my interpretation. I take great care not to make grand, universal statements of truth, as there is no "Truth" regarding individual experiences, but I utilize representative quotes to suggest case examples and themes among my respondents. I believe that my role as a researcher is not to construct findings, but to give voice to the marginalized and to produce information that challenges the stabilized concepts of sexuality and study abroad. By providing the respondents' voice and then applying my theoretical lens, I believe that I provide an environment that represents the respondents as well as provide support for homonationalist ideologies.

Findings

Global Education Office and Orientation Narrative

I think that the main purpose is to keep students informed and to get them even more comfortable, uh, with their study abroad experience. It's easy to just say, "I wanna hop on a plane and go abroad," but there's a lot more to it than that. (Alex, Staff Member)

Virginia Tech is a large, historically white, public land-grant university in southwest Virginia, with approximately 30,000 students. Within this population, approximately 1,300 students study abroad annually on a variety of programs including faculty-led, exchange, direct enroll, and 3rd party programs ("About the Office," GEO Website 2014). The most popular option, faculty-led programs, takes nearly 66-75% of all students studying abroad to locations across the world where students take courses taught by Virginia Tech faculty and get direct Virginia Tech credit for their coursework ("Faculty Led Programs," GEO Website 2014). These

programs are typically shorter and are hosted over break sessions. Alternatively, students can partake in 3rd party programs, which, as Alex, a staff member at the Global Education Office stated, “We like to call a travel agency for study abroad where they set up everything: the room, the board, the school, the tuition and fee, the student just pays a direct fee to them and go on those trips.” More immersive programs include bilateral exchange programs where students “switch” places with a student in a foreign university who then attends Virginia Tech, and direct enroll programs where the student directly enrolls at a foreign university.

Like most institutions with global education opportunities, the majority of Virginia Tech students that study abroad are white females (71% and 60% respectively) who major in the liberal arts (24%) (“Facts and Figures,” GEO Website 2014). According to Ruth, another staff member in the Global Education Office, “Geographically, the majority still go to Western Europe, um, but we’ve seen increased interest in Latin American as a more affordable option.” These demographics mirror those of national study abroad statistics that Smith et al. (2013) cite, bemoaning the fact that despite the goal of becoming more globally aware of diversity during study abroad, study abroad participation remains largely *undiverse* and uniform.

Despite this uniformity, students are given a wide array of options of where to study abroad, from Thailand, to Paris, to Switzerland, to the Dominican Republic. As such, the Global Education Office serves to work with students and campus offices to make study abroad as accessible and academically relevant as possible for students (“About the Office,” GEO Website 2014). Students are able to meet with staff members of the office on a one-to-one basis either on location or utilizing satellite advising available on campus to discuss their options, concerns, and necessary steps to prepare to go abroad. One of the main ways that they help advise students is *en masse* at the semester’s pre-departure orientation program for students planning on going

abroad in the upcoming semester. As the opening quote of this section shows, the Global Education Office works hard to inform their students and take the necessary steps to prepare them to study abroad, as it is more than “merely hopping on a plane” (Alex). If there is more to study abroad than merely going abroad, then what information is critical for students to know in order to be prepared prior to departure? In this section, I discuss emerging patterns in my observations, website analysis, and interviews which reveals safety to be the main purpose and concern of preparatory programming, the structure of the pre-departure orientation, and the institutionally stated benefits of study abroad.

The Main Concern: Student Safety and Risk

One major theme that emerged throughout my study is that the key concern within study abroad preparation is student safety. All preparatory items, advice, and recommendations are in the name of keeping students safe while abroad. Alex explained to me that the office takes safety seriously, and is in fact “highly prioritized.” As such, the office makes sure to dedicate space and time to safety concerns on both the website and in the pre-departure orientation. According to the “Staying Safe” section of the Global Education Office website, while people *do* live safely abroad, students need to use common sense, or think through what would be considered safe at home, to avoid any trouble: The website asserts students should maintain an “ideal balance of calculated risks... and maintaining common sense.” We see that while the Global Education Office encourages students to enjoy their time and to explore new facets of life and culture while abroad, students need to also consider their safety. In a way, study abroad and foreign places outside of the United States are constructed and represented as risky, despite the inherent fact that it is also risky to be in the United States. For individuals who are not white, straight, and

male, there is a significantly increased chance of discrimination and violence, even in the home nation. Being abroad adds yet an extra element of risk for each and every student, not on the basis of their of gender, race, or sexuality, but rather, by being American. It is emphasized in all capital letters online—presumably to catch the attention of the student—that students do not take their American rights abroad and do not have special protections, but the office does their best to keep students as safe as possible while away from campus. Alex described this protection as a “liability”:

You know what the liabilities are, um, we have communications with legal council they tell us what the liabilities are, what we need to cover, and we know what mistakes students and our office have made in the past with, uh, information that we have omitted or forgot to mention that comes back and bites students, like not knowing that they need to do their course credit transfer sheet prior to departure and waiting to do it when they get back, um, not knowing things about culture and respecting other cultures, and not knowing things about safety. All those things I'm sure just, you know, parts of the experience and parts of this field that professionals have had to learn and now we try to keep students [from being] surprised of those things.

According to Alex, the Global Education Office—and Virginia Tech more broadly—assumes legal liability over students abroad and is responsible for their safety in particular. While students assume the risk and responsibility for their safety, the Global Education Office claims legal liability, although it remains unclear as to whom they are liable to. In a sense, the office claimed to also be at risk, as if they were at risk of legal repercussions, while students were at risk of the “foreign Other” as well as themselves. By drawing upon past experiences and mistakes as well as current legal council, the office is guided towards specific information that needs to be directed towards the students in regards to what to do or not to do while abroad. The information delivered in orientation, then, is not necessarily developed by the office, but is actually a constructed narrative by the larger institution and national community as to what concerns about safety and behaviors students should be aware of abroad.

Interestingly and tellingly, in the pre-departure orientation, the Global Education Office invited a VT Police Department officer—who is also a retired FBI agent specializing in terrorism abroad—to conduct the safety section of the orientation program. While I acknowledge that I am a researcher studying, and perhaps hyperaware of, sentiments of nationalism, within the orientation I felt off put with the presence of the police force—a department that symbolizes safety but also laws, regulations, and punishment—and a member of a threat-focused national security organization that serves to defend the United States. Despite the fact that he urged for students to utilize “common sense” about their surroundings and behavior, which would protect students from risk and harm, he continually interjected sentiments of nationalism and about being American. For example, when discussing the differences in laws that students should be aware of, he explained that “not every country enjoys the same civil rights” (Fieldnotes, 11/18/2014). While on the one hand he mentioned practical advice that students need to be aware of to protect themselves from risky situations, he also positioned the rights that the students have as *Americans* as far superior to other countries.

While the school is liable for student safety, as highlighted in the above quotes, there appears to be a contradiction in who is actually responsible for student safety. On one hand, the school is legally responsible for the students that they send abroad—though it remains unclear what they are responsible for—yet on the other hand students are responsible for their own actions and consequences. This is especially apparent in the pre-departure orientation that is structured to not only prepare students in regards to safety, but to distribute the information needed for student safety in the form of “dos and don’ts” while abroad. What, then, does it mean to orient students before going abroad? What actually happens in the orientation program?

Information from Orientation

In order to answer some of these questions, I attended the Global Education Office Fall Pre-Departure Orientation program on November 18, 2014. The event was held from 6:00-8:30 in the evening for all students going either on exchange, direct enroll, or 3rd party programs during the upcoming winter session or spring semester. It is important to note that students on faculty-led programs, which are the majority of students going abroad, are not required to attend this large orientation program, but rather attend orientation sessions hosted by the faculty leader of their specific program. These faculty members are trained by the Global Education Office and required to discuss certain elements in their faculty-led orientation programs. The orientation that I attended was in a routine, lecture style classroom and it appeared throughout the presentation that the orientation was a matter of obligation or legal liability:

Two projectors with the PowerPoint were up, and rows of tables face the front, in three sections. I choose to sit near the back in the center row, where most students (no more than 15) were sitting, and more students choose to sit as they trickle in... Alex begins speaking and welcomes all the students, with little enthusiasm from the audience. Alex keeps trying to redo the welcome until there is more of a positive response from students, in which they claim that they knows it is hard for students to be here and excited and so they need our attention and effort to keep things interesting and moving. Alex introduces the presenters and the presentation section, and gives the floor quickly to an academic administrator to discuss "Academics" first, as she had a later meeting. (Fieldnotes, 11/18/2014)

Throughout the course of the program, presenter after presenter read from a PowerPoint that was projected in front of the student audience. Previous pre-departure orientation PowerPoints were available online, so I brought an electronic copy of the spring orientation from earlier that year. I noted that, except for a few changes such as an additional bullet point or different picture, the PowerPoints were identical in structure and information including practical matters, academics, conduct, safety, health, culture, Virginia Tech requirements, and a breakout session. When I asked about the pre-departure orientation, Alex explained, "At the pre-departure meeting we go

over... all the above. ... We go over visas, passports, things like taxes, um, addresses or... your forwarding, your mail back home. So we try to cover everything we need to make sure that the student's well prepared to go abroad." Everything, to Alex, consists of any basic piece of information about what a student needs to do leading up to their departure. While some topics presented in the orientation covered students' time in their host country, most of the orientation was dedicated to stateside logistics in the final weeks of preparation. Yet, by covering everything, Alex also meant that any and all possible situations that can occur are reviewed in the orientation in order to cover their bases.

Francesca, a warm and welcoming bisexual female who studied over the summer in Europe, and Anthony, an inquisitive gay male who studied for a year in South America, were the only two students in my sample who attended the larger orientation program. In their interviews they recalled their experiences in the orientation programs regarding preparation to go abroad:

I just remember that being very basic and very much like, "Don't open your wallet on the subway." You know, just little, like teaching people not to be idiots in another country instead of how to actively engage. (Francesca)

So we met in Litton-Reeves and the director gave us some, like, some introduction and introductory speech, some jokes, um, and then we all broke up into like groups of five to ten students for each country. Um, then they told us like what their experience was some general like impressions what to expect and then they had us like ask questions, answer questions. I think we also maybe shared some contact information. ... Um, and then that was pretty much it. ... I think we all pretty much had the same ideas um about studying abroad so the student peers, when they're talking to us in the small group break out sessions they could ask like, I don't know, the typically really cool, down-to-earth, friendly people and, uh, not just think [in] sort of contractual terms of how you should behave, how not to behave. "Like this is what we did, how this works, you should probably do that." Do, um, just trying to fit in, I guess, like whatever... (Anthony)

Similar to Francesca, who claimed that the orientation was more about basic information regarding being abroad rather than about engaging with a foreign culture and experience, I found that the orientation involved more delivering information *to* students rather than an opportunity

to discuss *with* students. With the fourth section literally entitled “Practical Matters,” the orientation set itself up to be an introductory course that delivered liability information to students regarding what needs to be done, including getting a passport and perhaps a visa if needed, setting up a power of attorney, forwarding mail, filing tax returns and absentee ballots, buying plane tickets, and exchanging currency. Additionally, students were advised on more specific “dos and don’ts” that were supposed to help protect and ensure their safety. As on campus, the biggest problem for students studying abroad in regards to conduct is alcohol. One presenter, a quiet and reserved young female graduate student whose assistantship was with the Division of Student Affairs, made sure to cover specific ways in which the university expected students were and were not supposed to behave abroad:

[The presenter] takes an “avoidance” stance; such that students should avoid trouble, avoid “being the center of the situation if you are targeted.” She goes down the pre-scripted list of some tips, including understanding cultural differences, dressing appropriately with the example of longer dresses or tee shirts, speaking loudly, and traveling wisely. The PowerPoint says that women especially don’t travel alone or after dark, and [she] adds men too. She states that students shouldn’t expect to change the host culture, and that isn’t the point of going abroad. Students should learn from it and try to have a different perspective when students come back. (Fieldnotes, 11/18/2014)

Other recommendations given to students included “protect your valuable documents,” “never leave your pack or luggage unattended,” “avoid illegal drugs,” “make two sets of copies of all your important documents,” “avoid demonstrations,” “travel with a companion,” and “be aware at all times of your surroundings” (see also “Health and Safety,” GEO Website 2014). This is not paranoia, it’s good common sense.” Overall, the orientation presentation lasted approximately an hour, with no option for questions, and moved at a quick pace from one subject to the next: “do this, don’t do that.”

Only during the breakout sessions, which were led by students and faculty that have previously studied in the region, as Anthony mentioned, did the information become country- or

region-specific regarding local customs or culture. In the orientation that I attended, I sat in on the group going to Spain since I have previously spent time in Barcelona. This group also happened to have the most students of the breakouts and was led by Ruth. I noted in my fieldnotes the various topics that were discussed in the breakout group including styles of dress, drinking, culture, visas, travel and transportation, host families, and speaking Spanish. Students were advised to not “get wildly drunk” as not to “embarrass us,” and that girls should not wear shorts as it is “just not a fashion thing there” (Fieldnotes, 11/18/2014). Ruth described cultural events in Spain such as the spring festivals in the small towns, which includes lots of colorful flowers and paper mâché while celebrating the patron saints. She suggested that students find out what is important locally, to invest financially and to travel to other places. Yet, even in the region-specific group, the information still remained relatively general, as the students were all going to different locations with Spain. Ruth even suggested that students try to visit as much of the country as possible, as each area is different from one another.

The four students who attended faculty-led programs had the advantage of having region-specific orientations regarding forms of comportment. Jessica, a bisexual female who went to Europe on a language-intensive program, explained that while her informational meetings were still about the “dos and don’ts” of study abroad, they were geared to the culture in which she would be immersed:

They’re kind of just informational meetings of like, “This is what you need to pack, these are the documents you need to get.” ... It was a lot of, um, just kind of updates on, you know, “This is where you’re at, like this is where we are in terms of the planning process.” Um, we had like one meeting, I think, that was talking about like cultural norms in terms of like, you know, maybe “don’t dress this way or don’t, you know, this like type of slang isn’t appropriate there or if someone tells you this, this is what they actually mean.” Um, and there was some, like, there were a couple things that were geared towards girls like safety and things like that but it was pretty general. (Jessica)

While Jessica's orientation information was specific to the region of Europe she spent, the types of information, she explained, were still "pretty general" in regards to norms and what types of things to do. She explained to me during another point in her interview that she was warned that Americans were not necessarily liked in the area to which she was going, and so her orientation was very much about de-emphasizing her American identity. At one point, her faculty leaders suggested that if there was trouble to claim that she was Canadian, "anything but American." She was instructed to not get overly intoxicated while out and to dress conservatively for that region, so that she could not be singled out on the basis of her behavior or dress. In other words, this "general information" was still highly important and focused on forms of comportment to that area in order to immerse, or hide, within the local community in the name of safety, rather than learning about the culture itself.

Caleb, an energetic gay male who studied in France for five weeks, felt similarly about his information sessions and questioned the manner in which he was being oriented:

I guess, uh, like I cared about how should we be interacting with people? But not you know, it wasn't really a question that got brought up. It was kind of like, it prompted me from how they were talking and I was kind of getting the gist of like, should be it was the way we were saying, "Make sure you're behaving x way," but they didn't say it directly. It was more like the allusion, alluding to it. And I was like, "How should we be conducting ourselves?" because it sounds like it was the way they were wording it was different, "So how should we be doing x, y, or z?" and so they were like, "We'll have a full discussion on that at the end, of the four sessions," so... (Caleb)

When I asked about whether or not the Global Education Office had certain expectations of their students' behavior abroad, Alex explained to me that while they want students to act respectfully towards both themselves and their host countries through certain behaviors that immerses the student in the new culture such as certain ways to dress or eat, "We don't have any rules if that's what you're asking... 'You will go abroad and you will do this and you will do that.' We don't, we don't have those." Institutionally speaking, Alex argued that setting specific rules for student

behavior would limit the possibilities for students. Rather, Alex did not see that as the office's responsibility or liability. Instead, according to the webpage on preparation steps, like an online orientation packet, "Your involvement is vital to a safe, successful, meaningful international experience. How involved you become in planning and preparing for your time abroad will directly influence how well you achieve" ("Preparing to Go Abroad," GEO Website 2014). The study abroad experience is not necessarily dictated and strongly structured by the Global Education Office itself; rather, the suggestions and recommendations that are given to students in the orientation program regarding dress, drinking, and stateside preparation, primarily, are to ensure the safest experience. From there, students make of their experience whatever they wish.

Benefits

While safety is noted as the number one concern and purpose to prepare students going abroad, the stated benefits of study abroad are much more vast and tangible beyond mere safety. Given that a student is safe, arguably by following the instructed "dos and don'ts" of the orientation, they are then able to make the most of their education experience. The representatives of the Global Education Office repeatedly discussed the benefits of a "successful" study abroad experience, in which students "achieve" through their own forms of comportment, as mentioned above. Alex stated:

So you know a student who's gone abroad is definitely going to come back more globally competent than a student who hasn't. At least that's the aspiration, the hope that we have. So as an office, you know, our contribution to global citizen, global citizenry, is us sending students across the globe, um, so yeah we do that... daily. ... You know, there's data suggesting that students who study abroad have a higher likelihood of getting into their first or second choice for graduate school, students who study abroad have a higher likelihood of, um, seeing employment six months after graduation. So, you know, the benefit is, you know, whether they're able to be quantified or not, could be vast. Student may go out and find him or herself while they're out abroad, get to study more, learn more, develop all kind of networks, um, develop all kind of resume building experiences,

it all depends on what a student's looking for as far as the benefits are concerned. And the educational experience, you know, it's always beneficial to become more globally competent so...

Thus the benefits of studying abroad successfully range from not only positive memories, but also tangible and marketable benefits for the student later in life and on the job market. The Global Education Office's role in "achieving" these benefits is to send the students abroad, yet that is where their responsibility—their liability—to the student ends. It ultimately comes down to the students' experiences and behavior that will lead to these potential benefits.

Ruth shared a similar position to Alex in the sense that it is up to the student to achieve these potential benefits of studying abroad, yet, for her, it starts with the program itself:

I think that study abroad can be very transformative, extremely transformative, um, for many students maybe. I think it can totally change, you know, something like a major but it can also change career paths. Um, I think just finding a different mindset can make a person much more receptive in the future to having international friends or coworkers, um, to choosing a line of work that is going to involve more, um, I don't know, international work. But I think it can also be, I do think that there are students who find a program that, um, and... I'm not pointing fingers at any particular program. They find a program where it's very structured and very easy to go on and I do think it's possible for them to go on it, get what they want out of it, which is you know an enjoyable experience, um, maybe college credit but then to come back um with relatively little change to their person or to their thought process.

Ruth's viewpoint in the matter of benefits departed from Alex's when considering *how* students can achieve these potential benefits: they are contingent upon the type of program they attend. In her opinion, students who go abroad on "pre-packaged" programs that are highly structured or are non-immersive either by language barriers or the company in which a student keeps can potentially limit the amount of exposure to new ideas and challenges, thus limiting the ability a student has to become more "global."

Also important to highlight here is the type of language that both Ruth and Alex utilized throughout their discussion about the benefits of study abroad. Seidman (2010) and Anderson (1983) argue that language in particular serves as a seemingly mundane, yet significant, behavior

that defines boundaries and perpetuate nationalist ideologies. Both Ruth and Alex used “tentative” or “potential” language, such that “study abroad *can* be very transformative,” thus not guaranteeing the outcomes of study abroad. This could be because the Global Education Office cannot promise or guarantee a particular experience abroad or any associated benefits afterwards. But this also relinquishes the office from all responsibility and liabilities and places them squarely on the student. At this point, the office can guarantee that it has met its obligations towards student safety due to the practical, formulaic nature of the orientation. Meanwhile, the student’s experience remains completely up to them whether or not they want to follow the suggestions and use their “common sense” outlined in the orientation. As Alex astutely stated:

You know I think it’s important, you know, to to emphasize that as an office... you know, students’ safety is highly prioritized and it doesn’t matter what student group you belong to. Now I think that for me as an administrator where I would like for it to stop. Um, I think that we start taking away from the education abroad experience when we start becoming too involved in the process once they arrive, um, at their destination. ... I think it stops in teaching them how to cover their bases at home and how to make sure they’re safe abroad but other than that [tsks tongue] the line should be drawn.

The line is drawn, then, at the orientation where all students going abroad are given the same information and it then is up to them to “achieve” a “successful” study abroad.

The LGB Experience Abroad

Along with Caleb’s desire to learn how to interact with locals, what was interestingly missing from the orientation program was a mention of sexuality or sexual identity specifically and relationships in general.⁶ Only quickly mentioned in the larger orientation and online was the idea that individuals may receive additional attention or discrimination regarding sexual orientation or gender, but this was offered without recommendations or assistance. Ruth explained:

We don't necessarily assume that, that when a student goes abroad that it's that they're going to have, um, I guess we normally look at it as an academic experience definitely. You know, um, a very compelling personal experience but we don't necessarily look at it in in the frame of like a sexual or romantic experience 'cause I guess the purpose for our office and for sending students abroad is not, is not romantic or sexual and so it's just not something that we tend to address officially.

Sexuality was not discussed in orientation because, as Ruth shared, it is neither a liability of the office nor is it a guaranteed aspect of the study abroad experience. That does not mean, however, that LGB-identified students, and sexuality more broadly, are missing from the study abroad experience. In fact, while there has been little research done on the exclusive experiences on LGB students studying abroad (Bowers 2012; Brux and Fry 2010; Sanderson 2002; Stoddard 2012), that does not negate the fact that there is a special narrative or unique experiences for this population. Rather, as Ruth exemplified, sexuality is considered an individualized and personal experience that should remain in the private sphere, rather than be discussed in a more public and “academic” environment such as orientation and study abroad more generally. This privatization and erasure of sexuality lends to a homonationalist politic within study abroad orientation because non-heterosexual individuals are not explicitly excluded on the basis of their differing sexual identity, but rather are included while their differences are simultaneously relegated to the private sphere.

To understand how this limited inclusion impacts experiences abroad through policed forms of comportment and other behaviors, I discuss three major patterns that emerged regarding sexuality: (1) sexuality is neither a factor in their participation nor impacts their experience; (2) study abroad can create an environment in which students come into their sexuality; and (3) while sexuality may be trivial to their experience, that does not deny students’ desire for queer culture and community. While these experiences are in no way universal nor representative of “the” LGB experience abroad, they do serve as case examples that highlight unique differences

that can, arguably, only be found within this population. These potential experiences raise concern about possible differences from the mainstream, pre-packaged, one-size-fits-all homonormative study abroad experience, as sexuality reemerges from the private sphere back into the public sphere.

Sexuality as a Non-Factor

Almost all respondents, at one point or another, claimed that their sexuality was not a factor in their study abroad experience. Most often, this took the form of describing their sexuality as minimal because simply being in a foreign culture was more of a concern than their sexual identity or the engagement of sexual behavior. For example, Anthony explained:

I don't know about other people but for myself, I guess my opinion of all of this is that we're sort of naïve and going abroad is already enough on our plates and most of us aren't, like, thinking about relationships in addition.

According to Anthony, most students who go abroad have a lot “on their plates” to deal with. Forms, coursework, travel details, language and cultural barriers, among other things, take priority in order to live day-to-day, and, as such, relationships are not priority or even on their minds.

While it may be true that students had other, more pressing concerns about going abroad, multiple students did bring up the idea of going to a foreign country and having a romantic excursion or sleeping their way across Europe. Both Caleb and Stephen, a gay male who was quite reserved and studied in Asia for two weeks on a research project with his advisor, noted that for some students, it is not necessarily the fact that sexuality was not present, but rather that their abroad experience was structured in such a way that acting upon their sexuality was impossible, thus making their sexuality an inconsequential part of their experience.

Overall it wasn't, it wasn't a big deal because again, like um, going to that, you know, with the two people of the thirty, like regardless of your sexual orientation, no one spoke the language and even then it's kind of, ugh, it's super awkward. It's like in high school. It's like, "Oh man, like my mom's going to be gone 30 minutes after school, you should come over," kind of thing. You don't have a place to go, you don't speak the language even if you had the perfect moment, like oh my god. We are meant to be [in the] moment, you didn't have the place to go so... what can you do? (Caleb)

Everyone has this vision of going to a foreign land and meeting someone and falling in love, that sort of thing. You know, there's that whole thing. Um, and for, for LGB people like that's, like that narrative shifts, it's not necessarily the same. Um, so not that it's a big part of studying abroad, but it could be. (Stephen)

In Caleb's experience, his orientation was one of two that actually did discuss sexuality, but as he discussed with me, it was very heteronormative (Caleb's own word choice) and was geared towards men having sex with women because "it wasn't made aware that there was a 'homosexual' in the midst." He told me that his faculty leader discussed "relations" in terms of being considerate of their roommates and safety. Despite the professor's discussion about student sexuality, he continued, it was nearly impossible to have a hookup or relationship abroad because there were so many barriers such as space or language that would prevent him from having one. Similarly, Stephen argued that while there is a narrative and idealized notion of romantic love from afar, this narrative shifts or is challenged for non-heterosexual individuals largely due to the erasure of LGB sexuality. Without understanding or knowing cultural norms, practices, and spaces regarding non-heterosexuality, students do not necessarily act upon their sexual desires because they do not know how to or where, and they are at risk of stigmatization from outing oneself in another country, which can have potentially serious safety implications. In fact, while most students stated that their sexuality was a non-factor in their experience, most also said that they could imagine a situation where non-heterosexuality could have a significant impact on a student's study abroad experience when safety is concerned.

An interesting pattern emerged among the two bisexual female students who studied abroad, Francesca and Jessica, both of which happened to be in a relationship with a male partner while abroad. Both noted that because of their relationship status while abroad, their bisexual identity was not a part of their life:

I: Do you think that impacted your experience at all?

S: Not really, no. I mean at the time I had a boyfriend so... it didn't really. That part of my life wasn't all that present. (Francesca)

Francesca made sure to emphasize that her sexuality (who she is attracted to) is not a choice *per se*, while Jessica described this as a “privilege” where, because of her relationship status, she was able to pass as straight. For both Jessica and Francesca, though, their bisexuality or non-heterosexual identity disappears or “isn’t all that present” when they are with a man. While this is an interesting pattern among the bisexual respondents, this is not all that different from the other respondents. Many participants stated that while they identify as gay or lesbian, there is so much more to their identity that makes them a “normal” human other than just their sexuality. In other words, sexuality and sexual identity were just one part of who the respondents were, and so their study abroad experience was influenced by their entire sense of self, rather than just their sexuality. Caleb illustrated this, saying, “Gay doesn’t matter, it’s just who you are. That was always my, you know, my mode of operation was. I am gay but I look at all these other things I do too. It’s just [an] identifier and move on.” To my respondents, while, yes, they may be LGB-identified, there is so much more to them as a person, and thus, that one small aspect of their identity should not, and did not, influence or impact their experience abroad.

Finally, some respondents also indicated that because their sexuality did not lead to a negative experience, their sexuality was not a factor. Yet their sexuality also did not lead to a *positive* experience. Similar to the concept of “negative rights,” in which a person has the right to

be free from others interfering, respondents often utilized language to describe how they were not negatively impacted. For example, Stephen explained:

Yeah, I mean it was never, it was never an issue I guess. If that makes sense. I don't know that that does make sense. Um, I never felt discriminated against, well, 'cause no one knew but, but not that I got an impression either way, but I never felt that it was necessarily something looked down upon but it was never tolerated either. Like I never got either of those impressions so...

For Stephen, his sexual identity was never *a problem*, and he was never discriminated against. In other words, only if he is negatively impacted due to his sexual identity should it impact his experience, rather than it have the possibility of positively impacting his experience. All in all, to my respondents, while they may be sexual beings and their sexuality is a part of their identity, they believed that it had minimal influence or importance throughout their program.

Coming Into and Experiencing One's Queer Sexuality

Two of my respondents who suggested that their sexuality had a trivial impact on their decision to study abroad also stated that their overall study abroad experience was influenced by their decision to come out while in their host country. That is not to say that their abroad experience influenced their sexuality, though as Anthony explained below, he would not have come into his sexual identity without the experiences that study abroad offered him, at least not during the same time in his life:

So I, I just, um, [made] friends with one of my classmates, he's, he's actually the guy who organized our housing and he was sort of in charge of helping all the international students become adjusted to the new place. So, um, so we became good friends because we shared a lot in common like... he plays all the same songs on the piano that I do. And when he knew that, like, I play the piano, he's like, "Oh, we should, you know, we should play the piano together." So we did, um, you know, we had no idea of, uh, our, our sexuality or anything like that, it's just, um. We became good friends and spent a lot of time together and then at one... we had just come back from eating dinner and I paid for it and I was just like teasing him that I took him for a date and, and then he was sitting at the piano at the time, so he, um, played the opening bars of Liebestraume, Dream of

Love. [Laughs] So that was the first time it was like, uh, a light bulb turned on in my head, but he actually felt the same way that I felt. ... It was such a wonderful experience that I would never give for anything and I think without studying abroad. ... It's maybe one of the, it's just one of the experiences of my life that I would have to give up.
(Anthony)

For Anthony, while his relationship remained merely a platonic friendship throughout the duration of his stay, his experience is unique in the fact that he developed feelings for his friend. He acknowledged his stay in Brazil as the time in which he had his first relationship, and prior to his stay he never thought about his sexuality. As such, while his sexuality did not affect his decision whether to study abroad as well as to where, nor did it raise concerns or questions during his preparation, it did ultimately affect his overall experience.

One major issue with coming out, either abroad or stateside, is the vulnerability of exposing oneself and the need for support systems. As Jessica discussed, coming out abroad was especially difficult because one is without their personal support system, which adds more stress to the entire situation:

S: I actually didn't come out as bi until I was on my study abroad... um [it] was like during the beginning of it and I had a boyfriend at the time and so for me my main issue studying abroad was, "I'm going to be apart from my boyfriend for 8 weeks," so that actually worried me a lot for our relationship but in terms of who I was in my sexual orientation I didn't really consider it to be a factor at all.

I: Okay so you came out at the beginning or during your study abroad-... How was that experience while you were being also separated?

S: It was actually very, it was very, like, complicated because I didn't have my support system there. It was like my friends um who was like I had Skype and I had Facebook, which is also a very long Facebook messages, um... 'cause I had always been attracted to females but... I had been one of the people who was kind of like, "I'm aesthetically [attracted to] but I would never date one and then I think with some of my experiences with the girls in my study abroad, I realized that that could be a possibility in my future and I do like men as well.

So while studying abroad provided both Jessica and Anthony the ability to interact with new people and experiences that bring people to develop a new sexual identity, this is complicated with the vulnerability and stress of already being a culture and environment that is not their own.

As students previously stated, there is a heightened stress that comes with going abroad, and while some, such as Anthony, claim that relationships were one of the last things on their mind when considering studying abroad, being abroad provides the potential benefit (or stress) and environment for non-heterosexual experiences otherwise not present or visible at home.

In Search of Queer Culture, Community, and Support

Mentioned briefly above, some respondents indicated that it was not merely the fact that sexuality was non-influential during their time abroad, but the structure of their program and the nature of study abroad in general were not conducive to sexual relations. Two students in particular discussed their desire to have queer culture, spaces, and experiences while abroad, though only Caleb was able to partake in a sexual encounter during his short five weeks in Europe. He specifically sought out queer-identified individuals to connect with abroad utilizing an online hookup/social network application common within the gay male bear community called Growlr. He explained:

Grindr wasn't really working but, uh, Growlr was huge over there if you're familiar with Growlr... which is terrifying to do because it's not my scene but that was an option and open so I was able to talk to people which is pretty cool. ... I think it was the only thing with gay culture, I tried to find a, uh, I tried to find queer spaces, like, wherever I go try to find queer spaces to like try to bring people with too or whatever and check out myself but couldn't find anything, um, there was [none]. ... So um not really bragging, uh, there was only two students that were able to have relations over the trip and I was one of the two... so, um, it was weird, it was fun, it was interesting, it was a check off the bucket list. Um uh, without the details, it was really funny because the first like literally 45 minutes, you know, some people, I don't know how much you know about the, we'll call them gay dating website apps, um, there's usually sometimes at least a couple minutes small talk before relations. The problem with that is that it was probably 45 minutes because I would try to talk, and he's like, [in thick accent] "I don't understand." So we would, he had his computer here would type it in Google translate, I would type it in Google translate and he's like, "Oh yeah! [Mumbles fake French]" and I'm like, "I don't know what you're saying." He would try to explain it and he'd type it into Google translator so [sighs] so embarrassing now!

While Caleb had difficulties accessing the gay scene in person, Growlr served as a neutral interface in which any barrier such as language or culture was eliminated (somewhat) and allowed Caleb to find the queer community and the experiences he sought out. When prompted as to why he decided to use Growlr when he was in Europe for only a short period of time, he explained in a joking tone, yet with serious conviction, that he needed to have gay outlets in life: “I can only talk to straight people for so long.” To Caleb, the majority of the spaces and culture in which he was embedded and occupied while abroad were dominated by heteronormative rules and a straight culture that happens to allow gay individuals to live in it. Caleb consciously sought out an explicitly queer community because they shared a culture and history, a queer culture and history. Rather than isolating himself within the queer community, he sought to find a more inclusive community that accepted him and understood his individual circumstances on the basis of his sexual identity.

Ruby, a humorous non-feminine lesbian who studied in Africa for ten short days, also sought out queer culture, but did more so through preparatory independent. When I asked about her research, she said,

[I] usually just Google like “[Africa], gay,” ... Um, just seeing what their status is on same-sex marriage. I think it’s legal there. ... Yeah, it’s legal there and, um, seeing like [where] people go... seeing there’s like activities, they have Pride, um, they have a little gay district. I wasn’t able to go but uh our professor was able to go and tell me about her shenanigans there so...

Ruby stated that she did research not only because she was interested in queer culture (though she absolutely was), but also in order to be as safe as possible as a non-feminine African American lesbian. She stated that many people there had not seen “someone like her” and “you never know how people are going to react.” As such, her research served to provide information on queer culture for two purposes: safety and queer community. On the one hand, she desired to

read personal accounts and understand which spaces were safe for her to be herself, while on the other hand she wanted to know where these spaces were in order to be able to visit them.

Additionally, it is important to note that in Ruby's experience, both her faculty leader and local tour guide were self-identified lesbians and so not only was Ruby able to research local queer culture, but she was also able to connect with her leaders regarding places to go and events to attend. Unlike any other student, Ruby's connection with her faculty leader benefited her by giving her not only first-hand accounts that she sought out in her research, but also a support network that tolerated and even encouraged her experiences involving sexuality abroad, even though no experiences came to fruition.

While sexuality and sexual identity may be trivial or non-existent in study abroad experiences, that does not deny the possibility of sexuality's presence in study abroad. According to the students, people, regardless of their identity, were considered "normal" and included as "good representatives" so long as they followed the suggestions put forth by the Global Education Office because sexuality should remain privatized and individualized during the course of this academic experience. Despite this strong need for privatization and individualization of sexuality, we see examples of visible and public sexuality such as coming out narratives and the desire for queer spaces and relationships, which may or may not come to fruition depending on the locale and program structure. So then, what does this mean in terms of national belonging and homonationalism? Is study abroad orientation homonationalist?

Applying the Homonationalist Lens: A Re-Analysis

As the previous two sections highlighted, while the intention of study abroad orientation is to keep students safe, the manner in which orientation is conducted is a routinized program of practical "dos and don'ts" that is delivered to a general audience. As such, more inter- and

intrapersonal concerns regarding interactions and forms of minority identity such as sexuality are not mentioned because they are not considered a central part of the study abroad package. Given the above findings, we can apply a homonationalist lens in order to begin to understand the students' and staff members' experiences and opinions regarding study abroad orientation programs. As Puar (2007) argues, it is the subtle forms of comportment, or the “dos and don'ts,” that are policed in order to dictate inclusion and nationalist tropes. Reapplying the homonationalist lens suggests that study abroad orientation is almost fully homonationalist; so much so that sexuality and the LGB narrative *completely disappear* and all that is left is the “good sexless student” identity. Thus, by reinterpreting the suggested behaviors in the pre-departure orientation, as well as the purposes and consequences of study abroad more broadly, we begin to see the ways in which homonationalist ideologies are propped up. This is done through three key tensions between the “institutional script” regarding study abroad and its underlying purpose or consequential effect: the packaging of study abroad as multiple opportunities available to all students and personal responsibility placed upon student compared to a prepackaged experience that all students receive; blending in for safety and representing the university and nation; and developing global citizenship all while perpetuating United States exceptionalism abroad.

Opportunity and Personal Responsibility versus Prepackaged Experience

Study abroad is often presented to students as a realm of possibilities, and that it really comes down to the student to “make of it what they wish.” While study abroad has the potential to open doors and provide multiple benefits, tangible or otherwise, it is ultimately the student's responsibility to obtain those benefits. As mentioned earlier, this holds the student liable, rather

than the Global Education Office, for any rewards or benefits, as well as any consequences or penalties, that accrue. As Alex explained:

You know, [it] depends on how they how their personality is, what they actually do with the study abroad experience. Just kind of like it's like Virginia Tech: all you can do is give them the opportunity. It's like getting a degree. You give a student a degree, a student earns a degree and you grant the student and degree from the university but the student has to actually do something with that degree. It can sit on the wall or your can leverage it. ... The office doesn't hold your hand or have rules per se, but suggestions on how to make the best of your experience and also make it safe.

In this sense, Alex describes study abroad as a tangible experience that students can “do something” with, either by experiencing it or leveraging it in order to get the most out of it. Alex compares the office’s responsibility to that of Virginia Tech at large, and claims that it is not the institution’s responsibility for a student to achieve, but rather it remains up to the student. Study abroad is generally available to each and every student, and in fact, as Alex stated earlier, as well as the website claims, ideally every student at the university would have the opportunity to study abroad. Yet each individual has different needs and wants: some might benefit more from a direct immersion experience while others might be only able to access a short-term program. But, regardless of the individual circumstances, each student is given the same *opportunity* to study abroad by the Global Education Office. I tried asking the staff members in their interviews if there was a certain type of student that they did *not* want studying abroad to see if there was a difference between a good and bad ideal student, but both Alex and Ruth indicated that as a study abroad official, they would like to see every student to study abroad that could afford to go. In fact, the Global Education website claims that they seek “students of all backgrounds and disciplines [to] explore, learn, and engage with other cultures” (“About the Office,” GEO Website 2014). There are a wide variety of programs available for students; there is at least one program that best meets each student’s academic, professional, and personal goals. Like

“shopping” for their own study abroad experience package, the day-to-day excursions, interactions, information learned, and the benefits afterwards depend on what the student does, not necessarily who the student is: “How involved you become in planning and preparing for your time abroad will directly influence how well you achieve [your] personal and academic goals” (“Preparing to Go Abroad,” GEO Website 2014). Study abroad may be for everyone, but not everyone can do study abroad correctly.

Just as Puar (2007) argued, the “good gay” is responsible for their own well-being and success and by “pulling one’s self up by the bootstraps” regardless of their individual circumstances or any adverse experiences. Given the opportunity to go abroad, whatever that opportunity may end up looking like, the good responsible student prevails by employing ideals of individualism. Rather than rules, the suggestions given to students during orientation on how to make the best of one’s experience are merely optional to students. It remains solely the student’s responsibility, however, to choose whether or not to follow the suggestions provided to them, hence why the benefits of study abroad, as mentioned previously, remain only potential. This is seen throughout the interviews and online through the use of “can” language: according to the website for “Top 10 Reasons to Study Abroad,” which presents the potential benefits and opportunities students have available to them, “Learning abroad *can* help you develop new skills, more independence and self-confidence.” On the one hand, if the students choose to follow the suggestions and they do have a “successful study abroad”—a study abroad experience that is not only safe but it accumulates benefits for the student—then the office has not only done its job by providing the opportunity to go abroad, but also a safe, enjoyable, and beneficial study abroad. On the other hand, if the student so chooses to not follow the suggestions provided to them, then it remains the student’s responsibility and liability, not that of the office’s, because they were

given the opportunity to study abroad “right.” It is the individual student, not the office, which is held responsible to take the opportunities given to them.

While the Global Education Office does not explicitly have specific rules in how to behave, their suggestions offered both online and in the orientation sessions are structured to guide and define the most ideal type of student: the “good representative.” Regardless of a student’s sexual identity, or any other form of identity, as Alex explained, the benefits, experiences, and concerns of study abroad do not differ “no matter what group you belong to.” Duggan (2003) describes this as demobilizing difference through everyday complicit practices. As such, Alex explained that the orientation did not present any information for LGB student experiences, as there was no need to cover those topics for the entire group. Yet, there were certain types of information, or suggestions as he called it, which applied to everyone, and if there were individual concerns, those should be taken care of personally through research or one-to-one conversations with an advisor. For example, in the orientation, the orientation leaders went over in detail a list of suggestions on how to better prepare oneself for time abroad, yet no student was required to complete any of these steps beyond mandatory forms and paying tuition fees. Some of these included, “Take care of your financial obligations,” “Research airport security measures,” and “Share your travel itinerary with family” (Fieldnotes, 11/18/2014). More tellingly, however, is the manner in which the orientation put the responsibility on the student through “you” language such as “*You* need to fill out the Student Conduct Release Form” or “*You* should consider setting up a bank account.” Through the use of this language, the office is constructing structured suggestions and meeting university obligations, while also setting the student up to be responsible and liable for the experience itself. When all else failed, as Ruth

explained below, the office recommends that students do additional research to find answers to their questions:

A lot of questions do come and we have to kind of turn it around back on the student and say, "I don't know you need to go and find out..." We do that put that on... the student to, to look up that information, so we give them um the websites for where to go we encourage them to like, you know, "You have to go look at the consulates for your country [to] see what they require." ... That's something that we say, "This is your responsibility and these are the resources but you need to go and actually make that happen."

As Ruth clearly stated, the Global Education Office's purpose is not to control and dictate the abroad experience, but to provide the opportunity and resources absolutely necessary for students to be able to go out and do the actual labor independently and create their own experience. With a "can-do" attitude and a "do-it-yourself" mentality, the good, independent student is responsible to rise above to attain the benefits that are available to those who try, regardless of their identity.

Like the Global Education Office representatives, when I asked about the opportunities presented to the students and how they felt personally responsible for their own experience, they agreed that, ultimately, it comes down to the individual student's decisions to be proactive, interact with new people, and to immerse oneself in the host culture.

I think they should encourage more students to be more global, but I know they do and they do send out lots of listserv emails saying "Go study here!" and "There's this program here." So it's really, you have to take your own initiative on that. (Francesca)

It's really much how you make it, what you put into it. It's how much you decide to go and what is, is comfortable and try to experience outside of American culture and what you don't, the more you learn and the more you'll appreciate it so... it's very much on you. That's what the professor said like... "We pay for everything, everything is prepaid with our funds so it's like you don't have to do this but it will be negatively affected in your grade." Like you don't have to do it but it's like participation is a third of our grade. Like you're going there, you travelled to [Europe], why are you sitting in the hostel? You paid a lot of money to, to not do that, it's just like you need to go. (Caleb)

I think definitely turning off your electronics like for a certain amount [of time] like especially Facebook. You know, like... make time for your friends at home and family but if there's opportunities presented to you on the trip don't, like, never turn down anything

in order to stay home or never, like, say no to going out with your group of friends because, you know, you wanna have time to talk to your boyfriend. Like you're only gonna be like most people, only study abroad once. (Jessica)

Francesca, Caleb, and Jessica all discussed the idea that it is the student's "own initiative" to participate in the study abroad opportunities that they are given. Jessica highlighted that in order to truly immerse oneself, students really should try to create as much distance, or at least eliminate possible distractions, from home in order to truly "be in the moment" and to experience new things. In Caleb's experience, which Stephen and Ruby also shared, while the choice to participate and immerse was ultimately up to the student, his experience would have been hindered either by grade or by other consequence had he not participated. Caleb argued that because a student has already paid for this rare opportunity, that should be reason enough to go out, learn, and interact in the host country, but some students do not. Caleb told me of a female on his trip that did not go to a couple events and it "was reflected in her grade," but he argued, "Sometimes you just gotta power through." In this sense, Caleb waxes poetic about neoliberal ideals of individualism, where the female student should have "pulled herself up by her bootstraps" in order to succeed. In Jessica's experience, she had great difficulty adjusting to her coursework and was homesick, thus limiting her experience, and she consequently looks back with regret and takes blame for her own personal failures. To all three students, while they were all given opportunities to go abroad, it all boiled down to their own independence and own ability to succeed—the true American Dream.

While study abroad is individualized and presented as a wide array of possible opportunities depending on the student, study abroad is simultaneously packaged as an all-inclusive, cookie-cutter experience that is identical for each student. While some argued that some programs are more "packaged" than others depending on level of immersion in the local

culture, applying a homonationalist lens yields an understanding that describes time abroad as an “experience” or an object in which someone can purchase, consume, or “sell.” Bocoock (1993:50 as cited by Bolen 2001:183) defined consumerism as the “active ideology that the meaning of life is to be found in buying things and prepackaged experiences.” If consumerism and travel is one way in which individuals can purchase their entrée into the homonationalist community, then the way study abroad is packaged becomes of concern to understanding the scripting and inclusion of students through policed forms of comportment.

It became clear throughout my interviews that certain types of programs—3rd party and some faculty-led programs—were not as immersive yet more structured than other programs. This highly structured experience, as the Global Education Office representatives explained, while an option to students who desired or needed the program, does not provide the same quality of opportunities or ability for students to be independent compared to exchange and direct-enroll programs. Ruth explained that “it’s very easy to fall back on well-established programs that are comfortable for our students to go on which... provide a lot of structure for students live with other American students, take classes in English, it’s almost like they’re on a little American island in another country.” Because I told Ruth and Alex that I was interested in diversity abroad, I felt that the way in which they discussed these other, less immersive, programs was to tout the wide variety of options that also increase the diversity of student participation, yet they also looked down on the quality of certain types of programs. Even if a student could not afford the high cost of faculty led program, there was still *some* type of program that they could afford that was good enough to give the student enough of the same “package” that can yield the same beneficial outcomes. As long as the student got to ‘dip their toe in the shallow end’ of the ‘global pool,’ they would be exposed to enough ‘global flavoring’

to claim global competency.⁷ While the Global Education Office provides the opportunity to go on these less immersive trips in order to increase participation, they seem to think that these programs are not the best option for students because students are not exposed to alternative ways of thinking and interacting with non-Americans. If the point of study abroad is to be truly *abroad*, in other words, then more structured types of programs are not ideal for students to learn and grow independently of their own culture.

Despite this institutional narrative regarding highly structured programs and differences in immersion, study abroad experiences were often described as an all-inclusive or prepackaged experience. Considering that there *are* in fact legal liabilities at stake, there must be some alternative explanation and motivation driving and structuring study abroad orientation. Looking through a homonationalist lens that constructs study abroad programs as prepackaged experiences for consumption, standardizing and unifying study abroad as this black box that any student can go through and return as transformed globally competent citizens, orientation then serves as the only specific event in the process in which all students share. As such, the preparatory process is highly routinized and general in order for the office to present the same information to a wide variety of students going across the globe while simultaneously holding students personally responsible. In other words, rather than a requirement, the study abroad orientation is structured to guide students towards a specific idealized study abroad experience and student identity that is unique to the university but, overall, is the same so that any student can have the same experience. As Caleb described, his experience was something that could be “sold” and “bought:”

I liked that the shortness of the program and didn't want to do over winter break here because I wanted time at home so that kept narrowing in, and narrowing in, and narrowing in and, um, there was a couple that were in like that time frame and this one

just happened to be um, seemed, it seemed okay, ... I went to the information session. Fernando [Caleb's instructor] sold it.

In this instance, Caleb described his experience as if it is a tangible object or experience that can be boxed up and sold. The mere fact that “Fernando sold it” indicates that there is *something* to sell. What, then, is that something? Caleb was sold based on the fact that given the cost of the program, the amount of benefits, and opportunities that were afforded to him were vastly more than he could ever do on his own. Study abroad, consequently, is comprised of the listed benefits and mundane forms of comportment that students are recommended to do in order to achieve the same successful outcome.

Orientation, then, becomes the only environment where the entire package can be distributed identically to each and every individual. Francesca, when discussing her orientation program, described it as “‘my first trip’ type of info like: ‘What do I pack? What do I bring?’ You know. ‘How do I get on the airplane?’” The suggestions given at the orientation, according to students like Francesca, describe not only general and practical information, but also how the study abroad experience is so boiled down and regulated that the recommendations can be applied to every person. As such, every person going abroad needs to know how to get on an airplane, pack at least *something*, take courses, fill out particular forms, and have a passport. In other words, we see a prepackaging of the study abroad experience that is reduced down to the bare bones of what are the day-to-day, mundane forms of behavior that every student experiences. This is why, as Ruth explained earlier, relationships and sexuality are *not* discussed in the orientation: because they are not a guaranteed part of the prepackaged experience. Relationships are not necessarily the end goal or a benefit of study abroad, per se, and thus they are left to the individual and private sphere. While certain portions of the orientation are mere suggestions or potentials, they are mentioned because they become the goal and purpose of study

abroad, but they remain the consequential result of student responsibility. The question remains, then, if study abroad is a prepackaged experience of opportunities, suggestions, and benefits, in what ways is this in the name of *homonationalism*?

Blending in for Safety versus Representation

Beyond the logistical suggestions in the orientation on what forms to complete and what to pack, there are also recommendations for students on forms of comportment that pertain to not only their individual identity but also of their school and national identity. While it is argued that the purpose of studying abroad is to immerse and educate students about cultures other than their own—or learn to “live like the locals”—students are still members of their home community (Dolby 2004). Consequently, they are not necessarily renouncing their personal identity abroad, but as Dolby (2004) argues, students are simultaneously learning about their host culture and their own American identity, how foreign cultures understand American culture, and how Americans understand foreign cultures. When discussing nationalism, then, it is these smaller, more mundane forms of comportment that serve to script and police the boundaries of the “community” such as cultural modes of dress, language, production, religion, kinship, and consumption. But, as we saw with Yuval-Davis (1997) and Hogan (2009), these forms of comportment are inherently gendered, racialized, and sexualized. This is even the case, as Puar (2007) and Duggan (2002, 2003) argue, through the seeming *inclusion*, yet *privatization and demobilization* (i.e. sexuality as a “non-factor”), of certain sexual identities and behaviors. Consistently throughout all three sources of data one can see this back and forth dialogue between suggesting students to “blend in” or “tone it down” in regards to their own American (and other forms of) identity in order to remain safe, respectful, and fully immerse oneself into the host culture while at the same time also suggesting (both overtly and covertly) that students

are representatives of both the school and nation. As representatives, students were urged and expected to behave in a manner that not only does not look bad upon their home, but also to perpetuate ideals of exceptionalism and superiority abroad (see next section for more on this).

For example, Anthony described his orientation experience:

S: I do remember maybe in the orientation is one of the feelings that, uh, both, um, the, the student helpers, the student peers, and also the new students who want to study abroad, one of the big, um, ideas or questions that people have or the, the ideas that they expressed is not wanting to fit a stereotype or not wanting to continue an American stereotype for example. ... So like fit in. They wanted to know how to fit in and and they, also, they're interested in, um yeah, not making blunders. So yeah, so they're interested in fitting in the culture where they're going and learning as much about it in order to prevent people from having like stereo- being stereotyped. That was definitely one thing I remember.

I: Okay can you talk a little bit more about that? How would they recommend you to do that, to blend in?

S: Um, I think they definitely gave us particular information. For example, um, you know how to go to a restaurant or what to expect in a restaurant, uh... maybe uh some, some dos and don'ts, like don'ts as in don't be you know you're in a, you're in a country that's not your own so be on your best behavior.

As Anthony recalled, students in the orientation were encouraged to “fit in” the host culture in order not only to be able to learn as much as possible, but to avoid stereotyping people as the negative image of an “American.” In other words, by fitting in, the ideal student is working on behalf of the American community as a representative to improve the foreign image and understanding of being an “American.” In the orientation, this is done through the office’s “suggestions” of particular forms of comportment. In Anthony’s case, he recalled that the “dos and don’ts” within the orientation, such like how to order food in a restaurant.

The “Cultural Resources” guide online details the fact that people from other cultures often have a negative stereotype of Americans, often based on our pop culture. As such, the office recommends that students try to share and be inclusive in their relationships, to not demand special treatment because of their American citizenship, to not drink alcohol to excess,

to not be obvious or loud in general or about their patriotism, and to not throw money around. Another instance online, on the “Staying Safe” webpage, they recommend that students do not “dress American” by avoiding wearing “clothes with American flags (or any kind of stars and stripes), VT t-shirts and paraphernalia, baseball caps, or anything else that may single you out from the general crowd as an American.” Yet in the advertising materials, online, and even the orientation presentation, the photos used—which happen to be submissions to the annual Global Education Office Study Abroad Photo Contest—continuously depict images of students donning VT apparel in “foreign” lands enjoying their time abroad. This serves to brand the VT abroad experience and to idealize not only the opportunities available to students, but to literally pictorialize what good representatives are doing abroad.

In the orientation that I attended, the presenters gave multiple additional examples of smaller ways to behave in order to both blend in while also representing the home nation. For example, Alex recommended that students bring little “mementos” of their home, like a keychain, to give out to people abroad as a form of thank you. This act, while well intentioned, serves to give a good impression of the home community and rise above any animosity between the two cultures. In the conduct section of the orientation, especially, the presenter offered many suggestions of ways for people to blend in, such as dressing “appropriately” for the region and not drinking excessively, because, according to Alex, “You’re a Hokie abroad and you’re representing something larger than yourself. So you’re representing Virginia Tech abroad. And we expect students to actually operate accordingly.” Additionally, students were encouraged to not “wear too much ‘swag’” and go “too strong” abroad in terms of their identity and opinions, as this would perpetuate negative stereotypes and limit their ability to fully immerse themselves and restrict their ability to build networks abroad.

When I asked about more specific forms of comportment, students mainly discussed different suggestions on ways to blend in or represent the university well, rather than specific rules on how to behave. For example:

How are students supposed to behave while being abroad? Definitely in a manner that does not reflect poorly on the university. Um, they never really tell us, you know, how to, how to act. They don't say, "Be yourself," but they don't say, you know like, I don't know, they don't really give us any guidelines on that. Just, "Hey we're going here" but yeah, that's not really, that's not really a conversation that happens. (Ruby)

It was trying to avoid become victimized, victimizing, you know what I mean. Like, you know, when people travel and I, you now, see places, like, if you stick out as a foreigner and you don't know the "how to whatever" then people will try to take advantage of you. Obviously, I mean, it happens and you know in situations here so it was like, "Don't dress like American." And I was like, "Good one. I don't know what that means." So, um, essentially it's like you want to be more, you know, without saying it was like be more hipster... so you don't stand out. ... Don't... like wear shorts, I mean don't wear the long shorts because then it's clear you're American or whatever but like you see this like what are you doing like wear like just above the knee length, but men and women should wear those kinds of shorts. It's really I mean that European style kind of deal. (Caleb)

[There was this] mutual understanding that we have to perform well and behave appropriately because, you know, that is who we are, what we represent. You know, first the broad picture and then the United States and then, you know, smaller subset Virginia Tech and you want to be appropriate and respectful and paint a good picture of who we are and what we represent. (Stephen)

You're supposed to behave well. I mean, I think I recall being more, "You're not supposed to drink very much, like party a lot over there." There's certain things you have to represent well and certain things that are illegal in other countries that you can't do you can't smoke pot when you're abroad really. (Francesca)

According to the students, the suggestions on what to do or not to do abroad offered in the orientation were not explicitly defined as rules, but more broad generalizations on the overall expectations on how American students should behave. Most suggestions, such as not wearing short shorts or "red, white, blue like screaming eagle flying over," according to Caleb, or not drinking excessively, are both in the name of erasing the barrier between who Americans and the locals are as well as improving the image and perception of Americans abroad.

Like Alex emphasized earlier, the office need not hold the hand of students and tell them what to do, but rather that responsibility remains up to the students. In this sense, the more “practical” matters of the orientation such as forms or clothing or drinking behaviors direct and define the bounds of what good students and good representatives do. The “good student” is defined then as one who fits this idealized image through the role of dress, restaurant behavior, and consumption—one who is unidentifiable yet proud to be American and a Hokie, one who is responsible, one who does not drink or is political, and one who does not take risks.⁸ The “good student” in study abroad is dehumanized and becomes a representative body to go abroad and perpetuate ideologies, immerse in different competitive markets, and to come back a more developed and global citizen to help advance the home nation. The “good student,” in other words, is *included* regardless of their identity, sexual or otherwise, because the ways in which the community is defined through these forms of comportment—or border guards—suggest that America, and subsequently Virginia Tech, includes everyone and that their differences do not matter.

Global Citizens versus Exceptionalism and Global Competitiveness

This paradox between blending in and representation works together in the name of community superiority and exceptionalism. Recalling that Puar (2007) and Parker (2011) argued that consumption and travel serve as patriotic duties to improve the economy and spread national ideologies in a world where the United States is seemingly losing its competitiveness due to a “flat playing field,” the way that individuals (or students in the case of study abroad) actively consume a homonationalist way of life, helps define and uphold the national community (Pike 2000). As students are going abroad, part of the script of institutionally-stated benefits is the

creation of more “global citizens” who are “interculturally competent.” The ability to see the world from new perspectives, cultures, ideas, and ways of life, though, not only benefits students to be more globally minded, but it also benefits the university and nation through perpetuating ideals of national superiority and competitiveness in the global market. Students who go abroad learn new skills and make networks of people that then students and the home communities are able to utilize to advance their progression either in the job market or economic market. As Alex stated:

The more that we're able to, uh, connect internationally with people the more business opportunities, the more customary growth opportunities that are there so. ... Um, going abroad creates opportunities and opportunities are definitely that we in higher education want students and the United States, uh, to capitalize on. [We want students to] create the Hokie Nation network on a broader scale and you can go over to China and, you know, meet Hokies, you can go all over the place internationally and actually get to know Hokies who have uh a strong alumni connection there. I think you know what Virginia Tech does when we send students is just expanding tentacles and our reach you know worldwide.

In this highlighted quote, Alex mentioned many of the themes presented throughout the findings including opportunities, exceptionalism, and representation, all the while tying it together with the overarching goal of becoming “more global,” making networks, and “spreading the Virginia Tech name.” Going abroad gives students the *opportunity* to meet many people abroad and interact with new ideas and cultures. This spreading of the Virginia Tech “empire” through business opportunities, in other words, serves neoliberal goals of expanding markets through individualized interactions and free trade of ideas in economic terms. At the same time, while these students are learning about the world around them and realizing that there is more than the community to which they belong, they simultaneously are also acting as an ambassador abroad, acting on behalf of the university to create networks and spread the cultural ideologies and

images of Virginia Tech and the United States elsewhere. By “expanding tentacles and our reach, we are literally “[putting] our presence...on the map” (Francesca).

Other students grappled with this juxtaposition of being global while also identifying with, belonging to, and acting on the behalf of a particular community. Ruby had a lot to say on this matter, first by questioning what a global citizen even is:

I: Um, some say that one major purpose and benefit of studying abroad is to prepare students to be what they call “global citizens.” Have you heard that term before?

S: I have...

I: Where have you heard that term?

S: Um, I heard that actually in like a probably like a study abroad packet or something like that. Global Education like part of their spiel.

I: Okay. How would you define a global citizen?

S: Uh, I guess global citizen probably one that just takes into account that the lack of sameness, um, that people kind of get used to in their bubble whether it be in Blacksburg or Virginia or you know eastern coast, just whatever. Just to know that there are different things out there, different perspectives, and to being willing to do different things I guess.

I: Do you think that studying abroad prepared you to be a global citizen?

S: Uh, yes. I will say so. Um, tie it back to the experiences that I don't think I would have had otherwise. Yeah, just encounter different types of people. Global citizen now, I don't know. I never really put much thought to that. Global citizen. Just thinking about what it means to be a citizen. [It] means you're like participating in things, I guess. You're a part of something. So yeah, I guess. Global citizen be the same thing on a bigger scale. Try to participate in things globally. I don't know, I have to think about that one [Laughs].

Ruby at first recognized the idea of a global citizen from the Global Education Office “spiel,” where the concept of being a citizen of the world, to understand and appreciate differences between groups without valuing one over the other, is continually part of the study abroad script or package. Within the global education package, to study abroad means that students will also deal with concepts of global belonging. Yet, she began to question, what actually is a citizen? How does one belong to both a localized, formal community such as Virginia Tech or the United

States but also belong to the world at large? She later rectified this through understanding global citizenship in terms of global competition and superiority:

Most people outside of this country don't live like we do and, um, obviously we like to help, uh, people but also we like to help ourselves and the best way to help ourselves is to get information from other places of what has been tried and what does not work to do better for ourselves and hopefully other people too. We kind of have to go out to find those things out.

In the name of diversity and humanitarianism, like Atanasoski (2013) argues in *Humanitarian Violence: The US Deployment of Diversity*, the packaging and legitimization of humanitarian assistance, comes at a cost and with a subtext of perpetuating the United States' ideals of superiority and global power. In Ruby's study abroad experience, she was involved in multiple research projects to learn how certain people live in the context of certain environmental and development situations, but this also was for the sake of attempting to create a "solution" to local "problems" while also providing learning and networking opportunities for US students. By stating that "the best way to help *ourselves* is to get information from other places," Ruby is emphasizing the ulterior motive: to not necessarily create completely unidentified students but to use these students at the benefit of the university and nation. As Ruby concluded, "I feel like anything that the students do that's, like, considered to be good [laughs], um, the university directly benefits from that." What students do, or do not do, in other words, defines what the American community is. Study abroad orientation, while it does not strictly regulate what students do, it does serve to guide, suggest, and orient students as to what behaviors and image that the community has worldwide.

Implications, Limitations, and Conclusions

Homonormativity is the limited inclusion, policing, depoliticization and privatization of sexuality that is anchored in and upholds heteronormative assumptions and institutions through practices

of domesticity and consumption. Considering how this phenomenon of policed inclusion delineates boundaries of community—between us and them—a homonormative nationalism, or *homonationalism*, emerges through the scripting and compliance of small, mundane behaviors, norms, and ideologies. The purpose of this thesis was to examine how, if at all, study abroad orientation programs are homonationalist. Acknowledging that study abroad provides an “opportunity to reflect on the awareness and values of one’s own country and place in that country” (Dolby 2004:150), the preparatory process that constructs global citizens could also be a process that constructs homonationalist identities: scripting the “good” sexual student.

After reviewing the Global Education Office website, participant observation of the Global Education Office Fall Pre-departure Orientation program, and interviews with two Global Education Office staff members and six students who have studied abroad, evidence suggests that homonationalist ideologies are present in the preparatory process. While it is important to highlight that it is not the *intention* of the Global Education Office, or Virginia Tech at large, to be homonationalist, homonationalism is one possible *consequence* of the current policies and practices in place. Given that homonationalism is so ingrained and nuanced in our everyday lives, people are unknowingly socialized to enact and embody these ideologies as natural and normal. That is not, however, to say that the Global Education Office or students are free of liability. Study abroad is ideally an experience for students to be exposed to cultures other than their own, yet the underlying ways in which the Global Education Office prepares and scripts student behavior is, in actuality, to be independent representatives of the home nation. Through narratives of safety, opportunity, benefits, personal responsibility, representation, suggested behaviors, superiority, competitiveness, and the privatization of sexuality, the way in which

study abroad orientations are constructed to be “all-inclusive” yet establish “suggested” boundaries of acceptable behavior serves to distinguish the home nation and the host community.

An important finding within this study, consistent with Pattison’s (2010) findings, is that both students and staff members felt that lesbian, gay, and bisexual students were included and supported through the preparatory process and within study abroad in general because sexuality was considered “not a problem” or “not a factor” in the study abroad experience.⁹ Unlike Pattison, however, this finding differentiates based on the analytical lens of homonationalism, which suggests that the *absence of sexuality*, or the privatization and individualization of students’ sexuality, is exclusionary evidence of the *presence of homonationalism*. By equating all individuals and their experiences by subsuming sexual differences into the private sphere—out of sight and out of mind—it could be argued that this is a consequence of neoliberal cultural values of private, value-free markets and laissez-faire politics. By negating and ignoring sexual difference, claiming that people of all sexualities should have the same experience abroad (one that does not involve sexual interactions at all), the home community is unified and strengthened in the name of market competition, like Alex stated regarding business connections and spreading the Hokie tentacles abroad.

Drawing upon Eduardo Bonilla-Silva’s (2003) concept of colorblind racism, study abroad orientation programs are “sexually-blind” by considering sexuality as a non-factor, which leads to erasing sexual differences yet reinforces the status quo (see Bonilla-Silva [2003] for a similar discussion on colorblind racism). He highlights the concept of abstract liberalism as a central frame to colorblind racism where the dominant group articulates and constructs our social world as if race is no longer a factor or that racism no longer exists. Rather, inclusion and acceptability is liberalized and remains up to the individual to work towards their entre, inclusion, and equal

status within the community. Similar to this concept, by acknowledging that sexuality is no longer is a factor, we become blind to the realities of sexual differences in regards to discrimination and social hierarchies that are in play throughout homonationalism that define and police the boundaries of who the “good gay” and the “bad gay” is. This also blinds us to the potential reality that the LGB communities may be better off or more accepted elsewhere, which in turn perpetuates the assumption that the United States is the superior community that is supposedly “inclusive” while others are far more risky and inferior in comparison. Rather than dismantling the closet to accept and include all people regardless of sexual identity, the closet merely gets bigger to create the illusion of being inclusive, while in reality still controlling, containing, and ignoring difference within the terms of acceptability.

Critics may argue that because of my positionality as a researcher, the nature of the small, nuanced forms of comportment, and the exclusionary nature of the evidence still does not *prove* homonationalism’s presence within study abroad. Is it just my selective analysis and lens that suggests homonationalism rather than the actual presence of homonationalism or even another, alternative framework? In a sense, I agree with critics in that I have not proven homonationalism. I take great caution and have great reservations to make a grand claim that I have proven homonationalism’s presence. But I also do not deny the possible presence or influence of homonationalist ideology on study abroad orientation programs as well as the eight individuals within my sample.

Alternative explanations of the privatization and negation of sexual difference could claim that sexuality in fact does not matter, this is the result of *heteronormativity* rather than *homonormativity*, or that the United States is just a socially conservative country that does not want to admit that its unmarried adults are having sex. As discussed above, while there is no one

universal LGB experience abroad, there is the potential for unique experiences abroad for LGB identified students such as finding one's sexuality or interacting with an explicitly queer culture, history, and community abroad. So while the study abroad experience is packaged as non-sexual, it, in fact, has an inherent sexuality, however privatized. It is not guaranteed that sexuality is a factor or influence in study abroad, but for some students, especially within the LGB community, it can be. As such, the claim that sexuality merely does not matter perpetuates the homonationalist privatization and individualization of sexuality. Similarly, the claim of a socially conservative country also perpetuates homonationalist values of national exceptionalism by privatizing differences in the name of unity to uphold the national community. Finally, heteronormativity, by definition, constructs and upholds heterosexuality as the natural and normal sexuality while excluding non-heterosexuality as deviant and Other. But this is not what we hear from the students: students feel included regardless of their sexuality. This inclusion is made possible due to homonormativity, in which certain LGB individuals are included because their sexuality is removed from the public sphere and privatized to create a sense of inclusiveness and unity regardless of their differences. Homonationalism as a theoretical lens, in other words, offers a valid and comprehensive explanation to understand the seeming inclusion, yet negation, of varying sexual identities.

Given that homonationalism arose post-September 11, 2001 (Agathangelou et al. 2008; Puar 2007), it is likely that most students and staff members were already accustomed and indoctrinated to homonationalist ideology and inclusion within the national community. Studying abroad orientation still serves, however, as one case example within the larger national community where we are able to observe ways in which belonging is constructed and policed through student and staff interactions. As the evidence suggests, the structure of the orientation

and the experiences of study abroad students have a pattern which advocates that study abroad is inclusive of LGB individuals, but this inclusion is stipulated upon the fact that students are “good representatives” of the university and comply with the recommended forms of comportment that uphold the university and nation. Sexuality does not matter because, rather than placing those differences on the forefront, by arguing that we include and accept all students regardless of sexuality, given that they represent us well otherwise as a “good student representative,” America and Virginia Tech can begin to reclaim its image on the global stage. In other words, the “gay” in the “good gay student” is assimilated and privatized for the sake of national belonging. It is not a matter of who the student is, but what a student does to be considered “good.”

Despite the fact that students felt included in the study abroad experience, they did discuss some serious concerns that need to be taken into consideration like safety in terms of sexuality, queer spaces, and institutional support. While Virginia Tech or the Global Education Office, as an *organization*, is responsible for the safety and inclusion of its students, restructuring study abroad to be not homonormative is more complicated and nuanced than it may seem. Study abroad orientation is the product of larger national projects of inclusion and exceptionalism, and as such, in order to truly enact change, changing one orientation program is not enough. It is hard to imagine what a non-nationalist orientation or study abroad experience would look like because, on the one hand, I would hope for more inclusive and interactive orientation advising that discusses the wide variety and intersection of identities and potential experiences. But, on the other hand, this could also serve to still be problematic because I would not want the LGB experience to be essentialized and rigidly defined, just as sexuality is not fixed at any given point in time. Having scripts and rules, in other words, could be both helpful and harmful to a student.

Some students recommended that rather than LGB specific orientations, which can compartmentalize LGB identity and experiences, information about local queer organizations and resources should be made available. This still, however, does not necessarily help if we consider sexuality as a non-factor in study abroad experiences. Queer methodologists such as Plummer (2011) argue that upon deconstructing normative discourses such as the study abroad orientation, it is not the role of the researcher to conclude with final solutions, but only to highlight the damage limitations and concerns. Taking this into consideration, as Gibson-Graham (1996), Scott (1988), Young (1990), and Butler (2004) argue, the concepts of sexuality, normality, hegemony, and citizenship need to be reconsidered and restructured in order to acknowledge and legitimize multiple alternative forms of livable lives. Rather than the good or bad sexless student representative, we need to embrace, as a community, the wide variety of possibilities, opportunities, choices, and identities students have.

Limitations and Further Research

This thesis yields four main limitations that should be taken into consideration for future research and developments on understanding study abroad as well as homonationalism. First, I initially included students who have studied abroad in the past five years (2010-2014) to raise the number of potential respondents, but this is only a case example, not a historical study.

Expanding this time range to ten years or more would be ideal to allow for not only a larger sample, but also to provide a larger range of study abroad and orientation experiences so that we may see how study abroad has developed over time and has become more homonationalist. Puar (2007) argues that homonationalism really became emergent post-September 11, 2001, as the United States utilized this ideology to strengthen the nation against the “monster-terrorist-fag” in

the Middle East. If this is the case, it would be interesting to see differences in study abroad scripts and orientation structure before and after 9/11 and the War on Terror. In what ways have homonationalism and study abroad changed over time?

Second, while on the one hand having a wider timespan in which students studied abroad would be interesting to see how study abroad orientation and homonationalism has developed over time, this could lead to potential memory recall issues. Given that some respondents had studied abroad many years ago, and the fact that in order to examine homonationalism one must consider the smaller, more mundane and minute details, some respondents had difficulty recalling the more “routine” or “basic” details of their study abroad experience. Rather, over time students are only able to recall more general details about events during their study abroad experience. A few students, such as Francesca and Caleb attempted to “study up” on their experience prior to their interview by looking through old emails and attempting to find old files containing their orientation materials, but came up short. Only after prompting and support from my website analysis and fieldnotes were some students able to recall some of the more mundane, yet significant, information. In what ways would interviewing students closer to their orientation provide more specific detail regarding the orientation process?

Third, by only interviewing LGB identified students who have studied abroad previously, this could be a selective sample of those individuals who already felt included on the basis of homonationalism as well as other aspects of their identity. Study abroad is an expensive endeavor, with programs ranging between \$2,000 for a faculty-led program to upwards of \$16,000 for a third party program. In addition to the main program cost, there are additional application fees and the cost of insurance, airfare, food, and any spending students do abroad. Only those students who are able to afford such high costs are able to go abroad, thus excluding

low-income students, which also has racial and gendered implications. Additionally, while I desired to examine those who completed the study abroad process and discuss feelings of inclusion, by only interviewing students who identified as LGB potentially limits the sample to those who might be already indoctrinated to homonationalist ideologies. Had I interviewed queer identified students who studied abroad, or students who chose not to study abroad, I could have seen a stronger case for boundary setting on the basis of identity as well as sentiments of the “good” and “bad” gay. How do other aspects of identity including gender, race, or location impact homonationalist ideologies and feelings of inclusion?

Finally, interviewing students at multiple time points might provide better evidence of how orientation specifically is homonationalist. Because homonationalism is deeply ingrained in our everyday actions and belief, how can one tell if the students were not already homonormative and influenced by homonationalism prior to the orientation? Given the time range in which homonationalism was enacted (2001) and the age of the respondents, as well as the length of employment of the staff members, it is possible that the respondents have been socialized such that homonationalism is deeply ingrained as natural and normal prior to the orientation. While it is unlikely that one specific event like orientation would make a person be homonationalist, it is possible that such an event could contribute and reinforce homonationalist ideologies. As Ruth argued earlier, study abroad has the potential to be very transformative for students. While she was likely discussing transformations in regard to skills and knowledge regarding other cultures, it could be argued that there is also a homonationalist transformation before and after study abroad orientation and their experiences abroad. Does study abroad transform ideologies regarding not only national identity but also national belonging, or is it merely an additional module in their educational experience available for students to purchase?

While this study is small in scope, it yields serious questions and ideas in regards to homonormative and homonationalist belonging. How is homonationalism imbedded in other aspects of organizations, especially within school systems such as classrooms, texts, and policies? How do other institutions and other Global Education Offices enact, reinforce, or challenge homonationalism? Further research should attempt different ways to capture homonationalism and its effects on both included and excluded bodies such as transgender and gender non-conforming individuals as well as queer and straight identified individuals. Can study abroad exist without nationalism, and what would it look like? Future research should look more at the intersection of multiple policed identities and how individuals who occupy multiple spaces experience homonationalism's effects such as race, class, gender, and geographic locale. Finally, the differences within institutions such as liberal arts colleges compared to large universities should be considered, as their functioning and policy-making processes differ largely from one institution to another. Overall, homonationalism as a theory proves to be a useful tool to understand study abroad orientations and LGB student inclusion. Homonationalism as a practice, however, can be considered to be one unintended, yet prevalent and ingrained, consequence of study abroad orientation and student behavior.

Notes

¹ While transgender students do experience significant forms of exclusion, discrimination, and microaggressions, and are often marginalized within the queer community, they are excluded from this study because gender presentation and identity are outside the purview of this study on sexuality. Further studies should examine in what ways transgender and gender non-conformance relate to homonationalism and how students experience study abroad.

² It is important to note that there are multiple different terms used for this process, often used interchangeably despite their differing meanings. Foreign study has the potential for negative connotation with the use of the word *foreign*. Study abroad implies an educational experience abroad, but excludes other international experiences such as internships. International education or global education refers to the organizational fostering of cross-cultural experiences, regardless of location, encompassing a wide variety of programs both at home and abroad. Finally, education abroad implies a wide variety of educational experiences while limited to experiences away from the home institution (Bolen 2007). For purposes of this paper, I utilize study abroad and global education interchangeably, as the office of interest in the study is designated a Global Education center, while educational processes abroad are of primary interest.

³ The Institutional Review Board has approved this study on September 30, 2014, and approved necessary changes to the protocol and interview schedules on October 27, 2014.

⁴ I have been in contact with the Assistant Director of the Global Education Office and they have agreed to distribute these emails.

⁵ Please note that I chose to distinguish representative quotes and fieldnotes by italicizing all quotes throughout the text.

⁶ It is interesting to note that, when asked, respondents almost always equated “sexuality” or “sexual identity” with the physical act of romantic and sexual relationships rather than as a personal identity.

⁷ Though it remains a question as to what global competency actually *is* or how to measure it. Quotes are my emphasis and interpretation, not that of the respondents’.

⁸ There is something to be said about how most of the suggestions on behavior are more a matter of what the students should not do, rather than what they should do, which was reserved for more practical matters such as which forms to complete. One argument could be that this negative behavior, like not drinking excessively, is to draw a distinct boundary between what would make the university look bad or not, rather than what would make the university look good. So long as the student does not mess up, then they are in good standing.

⁹ Throughout the course of this thesis, I had to consistently reconsider my analysis of the respondent’s interpretation of their experiences. I often found myself frustrated that the students were not actively engaged or critical of the current system in which sexuality embedded and how they saw sexuality as a non-factor in their lives, to the point of it “not being present” (Francesca). Yet, Brown (2012) critiques sexuality and homonormativity researchers, arguing that the researchers themselves can actively be homonormative in their analysis through the normative assumption of what non-heterosexual individuals do, live, or should believe. As such, while the evidence suggests that the student’s interpretation of their experiences is influenced by ideals of

homonationalism, they do not believe that their experiences are the only possible experience. Oftentimes they stated that while sexuality was not a factor in their experience, they could imagine an instance where it *could* be, thus suggesting that there are possible alternative lifestyles and experiences outside of the scripted and policed normative, prepackaged study abroad experience.

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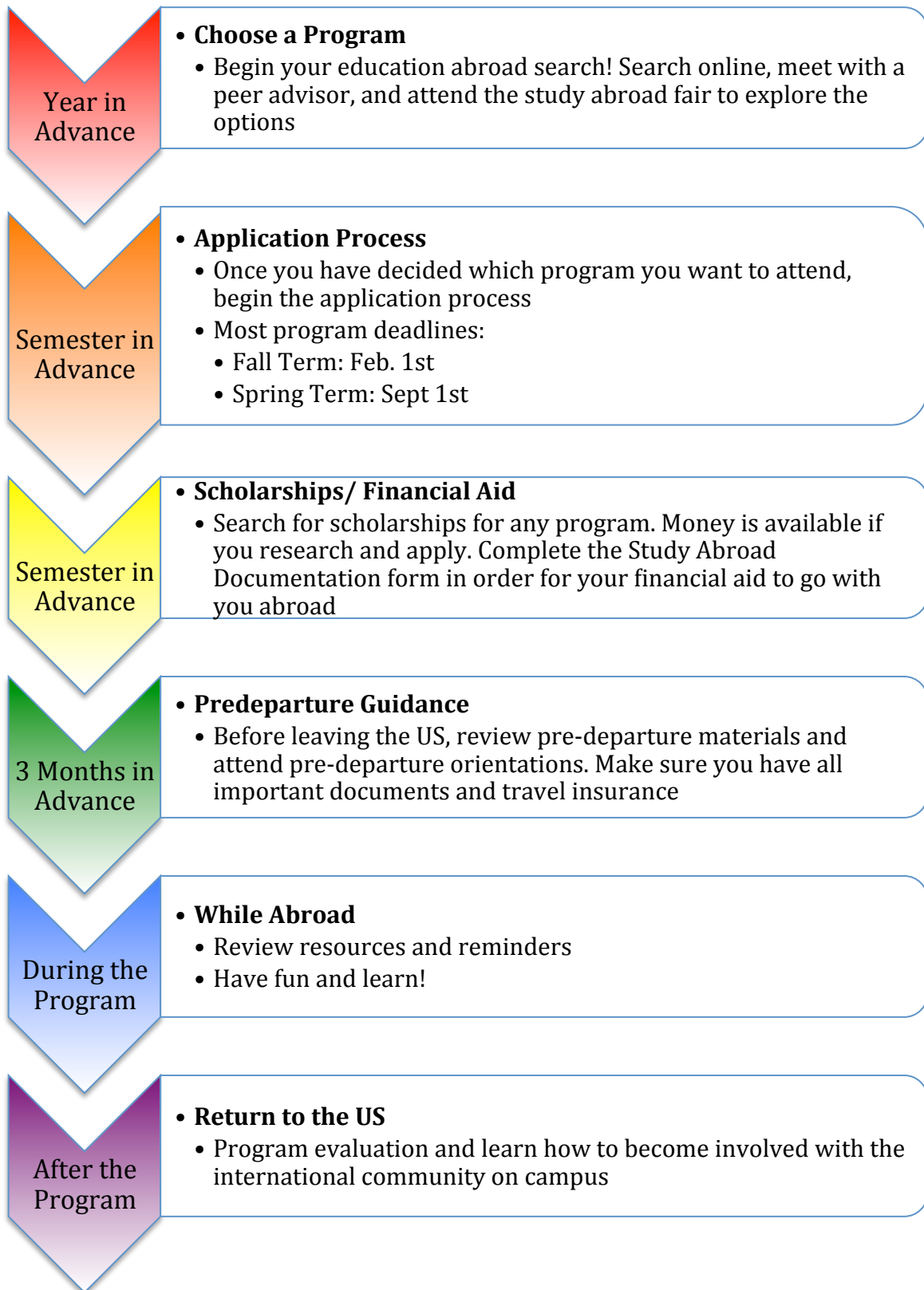
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Table 1. Study Sample Demographics

Alias	Sexual Identity	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	Program Region	Program Type	Program Length (in weeks)	Year of Program	University Affiliation
Alex*	Heterosexual	Male	-	-	-	-	-	Staff Member
Ruth*	Heterosexual	Female	-	-	-	-	-	Staff Member
Stephen	Gay	Male	White	Asia	Faculty Led/ Research	2	2014	Graduate Student
Jessica	Bisexual	Female	White	Europe	Faculty Led	8	2014	Undergraduate Student
Caleb	Gay	Male	White	Europe	Faculty Led	5	2011	Undergraduate Student
Anthony	Gay	Male	White	South America	Exchange	52	2010	Undergraduate Student
Ruby	Lesbian	Female	African American	Africa	Faculty Led	2	2014	Graduate Student
Francesca	Bisexual	Female	White	Europe	Direct Enroll	4	2012	Undergraduate Student

*Note: Demographic details for staff members omitted to protect confidentiality and identities of respondents

Figure 1. Study Abroad Flowchart



Source: Virginia Tech Global Education Office, "Getting Started"

Appendix A. Recruitment Materials

Email to Students from Study Abroad Office

Dear _____,

You are receiving this email because you have recently studied abroad during your time at Virginia Tech. I am a graduate student at Virginia Tech that is interested in hearing lesbian, gay, and bisexual student experiences about study abroad. Specifically, I want to know about the study abroad participation and experiences of LGB students. The data gathered from this study will describe the overall study abroad experience of LGB individuals and investigate how well the study abroad office is meeting students' needs. All data will be used for the researcher's thesis and resulting publications.

I will be conducting interviews with students who have recently studied abroad. The only requirements are that you must be 18 years or older, have studied abroad in the past five years during your time at Virginia Tech, and you must self-identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, though you do not need to be out. The interviews will range from 1-2 hours and will be conducted in a time and place that is convenient and comfortable for you. All interviews and communications will be confidential and participation is voluntary.

For more information or if you have any questions, please email Megan Nanney at mnanney@vt.edu (graduate student in Sociology at Virginia Tech).

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Megan

Megan Nanney
Master's Student
Department of Sociology
Virginia Tech
mnanney@vt.edu

Email to Students from Multicultural Office LGBTQ Student Groups

Dear _____,

You are receiving this email because you are involved in the _____ (college organization or group) at Virginia Tech. I am a graduate student at Virginia Tech that is interested in hearing lesbian, gay, and bisexual student experiences about study abroad. Specifically, I want to know about the study abroad participation and experiences of LGB students. The data gathered from this study will describe the overall study abroad experience of LGB individuals and investigate how well the study abroad office is meeting students' needs. All data will be used for the researcher's thesis and resulting publications.

I will be conducting interviews with students who have recently studied abroad. The only requirements are that you must be 18 years or older, have studied abroad in the past five years during your time at Virginia Tech, and you must self-identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, though you do not need to be out. The interviews will range from 1-2 hours and will be conducted in a time and place that is convenient and comfortable for you. All interviews and communications will be confidential and participation is voluntary.

For more information or if you have any questions, please email Megan Nanney at mnanney@vt.edu (graduate student in Sociology at Virginia Tech).

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Megan

Megan Nanney
Master's Student
Department of Sociology
Virginia Tech
mnanney@vt.edu

Email to Staff

Dear _____,

You are receiving this email because you are the _____ (position) at the _____ (office) at Virginia Tech. I am a graduate student at Virginia Tech that is interested in hearing about student diversity and study abroad experiences. Specifically, I want to know more about the history, purpose, benefits, and services of your office, as well as more about your role with students in the study abroad process. Questions will include demographic information including your race, gender, and sexual orientation. Data from this study will describe the experience of students from diverse backgrounds and identities and investigate how well our university meets their needs. All data will be used for the researcher's thesis and resulting publications.

I will be conducting interviews with staff members that work with the diverse student body at Virginia Tech and their study abroad experiences, like yourself. The interviews will last approximately one hour and will be conducted at a time and place that is convenient and comfortable for you. All interviews and communications will be confidential and participation is voluntary.

I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to set up a time for an interview about your role, opinions, and experiences. If you have any questions, please email Megan Nanney at mnanney@vt.edu (graduate student in Sociology at Virginia Tech).

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Megan

Megan Nanney
Master's Student
Department of Sociology
Virginia Tech
mnanney@vt.edu

Website Posting and Tweet

Do you identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual? Have you studied abroad at Virginia Tech in the past five years? Participants are sought for a study examining lesbian, gay, and bisexual experiences studying abroad. The data gathered from this study will describe the overall study abroad experience of LGB individuals and investigate how well the study abroad office is meeting students' needs. This will involve one 1-2 hours interview at a time and location that is convenient and comfortable for the participants. All interviews will be confidential and participation is voluntary. Participants must be 18 years of age or older; self-identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, though it is not necessary to be out; and have studied abroad through Virginia Tech in the past five years. All collected data will be for researcher's thesis and resulting publications. Please contact Megan Nanney at mnanney@vt.edu for more information.

Study seeking LGB students who have studied abroad to talk about their experiences. Study consists of 1-2 hour interview. Contact Megan Nanney mnanney@vt.edu for more info.



RESEARCH STUDY

Seeking Participants:

Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Experiences in Study Abroad

I am a graduate student at Virginia Tech that is interested in hearing your perspective and experience about being LGB and studying abroad. This study will describe how diverse students experience a global education. All data will be used for the researcher's thesis and resulting publications.

You must be 18 years of age or older; self-identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual; and have studied abroad through Virginia Tech in the past five years. Participation is voluntary and interviews will be confidential. Interviews will range from 1-2 hours and will be conducted at a time and place that is convenient for you.

For more information, please contact:
Megan Nanney,
mnanney@vt.edu



Appendix B. Interview Schedules
Student Interview Schedule

Background	<p>So first I would like to begin by getting to know a little bit about you. Can you tell me a little about yourself?</p> <p>Probe: Where were you born? Parents? Siblings? (What is your major? What year are you in?)</p> <p>How old are you?</p> <p>What do you personally consider to be your gender?</p> <p>What pronouns do you use?</p> <p>What do you consider to be your race or ethnicity?</p> <p>When you are asked about your sexual orientation, what do you say?</p> <p>Have you come out? (if yes) When did you “come out”? What was that process like? Who are you “out” to? How are your relationships with friends and family in regards to your sexuality? (if no) Can you tell me about that?</p> <p>What prior international experience have you had?</p>
Study Abroad- General	<p>Where did you study abroad? For how long? What type of program did you participate in? What year did you go abroad?</p> <p>Can you describe your experience while abroad? (travel, sight see)</p> <p>How did you choose where you studied abroad? Did you research the country or culture before you went?</p> <p>What was your main reason for deciding to participate in study abroad?</p> <p>What constraints or worries, if any, did you have about studying abroad?</p> <p>In your opinion, what is the point of studying abroad? (goal or mission)</p> <p>What are the benefits of studying abroad? In what ways did you benefit from studying abroad?</p> <p>Do you think that Virginia Tech benefits from its students studying abroad? How so? In what ways?</p> <p>Do you think that the United States benefits from their students studying abroad? In what ways?</p> <p>Some say that one major benefit and purpose of study abroad is to prepare students to be global citizens. How would you define a “global citizen”?</p> <p>Do you feel that studying abroad prepared you to be a global citizen? Can you explain to me how?</p>
Study Abroad Orientation	<p>Can you tell me about the process of getting ready to go abroad?</p> <p>Did you meet with a study abroad advisor or peer advisor?</p> <p>Did you seek other advice about studying abroad? (Did you attend the study abroad fair? What was that like? What tables did you visit? What did you get from the fair (ideas, questions, answers, information)?)</p> <p>Did you attend the pre-orientation program? What did you think about that? What kind of information did they talk about? Did you have any questions? Do you recall any questions that others asked? What is something that you learned from the orientation program?</p>

	<p>Did this information vary by location or program? What did you talk about in your breakout group? Why do you think they have an orientation program? How did they describe students that go abroad? (What type of students study abroad?) Did they talk about an idea of being a representative or ambassador? How are students supposed to behave while being abroad? What kinds of ways are students supposed to act? Eat? Talk? Dress? Relationships? Type of activities? Is there anything that students are not supposed to do? In what ways did they talk about America in this context? Or as being an American? Did they talk about the differences between America and other countries? In what ways? So I attended the orientation program this November. In the larger orientation, they mentioned a lot of times about Americans not being liked, or seen as a threat. Did they do that in yours? What do you think that they meant by that? Do you think its true? What did you do to avoid this? A lot of the information put the responsibility on the student. In what ways did you feel responsible for your education abroad experience? Also, they mentioned very quickly that this may be the first time students could feel like a minority. What did they mean by this? In what ways did you feel like a minority? Did they talk about diversity issues at all? How so?</p>
Study Abroad LGBT	<p>Do you think sexuality is an important factor in how students experience study abroad? Did you have any concerns about sexual identity in your decision to study abroad? (Where to study abroad?) Do you feel that you knew what your host country’s attitude was towards your sexual identity prior to leaving? Did you do any research to understand the host culture and attitudes? (How different were the perceptions of the LGBTQ community in xx (country they studied abroad in)? How comfortable were they with various sexualities? Did you explore “gay culture” while abroad (clubs, bookstores, certain geographic areas)? Can you tell me about that experience? Were you provided any LGBT resource material by the study abroad office or the MPS? What kinds of materials? How useful was that material?) Was sexual orientation brought up in the pre-departure orientation? Which sexual orientations? What did they say? Who initiated the discussion about sexuality in the orientation? Were you “out” during your study abroad experience? (if no: why not?) Can you describe to me how you came out in another culture? Did that differ from coming out here? Did you disclose your sexual identity to the advisor? Why or why not? What did they say? Did the advisor ask about your sexual identity? Did they show any signs of being an ally?</p>

	<p>What was your housing situation while abroad? (Host family, apartment, dorm) Did you disclose your sexual identity to your friends, family, or roommates? In what ways do you think that impacted your experience?</p> <p>Did you engage in a sexual or romantic relationship while abroad? Did you disclose this information to your host family? Friends and peers? Family and friends at home? How open were you with your relationship? How did that end up?</p> <p>Do you know of any other LGBTQ students who studied abroad with you? Before you? Did you share experiences?</p> <p>What effect would you say your sexual identity had on your overall study abroad experience?</p> <p>Recently, I read an article about sexuality and study abroad, and in it, someone said that his sexual identity had nothing to do with going overseas, yet it has every thing to do with it. What do you think about that?</p>
Student sense of belonging	<p>What do you feel you learned while studying abroad? What did you learn about yourself? Your culture (about being an American)?</p> <p>What does it mean to be an American? Is everyone in America an American? Is every American equal?</p> <p>Do you feel like the LGBTQ community is visible at Virginia Tech? Included? Accepted? What about within America?</p> <p>Do you feel included in the school? Within America? How do you know that you are included?</p> <p>Do you think that there are ways gay individuals are told they should act to be included and accepted? (Probe: Ways to dress? where should they work? Types of relationships? Taxes? Military? Travel?)</p> <p>Earlier we talked about global citizens, do you think LGB students can be global citizens?</p>
Institutional Change	<p>Are there any changes in advising would you wish to see the study abroad make for LGBTQ students preparing to study abroad?</p> <p>What resources would you wish you had prior to leaving?</p> <p>Would an orientation program specifically centered on LGBTQ topics abroad be useful? Why or why not? What topics would they need to cover?</p> <p>Knowing what you know now, what advice do you wish you had? What advice would you give to someone like you looking to study abroad here at Tech? If you had a time machine and could go back and change one thing about studying abroad, what would that be? Knowing what you know now, would you study abroad again if you had the choice?</p>
Wrapping up	<p>Anything else you would like to share about your experience that we have not covered?</p> <p>Do you have any questions for me?</p>

Staff Interview Schedule

Background	<p>So first I would like to begin by getting to know a little bit about you. Can you tell me a little about yourself?</p> <p>How long have you been at VT? What is your official title here at VT? How long have you been in this position?</p> <p>What is a typical day like at your job? What are your duties, responsibilities?</p> <p>What do you personally consider to be your gender?</p> <p>What pronouns do you use?</p> <p>What do you consider to be your race or ethnicity?</p> <p>When you are asked about your sexual orientation, what do you say?</p> <p>What do you personally identify as?</p> <p>What prior international experience have you had?</p>
Study Abroad- General	<p>Can you tell me a little about the study abroad office and related programs available on campus? How many students go abroad each year? Where do they go? What types of programs do they attend?</p> <p>What is the history of the study abroad office at Virginia Tech? What changes have been made over time? Have there been any major events at Tech or in the office that created change?</p> <p>In your opinion, what is the point of studying abroad? (mission or goals)</p> <p>What are the benefits of studying abroad for students? How can it enhance a students' education? How does your office measure these outcomes?</p> <p>Do you think that the school benefits from its students studying abroad? How so?</p> <p>Do you think that the United States benefits from students studying abroad? In what ways?</p> <p>What is a global citizen? In what ways does the study abroad office help students to be a global citizen?</p> <p>How do students respond and reflect upon their experience? What is the typical outcome? (e.g. a post-survey)</p>
Study Abroad- Orientation	<p>Can you tell me about the process students undergo getting ready to go abroad? (i.e. timeline)</p> <p>In what ways does the study abroad office help students preparing to study abroad?</p> <p>How do you advertise study abroad to students? What kinds of outreach do you do?</p> <p>How do you decide what information to talk about in Orientation?</p> <p>Who writes and delivers the orientation information?</p> <p>What types of information do you talk about in orientation?</p> <p>What is the purpose of the orientation?</p> <p>What types of questions do students typically raise in the orientation? Do you use these questions to guide or develop future orientations?</p> <p>So I attended the orientation program this November. XXX (questions that arise from field notes)</p>
Study Abroad- Representatives	<p>What kind of students do you want to study abroad?</p> <p>How are students supposed to behave while being abroad? What kinds of ways</p>

	<p>are students supposed to act? Eat? Talk? Dress? Relationships? Type of activities?</p> <p>Is there anything that students are not supposed to do? Are there any students that you <i>don't</i> want to study abroad? Have you ever turned a student away? Can you give me any examples of when a student didn't follow the advice they were given? What happened?</p> <p>Does the school/ do you see students as representatives or ambassadors while abroad? How do you prepare students for the role of representative? What does a good representative do? How do they act? What kind of person is a good representative?</p> <p>In what ways should students question their own culture? How do students navigate being an American while abroad? American and a global citizen?</p>
Study Abroad-Diversity	<p>Do all students equally benefit from study abroad? Do all students have equal access to participate in study abroad?</p> <p>Is diversity an important issue in study abroad participation?</p> <p>Regarding diversity, what types of students study abroad? What types of demographic information do you keep about these students?</p> <p>In what ways does the office reach out to minority students? In what ways does the office attempt to increase minority student participation in study abroad?</p> <p>What services and information are available to minority students interested in studying abroad?</p> <p>How are issues of diversity discussed in the orientation process?</p> <p>Do minority students experience the same benefits of study abroad compared to majority students? Any additional benefits?</p> <p>How does a student's gender impact how they experience study abroad?</p> <p>How does a student's socioeconomic class impact how they experience study abroad?</p> <p>How does a student's race impact how they experience study abroad?</p> <p>How does a student's religion impact how they experience study abroad?</p> <p>How does a student's ability impact how they experience study abroad?</p>
Study Abroad-LGBT	<p>How does a student's sexuality impact how they experience study abroad?</p> <p>For students, is sexuality or sexual orientation an important factor in deciding to study abroad?</p> <p>Are issues regarding sexuality discussed in the orientation process? What issues? (if not discussed, bring up both heterosexual and non-heterosexual topics)</p> <p>What information or resources are available for LGB students for study abroad?</p> <p>Do you maintain demographic information regarding students' sexuality?</p> <p>Do you consider yourself an ally? Do you make an effort to make students aware that you are an ally? How so?</p> <p>If you feel a student may be LGB, do you try to address the topic? How so or why not?</p> <p>Have you had to advise students about study abroad and sexual orientation issues? What happened?</p>

	<p>Hypothetically, a student is interested in studying abroad and is worried about their sexual orientation being an issue. How would you advise them?</p> <p>What if a student identified as LGB and they wanted study in a location known for its hostility towards LGB individuals?</p>
Institutional Questions	<p>Do you feel Virginia Tech includes students of all sexual identities?</p> <p>Earlier you defined a global citizen as xx, do you think LGB students can also be global citizens? What about queer students?</p> <p>What changes in advising would you wish to see the study abroad and MPS offices make for LGBQ students preparing to study abroad?</p> <p>What information, services, or training do you think might help prepare you to better advise LGB students wanting to study abroad?</p> <p>Would an orientation program specifically centered on LGBTQ topics abroad be useful? Why or why not? What topics would they need to cover?</p>
Wrapping up	<p>Anything else you would like to share that we have not covered?</p> <p>Do you have any questions for me?</p>

Appendix C. Codebook

- **Global Education Office:** *The Global Education Office specific*
 - **Orientation:** *Pre-departure orientation, meetings, or preparatory sessions*
 - **Dos and Don'ts:** *Specific behavior to do or not to do*
 - **Blending in or Toning Down:** *To tone down or blend in to the current culture or community through comportment or behavior*
 - **Interactions:** *Specific interactions with others, stories of interactions*
 - **Prepackaged Student:** *“The” experience abroad, the idealized study abroad experience*
 - **Ideal Student:** *Ideal behavior, good student behavior*
 - **Bad Behavior/ Non-Ideal:** *Explicitly bad behavior, consequences of bad behavior*
 - **Opportunity:** *The options given to students*
 - **Personal Responsibility:** *Left up to the student, on the student, student must do*
 - **Representativeness:** *Or ambassador, to represent something*
 - **Recommendations for Improvements:** *Any recommendations or current changes in the functioning of the GEO*
 - **Globalized or Global:** *Global world, “flat”*
 - **Being an American/American Culture:** *Being American, American identity, American culture, Americanness, stereotypes*
 - **Citizenship/belonging:** *Formal citizenship, belonging to a group or place*
 - **Social and Political Rights:** *Specific rights given to individuals*
 - **Superiority:** *The thought of being better or exceptional, or the lack thereof*
 - **Benefits or Change:** *Benefits or changes that accrue as a result of studying abroad*
 - **Immersion:** *Complete immersion in a culture, length or type of a program*
 - **Global Citizenry:** *Being a global citizen, intercultural competence*
 - **Global Competitiveness/Skills:** *Competition with countries, skills gained to compete in global (job) market*
 - **Networking:** *Making networks, connecting with individuals or communities, spreading name or image*
 - **Other Country's Cultures/Differences:** *Norms or culture of other countries*
 - **Sexuality:** *Anything dealing with sexuality, identity, LGBT, relationships, or sex*
 - **Coming Out:** *Coming out processes, experiences*
 - **Feeling of Inclusion:** *Visibility, inclusion, acceptance of LGB individuals within larger community*
 - **Negative Rights/Non-Positive:** *Not necessarily positive experiences, but not negative experiences (ex: “I wasn't discriminated against”)*
 - **Normativity:** *“normal” or universal human*
 - **Endorsement of Heterosexuality:** *Heterosexuality upheld as the norm or default*
 - **Sexuality as Non-Factor:** *Sexuality is not a factor in decision-making or experiences*
 - **Gender, Class or Race Intersections:** *Any mention or intersection of other forms of identity*
 - **Experience as a Minority:** *What minorities, regardless of identity, are experiencing*

- **Queer Space/ Culture/ Community:** *Queer things, events, spaces, culture, experiences, history, community*
 - **Regionalism:** *Differences in region or space*
- **Safety/Discrimination:** *safety, being seen as a threat, harm, discrimination*
- **Support Systems:** *Advice, relationships and support*

Appendix D. Consent Form

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY Informed Consent for Participants in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Title of Project: **Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Experiences in Study Abroad**
Investigator(s): **Megan Nanney** **mnanney@vt.edu (440) 812-2339**
Name E-mail / Phone number
David Brunsmad **brunsmad@vt.edu (540) 231-8723**
Name E-mail / Phone number

I. Purpose of this Research Project

This study seeks to examine the experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual (LGB) students who have studied abroad. We want to know about the recruitment, orientation, and advisory processes through the Global Education office regarding LGB students. The data gathered from this study will describe whether or not certain students feel included and supported based on their sexual identity. The results from this study will be utilized for the researcher's thesis and any subsequent publications.

In order to examine the above questions, we will conduct interviews with approximately 8-10 LGB identified students who have studied abroad during their time at Virginia Tech, as well as approximately 5 key study abroad and LGB-services staff members. You must be 18 years of age or older and student participants must have studied abroad in the past five years to participate. Interviews will be approximately 1-2 hours long at a time and location will be arranged with each participant.

II. Procedures

If you choose to participate in this study, you will meet with the investigator for approximately 1-2 hours in a public and quiet location arranged with the investigator and yourself, including libraries or coffee shops. At that time, the interviewer will ask a series of questions regarding your experiences, feelings, and thoughts on study abroad and your sexual identity. Examples of these questions can be provided upon request. During the interview, the interviewer will take notes as well as record the interview.

III. Risks

There is little to no physical risk involved in this research project. It is not our intention to make you feel any form of discomfort, though sharing some personal experiences may lead to some difficult emotional feelings. Should this occur, please know that you reserve the right to refuse participation at any time and to not answer certain questions. A list of available counseling services nearby can be provided upon request.

IV. Benefits

The results from this study will provide new conceptualizations in the needs and concerns of

LGB students who study abroad to create a more inclusive campus and more positive experiences for everyone. This subsequently will help advise the Global Education, LGBTQ, and student affairs offices in more inclusive practices.

No promise or guarantee of benefits has been made to encourage you to participate.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

The data collected from the interviews will be confidential, to which the specific names and other identifying material will be changed so that you cannot be matched to your responses.

If the researcher has reason to suspect that a person has poses a threat of harm to others or him or herself, or has been abused, the researcher is required by Virginia State law to notify the appropriate authorities.

The above investigators will have access to the study materials. At no time will the researchers release identifiable results of the study to anyone without your written consent.

Once all interviews are transferred to the researchers' password-protected computer, the digital recording will be erased. All paper notes will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office. All files, electronic and physical will be destroyed in five years.

The Virginia Tech (VT) Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view the study's data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research.

VI. Compensation

There is no compensation for participating in the study.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

It is important for you to know that you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. You are free not to answer any questions that you choose or respond to what is being asked of you without penalty.

Please note that there may be circumstances under which the investigator may determine that a subject should not continue as a subject.

Should you withdraw or otherwise discontinue participation, you will be compensated for the portion of the project completed in accordance with the Compensation section of this document.

VIII. Questions or Concerns

Should you have any questions about this study, you may contact one of the research investigators whose contact information is included at the beginning of this document.

Should you have any questions or concerns about the study's conduct or your rights as a research subject, or need to report a research-related injury or event, you may contact the VT IRB Chair, Dr. David M. Moore at moored@vt.edu or (540) 231-4991.

IX. Subject's Consent

I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

_____ Date _____
Subject signature

Subject printed name

(Note: each subject must be provided a copy of this form. In addition, the IRB office may stamp its approval on the consent document(s) you submit and return the stamped version to you for use in consenting subjects; therefore, ensure each consent document you submit is ready to be read and signed by subjects.)