

Merge: The W's Undergraduate Research Journal



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Brianna Warner

LGBTQ Campus Climate Assessment

Project Advisor: Dr. Irene Pintado

Department Reader: Dr. Caroline Payne-Purvis

Honors Reader: Dr. Nora Corrigan

Research Questions

1. Is there is a difference in the MUW campus climate towards LGBTQ individuals based on the respondents' sexual orientation?
2. Do faculty/staff perceive that the MUW campus provides a positive climate for individuals who identify as LGBTQ?
3. Do students perceive that the MUW campus provides a positive climate for individuals who identify as LGBTQ?

Hypothesis

1. Perceptions of campus climate are dependent on LGBTQ status.
2. Faculty/staff will perceive the campus as providing a positive climate for individuals who identify as LGBTQ.
3. Students will perceive the campus as providing a positive climate for individuals who identify as LGBTQ.

Introduction

The college experience is a time when students are often exposed to challenging new ideas and introduced to people with very different backgrounds. While this can be an environment that fosters positive intellectual and emotional growth, some students face unique challenges due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity (Rankin, 2003). Campus climates that are perceived to be negative and hostile toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning or queer (LGBTQ) campus members contribute to lower success rates and higher dropout rates among this group (Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network, 2009).

Many studies show that LGBTQ students, sometimes beginning as early as middle school, often experience more harassment, have more negative or self-injurious thoughts, manage more stress, and have an overall lower quality of life than their non-LGBTQ peers, which can lead to increased anxiety and mental exhaustion (Brown, et al., 2004). This can negatively affect performance on class assignments and activities, and therefore, the overall college experience. The negative impact this has on retention and academic outcomes among college students make the creation of an inclusive and supportive campus climate for the LGBTQ student population important to overall campus climate.

"LGBTQ Campus Climate Assessment" involves the creation of a survey instrument to assess MUW student and faculty/staff's attitudes toward LGBTQ individuals and their comfort level in interacting with LGBTQ individuals. The project will also assess the adequacy of campus resources for LGBTQ students. The data drawn from the survey instrument will be used

to improve programming such as the Safe Zone program implemented by the MUW Counseling Center and improve campus resources for LGBTQ individuals.

Purpose of This Study

The purpose of the study was to examine Mississippi University for Women students, faculty, and staff's perception of the campus climate with regards to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning or Queer individuals. This campus climate assessment will be used to inform programming and policy making in divisions on campus such as, but not limited to, the Counseling Center, Office of Student Life, and Department of Housing and Residence Life.

Literature Review

Campus climate is, at its most simple level, the environment of a college campus. This environment can be positive or negative and is made up of a variety of interactions that influence its creation. Climate, for the purposes of this project is considered to be “the current attitudes, behaviors, and standards of faculty, staff, administrators and students concerning the level of respect for individual needs, abilities, and potential” (Rankin, 2003). This study is largely concerned with student perceptions of campus climate, but it is important to understand campus climate as a general concept as well.

College campuses have unique cultures that differ across institutions. While campus culture influences students' experiences differently, students also contribute to the development of a distinct campus culture. Campus culture is also created through interactions between faculty, staff, students, administration, peers, alumni, and other stakeholders who in turn influence campus climate (Holland, 2008, p. 19).

A differentiation must be made between campus climate and campus culture, as they are sometimes used interchangeably. While both are important to note, this study primarily concerns climate rather than culture. As compared to culture, climate is more concerned with current perceptions and attitudes rather than deeply held meanings, beliefs, and values (Fanucce and Taub, 2009, p. 27). However, climate can be and often is inclusive of aspects of culture. Climate refers to the experience of individuals or groups on campus, as well as the quality and extent of interaction between those various individuals or groups (Fanucce and Taub, 2009, p. 29). It is important to assess campus climate because, in an unhealthy campus climate, individuals often feel marginalized, isolated, and even unsafe. If a campus climate is not healthy, there is a lack of respect for others and dialogue between differing perspectives is either nonexistent or hostile (Fanucce and Taub, 2009, p. 35).

Campus climate creates a series of norms that are specific to that campus. These norms are defined and understood by participants in the campus climate and deviating from these established norms goes against the grain of the established culture. The campus climate impacts students' identity development as they both interact with and participate in campus climate as well as observe it. The climate of a college campus is inferred by the individuals within it based upon their appraisal of every event and nonevent they observe and experience on campus (Cress, 1999). It consists of the mutually reinforcing relationship between the perceptions, attitudes, and expectations of both individuals and groups, as well as the actual patterns of interaction and behavior between individuals and groups (Cress, 2008, 97). Therefore, in order to determine a campus climate, one must examine "the current perceptions, attitudes, and expectations that define the institution and its members" (Fanucce and Taub, 2009, 34). So while students help

create the campus climate, they are in turn influenced by it in their daily lives. This can impact them in their classrooms, residence halls, and organizations.

Based on the literature, campus climate influences student's academic success and well-being. Kessler suggests that various social identity groups perceive the campus climate differently and their perceptions may adversely affect working and learning outcomes (Kessler, 2011, p. 97). However, organizations do not have one sweeping organizational culture that shapes climate perceptions. Instead, perceptions of climate can differ because of organizational members' affiliations with different subcultures (e.g., an LGBTQ subculture) (Fanucce and Taub, 2009, 39).

To demonstrate the importance of measuring campus climate, it is important to explore the impact that campus climate has upon students and their success. At a basic level, students' perception of campus climate affects how they respond to the environment. That is, negative perceptions are likely to lead to discontent, insecurity, and a desire to leave the environment, while positive perceptions are likely to be linked to contentment, security, and a desire to stay in the environment (Cress, 1999, 15). Cress (1999) noted, "The importance of the relationship between campus climate with students' sense of self and their academic accomplishments cannot be underestimated" (18). There is a strong relationship between student perceptions of campus climate, educational achievements in terms of grade point average and development of academic knowledge and skills, and how students feel about themselves with respect to social and academic self-concept (Cress, 1999, p.23). Various studies have demonstrated a direct correlation between a negative campus climate and lack of students' academic success (Fanucce and Taub, 2009; Rankin, 2003; Worthen, 2011).

Campus climate surveys assess the attitudes, perceptions, and expectations within interpersonal interactions (Cress, 2008, p. 97). The purpose of conducting climate survey research is to influence a foundation for institutional change (Cress, 2008, p. 104). They are utilized by academic institutions to gauge the environment's relations to issues of diversity (Cress, 2008, p. 107).

Until the 1980s and 1990s, there was relatively little consideration for the effect of campus climate on LGBTQ students. Many colleges and university administrators regarded LGBTQ students as an outlier, if they considered them at all. Ingrained homophobia made it difficult for LGBTQ students and faculty/staff to be "out" at all or risk discrimination, assault, expulsion, or even death. Therefore, very little examinations of campus climate for LGBTQ individuals exists prior to the 1980s and 1990s (Cress, 2008, p. 208).

Initially, campus climate assessments were constructed to evaluate the climate for racial diversity (Holland, 2008, 57). However, it was not long before such surveys with similar goals were used for issues regarding other identity categories such as gender (Holland, 2008, 52). The classroom climate for women in education explored how classroom climate encouraged (or discouraged) participation. Women who reported a better "fit" with the classroom environment participated at higher levels than did women who felt less of a "fit" (Worthen, 2011, 345).

As hostility toward LGBTQ students increased, due to publicity of the AIDS epidemic, administrators acknowledged the importance of attending to the safety of all students. Administrators also acknowledged the necessity of understanding LGBTQ students' experiences and identity development processes, and thus began to implement school wide changes to investigate issues and concerns of LGBTQ students and improve the campus climate

(Longerbeam et al., 2007, 218). A series of confrontations that occurred at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst during the fall semester of 1984 convinced the university administration that LGBTQ students were "subjected to an unusual amount of harassment and may well lack any of the usual student services sensitive to their needs as a group" (Longerbeam et al., 2007, 218). To assess this, the administration distributed surveys in the form of telephone surveys, surveys in the student newspaper, and surveys sent to student services and residence halls. Results showed that more than half of those surveyed believed there were widespread anti-gay and anti-lesbian attitudes on campus. Another campus climate assessment similar to the study conducted at the University of Massachusetts occurred two years later at Rutgers University (Longerbeam et al, 2007, 218).

These early campus climate assessments exposed the extent to which LGBTQ students were made to feel unwelcome at a variety of colleges and universities throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Despite these small single campus studies of campus climate, the first national study of campus climate for LGBTQ students was conducted in 2003 (Rankin, 2003). Of the fourteen campuses (four private and ten public) surveyed, a total of 1,660 self-identified LGBT students responded (Rankin, 2003). This study showed that a third of LGBT undergraduates had experienced harassment within the past year, with derogatory remarks being the most prominent form of harassment (Rankin, 2003). The study found that LGBT respondents were significantly less likely to feel very comfortable/comfortable with the overall campus climate, their department/work unit climate, and classroom climate than their heterosexual counterparts (Rankin, 2003). This study also uncovered the fact that transgender individuals attributed harassment to their gender identity 87% of the time (Rankin, 2003).

Many of the initial efforts to investigate campus climate resulted in the establishment of permanent resource centers and offices providing similar services, as well as programs to educate and cultivate LGBTQ allies amongst students, faculty, and staff. However, some of the early assessments failed to follow-up and continually reassess campus climate. The importance of continually reassessing campus climate is one that cannot be understated. One of the key purposes of campus climate research is to first establish what the nature of the campus climate is and to understand all of the moving parts and interactions of participants and observers of the campus climate. The second step is to decide what aspects of the campus climate must be altered to create a more positive overall climate. After said changes are made, then there must be a reassessment of the climate to examine the effects that changes have had, if any, on the climate in order to either continue with these policies or change them. Therefore, campus climate research must be ongoing in order to be comprehensive and successful. This holds true for future applications of the study conducted at MUW.

Campus climate consists of the mutually reinforcing relationship between the perceptions, attitudes, and expectations of both individuals and groups, as well as the actual patterns of interaction and behavior between individuals and groups (Cress, 2008, p. 98). Thus, in order to assess a campus climate, one must determine the current perceptions, attitudes, and expectations that define the institution and its members. Campus climate has a significant impact upon students' academic progress and achievement and their level of satisfaction with their university (Cress, 1999). Whether or not a student feels as though they matter on their campus is largely a result of the climate. Evaluations of campus climate for LGBTQ students allow administrators to uncover what inequalities may exist on their campus, which is the first step

toward being able to correct them. The survey is the centerpiece of the campus climate assessment process, providing data about students' experiences, behaviors, and attitudes regarding sexual orientation and gender identity and their perceptions of the school's response to it.

Coming out, the degree to which a person publicly identifies as their sexual orientation or gender identity, has traditionally been an important feature of LGBTQ individuals' ability to become enmeshed in the campus culture. However, there are campus cultures where there are enough people of marginalized identities to form a counterculture.

Much of the academic writing on LGBTQ students has not been empirical, but rather, personal reflections based on experience; this is particularly true for minorities within the LGBTQ community such as students with disabilities, transgender students, and students of color (Beemyn et al., 2005, 54). While these studies are valuable both because they provide some testable hypotheses and because they indicate the issues that some administrators and LGBT service professionals are already aware of, they do not provide systematic documentation of existing problems or solutions. The most effective way to quantify campus climate for LGBTQ members is through surveys. The term "survey" means a standard set of items given to participants, usually in a questionnaire, to assess different aspects of campus climate.

It has been established that perceived campus climate is a factor in the psychosocial development of LGBTQ students. Students' perception of campus climate is a predictor of their ability to adjust to life in the world of higher education and on their particular campus, and, "for students, perceived university environment is one of the primary sociological factors that can impact adjustment to college" (Fanucce and Taub, 2009, p. 24).

A multiple perspectives approach to studying campus climate is essential if campuses are to gain a fuller understanding of the campus community's perspectives. Investigating the perspectives of various campus constituents allows researchers to compare LGBTQ students' perceptions of campus climate with those of their non-LGBTQ peers, as well as compare attitudes based on specific characteristics of group members such as race and gender. (Brown et al., 2004).

Brown's utilization of a multiple perspectives approach distinguishes their study from previous assessments that garnered data either exclusively from LGBTQ students or exclusively from heterosexual students, and therefore could not reach conclusions regarding the similarities or differences between the two groups' perceptions of campus climate. Results suggested that different groups within the campus community had different perceptions of campus climate for LGBTQ students, and that individual characteristics (e.g., gender, progress toward degree, and academic discipline) were related to respondents' perceptions of campus climate (Brown et al., 2004)

Learning the condition of the campus climate for LGBTQ students can be viewed as the first step to ensuring that LGBTQ students' needs are being met as effectively and thoroughly as possible. Aside from determining whether LGBTQ students face harassment and bullying, there are additional factors to be considered when assessing campus climate (e.g., the presence of LGBTQ topics in the curriculum and the availability of resources to LGBTQ students) (Worthen, 2011, p. 350).

Multiple studies have found that LGBT students experience significantly higher rates of harassment and discrimination than their heterosexual and cisgender peers (Longerbeam et al.,

2007, p. 215). In these studies, LGBTQ college students generally rate campus climate lower than their non-LGBTQ peers, In one of the most commonly cited studies in campus climate research, a single campus study, the authors found that LGBTQ students are targeted for harassment and violence more often than non LGBTQ students (Rankin, 2003). The study found that more than one-third (36%) of LGBTQ undergraduate students had experienced harassment within the past year with derogatory remarks being the most common form of harassment (89%) (Rankin, 2003). Other types of harassment included spoken harassment or threats (48%), anti-LGBTQ graffiti (39%), pressure to conceal one's sexual orientation or gender identity (38%), written comments (33%), and physical assaults. 79% of those harassed identified students as the source of the harassment (Rankin, 2003). Perception of climate also appears to influence the degree of engagement with the learning enterprise (Rankin, 2003).

Members of the campus experience the campus climate differently based on their group membership and group status on campus (Rankin, 2003). LGBTQ students who experience positive campus climates have more positive educational experiences and experience healthy identity development (Longerbeam et al., 2007, p. 220). There are several predictors of positive attitudes toward LGBTQ people. These include knowing someone who is LGBTQ and/or being comfortable with one's own sexual identity.

The results of campus climate assessments illuminate not only the shortcomings in services, resources, experiences, and attitudes on campus, but also the campus' strengths. In turn, administrators can support the programs that are already working well and intervene where campus needs are not being fully met. In order to enhance the role of higher education institutions in providing students with the opportunities to learn how to live and work in a

complex, diverse society, it is essential that campuses assess the campus climate and respond accordingly (Kessler 2011, 99).

The experiences of LGBTQ educators in campus climate cannot be ignored either. To date, only one comprehensive quantitative study (Juul and Repa, 1993) has been published that examines the relationship between level of “outness” (being open about their sexual orientation) for LGBTQ educators and job satisfaction. These results are over two decades old, however, and do not provide further details about the factors that contribute to these educators’ perceptions of the climate at their schools. LGBTQ educators who rated themselves as more “out” had higher scores on the job satisfaction survey (Juul and Repa, 1993). There was no indication of why being out made the LGBTQ educators more satisfied with their jobs. For example, the campus climate could have been positive toward LGBTQ members, making educators more likely to consider being out. However, outness alone does not explain the contributing factors to the campus climate. A much smaller study of nine LGBTQ participants (Jackson, 2007) identified support (especially from administrators) as a major factor that impacted LGBTQ educators’ level of outness in the workplace. This study was weak due to the extremely small sample size and the fact that not all of the participants were higher education faculty, but rather, worked in the K-12 education system, where the experiences are very different from higher education. Many LGBTQ educators fear a complete and outright rejection by their students as a consequence of their sexual orientation (Jackson, 2007). No other major quantitative research study has evaluated professional climates for LGBTQ educators, however, making the climate for faculty members of particular interest to this study as well, especially given the high percentage of faculty respondents to the MUW survey. While faculty are not the primary focus of this survey,

the role that faculty play in campus climate is one that cannot be understated nor ignored. More studies are needed in this area to effectively gauge the current climate for faculty members, particularly LGBTQ faculty.

To the knowledge of the current researcher, MUW has not conducted or reported any comprehensive assessments of campus climate in its history of any kind whether about race, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity: the most prevalent subjects of campus climate research. While no study exists to document the experience of all LGBTQ students at MUW, surveys at other southern institutions reveal a troubling story of harassment and discrimination. In 2002, the University of Georgia conducted a campus climate survey and found that homophobic remarks were rampant, with 90% of respondents having heard them. Furthermore, roughly 25% reported feeling unsafe; 10% had experienced property destruction; and 10% had been threatened with physical violence because of their sexual orientation. Students were deeply unimpressed by the response to the harassment as well with 86% of respondents expressing dissatisfaction with the administration's response. The only existing study on the campus climate of MUW is primarily concerned with the climate for gay male students (Holland, 2008, p. 7).

A survey gathers information that can only be understood from first-hand reports. This information includes measurements of subjective characteristics, such as students' opinions, attitudes, beliefs, and awareness of campus resources. Surveys may also yield more accurate estimates of the prevalence of discrimination and harassment than statistics from law enforcement, as many victims of hate crimes and may never report the incident(s) to the authorities. Surveys can also allow researchers to investigate specific questions of interest. For instance, an investigator might be especially interested in what makes undergraduates more or

less likely to use homophobic slurs.

The use of a survey instrument to measure campus climate at MUW is of utmost importance. There has been no examination of campus climate for LGBTQ members in MUW's history. This study is the first, to the researcher's knowledge, to measure LGBTQ members' experience with accessing campus resources, attitudes, and daily experiences as well as their overall perception of the campus climate. This is especially important to creating a safe space for students, faculty, and administrators to learn and work freely and without fear of reprisal and to have positive academic and work outcomes.

Best Practices

The purpose of this campus climate assessment is to provide avenues for structural changes at MUW. By using the information gathered from this assessment, MUW administration will have the tools it needs to assess problems as well as assets with regard to campus climate. Structural changes positively affect campus climate for LGBTQ members. Positive structural changes include creating LGBTQ resource centers and safe-space programs, and providing institutional recognition to LGBTQ student groups such as the Gay-Straight Alliance. In addition, LGBTQ-inclusive practices, such as domestic partner benefits or nondiscrimination policies are very beneficial. MUW now has sexual orientation and gender identity included in its nondiscrimination policy. Institutional support and commitment to an LGBTQ-friendly campus; recruitment and retention of open LGBTQ students, faculty, and staff; and attention to LGBTQ student life, including social organizations, housing, and physical safety are three of the most

important factors to the creation and maintenance of a positive campus climate (Longerbeam, et al., 2007, p.218). MUW provides housing staff with the opportunity to undergo the SafeZone training offered by the Counseling Center on campus. However, the need for specialized training modules on advanced LGBTQ topics and skills building sessions for campus staff has been recognized by researchers (Draughn, Elkins, and Roy, 2002).

A study conducted by Campus Pride, an organization dedicated to improving campus climate for LGBTQ students, “couldn't find a single institution that optionally asks for sexual preference or gender identity on admission applications, let alone tracks the success of this unique student population.” (Kessler, 2011, p. 100). This study examines over 1000 college and university institutions across the United States. While a follow-up study has not been conducted since, the results are likely not overwhelmingly different now. In the long term, if MUW is to provide effective and culturally competent services to their LGBTQ student population, it is imperative to know what this population is and what presence they have on the campus. This survey is the first of any kind in MUW’s history to ask all members of the community how they self-identify in terms of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Studies of campus climate focus on three areas: (a) perceptions and experiences of LGBTQ people, (b) perceptions about LGBTQ people and their experiences, and (c) the status of policies and programs designed to improve the academic, living, and work experiences of LGBTQ people on campus. Campus climate studies provide data on experiences of and attitudes about LGBTQ people and have often been used to provide evidence for creating, improving, or expanding LGBTQ programs and services (Longerbeam et al., 2007, 223).

Multi-campus studies also are very important to campus climate research. They serve

multiple functions on college campuses, indicating to LGBTQ and non- LGBTQ students and faculty/staff that LGBTQ campus climate matters to the administration. Efforts to standardize data on LGBTQ campus climate represent a step forward from single-campus studies in terms of creating a broader regional or even national picture, although single-campus studies remain an important tool for assessing climate and supporting policy and program change where needed.

Climate surveys can provide information about community perceptions, knowledge, and attitudes relevant to gender identity and sexual orientation. Incident rates assessed via confidential or anonymous surveys can be another source of data about the extent of issues relating to discrimination and harassment. Regularly administering surveys can show changes over time, such as decreases in gender and sexual orientation based assaults. Surveys can provide information about the problem, enabling MUW to tailor prevention and response efforts to improve climate.

In practice, perceptions of climate are measured in many different ways, including asking what members of the LGBTQ community think about factors like: the way the campus – including fellow students – responds to harassment and homophobia; the viability of campus policies; how much campus leadership cares about LGBTQ students; and how safe students feel.

Methods

The purpose of the study was to examine Mississippi University for Women students, faculty, and staff's perception of the campus climate with regards to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning or Queer individuals. Through consultation and collaboration with the MUW Counseling Center, the researchers determined that the most effective way to

respond to the needs of LGBTQ students, faculty, and staff at MUW was to first establish the needs of this population. To do this, the researchers developed a campus climate survey to gauge campus perception of resources for LGBTQ individuals and attitudes toward the LGBTQ population.

Several variables were established to examine the population of MUW. An overall campus climate variable was created by combining many of the survey questions regarding campus climate. These questions were then recoded to create the campus climate variable where the lower the number meant the more negative the perception of campus climate and the higher number meant a more positive perception of campus climate. This climate variable was used to analyze the overall perception of MUW campus climate. The campus climate variable results were also compared between several demographic variables. LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ variables were established to compare perception between the two groups. Genders were also separated as well as race and biological sex into different variables for comparison purposes.

The population for this study included students, faculty, and staff at Mississippi University for Women. The data was collected between January 20th and February 3rd, 2016. There were 123 respondents to the survey. The researchers distributed the survey through email invitations and by posting links to social media and through Canvas courses.

Items were developed to ascertain participants' (or respondents') perceptions of resources for LGBTQ individuals and attitude toward the LGBTQ population. The survey items were written, revised, and formatted using "Survey Monkey" software for survey design. Survey Monkey was also used for data collection and analysis. After the creation of the survey, the project committee read the survey items and suggested revisions to increase clarity. The online

survey consisted of 114 items, which includes items specific to respondents who identified as transgender. The survey includes one open-ended item that provided respondents with the opportunity to comment, identify concerns, describe items that were difficult to answer, and suggest ways to improve the survey.

The researchers sought and received MUW Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval before data collection began. Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous, and results were reported in the aggregate. Respondents did not receive any incentive for completing the surveys.

Results

The demographics of the survey respondents were largely in line with MUW population with regard to biological sex makeup, but not to race or faculty/student makeup. 22% of respondents self-identified as LGBTQ. The demographics of race/ethnicity were not similar to those of the overall student population at MUW. According to MUW Institutional Research, roughly 36% of the student population at MUW is Black or African-American. In comparison, only roughly 13% of the survey respondents identified as Black or African-American. The rate of faculty respondents did not correlate with the population of MUW. 29% of survey respondents identified as faculty while faculty make up roughly 8% of the total MUW population. Staff cannot be considered in this same manner as some who identified as staff may also be students. The biological sex of survey respondents correlated to the student population with 77% of respondents being assigned female at birth and 19% of respondents identifying as assigned male at birth.

All null hypotheses are affirmed. There was no statistically significant difference between

LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ survey participants with regard to the perception of campus climate with $p=13$. LGBTQ respondents did not perceive the campus climate more negatively than non-LGBTQ respondents.

Most participants have not attended Safe Zone training. Over 37% of participants were unaware of any programming or educational events specific to the LGBTQ community on the MUW campus.

Discussion

The results of the survey indicated that there was no significant difference in perception between the different populations on campus i.e LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ, women and men, faculty/staff and students with regard to campus climate. This is indicative of the MUW campus' overall positive campus climate. This is not to say that significant changes cannot be made to improve the campus climate, but this positive perception could be potentially useful in recruitment and retention materials for MUW. By having an LGBTQ friendly campus climate comparable to other Southern institutions, MUW has the potential to attract and retain LGBTQ students.

Given the low rate of awareness of Safe Zone training, MUW administration and the Counseling Center must make it a point to increase publicity of the training as well as potentially offering it more often and opening it up to the entire MUW population. As it stands currently, SafeZone training is the only university sponsored training specifically focused on LGBTQ issues at MUW. It must be expanded upon to have a more maximal impact. It is also possible to expand upon Title IX programming, as well as tie it into Safe Zone training in order to be more inclusive of LGBTQ issues.

There were only 2 respondents who self-identified as transgender. While this may not be reflective of the entire MUW population, it is impossible to tell as this is the first assessment of the population and there is nothing to compare it to. This makes it impossible to provide an accurate snapshot of trans students' experiences at MUW.

Respondents did have the opportunity to suggest overall changes that could be made to the MUW campus to improve the experience for LGBTQ students. These suggestions are very revealing of the thought processes of members of the MUW community and center around a few main suggestions. Many respondents' emphasized a desire to see more programming and educational programs centered around the LGBTQ community, particularly concerning gender identity. Several respondents expressed a desire to see a clearer system of reporting instances of student-to-student harassment. One respondent asserted that if they were to change "anything at the W it would be to instate a system where students are actually held accountable for harassing their peers." Structural changes such as "more gender inclusive bathrooms...clear policies on inclusion and nondiscrimination for all groups" must be instituted in order to ensure that there is fair and equal treatment at an institutional level.

Another theme that was prevalent in respondents' suggestions was that of university promotion of organizations like GSA and the increase in LGBTQ focused programming. One respondent wanted to see the university promote organizations like GSA more and said "it would be a great idea to host a Pride Parade on college street or on campus; MUW is the most LGBTQ campus in Mississippi, and it would be amazing to see how many people from around the area would travel to show up at the parade." This response is indicative of the commonly held perception that MUW holds a unique position in the state of Mississippi with regard to the

treatment and presence of the LGBTQ community.

Conclusion

Campus climates that are perceived to be negative and hostile toward LGBTQ campus members contribute to lower success rates and higher dropout rates among LGBTQ students. LGBTQ students need a nondiscriminatory learning environment in which to succeed academically and to grow personally. Without a positive campus climate, LGBTQ students are more likely to face lower academic and social outcomes. The negative impact this has on retention and academic outcomes among college students make the creation of an inclusive and supportive campus climate for the LGBTQ student population important to overall campus climate.

Given the recent passage of Mississippi HB 1523, which allows for individuals to decline a multitude of products and services to people, mainly LGBTQ people, whose lifestyles violate their religious and moral beliefs and convictions without being penalized by the state of Mississippi, MUW has a unique opportunity to make its dedication to a mission of diversity and inclusion clear in this hostile political climate. By expanding on current programming and institutional policies, MUW can continue to maintain its status as the most LGBTQ friendly campus in Mississippi and can expand this into a regional reputation that could even be helpful in recruitment materials. By making these structural changes, MUW can ensure that LGBTQ students have a positive college experience that will produce excellent academic and social outcomes.

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Appendix A

LGBTQ Campus Climate Assessment

Please select the BEST response for each of the following.

1. My biological sex is:
 - a. Male B. Female C. Intersex
2. Which of the following best describes your current gender identity (check all that apply):
 - a. Male B. Female C. Genderqueer D. Genderfluid E. Transgender (Pre-, Post-, Non-op) F. Transsexual (Pre-, Post-, Non-op) G. Two Spirit H. Intergender I. Questioning J. Not listed (please indicate)
3. Which of the following best describes your current sexual orientation (check all that apply): A. Heterosexual (straight) B. Homosexual (Gay) C. Bisexual D. Lesbian E. Asexual F. Pansexual G. Refuse to identify H. Not listed (please indicate)
4. Which of the following best describes your race (check all that apply): A. American Indian/Alaskan Native B. Asian C. Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander D. Black or African American E. White F. Hispanic G. Not listed (please indicate)
5. Age:
6. Which of the following best describes your primary current academic/employment status

at MUW: Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior, Graduate Student, Staff, Faculty

7. Current relationship status: Single, Married, Dating, Divorced, Widowed, Engaged, Open-Relationship, Other:
8. Where do you currently reside: On-campus, off-campus

Please select the BEST response for each of the following.

9. How many friends do you have that identify as LGBTQ? (ALL) (Number)
10. How often do you notice Safe Zone signs on campus? (ALL) (Daily-Never)
11. How comfortable are you explaining Safe Zone? (ALL) (extremely comfortable to not comfortable at all)
12. Have you attended a Safe Zone training workshop? (ALL) (Yes/No)
13. Following Safe Zone training do you feel more educated on the needs of LGBTQ individuals? (Safe Zone attendees only) (Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree)
14. Which of the following resources are you aware of on campus for LGBTQ students? (ALL)
Possible answers: counseling center, Safe Zone, Gay-Straight Alliance, Dean of Students, Residence Advisor/Directors, Vice President of Student Affairs?
15. How confident are you in accessing resources on campus for LGBTQ students? (ALL) (Extremely confident to not confident at all)
16. How many educational events or programming specific to the LGBTQ community exists on the MUW campus (0- 5 or more) (ALL)
17. I believe lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer students are treated equally to heterosexual

students at MUW? (ALL) (Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree)

18. I believe transgender students are treated equally to heterosexual students at MUW? (ALL)

(Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree)

19. How comfortable are you attending class with openly LGBTQ students? (ALL STUDENTS)

(Extremely comfortable to not comfortable at all)

20. How comfortable are you rooming with an openly LGBTQ student (ALL STUDENTS)

(Extremely comfortable to not comfortable at all)

21. How comfortable are you with hearing LGBTQ individuals talk about their social lives (ie.

Families, dating, relationships) (Extremely comfortable to not comfortable at all) (ALL)

Please read the following and rate your comfort in each situation. Ask yourself, “How comfortable am I with:” (22-28)

22. A student who tells me they are in a same sex relationship. (Extremely comfortable to not comfortable at all) (ALL)

23. A student who tells me they are in a heterosexual relationship. (Extremely comfortable to not comfortable at all) (ALL)

24. A student who tells me that they are transgender. (Extremely comfortable to not comfortable at all) (ALL)

25. A faculty/staff member who tells me they are in a same sex relationship. (Extremely comfortable to not comfortable at all) (ALL)

26. A faculty/ staff member who tells me they are transgender. (Extremely comfortable to not

comfortable at all) (ALL)

27. Using an individual's chosen gender pronoun (ie. Male/female/other) (Extremely comfortable to not comfortable at all) (ALL)

28. An individual who does not conform to their biological sex (ie. A male who displays feminine characteristics/dress) (Extremely comfortable to not comfortable at all) (ALL)

Please select the BEST response for each of the following.

29. How comfortable are you/ would you be going to the health center? (Extremely comfortable to not comfortable at all) (ALL)

30. How comfortable are you /would you be going to the counseling center? (Extremely comfortable to not comfortable at all) (ALL STUDENTS)

31. How comfortable are you discussing your sexual orientation with each of the following: (extremely comfortable to not comfortable at all) (ALL STUDENTS)

- a. Academic Advisors
- b. Counselors
- c. Health Center Employees
- d. RA/RD
- e. Professors/Instructors
- f. Staff (ie. Dean of Students, VP of Student Affairs, etc)
- g. Classmates/Other MUW Students

32. How comfortable would you be joining a campus organization such as the Gay-Straight Alliance? (Extremely comfortable to not comfortable at all) (ALL STUDENTS)

33. How safe do you feel as an LGBTQ individual on MUW's campus? (Extremely safe to not safe at all) (LGBTQ STUDENTS only)

34. How safe do you feel in each of the following places on campus? (Extremely safe to not safe at all) (LGBTQ STUDENTS only)

- A. Residence Halls
- B. Cafeteria
- C. Classrooms/Educational Settings
- D. Common Areas (i.e green spaces, gazebo, etc)
- E. Rec Center
- F. Faculty/Staff Offices
- G. Health Center
- H. Counseling Center

35. How comfortable are you with going to see an OB/GYN annually? (LGBTQ FEMALE STUDENT ONLY) (Extremely comfortable to not comfortable at all) (LGBTQ FEMALE STUDENT ONLY)

36. If you have been harassed on MUW's campus for your sexual orientation or gender identity, how often have you been harassed? (if you have never been harassed on MUW campus for your sexual orientation or gender identity please select never) (Daily to Never) (ALL)

37. How often have you feared for your physical safety on campus because of your sexual orientation or gender identity? (Daily to never) (ALL)

38. Which of the following form(s) of harassment on MUW campus have you experienced?

Mark all that apply (ALL/Only if said anything but never to previous harassed question))

- a. derogatory remarks
- b. threats to expose your sexual orientation/gender identity
- c. pressure to be silent about your sexual orientation/gender identity
- d. direct or indirect verbal harassment or threats
- e. denial of services
- f. written comments (e.g. anti-LGBTQ flyers, publications, etc.)
- g. anti-LGBTQ graffiti
- h. threats of physical assault or injury
- i. social media threats/comments
- j. avoidance
- k. other: specify

39. How often have you concealed your sexual orientation/gender identity on campus to avoid intimidation? (ALL) (Daily-Never)

40. How often have you avoided disclosing your sexual orientation/gender identity to an instructor due to fear of negative consequences, harassment, or discrimination? (ALL) (Daily-Never)

41. Do you feel you have ever been denied university/college admission/employment or promotion due to sexual orientation/gender identity? (ALL) (Always to never)

42. How well do you feel MUW addresses issues related to sexual orientation/gender identity?

(ALL) (extremely well to not well at all)

43. How confident are you as an LGBTQ student in MUW's incident reporting? (LGBTQ STUDENT ONLY) (extremely confident to not confident at all)

44. How would you classify your LGBTQ status (LGBTQ only) (not open, friends/trusted confidants, extremely open)

45. I avoid areas where LGBTQ persons congregate for fear of being labeled (ALL) (Always-Never)

46. The climate of the classes I have taken are accepting of LGBTQ persons (ALL) (SA-SD).

47. The curriculum of classes I have taken includes the contributions of LGBTQ persons (ALL) (SA-SD).

48. Have you taken or plan to take a course at MUW in which issues of sexuality were discussed (ALL STUDENTS) (Y, I have taken, Y, I plan to take, /No)

49. Have you taught or plan to teach a course in which issues of sexuality were/are discussed. (FACULTY) (Y, I have taught, Y, I plan to taught, /No)

50. I am concerned that if I teach courses on sexuality it will negatively affect my chances of tenure, promotion, or employment. (SA-SD)(FACULTY)

51. Men are harassed on campus due to their sexual orientation (actual or as perceived by others) (SA-SD) (ALL).

52. Men are harassed on campus due to gender identity or gender expression. (SA-SD) ALL

53. Women are harassed on campus due to their sexual orientation (actual or as perceived by others). (SA-SD) (ALL)

54. Women are harassed on campus due to their gender identity or gender expression. (SD-SA)

(ALL)

55. Transgender and gender nonconforming persons are harassed on campus due to their gender identity or gender expression (SA-SD) (ALL).

56. I have witnessed discrimination against LGBTQ identified students on campus. (Never, Once 2-3 times, 4-5 times, 6 or more times) (ALL)

57. I feel competent in knowing how to report an act of discrimination or harassment that I had witnessed. (SA-SD) (ALL)

58. I feel competent in knowing how to report an act of discrimination or harassment that I had experienced. (ALL)

59. I have discriminated against someone based off of their sexual orientation or gender expression. (ALL) (SA-SD)

60. The campus climate for LGBTQ has improved in the past three years? (ALL) (SD-SA)

61. I have heard faculty/staff stereotype, make negative remarks, or tell jokes regarding LGBTQ individuals? (SD-SA) (ALL)

62. I have heard students stereotype, make negative remarks, or tell jokes regarding LGBTQ individuals? (SD-SA) (ALL)

63. I am willing to confront a student making derogatory remarks towards LGBTQ individuals? (SA-SD) (ALL)

64. I am willing to confront a faculty/staff member making derogatory remarks towards LGBTQ individuals? (SA-SD) (ALL)

65. In general, it is easy at MUW to get to know people of different sexual orientations (which may include lesbian, gay, and bisexual). (ALL) (SA-SD)

66. In general, it is easy at MUW to get to know people of different gender identities or expressions. (ALL) (SA-SD).
67. MUW is a diverse campus environment where differences are respected and appreciated. (ALL) (SA-SD).
68. I would recommend MUW to friends looking for a school/work environment that is welcoming of people of diverse sexual orientations and/or gender identities. (ALL) (SA-SD)
69. Have you ever felt that you were expected to speak on behalf of all gay, lesbian, bisexual, and queer individuals at MUW? (LGBQ ONLY) (Never-Daily)
70. Have you ever felt that you were expected to speak on behalf of all transgender individuals at MUW? (Trans only) (Never-Daily)
71. Since coming to MUW my attitude toward LGBTQ persons has become accepting. (SA-SD)
(ALL)
72. Since coming to MUW, my knowledge on the LGBTQ community has increased? (SA-SD)
(ALL)
73. I am knowledgeable about LGBTQ concerns, history, and culture? (ALL) (SA-SD)
74. I am interested in learning more about LGBTQ concerns, history, and culture? (ALL) (SA-SD)
75. I am willing to attend a program on LGBTQ issues at MUW? (ALL) (SA-SD)
76. I would prefer instructors explain to students about my preferred name or pronoun. (SA-SD)
(ALL)
77. I have considered leaving MUW because I did not find the environment as safe and welcoming as I had hoped? (ALL) (SA-SD)

Final open ended question. What overall changes would you like to see on the MUW campus regarding LGBTQ students/community? Overall, what challenges do you feel LGBTQ students face on MUW's campus? What suggestions for improvement do you have for MUW regarding LGBTQ students?

If participants selected "Transgender" as their current gender identity they will be asked to answer the following questions.

Please select the BEST response for each of the following.

1. Do you have a primary physician that you see on a yearly basis?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Unsure

2. How comfortable are you visiting a healthcare facility for a check-up?

- A. Very comfortable
- B. Comfortable
- C. Neutral

D. Uncomfortable

E. Very uncomfortable

3. If you identify as a transman, when was the last time you went to your physician to receive a pap smear? (If not, skip to question 5)

A. 1-3 months

B. 3-6 months

C. 6-9 months

D. 9-12 months

E. More than a year

4. How comfortable are you with going to a health facility to receive a pap smear?

A. Very uncomfortable

B. Uncomfortable

C. Neutral

D. Comfortable

E. Very comfortable

5. As a Transwoman, how comfortable are you with going to a health facility to receive a prostate exam?

A. Very uncomfortable

B. Uncomfortable

- C. Neutral
- D. Comfortable
- E. Very comfortable

6. How soon do you disclose your gender identity to a new partner that you are involved with sexually?

- A. Never
- B. After the first year
- C. Within the first year
- D. Within first 6 months
- E. Immediately

7. Has a doctor ever denied you retrieve Estrogen or Testosterone because of the fact you are transgender?

- A. Yes
- B. No

8. Which of the following do you consider your sexual orientation?

- A. Heterosexual (Straight)
- B. Homosexual (Gay)
- C. Bisexual
- D. Pansexual

E. Asexual

F. Prefer not to identify

9. Have you ever been turned down for a job or a promotion because of your gender identity?

A. Yes

B. No

C. Unsure

10. Do you consider yourself passable when people first see you in public?

A. Yes

B. No

C. Unsure

11. Have you ever received under the table cosmetic procedures outside a hospital setting?

A. Yes

B. No

12. Have you ever suffered from depression because of not being able to find employment because of your gender identity?

A. Yes

B. No

13. Have you ever tried to commit suicide because of the stress of coming out as transgender?

A. Yes

B. No