

# Personal Learning and Development of a GLBT Short-Term

## Study Abroad Program

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### Introduction

#### Research Problem and Purpose

- Only 7 GLBT study abroad programs in the United States.
- No research on learning and development outcomes of a cross-section of GLBT studies courses and study abroad programs.
- This study aims to address the lack of research on the cross-section of study abroad and GLBT Studies courses.

#### Study Abroad Literature and GLBT Participation

- Due to internationalization efforts of institutions of higher education, we have seen an increase the quantity of students studying abroad (Institute of International Education, 2010).
- Approximately 54% are studying abroad through short-term programs defined as a program eight weeks or less in length (Institute of International Education, 2010).
- Salisbury (2010) identified a gap in the rates of minority students participating in study abroad, however sexual orientation/gender identity was not included in the study.
- Pattison (2010) found that sexual orientation and/or gender identity did not have any affect on students' decisions regarding study abroad.

#### Short-term Study Abroad Literature

- This course was successfully implemented and met the guidelines set by Nam (2010) and Donnelly Smith (2009) for effective short-term study abroad programs, including
- clear academic content provided by local experts as well as faculty from home institution.
  - experiential opportunities/engaging with local community.
  - time to reflect on those experiences through journaling and group discussions.

#### The Study Abroad Program Description

The course, "GLBT History and Activism in Amsterdam and Berlin" spent five days in Amsterdam and two and a half weeks in Berlin.

#### Research Questions

- 1) What is the perceived participant awareness of GLBT issues in international, intercultural, and historical contexts?
- 2) In what ways has the experience underscored the participants' perceived attitudes regarding GLBT community and their role in GLBT activism?
- 3) How are the perceived outcomes demonstrated through their recollections and reflections of the trip and opportunities to share these experiences with family and friends upon re-entry?

### Qualitative Methods

#### Qualitative Research Design

- Epistemological theoretical framework:
- constructivism (Abes, 2007).
  - postmodernism critical theory (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006)
- Instruments of Data Collection:
- In-depth interviews
  - Document analysis of course syllabus, final paper assignment, and final papers.

#### Limitations

- Low participation.
- No pre-test, post-test only.
- No ally participants

#### Participants

-The faculty leader, as the director of the GLBT programs office had previous experience leading students on a GLBTA Leadership course that focused on GLBT history and activism in the United States. The GLBTA Leadership course contained experiential and service-learning opportunities and met with activist-leaders of GLBT organizations (University of Minnesota, 2011).

#### Tables 1 & 2: Participant Demographics

Table 1. Participant demographics

Pseudonym	Interview	Final paper	Year in school	Previous International Experience	Majoring in Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies
Steven	Yes	Yes	4	No	Yes
Robynne	Yes	No	2	No	Yes
Caroline	Yes	Yes	2	Yes, extensive	No
Evan	No	Yes	2	Yes, some	Yes
Erica	Yes	Yes	2	Yes, a little	No

Table 2. Participant GLBT profiles

Pseudonym	Gender	Self-identified Sexuality
Steven	Male	Gay
Robynne	Female	Bisexual
Caroline	Female	Lesbian
Evan	Gender non-conforming	Bisexual
Erica	Female	Lesbian

### Data Analysis

#### Course Contents

- 1) Required texts:
  - The Men with the Pink Triangle (Heger, 1980)
  - The Pink Triangle (Plant, 1986)
- 2) In Amsterdam the students visited the Homomonument, the Prostitution Information Center, and met with scholars and students at the University of Amsterdam to discuss homonationalism, legal marriage laws and the affect on PRIDE celebrations.
- 3) In Berlin the students studied the Weimar Republic, homosexuals in the Holocaust with GLBT scholars and historians. Visited Sachsenhausen, Magnus-Hirschfeld Society, the Schwules Museum, the Sonntag Club, etc.

#### Plan of Analysis

- Participant interviews were transcribed and coded.
- Participant's final papers were coded.
- Data was analyzed using induction: the iterative process of building categories, patterns, and themes until a set of themes are established.

#### Emergent Themes

- 1) Pre-departure expectations and experiences.
- 2) GLBT history of Amsterdam and Berlin. (RQ 1)
- 3) The connections between history and activism. (RQ 1)
- 4) The meaning of activism and community from participant perspectives. (RQ 2)
- 5) Definitions of activism. (RQ 2)
- 6) Personal development experienced from participation and demonstrated through sharing the experience with others upon re-entry. (RQ 2&3)

#### Demonstrated Outcomes

##### Student Learning:

- cultural history
- mainstream vs. GLBT historical/contemporary culture
- comparisons w/ U.S. historical/contemporary culture
- historical resistance and connections to...
- present day activism

##### Personal Development:

- personal definitions of community/activism
- self-awareness
- self-esteem/confidence
- cross-cultural awareness
- increased motivation (education, activism)
- critical thinking

### Conclusions & Implications

#### Conclusions:

- This program had a great impact on the participants because:
- They demonstrated in-depth knowledge and understanding of GLBT history and activism in cross-cultural contexts.
  - They grappled with the definitions of activism in a personal context and the cultural context of Amsterdam and Berlin.
  - The outcomes of personal development are on par with other short-term study abroad program outcomes.

#### Implications:

- Further diversifies access to study abroad.
- Calls for further collaboration between international education and GLBT studies professionals.
- Increases visibility of GLBT population on an institutional and global level.

#### Suggestions for further GLBT study abroad programs and research:

- More studies in general on GLBT study abroad programs.
- Research on GLBT Allies.
- Implement and research GLBT study abroad opportunities in location other than Europe.

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