

Public Abstract

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Title:Campus Climate for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Undergraduate Students at the University of Missouri: A Qualitative Study

Extant literature shows that painting a complete picture of campus climate requires both quantitative and qualitative data. The University of Missouri has been engaging in quantitative campus climate research since 2001. Quantitative data has shown that the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) population perceives the campus climate as most hostile and experiences more harassment than any other identity group. This case study seeks to explore further the perceptions of the campus climate by the LGBTQ undergraduate students at the University of Missouri as well as explore the unmet needs of this population. This research attempts to uncover why this population experiences a hostile campus climate and what can be done to better their experiences.

This study utilizes qualitative methods borrowed from grounded theory (open and axial coding) as well as the transformational tapestry model outlined by Rankin and Reason (2008) to explore the research questions. Five broad themes emerged from the data including (a) discrimination, (b) intersecting identities that influence perception of discrimination, (c) (dis)comfort, (d) support, and (e) suggestions for improvement. Data analysis shows that while the LGBTQ undergraduate population does experience high levels of harassment and discrimination, these students have created their own supportive communities and networks utilizing existing on and off campus resources. Recommendations for campus improvement are included.