

Campbell - Queering International Education Grant (July 2022-December 2023)
Conflict Transformation

A. Statement of research question and its importance

This project examines and interrogates the relationship between international education (IE) and peace through two studies. First, my research examines how LGBTQIA+ students from countries without legal protections for queer citizens—including three countries which send the largest number of queer students to the US (China, India, and South Korea)—experience IE in the US. The research questions which guide this study are:

1. How do queer international students who study in the United States navigate their identities – interpersonally and externally – as they prepare for U.S. study and upon their return home?
2. What are the considerations, challenges, and supports for queer international students as they prepare to study and after they leave the United States?
3. How do U.S. international student visa policies support or constrict queer international students?

This research illuminates the conflicts, tensions, and joys that arise when the students go back to less inclusive and less welcoming environments, often as a requirement of their student visa or scholarship program. It aims to bring more attention to the difficult position of queer international students from less open and welcoming countries.

The second project in this study is to interrogate and update the claims made by J. William Fulbright as to the efficacy of international exchange programs to create peace. The research questions for this review of literature and current scholarship programs are:

1. What are the major conceptualizations for international exchange for peace that are being used in U.S. higher education programs today?
2. What evidence is available that these international higher education programs bring about peace, conflict resolution, or national security outcomes?

The findings from this research aim to assist US governmental scholarships and similar exchange programs to include peace and conflict studies research and frameworks to enhance program design, evaluation, and alumni support—toward improving programs' impact on society.

B. List of collaborators and partners

- Three graduate research assistants at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies: Quintessence Townsend, MPA/IEM (2022-2023,); Jordyn Dezagó, MPA/IEM (2022-2023), and Marissa Ruhno, IEM (2023).
- Presentations of Research: Comparative and International Education Society, 2023 and 2024; NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2023; and Association for the Study of Higher Education 2023.
- Multiple conversations with other researchers and scholars in the area of queer student studies, international student research, and research with international students.

C. Summary of research findings

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In the first project exploring the experiences of queer international students, the main findings, as they relate to conflict and conflict transformation are:

- Queer international students seek US higher education, in part, to live freely and openly.
- Student visas were a source of stress, limiting opportunities for students and forcing them to make difficult decisions, including about going back into the closet when going home. These stresses while in the US and conflict in personal lives and interpersonal relationships.
- Queer international students are leading as role models for younger generations, but few consider themselves activists and are not “on the front line” of queer rights at home.

For the second project examining current international exchange programs for peace, results showed six models in how exchange programs contribute to Galtung’s definition of positive or negative peace:

1. Exchange programs are put in place to rebuild and strengthen nations after conflict.
2. Exchanges teach students skills of how to maintain security and deter future conflict.
3. “Rescue” programs are offered to students and scholars to escape conflict and violence.
4. Programs identify systematically marginalized individuals to bestow benefits of international exchange.
5. Exchanges teach the academic discipline of peace and conflict studies for scholars.

D. Implications for study and practice of conflict transformation

There are three main implications for the study and practice of conflict transformation:

1. IE scholars and policymakers can benefit from knowledge of peace studies, including in assessment of whether peace is achieved as a program outcome. Specific attention should be made to climate justice and racial and ethnic tensions.
2. Queer international students come to the US to seek freedom and peace. However, students from countries that do not legally support LGBTQIA+ do not tend to join domestic advocacy organizations, and there are few networks for queer international students. These students need additional voice and support in US higher education.
3. Many of the systems that the US has in place to monitor international students are based on (1) national security and (2) heteronormativity. Extant policies evoke great stress for queer international students; for example, policies often push queer international students to return to countries where their LGBTQ+ identities are not protected, and their human rights are under threat.

E. List of publications, performances, media coverage, and other output

- Campbell, A. C., Dezagó, J., & Townsend, Q. (2024). Queer students in international education: A review of distinct motivations, considerations, and challenges. *Higher Education*. DOI: 10.1007/s10734-024-01183-4
- Campbell, A. C., Townsend, Q. M., & Ruhno, M. (2024). Queer international students navigating policies at home and abroad. In A. Herridge & K. Prieto (Eds.), *LGBTQIA students in higher education: Approaching student identity and policy* (pp. 131-148). IGI Global. DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-2853-8.ch007
- Campbell, A. C. (in preparation, book manuscript). Finding freedom? Queer International Students in the United States.
- Campbell, A. C. (in preparation, article manuscript). Was Fulbright right? Interrogating and modernizing the links between international higher education and peace.