

CAMPUS CLIMATE FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, AND
QUEER UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI: A
QUALITATIVE STUDY

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

CAMPUS CLIMATE FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, AND QUEER UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The University of Missouri has been engaging in ongoing campus climate research since 2001. Previous studies have revealed that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) students perceive the campus climate as more hostile and experience more harassment than any other identity group. This case study explores further, utilizing qualitative methods, the perceptions of the campus climate at the University of Missouri by LGBTQ-identified undergraduate students as well as the unmet needs of this population. Five broad themes emerged from the data including (a) discrimination, (b) intersecting identities that influence the 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.

CHAPTER 1

The gay rights movement in its current incarnation in the United States was born out of the Stonewall riots (Duberman, 1993). These were essentially a community uproar aimed against the police and the state for the continued mistreatment of gay and transgender people frequenting New York City's mob-run gay bars and lack of basic human rights experienced by this population. The people saw a problem and did what was in their power to change it. Their ongoing activism has resulted in myriad bottom-up social change that we continue to see today.

The United States government has a record of imposing top-down social change on its citizens. For example, President Clinton, in 1996, signed into law the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) enacting top-down social change. DOMA declares that states are legally allowed to ignore same-sex marriages performed lawfully by another state and also defines marriage at a federal level as a union between a man and a woman (Betlach, 1998). This has had a particularly large impact on the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) population in this country as legislation has historically invaded their personal lives (Duberman, 1993). From sodomy laws to DOMA, unjust rules and regulations have been controlling the lives of the LGBTQ population in this country for years (Eskridge, 2008).

Institutions of higher education are often microcosms of society (Scisney-Matlock & Matlock, 2001). In addition to the government imposing restrictions and regulations on peoples' lives, we also have college and university administrations with which to contend whose policies and values often influence parts of campus culture and campus

climate. In the realm of higher education, we often see student initiatives (bottom-up) that result in policy changes. For example, I was part of a student initiative while an undergraduate at Carleton College fighting for the enactment of a gender-neutral housing policy. After a 4-year battle with the board of trustees and the administration, Residential Life at Carleton began allowing students to room with whomever they wish regardless of gender.

Social change from the ground up is difficult and slow, especially on college campuses. It often takes significant time and effort to enact, however, it can be done. In order to set the stage for social change, the experiences and stories of individuals on the ground must be heard. Through these experiences and stories, we can ensure our institutions continue to move in the direction of not only acceptance and embracement of diversity but in the direction of celebration of diversity. This project aims to document the lived experiences of LGBTQ undergraduate students at the University of Missouri in order to amplify and unite these voices with the hope of setting the stage for and indicating the direction of necessary change.

My Personal Story

As a queer identified transgender man, moving to the middle of a red state in the middle of the country to an institution with little protection for LGBTQ folks was a less than ideal situation. I came to the University of Missouri (MU) having completed little research about the campus as a whole or the surrounding area. After having committed to attending MU, I began to realize from information passed to me by my friends and colleagues at my previous institution that this might not be the most comfortable place for someone like me.

My first day on campus, I experienced a strange mix of relief and fear. Relief in finding out that my department knowingly hired a transgender person and I did not have to hide my gender identity and fear of what was to come. My boss informed me that he, in fact, knew I was transgender and that he had intentionally outed me to his boss, the director of my department, as well as the LGBTQ Resource Center Coordinator. Following the conversation in which all of this was revealed, I suddenly became afraid that I may not be a part of a legally protected class. I researched the campus non-discrimination policy and found that the University of Missouri does not include gender identity and expression in their campus nondiscrimination policy (Curators of the University of Missouri, 2012a). I also learned that the University of Missouri does not have in place a preferred name option for internal university documents; does not have gender-neutral housing options for students; and that the city of Columbia did not have housing, employment, or public accommodation protections in place for transgender or gender non-conforming individuals (this has since changed). Since I came to MU, it has been a battle, balancing what I need to do to feel comfortable being out as a queer trans person with doing my part to educate the willing few on queer and trans identities with nearly every opportunity that comes my way (e.g., sitting on panels; guest lecturing; informal conversations with faculty, staff, and students; participating in focus groups); advocating for and supporting students who are LGBTQ-identified; working to enact policy change; and living my regular, every day life as a graduate student.

There are several reasons why I began to formulate this project. First, from the perspective of a student, both my experience as well as the other students with whom I interact, I saw that being LGBTQ-identified at MU was, at times, uncomfortable. I

personally feel like I do not fit into the larger campus culture. Michael, a mixed race transman, echoes this sentiment. He states, “The campus seems...really heterosexual. Football, frat parties, like...that is the main thing.” In a campus seemingly made for heterosexuals, as Michael and many other participants point out, there may seem like there is little room for being LGBTQ-identified.

Second, in my interactions with both out and closeted LGBTQ-identified students I have noticed themes and heard stories that confirm my feelings of unease and my personal perceived lack of safety within the larger campus community. Similar to my interactions with students outside this study, Tonya, an out, queer, cisgender femme says, “I...always have to be hyper vigilant if I decide to hold my partner’s hand walking through campus.” This statement reinforces the discomfort I sometimes feel especially during the times I am acutely aware that my queerness is visible. The abundance of horror stories I have heard and the discrimination and harassment I have experienced motivated me to further think about and formulate this project.

Third, my experience as both a student and a staff member has helped me to further hone this research study. I have unique opportunities to mentor and support LGBTQ undergraduate students maintaining a power dynamic where I feel more equal to them than if I was solely a member of the administration. By interacting with students as peers, opening the door for collaboration, and participating in queer-centered student organization, I am able to create a relationship with students that includes friendship, partnership, and a sense of shared experience. It is from this unique place as well as from my personal experiences that I began to see a problem and began to formulate a study with the intent to attempt to remedy the situation. The aim of this study is to record and

document these stories, perceptions, and experiences in hopes of providing an in-depth account of the lived experiences of LGBTQ undergraduate students at the University of Missouri.

Beyond seeing a problem first hand at MU, I understand the importance of institution-specific campus climate studies due to my participation in the implementation of a campus climate survey at my previous institution. Through this work, I learned that on a small scale and within specific communities, campus climate data can lead to institution level change that has positive effects on all students at the institution. This work also allowed me to see that, within an institution of higher education, identification of problems or areas in need of change requires research, a way to prove and measure what is happening on campus, in order to justify allocation of time and resources to affecting change. It was with this realization that I saw this project as a potential catalyst for further initiatives aimed at bettering the experiences of LGBTQ-identified students at the University of Missouri.

Finally, as I found in my academic work at the University of Missouri, it is clear that, in general, members of the LGBTQ communities on several campuses across the nation feel discriminated against or marginalized because of their sexual minority status or gender expression (Brown, Clarke, Gortmaker, & Robinson-Keilig, 2004; Malaney, Williams, & Gellar, 1997; Rankin, 2003). In Rankin's (2003) national campus climate survey for the LGBTQ population across 14 institutions, she found that 36 % of all undergraduate student respondents identifying as LGBTQ had experienced harassment in the past year and only 41 % of respondents felt their institution was addressing these issues. National studies provide great descriptive and generalizable data however, in

order to transform a single institution, one must complete an institution-specific campus climate survey. Doing this allows the researcher to identify specific areas within the institution where change is needed and specific programs or services from which LGBTQ-identified students may benefit (Rankin, 2002). By identifying these areas, further allocation of time and resources and creating or expanding certain programs to meet the needs of these specific populations can be justified (Renn, 2010). This type of research can also be used to identify sources of discomfort and/or discrimination. For example, if data indicate that the majority of homophobia felt by students is coming from faculty members, initiatives can be taken to further train faculty on LGBTQ issues and the impact heterosexism and homophobia have on LGBTQ students in their classrooms. The need for fostering a better campus climate for LGBTQ-identified students is clear but to be effective and efficient with time and resources, more information is needed.

Campus climate data for the University of Missouri appear consistent with the national trend. In 2009, the University of Missouri completed a campus climate survey for students on its campus (Curators of the University of Missouri, 2012b). The data show that transgender and LGBQ students rate the campus climate the most hostile of any other identity group. In addition, 57.1% of transgender and 34.8 % of LGBQ students reported experiencing harassment, the highest percentages of any other measured identity group (Worthington & Hart, 2010). From these data we can see that steps toward bettering the campus climate for LGBTQ-identified students are warranted.

Research Questions and Design Overview

The research questions I seek to address are twofold:

- 1) How is the campus climate perceived by LGBTQ undergraduate students at the University of Missouri?
- 2) What are the unmet needs of the LGBTQ population at the University of Missouri?

From these data I hope to identify specific areas where change is needed within the University of Missouri and develop suggestions for the administration, faculty, as well as student affairs practitioners to better affirm and support LGBTQ students attending the University of Missouri. To address these questions, I conducted a case study of LGBTQ-identified undergraduate students at MU. Using a semi-structured interview protocol and open and axial coding techniques (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), I analyzed the data to present themes that the participants' stories elucidated.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that I use in my study comes from Rankin and Reason's (2008) Transformational Tapestry Model for transforming campus climate. The authors define climate as "the current attitudes, behaviors, and standards and practices of employees and students of an institution... particularly those attitudes, behaviors, and standards/practices that concern the access for, inclusion of, and level of respect for individuals and group needs, abilities, and potential" (p. 264). Additionally, the authors identify six areas within the higher education system that influence campus climate. These include (a) access/retention, (b) research/scholarship, (c) inter- and intragroup relations, (d) curriculum and pedagogy, (e) university policies and service, and

(f) external relations. It is from this framework that I designed my interview protocol (See Appendix A). All of the questions were formulated to extract information about one or more of these areas in order to get a thorough view of the campus climate at the University of Missouri from an LGBTQ-identified undergraduate student's perspective.

There are two areas I found to be less directly relevant for the interview protocol. First, I assume that access/retention is outside of the bounds of knowledge that undergraduate students possess. Because of my positionality, more specifically my place as a student and a staff member at MU, I realize that information on access and retention is not likely of interest to many undergraduate students beyond their own personal experience with these issues. I know that undergraduate students may rarely engage with discussions and initiatives surrounding this area of higher education, and therefore, I refrained from asking questions geared toward these topics. Second, because I was focusing on the lived experiences of students, I refrained from asking questions about research and scholarship surrounding LGBTQ issues at MU. I did ask participants to discuss their involvement experiences on campus and in those discussions, students' experiences with their own research and scholarship occasionally surfaced. Although I did not ask questions specifically relating to access/retention and research and scholarship, these areas did influence my recommendations, which I discuss in chapter five.

The conceptual framework also influenced data analysis. During initial theoretical coding, I especially searched for and highlighted themes that fit within Rankin and Reason's spheres of influence. Because the questions I asked were meant to elicit

data surrounding those spheres of influence, I paid particular, but not exclusive, attention to those related themes.

Operationalization of Key Concepts

To facilitate the understanding of this research, key concepts need to be defined in the context of this study. First, I acknowledge the diversity of identities that exist under the LGBTQ umbrella and do not mean to render any of these invisible or unimportant. I also acknowledge the importance of language and the freedom to self-identify or reject labels all together. I therefore use *LGBTQ* as a descriptor for the community of sexual and gender minorities for ease and continuity across the existing literature. Additionally, I use *trans* and *transgender* interchangeably as descriptors for the community of all non-normative gender identities, also for ease and continuity across the existing literature. Finally, I use *cisgender* as a term to describe a person who feels comfortable in their gender identity and the gender expression expectations assigned to them based on their physical sex.

Significance

Ultimately, I hope this research can serve as a catalyst for the betterment of the campus climate for the LGBTQ community. With the results, I will create a policy brief and share this, as well as this paper, with the appropriate individuals across campus including the Assistant Director of Student Life, Director of Student Life, Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, and the Chancellor's Diversity Initiative. These key decision-makers have the influence and position to better advocate for change at an institutional level. Informing these key administrators about the lived experiences of LGBTQ-identified students as well as giving them recommendations for change will

assist them in helping to create a healthier environment for LGBTQ students at the University of Missouri. At the very least I wish to provide a rich account of what LGBTQ people experience and how they perceive the climate at the University of Missouri. As previously discussed, the University completed a climate study in 2009 that provided quantitative data relative to the perceptions of LGBTQ undergraduate students. An important next step to add to these data is to talk with LGBTQ-identified students about how they are experiencing the climate at MU. By conducting a qualitative research study that highlights the voices of students, we will be able to discern in greater detail how LGBTQ-identified undergraduate students experience the campus climate. In addition, we will be better able to evaluate further initiatives required by our campus community to continue our journey toward a campus climate that celebrates diversity.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Campus climate for LGBTQ students has been an important issue that has been getting more and more attention in the past 10 years. In the following section, I will review past frameworks and discuss a working definition of campus climate. Second, I will establish that nationally, the campus climate for LGBT individuals has historically been hostile across institutions. Third, I will discuss the current climate for LGBT students on the University of Missouri campus. Fourth, I will discuss the negative effects a hostile or unwelcoming campus climate and the positive effects of a diverse and welcoming campus climate. Finally, I will review literature on useful support strategies and coping mechanisms for college students in minority populations.

Campus Climate

Campus climate studies that include the LGBT population began to become a mainstay at institutions across the country in the 1990s (Tierney & Dilley, 1998) and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Campus Project has been recording incidents of harassment and violence directed towards LGBTQ people since the 1980s (Rankin, 2003). Sue Rankin (2003), however, brought campus climate studies specific to the LGBTQ population to the forefront of the higher education literature with her national survey. While these studies are no longer at the forefront of the current literature on LGBT individuals within higher education, they are still common practice (Sanlo, Rankin & Schoenberg, 2002).

Since then, there has been a call to "queer" research in higher education (Renn, 2010). By queering higher education, we step outside the hierarchical structures that

make up and characterize our institutions in order to better understand LGBT issues on campus as well as other injustices that may exist in the academy (Renn, 2010). Queer theory remains an important framework to utilize in order to better understand and unpack injustices within academe and beyond. In addition, campus climate research, especially single institution case studies, remain important in order to ensure students and employees have a safe environment in which to learn, work, develop, and grow (Hurtado, Carter & Kardia, 1998; Hurtado, Griffin, Arellano & Cuellar, 2008; Renn, 2010). Campus climate research is grounded in peoples' experiences and feelings. This remains important in identifying needs for policy change, programming, education, and training (Malaney, Williams & Geller 1997; Rankin, 2006).

Colleges and universities across the nation are beginning to reflect greater numerical heterogeneity consistent with the diversification of our population (Rankin & Reason, 2008). With this, colleges and universities are beginning to see the need to create campus environments that are safe and welcoming to all students the institutions serve (Malaney et al. 1997; Rankin & Reason, 2008; Worthington, Navarro, Lowey & Hart, 2008). Although the idea seems difficult to pin down, that scholars and practitioners do have an implicit understanding of what constitutes campus climate (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson & Allen, 1998). There is, however, some disagreement in the literature over the exact definition of this term (Rankin & Reason, 2008). In this section, I will review the debated frameworks that help us define campus climate and identify a working definition used in the current study.

Hall and Sandler (1982) introduced the notion of a *chilly* campus climate to describe an unwelcoming and uncomfortable environment for women. More recently,

Hurtado et al. (1998b) developed an inclusive, liberally utilized, and often-cited framework for understanding campus racial climate. The researchers assert that there are four dimensions to campus climate, which help to provide a greater understanding of the concept. These four dimensions are:

An institution's historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion of various racial/ethnic groups, its structural diversity in terms of numerical representation of various racial/ethnic groups, the psychological climate of perceptions and attitudes between and among groups, and the behavioral climate dimension, characterized by intergroup relations on campus. (Hurtado et al., 1998b, p. 281)

This framework is one that provides a nuanced understanding of campus climate that can lead to suggestions for improvements to policy and practice (Milem, Chang & Antonio, 2005).

Hurtado et al.'s (1998b) conceptualization of campus climate is not immune to critique. Some scholars say the framework focuses too much on race and students when campus climate is important for all individuals associated with the institution. Hart and Fellabaum (2008) argue that Peterson and Spencer's (1990) definition of campus climate "is broader and thus captures perspectives on additional identities and from additional institutional members" (p. 224). Peterson and Spencer draw from Hellriegel and Slocum (1974) and state, "climate...is more concerned with current perceptions and attitudes rather than deeply held meanings, beliefs, and values" (p. 7). They also identify three categories useful to institutional researchers that make up campus climate. These include objective climate, perceived climate, and psychological or felt climate. Objective climate includes "patterns of behavior or formal activity in an institution that can be observed directly and objectively" (p. 12). Perceived climate "focuses on how participants view various institutional patterns and behaviors" (p. 12). Finally, psychological climate

“focuses on how participants feel about their organization and their work” (p. 13). This includes peoples’ sense of belonging to their institution.

Peterson and Spencer’s (1990) definition is more inclusive than Hurtado et al.’s (1998b), as Peterson and Spencer include factors other than race and ethnicity. While both of these definitions are important to consider, I chose to use the Rankin and Reason’s (2008) definition of campus climate as my conceptual framework, as previously stated. Not only is their framework broad and inclusive but also lends itself well to praxis. Their framework is also one that does not focus exclusively on race. Rankin and Reason define climate as “the current attitudes, behaviors, and standards and practices of employees and students of an institution... particularly those attitudes, behaviors, and standards/practices that concern the access for, inclusion of, and level of respect for individuals and group needs, abilities, and potential” (p. 264). Also included in this model are areas of higher education that influence campus climate, which include: (a) access/retention, (b) research/scholarship, (c) inter- and intragroup relations, (d) curriculum and pedagogy, (e) university policies and service, and (f) external relations.

Chilly Campus Climate for LGBT Individuals

In 1988, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force recorded 1,411 incidents of anti-LGBT bias including threats, vandalism, harassment, and assaults (Rankin, 2003). For colleges and universities, the climate for the LGBT population has historically been hostile on campuses throughout the United States (Brown et al., 2004; Dilley, 2002; Malaney et al. 1997; Rankin, 2003, 2005, 2006; Waldo, 1998). In comparative studies, LGBT students rate the campus more negatively than heterosexual students (Brown et al. 2004; Waldo, 1998). In 2003, Rankin published the first national campus climate survey

results for LGBT people from data collected on 14 campuses, which found there often exists a hostile campus climate for students.

Campus Pride recently published a larger national study of over 5,000 LGBT students, staff, faculty, and administrators (Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld & Frazer, 2010). The results of this survey stray little from those of Rankin's (2003) national study, indicating we have made little progress over the past 10 years. In the 2010 report, 39% of transmasculine respondents, 38% of transfeminine respondents, 31% of gender non-conforming respondents, 20% of men, and 19% of women indicated experiencing harassment. LGBQ, transmasculine, transfeminine, and gender non-conforming respondents were significantly less likely to feel very comfortable or comfortable with the overall campus climate than their allies. Further, LGBQ, transmasculine, transfeminine, and gender non-conforming students were more likely to have seriously considered leaving their institution. Finally, LGBQ, transmasculine, transfeminine, and gender non-conforming individuals were less likely to agree that their institution provides adequate resources on LGBT concerns, positively responds to incidents of LGBT harassment, provides adequate support to LGBT employees and their partners, and provides adequate resources on LGBT issues and concerns.

There is scant research on the lived experiences of LGBTQ individuals. The small body of extant literature does show that the campus climate as well as the presence of supportive individuals and LGBTQ-identified role models influences the coming out process (Evans & Broido, 1999). Additionally, according to Bourassa and Shipton (1991), college students face discrimination particularly in the residence hall environment due to the presence of rigid heterosexual standards. Research also identifies the unique

needs of transgender college students. Beemyn, Curtis, Davis, and Tubbs (2005) note the need for transgender specific programming and support services as well as inclusive policies. Particularly important are gender-neutral housing policies, which would allow transgender students living in residence halls to have a greater choice in comfortable housing options (Beemyn et al., 2005; Ta-Pryor, Ta-Pryor & Hart, 2011).

Effects of Campus Climate

Much of the existing literature on campus climate focuses on race as I discussed. Although students of color and LGBTQ students have unique concerns, these populations are both marginalized, albeit in different ways. I review the literature on race here to highlight potentially transferable data as well as indicate the need for more research on the effects of a hostile campus climate on the LGBTQ-identified population.

Campus climate influences students' academic performance (Rankin, 1998) as well as influences college student development (Chickering, 1969; Chickering and Reisser, 1993). Chickering and Reisser authored one of the most influential theories of college student identity development. This theory outlines seven vectors, or steps, of identity development. Chickering and Reisser note that environmental influences greatly affect the identity development and outcomes of college students. They outline seven key influences: institutional objectives, institutional size, student-faculty relationships, curriculum, teaching, friendships and student communities, and student development programs and services. If one or more of the seven key influences are missing, students' identity development will be affected, potentially negatively. For example, if an institution does not have an LGBTQ center that provides a safe, community building space for positive peer group interaction as well as student development programs and

services, the identity development of LGBTQ-identified students may be influenced negatively. Thus, not having an LGBTQ program or LGBTQ-specific student services could be an indication that the climate is not a positive one for LGBTQ-identified students.

Research showed that perception of a non-discriminatory environment has many positive outcomes for college students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini & Nora, 2001). Pascarella and Terenzini found that African American students who attend Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) have greater educational attainment, academic self-image, and cognitive development than African American students who attend predominantly white institutions. This could be because the social environment for African American students is more supportive at an HBCU than a predominantly white institution. Whitt et al. identified seven variables that had an impact on students' openness to diversity and challenge. The authors found that if students who are a part of a marginalized group perceive a positive campus climate for their group, they are more open to diversity and challenge, a positive outcome.

Sense of belonging, or an "individual's view of whether he or she feels included in the college community" (Hurtado & Carter, 1997, p. 327), is greatly affected by how students perceive the campus climate (Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999) and is also an important variable that contributes to student persistence at an institution (Tinto, 1993). Tinto argues that the extent to which students integrate themselves into the college environment and college culture affects whether or not students will persist at that institution. However, Hurtado and Carter take issue with Tinto's argument. They argue that Tinto does not offer alternatives to "mainstream"

college integration and involvement and they therefore offer the concept of “sense of belonging.” This definition highlights that it is not the students’ sole responsibility to integrate themselves into an institution but instead they must also be welcomed into the institution. Therefore, it is important that schools provide a climate that welcomes all students in order for students to feel a sense of belonging with their school.

Hurtado and Carter (1997) found that Latino students’ perception of a hostile racial climate had a negative effect on their sense of belonging. Similarly, Hurtado and Ponjuan (2005) in a longitudinal study found that Latino students’ perception of a hostile climate contributed to a decreased sense of belonging. In a study by Cabrera et al. (1999), they found that African American students’ perceptions of a hostile campus climate decreased their commitment to their institution. Although these studies focus almost exclusively on campus racial climates, it is important to understand the potential crossover to students who are LGBT-identified. If a student perceives that their marginalized group is treated with hostility on a particular campus, it is reasonable to assume that they will feel less of a connection with their institution.

In addition to perceptions of campus climate affecting students’ sense of belonging and persistence, data show that when students perceive their campus environment to be discriminatory, there are additional negative outcomes for some students (Cabrera, Nora, Salter & Persaud, 2003; Terenzini, Pascarella & Hagedorn, 1999). Cabrera et al. (1999) found that a perceived racist environment had a negative impact on students’ academic experiences, institutional commitment, academic and intellectual development, and persistence. Salter and Persaud (2003) found that women who experienced a better classroom “fit” participated more in class than those who did

not. As these studies evidence, negative perceptions of the campus climate negatively impact college student outcomes.

Beyond simply creating a good environment for minority college students, fostering spaces that are intentionally diverse create positive learning outcomes for *all* students, including those in the majority (Chang, Astin & Kim, 2004; Gurin, Nagda & Lopez, 2004; Pascarella, Palmer, Moye & Pierson, 2001; Thoma & Ladewig, 1993). Pascarella et al. (2001) found that students who had significant involvement in diversity experiences during college had higher scores on an objective, standardized measure of critical thinking skills. Chang et al. (2004) looked at effective facilitation of cross-racial interaction and how it is educationally relevant. Using longitudinal data from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), their findings indicate that students who engage in cross-racial interactions have better intellectual, social, and civic development. In another longitudinal study, Gurin et al. (2004) found that racial and ethnic diversity on college campuses prepares students for citizenship in a multicultural society if students are having actual interactions with those who are different than themselves. Finally, Thoma and Ladewig (1993) note that students who view diversity on their campus positively have higher scores on moral judgment measures. It is clear that attending a college with an environment that supports and encourages diversity affects all students' personal and academic development positively. This gives further support for university leadership to create spaces that are welcoming and inclusive to individuals with diverse backgrounds, including LGBT-identified students.

Not only does meaningful experience with diversity create positive learning outcomes for students in college but also has many post-college benefits (Bowman, 2011;

Denson & Bowman, 2011). In a meta-analysis of the relationship between diversity experiences in college and civic engagement, Bowman found a significant positive relationship between these two concepts. Additionally, Denson and Bowman found that students who are more open to diversity have a greater sense of civic duty throughout their lives than their peers who are not open to diversity. They also found that students who had positive interactions across racial groups show increased civic engagement. Extending throughout students' lifetimes, having meaningful racial diversity experiences seems to provide ample benefits not only for those in marginalized groups but also those in the majority.

Support

In order to foster opportunities for meaningful experiences with diversity for all students, there needs to be ample support for those students from oppressed and underrepresented groups to survive and thrive in college (Evans & Broido, 1999). In this context then, creating an environment that is supportive of LGBTQ-identified students is of the utmost importance to ensure that these students persist and succeed in higher education. Astin (1993) noted the importance of the peer group as the single most major influence on college student development. A peer group is "defined as any group of individuals in which the members identify, affiliate with, and seek acceptance and approval from each other" (Astin, 1993, p. 401). For LGBTQ students, a peer group or community is often one of the only sources of support and acceptance as many students are not out to or have been outcast by their families (D'Augelli, Grossman, & Starks, 2005; Savin-Williams, 1998).

One way campuses can facilitate a community of support is through establishing an LGBTQ Center. The most common reason for an institution of higher education to create an LGBTQ center of office is as a response to incidents of harassment or discrimination against LGBTQ individuals (Sanlo et al., 2002). These centers and offices are charged with creating a safe environment for LGBTQ students and supporting these students through college. Part of supporting LGBTQ students is creating a visible presence on campus through outreach programs such as speaker's bureaus or student panels, educational opportunities and trainings for both LGBTQ-identified students and cisgender heterosexual students, and programs that raise awareness about LGBTQ identities (Sanlo et al., 2002).

Climate at the University of Missouri

While the University of Missouri does have an LGBTQ Resource Center, LGBTQ-identified students still consistently rated the campus as hostile (Rankin, 2002; Worthington & Hart, 2010). After participating in Rankin's (2002) national survey on the climate for LGBT individuals in 2001, MU has been engaging in on-going campus climate research. According to a quantitative study on the campus climate for students, faculty, and staff at the University of Missouri (Rankin, 2002), 21% of respondents indicated they had experienced harassment motivated by their sexual orientation or gender identity. More specifically, 15.4% of transgender respondents indicated they had been victims of harassment. Most harassment was experienced in the form of derogatory remarks (85%) and was experienced mostly in public spaces on campus (55%), while working University jobs (43%), and while walking on campus (40%). Thirteen percent indicated they had feared for the physical safety because of their sexual orientation or

gender identity. Additionally, 58% of respondents said they had concealed their sexual orientation or gender identity to avoid intimidation. There were 49% of the participants who did not feel that the curriculum at MU adequately reflected the contributions of LGBT people. Finally, 62% of respondents felt that the University of Missouri was not adequately addressing issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity.

Most recently, data from a campus climate survey for students (undergraduate, graduate, and professional) distributed in 2009 (Curators of the University of Missouri, 2012c) show that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students rate the campus the most hostile of any other identity group (Worthington & Hart, 2010). Additionally, the data show that 57.1% of transgender and 34.8% of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students have experienced harassment on campus. These percentages are significantly higher than predicted by chance. LGBT individuals experience harassment at the University of Missouri more frequently than any other identity group, including people of color and people with disabilities (Curators of the University of Missouri, 2012c). Although the samples collected at the University of Missouri are different and the data cannot reasonably be compared to the 2001 data, (Worthington & Hart, 2010) we see that the general trend experienced of the climate for LGBT students is similar.

Perhaps contributing to the perceptions of climate for LGBTQ students, there are several university policies that are not inclusive of LGBT individuals. The University of Missouri's statement of values includes language on welcoming difference and being accountable to both yourself and others (Curators of the University of Missouri, 2012a); however, the University of Missouri's statement of non-discrimination fails to mention gender identity and expression (Curators of the University of Missouri, 2012b). This can

create an unwelcoming environment for transgender students, faculty, and staff.

Furthermore, the University of Missouri does not offer insurance benefits to domestic partners. A survey respondent in Rankin's (2002) campus climate study of LGBT individuals at the University of Missouri states:

My main issue with the University of Missouri, Columbia is the lack of acknowledgement that we exist when it comes to the realm of staff benefits. As a man in a long-term relationship, I feel prejudicial bias that I cannot give my partner medical, dental, and prescription benefits on my insurance. My family medical leave, sick leave, and leave upon a death, does not take in to consideration my partner or his family. A heterosexual marriage does not guarantee longevity of commitment to a relationship. (Rankin, 2002, p. 40)

Another respondent from the same study shared:

The university has institutionalized the denial that GLBT community even exists. As an example, when new employees are given the presentation as to HR benefits, it is made clear that only relationships with marriage certificates are recognized. To know that my long term partnership does not make the cut while the 25 year old next to me on her third marriage does qualify and is thus extended medical coverage, is insulting. (Rankin, 2002, p. 37)

The lack of domestic partner benefits has the potential to create negative perceptions of the campus climate not only from faculty and staff but also from students. According to a *Columbia Tribune* article (Silvey, 2011), between 2008 and 2010, four potential faculty and upper level administrators have passed up jobs with the University of Missouri System because of the lack of domestic partner benefits. Faculty and staff who may provide support, positive role modeling, and inclusive education for LGBTQ-identified students at MU are accepting positions elsewhere. Additionally, not offering domestic partner benefits to faculty and staff sends a message to students that MU does not value its LGBTQ-identified employees. With over 400 institutions of higher education offering their employees domestic partner benefits, this signals that the

University of Missouri is holding out on an inclusive policy that has implications for the lives of its employees (Silvey, 2011).

Conclusion

Given the extant literature on campus climate for LGBTQ students and the importance of positive campus climates not only for minority students but for all students, it is important we are creating and maintaining campuses that are open and welcoming to LGBTQ people. Nationally, as well as at the University of Missouri, the campus climate for LGBTQ people has been generally hostile. This can lead to various negative student outcomes not just for LGBTQ-identified people but also for the student body as a whole.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

This study is a qualitative examination of the perceptions and experiences of LGBTQ identified students at the University of Missouri. As previously discussed, the University of Missouri completed a climate study in 2009 that provided quantitative data relative to the perceptions of LGBTQ undergraduate students, and while these data can give us a good snapshot of campus life for all students, a qualitative project will provide depth (Merriam, 2009) into the experiences of those students who may perceive the campus as the most harmful. Allan and Madden (2006), in their work studying classroom climates for female undergraduate students, found that some aspects of classroom climate may be lost in quantitative analysis. Thus, they argue the necessity of both quantitative and qualitative data in painting a full picture of the climate for historically disadvantaged groups. Taking this into account, an important next step to add to the quantitative data collected at MU is to speak with LGBTQ-identified students about how they are experiencing the climate. By conducting a qualitative research study that highlights the voices of students, we will be able to discern in greater detail how the campus climate is experienced. In addition, we will establish a baseline so that we will be better able to evaluate future initiatives required by our campus community to continue our journey toward a better campus climate for LGBTQ identified students.

I chose to conduct a case study examining the experiences of self-identified LGBTQ undergraduate students. Merriam (2009) defines a case study as, “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p. 40). Additionally, Yin (2008) indicates

that a case study design is appropriate if the questions “require an extensive and ‘in-depth’ description of some social phenomenon,” (p. 4) as this study does.

I am interested in describing the experiences of self-identified LGBTQ undergraduate students attending the University of Missouri. The bounded system, in this case, is the University of Missouri and the social phenomenon I am interested in describing is the experience of being LGBTQ-identified and an undergraduate student within this bounded system. The overall aim of this study is to record and document these stories, perceptions, and experiences in hopes of providing an in depth account of what it is like for LGBTQ individuals on this campus.

The research questions guiding this study are:

- 1) How do LGBTQ undergraduate students experience the campus climate at the University of Missouri?
- 2) What are the needs of the LGBTQ population at the University of Missouri?

Selection of Participants

I relied on convenience and snowball sampling to identify potential participants. I obtained permission from the LGBTQ Resource Center Coordinator at MU to utilize the LGBTQ campus email listserv. I sent my recruiting script (see Appendix A) through this listserv. A total of seven potential participants emailed me directly as a result of reading my recruiting script. Of those seven, I scheduled and completed interviews with five. The other two participants who contacted me dropped out of the interview at the last minute for personal reasons. From these five participants I relied on snowball sampling, asking for the names of other individuals who may be willing to participate; I later contacted them by email. Additionally, I noted that early on my sample lacked racial diversity, and

to this end I attended Triangle Coalition meetings in the fall of 2011 to target potential participants who identified as a minority race or ethnicity, as I was aware that a number of people of color attended these meetings. The Triangle Coalition is the LGBTQ activist student organization on campus. Through this venue I recruited two additional participants.

Data Collection

With the approval of the study by MU's Institutional Review Board, I conducted 9 semi-structured interviews during the 2011 fall semester (See Appendix B). All participants were current undergraduate students at the University of Missouri who self-identify as LGBTQ. Prior to each interview, I verbally informed my participants about the nature of the study and the questions I would be asking. They also received a consent form informing them of the nature of the study, risks, as well as resources for them to utilize (See Appendix C). Signatures were not collected to ensure confidentiality due to the potentially sensitive nature of the topic. I also provided participants with information about resources to seek further information or support.

To make the participants more comfortable, and to try to address power differentials, I conducted the interviews in a place of the participants' choosing. Additionally, I offered to reserve a classroom in an academic building or in the library. Most participants chose the library; however, some chose to come to my office. All interviews were conducted in private spaces with a closed door. I asked each participant to choose a pseudonym; most elected for me to choose one for them. Interviews lasted between 17 and 90 minutes; the average interview time was 39 minutes.

I received permission to audio record all of the interviews. In addition to recording, I took field notes to document my thoughts and feelings as well as potentially relevant nonverbal behavior. I transcribed my interviews verbatim and removed all potential identity indicators from the data. This was to ensure anonymity for the peer coder who assisted me on this project, as well as to safeguard the data.

Data Analysis

To organize the data, I used Dedoose, a qualitative data management software. I borrowed qualitative coding strategies from grounded theory to analyze my data. First, I did a line-by-line analysis (primary or open coding) as detailed by Strauss and Corbin (1990) to generate categories. Second, I used axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to re-examine and organize the codes. To do so, I reexamined my initial codes and reconstituted them into broad themes. For example, my participants spoke of support coming from sources on and off campus including professors, peers, staff, family, and different groups and involvement activities. From these initial codes, I developed the theme of the importance of community support in creating a better campus climate for my participants. Because I am not developing theory, I chose not to conduct selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Rather the two coding techniques I used allow me to talk about the broad themes present in my data and provide an organized and highly descriptive account of how my participants experience the campus climate at the University of Missouri.

Positionality

As a feminist scholar, I am deeply committed to utilizing feminist research practices. As such, I relied on the work of DeVault and Gross (2007) on feminist

interviewing to inform my methods. Particularly, I operated reflexively, paying close attention to context and my positionality during each stage of the interview process. For example, while interviewing a black, queer transman I was constantly aware of my whiteness, the power lines that our racial difference drew between us, and how this power difference could influence our rapport. To try to minimize the boundaries created by this power differential I was sure to outline to my participants that my research project was a collaboration between them and me. I was not setting out to take their stories; I was there to tell their stories as authentically as possible in their voices. As a feminist researcher, I approach each question in collaboration with my participants and acknowledge that knowledge and truth are co-constituted.

My position in this project gives me particular insight and biases that need to be addressed explicitly. I became interested in this topic for two reasons. First, I experience the campus climate as an out, queer transman. When I first came to the University of Missouri, I realized the stark differences between the way that I feel on this campus and the way that I felt at Carleton College, where I completed my undergraduate work. I am noticeably more aware of my queerness and gender non-normativity here. I am more uncomfortable and feel more unsafe than I ever did at Carleton. This led me to examine for myself what particularly created this sense of unease and discomfort that was all but absent at my previous institution.

Second, I work with and mentor a number of students who identify as LGBTQ. I quickly learned from them that I was not alone in my feelings of discomfort due to my queerness and gender non-normativity on this campus. This was confirmed again when I learned of the disheartening results of the 2009 campus climate survey where transgender

and lesbian, gay, and bisexual students rated the campus the most hostile of any other identity group (Worthington & Hart, 2010). As a result, I made it a personal goal to attempt to understand the reasons for these results, my feelings, as well as the feelings of the students with whom I work in order to attempt to affect change if and where it is warranted on this campus.

My experience on this campus as an out, queer transman influences the way in which I see the data, so I am particularly attuned to participants' descriptions of negative experiences related to their sexual orientation or gender expression. However, because my own experiences shape the lens from which I view the data, I also scrutinize, both within the interview and as I coded and analyzed, participants' experiences that highlight positive feelings of belonging or neutral spaces. This viewpoint means that I pay close attention to the words that are unspoken, or the feelings or stories that are alluded to rather than explicitly shared, much in the same way that DeVault (1999) suggested that feminist interviewing allows feminist researchers to use their own experience to "hear" the unspoken truths. Devault suggested that the shared experience of oppression allows researchers particular insight into the stories behind marginalized experiences. For example, when participants spoke positively of the LGBTQ Resource Center, my experience with what I perceived as a more effective model of an LGBTQ center led me to ask particular probing questions to allow my participants space to critically reflect.

I have a particularly interesting relationship with the campus. I am a student as well as a staff member at MU. This makes me aware of both the structure and the realities of being in the structure and how the structure influences the day-to-day experiences of both students and staff. As an activist and mentor to students, I have a

unique ability to influence the experiences of LGBTQ undergraduate students in certain ways, most notably in my ability to be a support person for transgender students. I am also often privy to information that is generally unavailable to students. An example of this is knowledge of working budgets for various offices in the Department of Student Life and how more financial resources are allocated to offices such as Greek Life and the Center for Leadership Development and Community Involvement compared to the LGBTQ Resource Center and the Women's Center. Having access to this type of information influences my perceptions of the campus climate and adds to the injustices I see across campus. It particularly allows me to see potential solutions to issues identified by participants in the form of, for example, financial reallocation or other ways to work within the system to address these injustices. This knowledge allows me to see the narratives from an individual and an institutional angle, which will help me discern which issues may be addressed from within the system and those which cannot be remedied within the system as it currently exists.

My positionality also creates particular biases that may present as problems that need to be addressed. First, I have had a fairly negative experience as a queer and trans person on this campus. While never feeling like I was ever in any physical danger, there have been times when I felt like my job was in jeopardy simply because of my gender identity. I have been non-consensually outed to fellow students and staff members. I have been verbally harassed in Greek town. Also, I feel like I am constantly the victim of institutionalized homophobia and transphobia. My own negative experiences on this campus have led me to be more suspicious of students whose narrative does not include that same level of homophobia or transphobia. To help address my biases, I used a peer

coder to help me widen the lens of analysis. The peer coder did not have a similar experience as an out queer person on this campus.

Trustworthiness

In order to ensure trustworthiness, I utilized member checking. This involved sending the transcripts of the interviews to each participant and asking them whether or not I captured their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. I sent the raw interviews to four of the nine participants. Each of them returned the raw interviews to me with no changes. After completing data analysis, I sent the findings to the remaining five participants to ensure I captured their feelings and experiences in the final product. As previously noted, I utilized a peer coder. Our interrater reliability was 85% for the initial codes. To resolve the discrepancies, my peer coder and I met to refine codes and agreed on a more detailed coding schema. Finally, I use thick, rich description to capture the experiences of my participants.

Limitations

There are some limitations with this project. My sampling strategy does present some limitations; my own connection to the University of Missouri's LGBTQ population allowed me to utilize convenience sampling. Relying on this type of sampling means that my participant pool does not represent the entire population of LGBTQ-identified students at the University of Missouri. Missing are those students who are not yet out or who do not identify as LGBTQ but who may still experience campus life in a similar way because of gender or sexual non-normativity. By asking for volunteers to be a part of my study, only those who were relatively comfortable with discussing their LGBTQ identity and how they experience the campus climate at the University of Missouri with me

participated in the study. Those who initially volunteered had to be a member of the LGBTQ Resource Center email listserv and therefore have to be involved with that office at least minimally. This left out large portions of the population. In addition, by asking for volunteers, I may only be speaking with those students who have a particularly positive or particularly negative experience with the campus climate.

Because I relied on snowball sampling as well, my participant pool is made up of students who know other LGBTQ students on campus and are at least somewhat part of an LGBTQ community. This may have influenced my data because the literature shows that students are most affected by their peer group in college (Astin, 1993). If students are a part of an LGBTQ community, they may have a more positive experience than those who are not a part of a community. I also have an oversampling of students who are extremely involved with the LGBTQ Resource Center or with LGBTQ student organizations. I assume this is both because of my close relationship and involvement with the LGBTQ Resource Center as well as my sampling method. Finally, the data represent only LGBTQ-identified students who have persisted at MU.

In my initial demographic questions, I did not assess participants' socioeconomic status, religious identity, national origin, or their ability status. Focusing primarily on sexual orientation and gender identity and, at times, on racial or ethnic identity, there are areas of identity intersection that are not addressed in this research. Further research on the topic of LGBTQ campus climate could address intersecting identities and how this influences how students experience the campus climate at MU. Finally, while my positionality and connection to this research allows me a particular closeness and lens from which to view the data, it also could present some limitations, most significantly a

reliance on my own experience as a litmus test for the “truth” of the participants’ narratives.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

In this study, I sought to answer how LGBTQ-identified undergraduate students at the University of Missouri perceive the campus climate and what the unmet needs of this population are. In order to answer this question, I analyzed the data and have identified five broad themes that include: (a) discrimination, (b) factors that influence discrimination, (c) (dis)comfort, (d) support, and (e) suggestions for improvement. These themes are discussed in detail here.

Discrimination

All of the participants discussed instances of harassment and discrimination based on an LGBTQ identity. The discrimination took the form of either overt discrimination or institutionalized discrimination. I define overt discrimination as discrimination perpetrated by a person or group of people directly onto or about another person or group of people. I define institutional discrimination as the exclusion of or unfair practices towards marginalized groups that is a result of the way that an organization runs or operates. Participants indicated experiencing both overt and institutionalized discrimination, witnessing discrimination, and hearing stories of discrimination that was perpetrated against their friends or individuals in their community.

Overt discrimination experienced.

As noted earlier, I interviewed nine undergraduate students who attend the University of Missouri and self-identify as LGBTQ (See Appendix D for Demographic Table). Eight of the nine participants indicated they have experienced overt discrimination based on their LGBTQ identities. The instances of discrimination

experienced by the participants were most often perpetrated by fellow students and occurred most notably on campus, in or around downtown Columbia, and in “Greek Town.” Tonya is a white and queer-identified femme in her third year at MU. She comments on an experience she had dealing with discrimination:

My freshman year...[my partner] was living in the halls then and I was hanging out on her bed, I think we were both laying down and watching a movie on her computer, but we were close enough that people who weren't in a relationship would not be that close to each other watching a movie. Her roommate walked in to the room...She moved out 2 days later, didn't have another word to [my partner]. They were fine before that and suddenly did *not* have another word to her after that.

Here, Tonya and her partner experienced discrimination by a roommate, which took the form of the roommate ignoring her and her partner and subsequently requesting to be able to move out of the room. Tonya comments on another instance of overt discrimination she faced. This time, the discrimination was perpetrated by a faculty member and occurred in the classroom. Tonya states:

In Spanish class, we started learning “novio” and “novia,” which mean girlfriend and boyfriend. I remember one assignment where we had to explain our perfect partner... when it was my turn to read to the class, everybody has to read “mi novia es...” and I went through the list and he corrected me five or six times saying to me, “no it's novio...” At that point we could only speak in Spanish since we were trying to immerse ourselves in language and I had to explain to him over and over again, “no, es novia.” The way that they speak is so gendered...I had to say it over and over and finally I said in English... “No, I want a girlfriend at this point in my life.” This is what I mean. It was the most awkward class for the rest of the semester.

Tonya's experience in Spanish class demonstrates how the professor silenced her and negated her experience in the classroom therefore creating an “awkward” atmosphere and effecting the learning environment for Tonya and potentially for other students.

Elizabeth, a senior who identifies as white, asexual, and as a trans woman has also faced overt discrimination from faculty. She states:

I was really glad to see in training...for the people who teach...saying you have to go use peoples' preferred pronouns and name...but when I came here, I'm not sure if that person missed that or what, but one person completely refused. My first semester here and it was really discouraging...any time that they referred to me, they would use my legal name even though it was awkward to do so. They would refuse to use feminine pronouns and every time they talked to me they would make sure to use my name. Like...use it as a weapon kind of thing. That was the first time my old name was used as a weapon and, yeah, it's really awkward.

Like Tonya, Elizabeth notes the awkward atmosphere that exists in the classroom when discrimination comes from a faculty member. Chris, a junior who identifies as a black, gay man, also describes an experience of discrimination from faculty that occurred in a journalism class. He states, "The professor showed an ad in class of a sexy man and he was like, 'Ok ladies, how do you feel? Men, hush.' I was like, 'I have something to say about that. I like that, why can't I say something?' That...pissed me off." Again, like in the experience recounted by Tonya, a faculty member in a classroom negated an experience of an LGBTQ-identified student. In this case, Chris noted his anger at his experience being silenced.

Participants also reported verbal and physical harassment both on and off campus.

Elizabeth states, "I have been harassed...On campus it's verbal; off campus it can get physical." She comments on instances of verbal discrimination she faces:

People pass by and just kind of are like, "Oh hey, are you a dude or a chick?" That kind of shit, especially when they're doing it to point you out to their friends, makes me feel bad. There's a difference between somebody...wanting to know and educate themselves and somebody just trying to be a belligerent asshole.

Elizabeth differentiates between respectful and well-intentioned questions that are meant for education and questions that are meant to demean or harass. Robert, an Asian gay-identified man in his third year at MU recounts an incident where he was verbally harassed due to his gender presentation and sexual orientation:

I was at my...boyfriend's graduation last semester and I was wearing these really tight jeans. This group of guys just came up to me and started laughing. They were staring at my pants, you know, talking about them in front of me. They were just making fun of me for [my pants], calling me queer.

The group of students laughing at Robert and calling him "queer" were commenting on his gender presentation. This upset Robert and he later commented on how incidents such as this one make him feel less connected to the greater campus community as a whole and make him feel like he doesn't "fit in" at Mizzou.

Six participants discussed "Greek Town", a grouping of fraternity and sorority houses next to campus, as an uncomfortable place for themselves and for other LGBTQ-identified students. While three participants also discussed the positive work done by Greek Allies, an advocacy group that is working towards educating the Greek community on LGBTQ-issues, others noted experiences of verbal harassment that occurred in Greek Town. Elizabeth explains:

Every time I go near Greek town, I just get blasted by...terrible slurs and terrible lines...I go from...mostly ok on the regular campus as a whole to Greek Town, and it becomes completely hostile...whereas on the campus...from my perspective, most people don't notice me or really gawk at me whereas in Greek Town, it's like, I'm not sure if everybody's being examined at a detailed level but it feels like I am and that causes a lot more hostility.

Elizabeth is not alone in her experiences of overt discrimination in Greek Town. Chris also experienced harassment stating, "I remember my freshman year I was over on that side of where the Greek houses are and a car drove by and they yelled 'queer.'" The

participants' experiences with over discrimination in Greek Town was a significant part of the theme of discrimination overall highlighting the salience of particular spaces as safe or hostile to LGBTQ-identified students.

Other sources of overt discrimination discussed by three participants are residential life student staff members. Phil, a gay-identified cisgendered man states:

I know residential life does a lot of that stuff with student staff and that's where most students get their first experiences on campus...I think they do a fairly decent job with that. One of the things that does annoy me is that, when we discussed gender neutral housing at the joint session for [the Missouri Student Association], there was one student staff member who said... "Well, if you do this, then this is going to take away from jobs of people who aren't necessarily comfortable with that sort of situation." And I'm like, ok, if you're not comfortable with the LGBT students, then you have no business being in this job.

Phil goes on to explain how angry he was at this student's comments at the joint session for the Missouri Student Association. This student's comments are discriminatory because they are saying that having a gender-neutral housing policy could take jobs away from staff members who are not comfortable with human rights. The comments deny that the lack of a gender-neutral housing policy is, in and of itself, discriminatory. Chris also notes an instance of discrimination perpetrated by a residential life student staff member. He states:

I was friends with my [Community Advisor] on Facebook my freshman year and I was looking at my feed and I saw that he commented on someone's picture and he said, "You look like a queer" or "You look like a faggot" or something like that and I'm like, ok, you're student staff, you need to not be talking like that, you were trained not to talk like that...if I'm not comfortable where I'm living then where can I feel comfortable?

Both Phil and Chris note that student staff members, especially in residential life, should not be discriminating against LGBTQ-identified students due to their position within the university, the contact they necessarily have with students, and the fact that these students

are working with other students in their homes where they especially deserve to be comfortable.

Overt discrimination witnessed.

Participants also discussed discrimination they witnessed against other individuals based on their perceived LGBTQ identity. Tonya discusses an incident that involved two of her friends. She states:

[My friend] lived in...an all girls hall and wanted to have their trans partner come...and hang out. If their partner had to use the bathroom...and she was a trans woman...she couldn't use the bathroom on their floor. She had to go all the way down to the bottom accompanied by ze to be able to use the gender-neutral house bathroom. Their hall coordinator said, "I can alert everyone on this floor that your girlfriend is going to use this bathroom" and so they just never stayed there anymore.

Tonya recounts another incident of discrimination that she witnessed:

We were at Steak and Shake in the middle of the night and I was sitting on this side and one of my trans female friends was sitting on that side. I could see the guys sitting in the booth right behind her just staring and pointing and everything and she's the type of person who if I would have stood up and said something and told them, you know, to go fuck yourself she would have been way more embarrassed than to be pointed out like that. My partner was sitting beside me and she's just like watching me and I'm not looking at anything else besides them because I'm getting so angry and [my partner] told me to just calm down.

The two incidents of discrimination that Tonya witnessed happened to her friends but participants also noted witnessing harassment based on perceived LGBTQ identity targeted against complete strangers. Robert states:

I was walking behind two people who I can safely assume are gay and...one of them had passed by...a guy that he knew I guess from somewhere on campus and while he was walking away...it was either his friend or he who said, "kind of like a fruit, kind of fruity that guy" and laughed at him being gay.

Robert goes on to indicate that hearing these students' reactions to people they assumed were gay made him feel unsafe and stigmatized.

Secondhand evidence of overt discrimination.

Beyond sharing stories of overt discrimination that participants had experienced and witnessed, they also discussed stories they had heard about overt discrimination experienced by other students. Phil comments on one of those stories:

One of my friends, who's a trans woman, was walking through campus and was cornered by some people. I wasn't there at the time. I was at another side of campus entirely. She came to us and told us what had happened and we're like, "ok, we're walking you to your car because this is not ok...did you get any description? Do we need to call somebody?"

Although this incident did not happen to Phil, it did happen to one of his friends and clearly effects how he experiences the campus climate. Phil went on to describe how this and other stories he has heard from his friends about being harassed on campus. He states, "I know people who have been harassed walking through Greek Town or through campus all the time because they're trans, or because of their perceived identity." These stories, as he explained later, make him think twice about heading out alone at night or visiting downtown after the bars close.

Michael, a junior who identifies as a mixed race transgender man, also has heard stories about instances of overt discrimination. He states:

There are stories that I've heard from some trans identified people, obscenities that have been yelled...you know, guys around campus saying "faggot" all the time...I actually have a friend who just identifies as a lesbian and someone told her that she was in the wrong bathroom once just because she has short hair, so I don't think we're behind enemy lines or anything but I can see where we have issues.

Michael comments on how he does not think that LGBTQ-identified students are in too much danger physically but does note they are faced with some discrimination. Chris also comments on stories he has heard of overt discrimination experienced by LGBTQ-

identified students. He states, “I’ve heard stories from other people who have had issues, like I have a trans friend who has had people drive by and splash water on her and all kinds of horrible stuff.” While these stories are all second hand, these stories still influence how the participants experience the campus climate at MU.

Institutional discrimination.

Participants also discussed the institutional discrimination LGBTQ-identified people face. The most commonly shared instance of institutional discrimination brought up by four of the participants is the lack of a gender-neutral housing policy for students living on campus at the University of Missouri. Tonya explains:

I think [trans students’] option right now besides rooming with their sex assigned at birth, is a single room with a single bathroom. It’s hell a more expensive and it’s also...so isolating to not have that roommate or suite mate or somebody there. The big thing that residential life was scared of as far as if they implemented it they could not do it in community bathroom style places right now because of Missouri laws that...you can’t share a bathroom. They’re very very strict on it.

Tonya’s story clearly shows that the lack of a gender neutral housing policy is discriminatory because the only “safe” option available for trans students is living without a roommate on campus and that option is prohibitively expensive and could also be potentially isolating for students. If somebody wishes to transition while living in the residence halls, they will have few options for a living situation.

The University of Missouri also lacks a preferred name policy. The only way to have one’s name changed on their internal university records is to have it change legally, which is often times not an option for family or financial reasons. Elizabeth illustrated the impact of this policy:

The fact that I can’t choose a preferred name on the registrar really...sucks because if I don’t get a chance to find out my instructor before the class to email

them and they start taking role, I just kind of sit there and my name goes by and I think, “I’m not answering to that, I’m not answering to that. I’ll send you an email, not answering to that.”

Previously, Elizabeth noted her legal name was being used as a weapon by professors.

The lack of a preferred name policy allows instructors to know transgender students’ legal names and genders therefore potentially outing the student and allowing the instructor to be able to use their name as a weapon. With a preferred name policy, this situation would have been avoided. This potentially silences students, might leave them feeling uncomfortable, and could be avoided with a policy that allows students to change their names on internal university documents.

Another incident of institutional discrimination noted by participants is the fact that the University of Missouri does not offer domestic partner benefits. Robert noted the importance of this by stating, “One of the reasons why this campus is not friendly is because it doesn’t recognize domestic partnerships – it doesn’t give benefits to its staff members who are LGBTQ and partnered domestically. This shows how much they value us.” While this policy does not directly affect students, it does indicate that the university doesn’t value LGBTQ people who work for their institution enough to honor their partners and relationships by extending them a benefits package. Finally, the university does not have gender identity and expression included in their nondiscrimination policy. Five of the participants commented on this omission and stated that this is another form of institutional discrimination.

Intersecting Identities that Influence Perception of Discrimination

In addition to discussing experiences of discrimination, both overt and institutionalized, as well as stories they have heard, participants mentioned how different

intersecting identities can likely influence the perception of discrimination felt by individuals or even increase the chance that a person will experience discrimination. The first of these is the visibility of their queerness. David, a white gay man in his fifth year at MU explains:

I think discrimination is worse against LGBTQ people because it's so visible. You know, mistreatment or prejudice or oppression or whatever towards someone's sexuality...most cases this is really more about gender than anything. If their gender is more of a transgression then it's more visible then it's worse.

David notes that discrimination against LGBTQ-identified folks is often more about gender than sexuality. This is because in many cases when there is overt discrimination, the person or people discriminating are not seeing the victim with a partner. Instead they are seeing that their gender is not fitting within the stereotypical presentation of that gender and their sexuality is then inferred from those cues. Therefore, a man who can "pass" as heterosexual embodies a particular form of masculinity. Those whose masculinity fall short of this ideal are assumed gay and are more easily targeted that way.

Similar to what David identifies, participants also noted that being transgender increases the chances of discrimination. Tonya states, "A lot of groups, compared to me, are more easily read...if you're not cisgendered, you're more easily read as queer."

Tonya notes that being transgender can often increase the chances that somebody is read as queer. She goes on to say:

Most of the discrimination I see is when I'm out with my trans friends...most of the time when we're out, it's a big queer group and it's awesome but I am super protective especially since I am cisgendered, like I become hyper aware for them because they can be read easier.

Tonya's narrative demonstrates that transgender individuals might often be read as visibly queer, and thus may be as more susceptible to discrimination because they are more easily read as LGBTQ.

The participants also noted another reason why transgender individuals have compounded discrimination. Phil states, "I can definitely see trans students considering the campus the most hostile because it's not necessarily friendly...like the residential life aspect of it since there is no gender neutral housing." Phil points out that there are more institutional barriers if you are transgender. One of these is the lack of a gender-neutral housing policy. Additionally, in many buildings on campus, there are no gender-neutral restrooms. This is especially apparent in residence halls, as noted previously, as well as in academic buildings.

Another factor that can compound the severity of the discrimination felt by participants is the intersection of their identity as LGBTQ and their identity as being from a particular place. Chris states:

I kind of let [harassment] go because what could I do? They were in a car and I'm walking so I just let it go but that kind of stuck with me because I've never, I come from a small republican town that is not really that accepting. I've never had problems like that before so that being the first time that someone has said something to me kind of threw me.

Here Chris is illustrating that the harassment he experienced was worse because it was in Columbia, a place he went on to describe as home and as more accepting of both racial and sexual difference than his hometown. He had not experienced something like this back home, which he originally assumed to be less accepting. Because of this, he stated he had a stronger reaction to the harassment. This concept was echoed by three other participants, all of them indicating that how hostile somebody thinks the campus is

depends on where they come from and the experiences they had with discrimination prior to coming to MU. Phil indicated that being from a small town in Kansas, Columbia seems like a haven and the climate here is much better than back home. Somebody coming from a more accepting hometown or an accepting family might be more affected by the instances of harassment and discrimination that do happen at MU.

Another factor that can influence the perception of discrimination felt by participants is the intersections between their sexual or gender minority identity and their other minority identities. All of the participants of color indicated that they faced more discrimination because of their identity as a person of color than because of their sexual or gender minority status. Robert states:

Whenever I walk in to [Bush Auditorium] I get tons of looks. I mean, I, you know, I just turn heads every time I walk through the aisles and it's probably because of my race because there aren't very many Asians in that class or maybe because I look gay....I was lucky enough to sit with three [Asians] today and that's the first time I've ever seen any in that class. So yeah, that's...that's it, it's the looks that makes me feel uncomfortable and the...exactly I can't find anybody that I can identify with.

Here Robert is noticing that he stands out in this classroom in more than one way and is desperately trying to find individuals with whom he can identify. He notices the stares of his classmates and spends time wondering if they are looking at him because of his race or because of his sexuality. Either way, this is creating an uncomfortable learning environment for Robert thinking it could be for either of those reasons.

Chris also discusses harassment he has faced both because of his race and because of his sexuality. He indicates that both of these things play into how he experiences the campus climate. He states:

I've experienced some things lately on campus that haven't really been that great. I was going to down College Ave to go to a dining hall and this car drove by and they said...I don't know if I should say the slur that they used because it was very like...pejorative. They said "shit baby" and I was like, wait a second, what are you talking about? I didn't get what he was saying at all, and shit baby is like a racial slur. I was like, um ok.

Beyond getting derogative terms yelled at him because of his sexual orientation, he also faces the same types of harassment based on his race. This compounds the discrimination for Chris and he goes on to explain how he holds on to the negative feelings when things like this happen to him not only being verbally attacked based on his race but based on his perceived sexual orientation as well. Chris discusses another form of discrimination he faces most likely because of his race:

If I walk by and it's nighttime and there's no one else around people will lock their car doors...or they'll go to the other side of the street. I don't think that that's necessarily racial and it's maybe not based on me being gay but I can't help but think that.

Similar to Robert, Chris is constantly wondering if his race or sexual orientation is prompting this discrimination. Both of these gay men of color indicated they felt like they had twice the discrimination to deal with because of being a part of two marginalized groups, a person of color as well as an LGBTQ-identified person.

As Rankin and Reason (2008) discuss, the external community where the campus is situated plays a large part in how the campus climate is experienced. Students leave campus often for various reasons and the community outside of campus can often feel like just an extension of campus. Experiences of discrimination that occur off campus but in the Columbia community influence how students experience the campus. Tonya explains discrimination she faced while at the Columbia Mall:

I was out and I was just randomly looking in a ring shop because [my partner and I] already have promise rings and I was looking in one of the ring shops and I was looking for a male bands but like smaller male bands... I was trying to explain, you know, I wanted a smaller band...and I wanted to know my price range to how much I needed to save for this and...she was like, "Oh, does he not just like a bigger band for this?" And I was like, "No it's a she and you know she just prefers a more manly style." Oh. Let me get somebody else to help you because I can't help you right now. I was like, ok, you were able to help me 5 seconds ago before I corrected you on the person I'm looking for a ring for. Then I didn't get help after that. Everybody became busy.

While the incident Tonya is describing did not happen on campus, it did happen in the community not too far from campus. Instances of discrimination, even in the community, influence how we experience the campus climate because often campus and the community bleed together. Tonya recounts another incident at a local gay bar:

Last weekend we were out with a trans female and a trans male friend of ours. We were out at SoCO, which is supposed to be the gay friendly bar and I'm not old enough to go to [other gay bars]. I'm not old enough to go to the 21plus place so that is literally the only place to go if I want to go out and dance with my girlfriend. There is no other place to go. Our trans female friend needed to go to the bathroom, went into the female bathroom, and got dragged out and was asked to see her license because her sex did not match her gender. Because we came in two separate cars, they left immediately. All I wanted to do was like, I wish I would have gone to the bathroom with you, I wish I would have just been there to be like ugh. She had to do it by her, she just went up to go to the bathroom, you don't...you don't think about it and ...they left right after it because she probably was about to cry and so it was just like, I can't be here anymore and it's really unfortunate.

Transgender people often have a difficult time finding a public restroom to use. As noted earlier, there are few gender-neutral restrooms on campus and also few in the community. Witnessing this type of discrimination adds to the discrimination students feel on campus due to lack of accessible bathrooms. As Tonya noted above, if the transgender community cannot feel comfortable at home in the residence halls or in local queer community spaces and bars, then where can transgender individuals have a safe space in

Columbia? This compounding of discrimination both on and off campus is difficult for Tonya to witness and emphasizes further the need for campus to be held as a safe space for the LGBTQ community.

Elizabeth compared and contrasted the discrimination and harassment she faces both on and off campus. She states:

On campus it's verbal because...I'm not sure if it's maybe the campus has it's own police department that makes people think otherwise...or the fact that they're surrounded by a bunch of people.

Interviewer - Maybe there's a different level of propriety people think when they're at school?

Elizabeth - Umm, or maybe they're not inebriated by a ton of alcohol.

Interviewer – Yeah, true.

Elizabeth – I don't go out on drinking nights, by the way. I refuse to go out because of the drunken...just, drunkenness.

Elizabeth commented on the role that she sees alcohol playing in the harassment she experiences. She clearly stated that she believes that the reason she gets harassed more downtown is because most often, individuals are drunk. She also discussed the police department on campus and how that establishes an atmosphere of relative safety for her. Their presence, she believes, decreases the amount of harassment perpetrated against her. It can be inferred then that the external community's lack of a present police force could create unsafe spaces for LGBTQ-identified students off campus.

Robert had a similar situation that occurred in downtown Columbia:
I was walking downtown and there was a group of guys in an SUV. They looked like a bunch of [frat boys]...and they just yelled out at me as I was crossing the street and said, "Hey are you gay, hey man are you gay?"

While Robert went on to discuss how he might not consider this discrimination, they were asking him to out himself, which made him feel uncomfortable. He also discussed later in the interview how experiences of harassment on campus and off campus blend together for him. He therefore experiences the Columbia community similarly to the University of Missouri campus.

There are many factors that the participants identified that can influence the perception of discrimination and harassment for students. First, visibility as queer makes it more likely that students will experience harassment and discrimination based on their personal looks. A student's transgender identity might also increase the likelihood or severity of discrimination against students. This is related to visibility because if a student is visibly trans, this adds to the discrimination and also there are many more institutionalized forms of discrimination that affect transgender students such as the lack of gender neutral locker rooms and rest rooms and the lack of a gender-neutral housing policy at MU. Participants also noted that belonging to both a sexual and racial minority group can sometimes compound discrimination. Finally, participants commented on the external Columbia community. Experiences of discrimination in the community will often times bleed over into campus. The hostility of the Columbia community can make students feel as if they really do not have a safe space to go if campus is also not seen as safe.

(Dis)Comfort

All of the participants discussed spaces on campus where they felt comfortable and where they felt particularly uncomfortable highlighting the importance of specifying places when assessing campus climate. It is important to note that discrimination and

discomfort are related. Discomfort is often related to fear of being discriminated against or occurs because one has been discriminated against. Elizabeth shared her experience with discomfort:

A lot of [my discomfort] is because of Greek Town and Greek Town doesn't stay in Greek Town. Greek Town goes out. And a lot of it has to do with...I mean, you can't control other people but I think you can strive to educate them.

Elizabeth discussed how her experiences of harassment in Greek Town sometimes spill out into other areas on campus. Instead of just a particular space that makes her feel uncomfortable, it also includes a particular community. Tonya also discussed her discomfort while in Greek Town:

I would tell you not to go walking around in the middle of Greek Town in the middle of the night by yourself because I am over right across the street from them and...you can naively think, I just need to go through here for a short cut so I can get faster to class over there but...there is just sometimes you should not be doing that, especially not by yourself...especially if you're not cisgendered.

Tonya feels so much discomfort while in Greek Town that she advises other LGBTQ people not to go walking around Greek Town at night under any circumstances. Chris also discussed his discomfort in Greek Town:

Greek Town...is the only place I can think of that really could be a problem with me being comfortable. I'm not going to say it is a problem but it could be more so than anywhere else that I can think of just because of what I've experiences in those places.

Chris indicates that even though he does not necessarily think it is a problem all the time, because of past experiences in Greek Town, he sees this as an uncomfortable place to be.

Hypervigilance.

Many participants indicated that, because of their past experiences with discrimination and stories they heard, that it is oftentimes necessary to be hypervigilant.

Tonya explained:

I don't think there's ever been a time where I'm not just like hanging out with my friends with my partner that I'm not looking at everybody and I'm looking to see what they're thinking and what they're reacting.

She goes on to discuss how she feels the need to protect the safety of her queer friends because she is the "least visible" person in her group of friends since she is cisgendered and a femme. Tonya added:

I'm always ready for [harassment] to happen but...about, you know 50% of the time, it does happen where you just get those awkward stares and I always feel really uncomfortable about that because although I have chosen to out myself by holding [my partner's] hand or sitting really close to her I haven't...consciously opened myself up to wanting you to judge me right now for this, I just want to be comfortable walking down the street and being...what I think is normal.

Tonya here is speaking of the need to be hypervigilant because half of the time, harassment or discrimination occurs. She also noted that she wishes she were able to be out with her partner and be treated as a "normal" couple instead of constantly being in fear of what others will say to them.

Michael also discussed feeling like he has to be hypervigilant. For him, this most often occurs in bathrooms and locker rooms:

There's always there's this feeling in the back of my head every time I walk into a bathroom, you know, I don't think I'm going to get...physically hurt but I know that some people are like, you know, 'what just walked into the bathroom? Am I in the right bathroom?' Sometimes I feel like I make other people uncomfortable, I may not but I'm sure I make other people feel uncomfortable in the bathroom or at the locker room at the [Student Recreation Center]. That actually has gotten worse as I've progressed through college. I don't like to look up really. I feel like if I even just make eye contact with another woman, and they change freely in

there and I mean I've seen all of it before, I've taken PE classes but I have a feeling that because I'm sure that my identity is assumed, being somewhere on the [LGBTQ] spectrum they think that like I'm checking them out or they'll get offended or somebody will be brave enough to say something so I try not to, I just go in there and lock myself up, go to the bathroom. I don't wanna be in there.

Michael, as a trans man who still uses the women's locker room at the Student Recreation Center, is discussing the necessity for him to get in and out of the locker room quickly because he is afraid that somebody will be offended simply by his presence in that space. He feels he has to be hypervigilant, watch where he looks and feels he has to change clothes quickly to get out of that uncomfortable situation. Finally, like Michael and Tonya, Chris discussed his need to be hypervigilant:

If it's like just being by myself like going down the street at night like I kind of tend to walk a little faster and I tend to go like in between buildings, I don't really go out into street like where the houses are so for the most part, yeah but, there are times when I kind of put my guard up.

Chris described being hypervigilant because he is afraid of what could happen to him as a black, gay man walking alone at night. Chris explained that, while this may not be completely conscious, he catches himself performing these self-protective behaviors.

Participants noted spaces where they felt incredibly comfortable and those where they feel incredibly uncomfortable. Here I note spaces where the participants felt particularly uncomfortable as well as the sub theme of participants feeling that hypervigilance is necessary.

Support

Another theme that emerged from the data was the immense amount of support that students have on campus from their particular peers and peer groups, faculty, and staff. These were some of the most heartfelt conversations. Participants spoke candidly

of their friends, mentors, educators, and professors who have made huge differences in their lives at MU. Many spoke of the importance of finding a supportive queer community and mentors and that there is no shortage of those at the University of Missouri.

Peer support.

Each participant spoke of their peers or peer group as being an incredible source of support for them at the University of Missouri. Beyond that, each participant also gave advice to other queer students to find their community right away and noted their communities as being open, loving, and inclusive. Rita, a white, lesbian identified woman stated:

Go hang out in the center for social justice. I know it's not the center for social justice anymore per say but go hang out in those offices down [in the Student Center] and you know, just get a strong group of people who will support you. I mean, even if they don't necessarily identify as LGBTQ as long as you know you have that group of people who are there, you know, who can support you. I think that will make things a lot better for LGBTQ students.

Rita went on to explain how, as a transfer student, she did not have very many friends coming to MU, let alone friends who were LGBTQ-identified. She noted that spending time in the Center for Social Justice really helped her build her community and her group of friends.

Elizabeth also discussed her experience with her very supportive peer group: I...came out to all of my friends first and some rejected me, some were like, ok, we love you, some were like apathetic towards it. It was mostly from what I saw at the time, a mostly positive response, as time went on I found out other people had...secretly...or just under the radar cut ties with me and stuff without even saying anything to me which, I don't know how I feel about that but...and yeah, friends overall it was...a big deal but it went smooth for the most part and I had wonderful loving accepting friends and it was a positive experience overall.

Elizabeth continued in the interview to discuss how her community has always been there for her in good and bad times and that she could never have survived coming out if it was not for those individuals. She also discussed the support she has gotten from her involvement with student groups and activities through the LGBTQ Resource Center.

She stated:

The resource center was the first place I went to find support and it was a place I found friends. Going through [the LGBTQ Resource Center] I became more involved in the campus using the resource center as a jumping ground and I think that's why I'm so glad that events like the queer fall fling are now happening because so many students use the resource center as a jumping ground to finding their family, finding friends. I know that not everybody in this community are friends but there's plenty of people, that's a good thing because it will allow people who are different to find their own clique, find their own friends within this community and we can come together as a whole and...be in this resource center, be in [Triangle Coalition], etc and come together and demonstrate. So yeah, I found community here.

Michael also commented on his involvement on campus, in his case as a rugby player, as something that has helped him build community and find friends. He stated:

It's been just fine. No big deal, I mean, I joined the rugby team and the good majority of those women identified as a lesbian or bisexual or you know, they were all questioning [their sexualities] pretty much so the people that I surrounded myself with for the longest time were pretty much the same as I was. It's been good.

Chris added his experience with student groups on campus helping him find friends and a community:

I'm in the Queer People of Color group here and that really helped me to see that I'm not alone here. I'm not going through this struggle alone. That helped a lot and yeah, actually I was involved in other organizations in the past so...that really helped me really get in touch with my identity because you know I grew up pretty much the only gay person in my town so I stood out a lot but here it's harder to stand out because everyone's different like everyone's weird, everyone is gay! So, I kind of feel more at ease to let my tendencies out, I guess you could say.

Chris indicated that the Queer People of Color group really helped him find a community and a home at MU. It helped connect him with other students who are going through a similar struggle, as he stated. He went on to explain that this makes him feel more of a sense of belonging both to his community and to the University of Missouri as a whole.

Beyond connecting with other LGBTQ-identified people on campus and beyond involvement with LGBTQ specific activities, other participants stressed the importance of surrounding yourself with accepting and caring people in general. David stated:

Just the people I surround myself with I think I really am proud to say that I'm friends with a lot of really, really intelligent people, socially intelligent people, open-minded people, and just kind people so...I don't really associate with people who wouldn't be accepting generally and if they aren't accepting they find out pretty quickly.

Later in the interview, David explained that his group of friends at MU, while not a part of the LGBTQ community themselves, are incredibly supportive of him and his identity. Marty, a junior and a white gay identified man, also had a positive experience with his friend group. He stated:

I was really nervous telling my friends I was gay because I was afraid they might be teasing me after I told them...they seem fine with it, you know, they support me. They definitely don't mind me being gay.

All participants spoke positively of their friends and all indicated they had some sort of supportive community at MU. Many found their friends and community through LGBTQ organizations and groups on campus and many surrounded themselves with supportive people and found their community organically. Either way, it is clear that the participants all have loving and supportive peer groups and friends.

Faculty support.

Participants also spoke of support they received from faculty members and graduate instructors. The support from faculty most often came in the form of teaching classes in a way that took into account all students' perspectives as well as stressed respect and open mindedness. Michael explained:

There is this random health professions class I'm in, Healthcare in the United States. Dr. K. kept stressing on the first day about respect. And granted it had nothing to do with...LGBT issues, he kept stressing like mutual respect. If we ever have a discussion whatever you do like...you know, whether this person says I love the president, I hate the president, I'm a democrat or I think this or I think that, you know, respect them and I think some people, I think that's just like a general topic...that applies everywhere so I think some people have the right mindset and with that baseline you can also translate that to the LGBT community, you know, treat others like you want to be treated.

Michael feels supported by his professor because he is establishing a classroom norm of respect. By doing this, Michael stated that he feels comfortable that he would be supported if he ever had an issue in that class where he felt uncomfortable, whether it was about his transgender identity or not. Rita noted that she has encountered supportive faculty across the board stating:

I've been out to most of my professors and pretty much they know you know through conversations that we've had outside of the class and they know and they're just really cool with it but I feel like any class that I've taken actually so far like if the professor had known if they didn't already know I feel like they would have been really cool with it so.

Rita noted that she trusts that the faculty members at MU would be supportive of her LGBTQ identity.

Five participants mentioned one particular professor, Dr. B in the Sociology Department, who understands LGBTQ issues and creates a supportive environment in his classroom. Elizabeth stated, "Dr. B...I know through other students that he creates a good

environment in his classrooms. [My friend] has him right now. A lot of the sociology professors have done it right.” David also named sociology as a very LGBTQ friendly department and describes Dr. B as a very supportive faculty member:

The fact that most queer theory classes are taught by a straight person is really cool. Dr. B is like the go to. He has a great class and he is fantastic and he is so knowledgeable and the fact that he is knowledgeable about it and identifies as straight is really cool. I think some people would argue that it wouldn't be the best but I think if we're at all trying...to get everyone else back to us, who better to pull them that way? That direction? than, you know, a straight person, saying all these cool things.

Beyond thinking Dr. B is supportive and knowledgeable, David also described the potential that Dr. B has to educate a wider population about LGBTQ issues due to his identity as a straight man.

In addition to the Sociology Department, the Women's and Gender Studies Department was mentioned by three participants as being a supportive and welcoming department. Rita states:

I feel like Women's and Gender Studies I feel like is definitely very inclusive, very open at least. I mean, I've taken only two classes so far but I feel like those classes were very good about...being open about my lesbian identity.

Along with Rita, Phil also feels supported by the Women's and Gender Studies Department. He stated:

The Women's and Gender Studies [Department], oh my gosh, so much that I've learned about different kinds of issues especially LGBTQ! I didn't know anything about transgender identity until I came here and now that's one of my biggest fights because I know so many trans people. Transgender issues are like one of my biggest things, I think that's one of the most important minority issues on this campus or in the world so Women and Gender studies for sure is a good example.

He emphasized that each class he has taken in the department incorporates LGBTQ identities into the curriculum and he goes on to describe how he feels as if his voice is heard and valued.

Each participant indicated that they had at least one faculty member with whom they felt comfortable and who created a supportive environment for LGBTQ-identified students. Some identified faculty members who dealt particularly with LGBTQ issues in their classrooms while others noted that merely articulating a community norm of respect was enough to make them feel safe and welcome. While there were a number of faculty members who were identified as creating a toxic classroom environment for LGBTQ students, the vast majority had positive experiences with faculty members.

Student affairs support.

In addition to faculty members, participants noted a number of staff members and student affairs offices that have been supportive of them and other LGBTQ-identified students. While some named specific departments, for example residential life was mentioned as an LGBTQ friendly department by both Tonya and Phil, others identified specific staff members by name.

Three participants noted the support that the Missouri Student Association (MSA) gave to the gender-neutral housing proposal that was voted on in the spring of 2011. Beyond just the gender-neutral housing initiative, Phil noted that MSA has recently been supportive of LGBTQ issues more generally which he noted, stems from the MSA president. He stated:

MSA has been one of those organizations that I have in the past, especially working in the Residence Hall Association, I've just always had like a real tension towards but the president this year has been really, really receptive about the trans

issues and we've discussed them at all the MSA presidential debates. He was the only one who had any real answers about [trans issues] and he's just been an incredible person. One day he messaged me on Facebook just to say hey and that he wanted to tell me that he went to a drag show the other day and he thought it was awesome...He's just one of those really receptive awesome people.

Phil presents an example of positive and supportive staff leadership influencing an organization to become more supportive of LGBTQ issues.

Rita has had incredibly positive experiences with the women's center (WC) on campus. She explains how her time in the WC is overwhelmingly positive and how she gets support from the staff members there. When asked about supportive forces on campus she states, "[The staff members] down in the women's center! I feel like they're very good about being supportive and inclusive of LGBTQ identities." Elizabeth also mentioned the WC as a supportive office on campus and comments on its creation stating, "[The director of the WC] like fought for [the women's center] to be there and it's there. I love [her] for that." In all, five of the participants mentioned the women's center as a supportive office with supportive staff members that are inclusive of LGBTQ identities.

Rita noted her positive experiences with the Sexual Health Advocacy and Peer Education (SHAPE) group she works with. She stated:

SHAPE is another organization that has been great with LGBT issues. It's not necessarily their job to talk about you know, trans issues and queer issues but they're very inclusive in their stuff, especially with the queer issues, demanding that we have dental dams in the condom machines because instead of like three different types of condoms like some originally wanted to do like no, we need to have these types of things because these are the types of things being used if they're not necessarily used as much, who cares, people use them, they need them, they need to feel included.

Rita made a point to note that SHAPE is an organization that is supposed to serve everybody regardless of their sexual orientation and does a great job of incorporating LGBTQ perspectives and needs.

As noted previously, Greek Town and in the Greek community were mentioned multiple times by participants as places where they and other LGBTQ students did not feel safe. Interestingly, two participants noted the positive work done by Greek Allies, an LGBTQ education group for and by the Greek community. Elizabeth stated, “I do appreciate that Greek Allies does exist now and I’m really looking forward to the work that they do.” The data show that the Greek system and Greek Town are problematic for LGBTQ students, although there is a ray of hope.

Finally, four participants mentioned the former coordinator for the LGBTQ resource center as a huge support for them on campus. When asked about staff members who have created positive, supportive spaces for LGBTQ students Elizabeth states, “[The former LGBTQ center coordinator]. No question. He’s amazing. I am really sad that he left.” Chris also mentioned the former LGBTQ resource center coordinator stating:

The old advisor, he was really good at talking me down whenever I was getting really worked up about stuff on campus that was problematic. I don’t want to say something to do the wrong person and get in trouble...just the people [at the LGBTQ resource center], they’re cool, you know?

Clearly, the former coordinator of the resource center created a positive and supportive environment for a number of LGBTQ-identified students and was highly regarded in the community as a good support person.

Each of my participants was able to name a staff member or an office on campus where they feel safe and supported as an LGBTQ-identified student. Most notable are

the LGBTQ resource center, the women's center, and residential life. The data show that although there are spaces in which LGBTQ-identified students feel uncomfortable, there are also many places and organization where they feel extremely comfortable to be themselves.

Suggestions for Improvement

I would have to say the university needs to do whatever it takes to make people on the LGBT spectrum more comfortable. There are groups that they can find so there's that but college is a huge transition. You don't go home anymore after classes. You have to live here all the time, you have to eat here, you have to learn here, there needs to be either better bathroom situations and definitely better dorm and living situations. There doesn't have to be like a gay dining hall or something...even if there was just a gender neutral floor.

The final theme that emerged from the data is suggestions for improvement. All nine participants offered recommendations to improve the campus climate for LGBTQ-identified students, faculty, and staff. Suggestions ranged from new and improved policies, to ideas for programming run through the LGBTQ Resource Center. As Michael stated above, participants noted the need for MU to create an environment that is comfortable for all students.

Four participants recommended that residential life adopt a gender-neutral housing policy. Tonya elaborated:

For residential life it would probably be gender-neutral housing just because it's a big bonus for trans people who necessarily don't fit in our sex boxes or gender boxes. It's also a comfort level thing. Both me and my partner's roommates either moved out or refused to talk to us after we came out to them and I would have felt much more comfortable living with a gay man or living with a straight male who is not really interested but, it just doesn't happen that way and I wish it would.

As Tonya explained, a gender-neutral housing policy would not only let transgender students room with somebody of any gender, it would allow for more living options for all students.

In addition to gender-neutral housing, five participants recommended the university advocate for and build more gender-neutral restroom facilities. Elizabeth said:

I don't want to make the stereotypical argument but let me use a fucking female bathroom. I mean I never had trouble in a bathroom, believe it or not, which I am so excited about but if there's a gender-neutral bathroom that's accessible, I will use that. Please, make one on every floor or something. They're not hard to build. Maybe they're hard to add in but they're not hard to build when you're building a building...case and point, the Student Center.

Elizabeth expressed her frustration at the lack of gender-neutral restrooms on campus and recommends that the university be committed to creating more in order to ensure a safe bathroom for all students. Rita echoed Elizabeth's sentiments:

I guess mostly for the transgender population I feel like unisex bathrooms, I feel like that's important because isn't it against the law in Missouri technically to use the opposite gender, the opposite sex bathroom in the dorms? That's crap.

Rita referenced the Columbia city ordinance that states that it is illegal to enter a bathroom for the opposite sex in a boarding or rooming house, which includes residence halls (Columbia, Mo., City Ordinance 13360, § 1 (1992)). This, according to Rita, makes it even more imperative that the university construct more gender-neutral restrooms.

Two participants mentioned the lack of security measures for students to utilize on campus when they are out late at night. Chris stated:

I think we could use more security because we have those phone things but, I mean, maybe have a couple officers walking around or something like that. I don't know if they already do that because I don't hang around campus like that but maybe that would help me feel more comfortable, knowing that there's

someone out there watching what's going on. I know they have cameras everywhere but a camera isn't going to step in and say something.

Elizabeth also mentioned the need for more security on campus. She states:

They say there's an emergency phone at every corner. No, there isn't. I've been walking places searching for that thing just in case. I can't find it. So at night I think there needs to be more places to look for the emergency phone thing and I think it would be nice to see a typical response time like if I call the cops will be here in two minutes. That's how long it takes them to get here.

Both Elizabeth and Chris are commenting on the need to increase campus safety measures in general, which will make them feel more comfortable while on campus.

Extending domestic partner benefits to faculty and staff came up in seven interviews as a recommendation for improvement of campus climate for LGBTQ students. Rita explained:

Recognizing domestic partnerships and stuff would be so beneficial but I guess that's more of like a staff and faculty thing but that's...something I would be mostly concerned about because I've heard about it. I guess it always comes up before the board of administrators and they haven't voted for it yet and I think that's not cool especially since we're the flagship campus here and I feel like we should be setting an example and being real progressive in how we treat people.

Rita noted that extending benefits to the same-sex partners of employees is more about treating them equally and setting an example. By doing this, the university is demonstrating how much they value LGBTQ people at their institution. David also discussed extending domestic partner benefits to university employees:

You know, if you want [domestic partner benefits] to happen then make it happen and then everyone will see that they're a part of the bigger part of what they're doing...It's going to give [the LGBTQ population] a lot more recognition I think. I don't know. Everyone knows what the right thing to do is, just do it. We trust our administration to do that. We trust them with a lot, an education, a lot of money and a lot of influence in a lot of things and we're trusting that they would do the right thing. I think the majority of people know what that is all of the time...at whatever cost.

David states that extending domestic partner benefits to university employees is the right thing to do. He also notes that the administration has a choice in how they spend their money and that students are trusting them to make the correct choice in their policies and procedures.

Seven participants also mentioned adding gender identity and expression to the system-wide nondiscrimination policy. Elizabeth states, “Officially putting the words in, ‘we do not discriminate based on gender identity.’ Those words, that one phrase, will do so much.” Additionally, two participants brought up the necessity for a preferred name policy. This would allow students, faculty, and staff to change their name on all internal university documents without going through legal proceedings.

Five participants brought up the lack of mandatory diversity trainings on campus. Michael offered a great suggestion to improve education of the entire campus surrounding LGBTQ issues. He stated:

I always thought it would be kind of cool if everybody was safe space trained. I know a lot of freshmen do FIGs, their freshman interest groups and they have to do all this weird stuff. Why not have them get safe space trained? Or, you know, make it like a floor requirement. I know as a freshman whenever they said a floor meeting was required, I know my ass was there but it’s not true, you don’t have to show up to that crap. If everyone, or even if we were able to get like 60% of the incoming freshmen in the dorm safe space trained. Even if it was just abbreviated and people just knew, I think people, kids that come from really small towns that probably have never heard the word transgender, let alone know what it means, they just know that people get sex changes. You know, if they actually would learn. They don’t have to like it, but if they could just get that seed planted in their head, like hey, be sensitive toward this and that and don’t say this word or at least try not to, that could make a world of difference possibly. Maybe not everyone will listen, but some people will. And, I mean, that’s a lot to ask, but I think everyone needs to feel comfortable.

Michael is trying to find a way to make sure that more of the campus is aware of LGBTQ issues and sensitivity. He suggested going through residential life because there is a live-

on requirement for most students at MU during their first year. Elizabeth also discussed educational training on LGBTQ issues:

Training, I want to see more safe space trainings. I definitely want to see a lot more safe space trainings. I would like to see like students having to go through like some kind of educational program even if it's a one-time thing...just having that and letting them think on it later, yeah, helps a lot. I would like to see staff being forced to go through safe space trainings because you work here, you are involved in students' lives. And then I would like to see like every department be like, hey, we take gender identity seriously.

Phil also discussed the need for training for faculty and graduate instructors, "I think the faculty should be trained to tell them...just like make sure they don't say homophobic things in class or they don't say heterosexist things in their class. That would be...very helpful and make me feel safer." It is clear from the data that participants believe students, faculty, and staff could all benefit from increased opportunities and requirements for training on LGBTQ issues and best practices.

In addition to training, three participants brought up the need for a diversity class requirement for all students in order to graduate. Phil explained:

I would love to see a diversity course requirement. I would love to see that. I would like to see it in a very strict amount of different classes. I don't want someone to go take Ancient Greek Mythology and have that be their diversity course. That's dumb. I want them to be in Women's and Gender Studies courses and learning about current social issues and those sorts of things. I took Women's and Gender Studies on a whim and fell in love with it and now it's my major. I've learned so much more about social justice and I think everybody needs to learn that so. I would definitely require that. If not a class, we have a lot of groups that talk about social justice issues but they don't necessarily get the attendance from students because students are busy. They don't have time to go to like an hour session to talk about diversity or something like that. But if you require them to do that for a course, just for one semester than you know, it's part of their schedule. A lot of students would want to do that anyway. A lot of students would want that kind of experience, they just can't because they have other classes or whatever. But...if they have to take it for a class then, why not, as part of one of their humanities?

Like trainings, Phil is pushing for more education on social justice, including LGBTQ issues, through a classroom experience. He thinks that if it were mandatory for graduation, a lot more students would have the opportunity to take advantage of opportunities across campus.

Three participants mentioned the LGBTQ resource center and gave suggestions for different types of programming. Tonya stated:

I know the black culture center recently started something where they pair young black men who historically and statistically do not make it through Mizzou as well as...their white male counterparts. They paired them up with an older black role model who is supposed to be their peer advisor for that year to get them started here and getting them through it. I don't see anything like that for the queer community from the LGBTQ Resource Center and I think it would be really helpful to a lot of them especially saying, you know, I am here for you, I have been through this, I know what you're doing or here are some recourses where you can go and you can vent your frustration or make a change... Things like that that I don't even see in the works here like no one's even thought about it yet and been like, this can be a really good thing for us.

Tonya is discussing the need to increase and diversify programming coming out of the LGBTQ resource center in order to better serve LGBTQ students. David has a different perspective on the resource center. He stated:

Some things are a little too much in your face and...if that is really what you want to do, if that's really what makes you happy, that's really the kind of image you want to give off then do it, and that's fine but gauging where the rest of the culture is right now, it's not the most productive way to make everything more understandable. It's scary to people and it's very in your face, it's very you know, and that's how a lot of things happen, a lot of programs, things like that, simple stuff like the coming out photo is really cool that people can just go, stop for a photo, whatever. I guess sadly, there's not a lot of stand out [programs] that I see and I guess that's probably why I took it upon myself to start one.

David is also commenting on the lack of diversity in the programs run by the LGBTQ resource center and is wishing for something that is a little bit less, as he stated, "in your

face”. Finally, Robert commented on the lack of visibility the LGBTQ Resource Center has across campus. He stated:

[The LGBTQ resource center] is supposed to be the #1 resource for the LGBTQ community on campus and I just don’t think we’re getting enough visibility and enough recognition. I mean, I was in a magazine club meeting the other night and they listed all of the magazines on campus and *Shout* wasn’t even included on that list and I was kind of offended by that but I also don’t know for a fact if they know about *Shout* because it’s been such a small publication in its history. The LGBTQ resource center could probably do a better job. I mean, we have a listserv of people who sign up to be on newsletters and mailing lists but that means that everybody else on campus is left out. They don’t know about any of these events that are happening, they don’t know if something is going on that requires attention and other organizations on campus, maybe its parent organization, isn’t going to do anything to promote it. I heard that the LGBTQ resource center isn’t even receiving that much funding from student involvement so that’s really sad to me. They might allocate more of their resources to us, I mean, we need it just as much as everybody else but I think that also speaks of the lack of effort that the resource center is making so I think if we were to put forth more effort then we would be heard a little better.

Robert noted that increasing visibility of LGBTQ specific programs and resources would be beneficial in order to raise awareness. He also noted the lack of funding for the LGBTQ resource center and the fact that he perceives a lack of effort in the promotion of LGBTQ-specific programs and services.

Lastly, one participant spoke of simply the need for the community to be heard and their problems to be taken seriously. Tonya stated:

I think we need acknowledgment of our problems. I hear a lot about, specifically all the issues that happened against the black community here. I hear about that all the time in the *Maneater* and One Mizzou came out to retaliate against it with all these students but if I hear about big problems that happen here to one of my queer community people, I don’t hear a reaction like that from the Chancellor. I don’t hear a reaction like that from the Board of Curators, you know? I hear maybe a little bit of reaction from it from our community but an acknowledgment of what’s happening here and striving more actively to fix it. That would be good. I know the Chancellor’s Diversity Initiative is there and it’s not like they’re ignoring it but there are bigger things on their minds and I feel a little bit pushed to the side and you can wait your turn because we’ve been dealing with this

problem longer. I feel like a lot of the LGBTQ issues have come to the forefront later than racial diversity issues and things like that and so, I feel like, wait your turn, we'll get there eventually.

Tonya is noting the need for her community and their problems to be heard and acknowledged by the administration. She indicated that she feels that her community is often pushed to the side and that maybe if the administration were to take LGBTQ student concerns seriously, these students would feel important and feel heard.

Overall, the participants had myriad suggestions to improve the campus climate for LGTBQ-identified student at MU. Many of these suggestions involved policy change and resource allocation, as well as being more creative with programming and services for the LGBTQ communities on campus. Many participants also mentioned the need for more educational opportunities and the need for more mandatory diversity trainings for faculty, staff and students. With these changes, perhaps the campus climate for LGBTQ students can begin to improve and LGBTQ-identified students can begin to feel that their concerns are valid and important.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

As these data show, campus climate for LGBTQ-identified undergraduate students at the University of Missouri is often perceived as hostile. Although it took on different forms, all of the participants indicated experiencing some form of harassment or discrimination that they attributed to their LGBTQ-identity during their time at the University of Missouri. All of the participants also indicated feeling uncomfortable on campus in particular spaces and at particular times. While the majority of the data show that LGBTQ students have negative feelings about the campus climate, there are many areas of campus that support and nurture LGBTQ students. Additionally, all participants were easily able to identify areas of campus that could be improved upon and had myriad suggestions to make campus climate friendlier.

The qualitative data are consistent with the quantitative data collected at the University of Missouri in 2009 as well as the data collected for Rankin's (2002) study. The 2009 data indicate that 57.1% of transgender and 34.8% of LGB students have experienced harassment at MU (Worthington & Hart, 2010). Additionally, the 2009 data show that LGBTQ students rate the campus as hostile. The qualitative data are also consistent with the national data on LGBTQ campus climate, which show that LGBTQ individuals generally experience a hostile campus climate (Brown et al., 2004; Dilley, 2002; Malaney et al. 1997; Rankin, 2003, 2005, 2006; Waldo, 1998). As noted previously, it is necessary to utilize both quantitative and qualitative data in order to paint a full picture of the campus climate for an institution (Allan & Madden, 2006). This

study complements previous quantitative data and adds to the information previously gathered on the climate for LGBTQ-identified students.

Rankin and Reason (2008) identify six areas of higher education that influence campus climate. Rankin and Reason first discuss access/retention. The University of Missouri does not allow students to self-identify as LGBTQ on college admissions forms (Windmeyer, 2012). In fact, only a few institutions nationwide collect this information from students (Hoover, 2011). Because of this, it is difficult to assess whether or not LGBTQ students have equal access to MU or if these students are persisting. Each of the participants has obviously persisted up until this point in their undergraduate careers at MU. Given that each of the participants noted experiencing some form of discrimination leaves me to wonder how many LGBTQ-identified students are not persisting due to the hostile campus climate. Furthermore, this begs the question of which LGBTQ sub-communities are not being served by the existing support services for LGBTQ undergraduate students. Because the data collected for this study only come from students who have persisted until this point, there are a lot of questions to still be answered. In order to create a better campus climate for LGBTQ students, the university must be concerned with the persistence and success of these students (Bensimon, 2004). If the university does not ask these students to self-identify as LGBTQ, these students' success cannot be measured. While I do not recommend the University of Missouri begin asking students to self-identify as LGBTQ at this point due to the unknown implications of asking those questions, I do see this as a future necessary direction for university admissions at MU and across the country.

I did not specifically ask questions to participants about their experience with research and scholarship at the University of Missouri although several brought up their own personal experiences with their academic programs and departments. Two participants mentioned the support and education they received from the Women's and Gender Studies Department signaling the importance of such scholarship for LGBTQ-identified students. Additionally, several students mentioned the work of Dr. B, a professor in the Sociology Department. One participant specifically mentioned the educational importance of a queer theory professor identifying as a straight man. Additionally, several participants mentioned the campus climate research conducted by the Chancellor's Diversity Initiatives as being a positive step to bettering the campus climate. Beyond Sociology, Women's and Gender Studies, and Health Professions no other academic departments were mentioned positively. Because some departments were not mentioned at all, this could indicate these departments foster exceptionally welcoming spaces. This could also potentially signal a lack of diversity in pedagogical or research endeavors in other departments across campus.

Rankin and Reason (2008) indicate that inter- and intragroup relations are an important area of higher education that influences campus climate. This area is particularly salient for participants in this study. It is disheartening to learn that all the participants experienced some form of discrimination during their time at MU. Most of the overt discrimination reported by the participants was verbal harassment perpetrated by fellow students. Participants also noted witnessing overt discrimination, hearing stories of discrimination, and institutional discrimination.

As noted in the literature, the perception of a non-discriminatory environment has positive effects for students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini & Nora, 2001). Additionally, research shows that fostering spaces that are intentionally diverse create positive learning outcomes for *all* students (Chang, Astin & Kim, 2004; Gurin, Nagda & Lopez, 2004; Pascarella, Palmer, Moye & Pierson, 2001; Thoma & Ladewig, 1993). However, when fostering intentionally diverse spaces, research shows that tension will exist (Hurtado, 2005) and therefore intentional educational initiatives must be in place in order to temper this tension (Chang, 2002).

A particularly salient example of this tension described by participants is the relationship between the LGBTQ and Greek communities. Greek Town was mentioned over and over again by participants as a place on campus that was particularly hostile towards LGBTQ-identified students. Two participants noted being excited by the educational opportunities presented to the Greek community by Greek Allies.

As Rankin and Reason (2008) note, educational tools and groups such as Greek Allies can be effective in the improvement of inter- and intra group relation. This signals the importance of increasing educational opportunities particularly because of the prominence of overt discrimination perpetrated by students' peer groups but also as a means to educate faculty and staff in order to avoid the discrimination perpetrated by these populations.

The data show that within the LGBTQ community is where many of the participants found help and support in their identities. Participants noted that the LGBTQ Resource Center is a place where community gathers and organizes as well as a place where students find their chosen family at MU. This is consistent with assertions about

LGBTQ centers as community building and support spaces made by Sanlo et al (2002). The sources of particularly peer support were often the heartfelt conversations and it is clear that those within the LGBTQ community often lean on each other for help. Perhaps this community contributes to students' sense of belonging at MU and is a factor in the persistence of the participants (Tinto, 1993).

Participants spoke favorably of the departments of Sociology, Women's and Gender Studies, and Health Professions. Each of these departments was mentioned due to the curricular content being particularly social justice oriented or because the pedagogies employed by professors fostered respectful dialogue and civility. All participants who had taken courses in Women's and Gender Studies noted the inclusivity of the classroom as well as the great educational opportunities provided by this department. This highlights the particular importance of either infusing social justice oriented and inclusive pedagogies into a broader range of departments or creating a diversity course requirement for students. The fact that so many of the participants noted that they attained significant personal growth through Women's and Gender Studies courses support the claims of Chang et al (2004), Gurin et al (2004), and Pascarella et al (2001) that having significant diversity experiences creates positive outcomes for all students. The data show that participants are in support of a diversity course requirement, which was not approved by the faculty just last year.

Given the recommendations of the participants, one can infer that they believe the prominence of discrimination at MU is largely due to the lack of educational opportunities available to students, faculty, and staff on LGBTQ issues. Participants also note the lack of emphasis placed on diversity initiatives by the administration. This was

evidenced by a lack of mandatory diversity trainings and education-focused initiatives that engage the entire campus. In addition, based on the recommendations for improvement asserted by the participants, one can also infer that the lack of attention given towards LGBTQ students and their struggles by the administration may leave these students feeling forgotten and unimportant.

This speaks to the need for institutional decision-makers to better articulate their commitment to creating a positive and healthy environment particularly for LGBTQ-identified students. As Tonya points out in the previous section, a racially charged incident particularly targeted at the black community at MU will elicit a response from the administration. For example, last year racially charged graffiti was found outside of Hatch Hall on MU's campus (Hibsch, 2011). From this incident came a response from Chancellor Brady Deaton; a statement of condemnation of racism by the Council of Deans; a campus-wide outcry; and "One Mizzou," a campaign to promote diversity on campus (Hibsch, 2011b). As Tonya noted, "I hear about big problems that happen here to one of my queer community people, I don't hear a reaction like that from the Chancellor. I don't hear a reaction like that from the Board of Curators, you know?" By reacting so differently to incidents targeted at different communities, the administration at MU is establishing a hierarchy of oppression where the participants feel like the black community is at the top of the hierarchy and LGBTQ students are at the bottom.

We can also see this hierarchy in the resources allocated to the offices that serve these populations. The Gaines/Oldham black cultural center has its own building and three full time staff members, while the LGBTQ resource center has a relatively small office in the back corner of the basement of the Student Center, one full time staff

member and shares an administrative assistant with three other offices. These disparities in funding, physical space, as well as the difference in the reaction of the administration and the larger campus community to incidents of overt discrimination may add to the feeling that there is a hierarchy of oppression that is supported by key policy makers at MU. While some participants spoke of the important work the Chancellor's Diversity Initiative engages in, many also stated that this work is not enough. The lack of domestic partner benefits for university employees, the omission of gender identity/expression from the campus nondiscrimination policy, the lack of a preferred name policy, as well as the lack of a gender neutral housing policy all also speak to the messages key decision-makers at MU are relaying to the campus community about their commitment to fostering a safe and healthy environment for LGBTQ-identified individuals.

It is clear from the data that the external Columbia community can also be particularly hostile towards LGBTQ-identified individuals. Participants expressed experiencing discrimination downtown and off campus. Although the City of Columbia recently added gender identity and expression protection to their city ordinance (Pearl, 2011), the fact that it is situated in the middle of a particularly conservative area of the country impacts the political climate of the campus as well as the surrounding area.

The recommendations the participants give largely influence the recommendations I assert here. The continued commitment of the administration to campus climate assessment is imperative to continuing to improve the climate for LGBTQ undergraduate students. It is clear from my data as well as the literature that initiating policy change is an important first step to improving climate. My recommendations are as follows:

- Key decision-makers must extend basic protections to transgender and genderqueer students by including gender identity/expression in the system-wide nondiscrimination policy.
- Domestic partner benefits must be extended to university employees in order to retain and recruit faculty and staff members who may be LGBTQ-identified and who represent potential support for students.
- A preferred name policy must be implemented so students like Elizabeth can change their names on internal university documents.
- Gender-neutral housing must be an available option, especially considering the live-on requirement for most first-year students.
- There must be an effort on campus to continue to increase the number of gender-neutral/family friendly restrooms.
- Key decision-makers must establish a commitment to educational outreach to all campus community members. This means creating quality available educational programs on both LGBQ as well as transgender issues that reach a broad audience.
- Establish mandatory yearly diversity training for all employees of the institution including faculty and staff.
- Better fund LGBTQ diversity initiatives including the Chancellor's Diversity Initiatives and the LGBTQ Resource Center in order that these entities can increase their educational reach to a diversity of communities on campus.

- Institute a mandatory diversity course for all students to complete in order to graduate. Ensure that the diversity requirement courses focus on issues of social justice and increase awareness of diversity issues.
- In the future, allow students to self-identify as LGBTQ on admissions form and track that data to ensure LGBTQ students are persisting and succeeding.
- Key decision makers on campus need to work to break down the institutionalized hierarchy of oppression by ensuring that the voices of LGBTQ-identified students are heard and their concerns taken seriously.

I recommend a university task force be created to address the myriad issues that arose during the research. A policy brief outlining the findings of this study and providing recommendations would be a useful way to convey this important information to key decision-makers within the University of Missouri as well as the Missouri System. Many of these recommendations are geared toward high-level administrators, but working within small areas of influence (e.g., individual faculty, staff, and student affairs units, etc) also can greatly influence the campus climate.

Extant research clearly states that fostering intentionally diverse spaces and creating a healthy and welcoming environment for minority college students creates positive in and post-college learning outcomes for all students (Bowman, 2011; Chang et al., 2004; Denson & Bowman, 2011; Gurin et al., 2004; Pascarella et al., 2001; Thoma & Ladewig, 1993). In addition, a students' negative perception of the campus climate can decrease their commitment and sense of belonging to an institution and therefore their persistence at that institution (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Tinto,

1993) as well as have a negative impact on their academic experiences and intellectual development (Cabrera et al., 1999). Considering these data and the existing literature surrounding campus climate and student outcomes, it is imperative that these recommendations be given dedication and resources in order to attempt to improve the experiences of all students at the University of Missouri.

Direction for Future Research

These data have uncovered multiple future directions for this research. Most interesting and one of the least explored is the relationship between the LGBTQ and Greek communities on campus. Participants identified Greek Town as an uncomfortable place more frequently than any other space on campus and identified Greek students as perpetrating overt discrimination more than any other group. I would like to explore this relationship further at the University of Missouri and compare that relationship with those on other comparable campuses. I would like to collaborate with campus administrators to explore possible solutions to the contentious relationships between these two communities. I am also interested in identifying and speaking with LGBTQ-identified students who did not persist at the University of Missouri and exploring why these students discontinued their education at MU. This would help to further identify areas of campus that can be improved. Finally, I would be interested in exploring factors that makes spaces safe for LGBTQ-identified students at the University of Missouri in order to try to replicate those factors in more spaces on campus.

Conclusion

The findings presented here add voices and detail to the quantitative campus climate data collected at the University of Missouri in 2009. We now have a more complete understanding of the experiences of LGBTQ-identified undergraduate students so we can better identify sources of discrimination and discomfort. We are also able to identify places these students go to for help and support, which can possibly help us identify factors that help create safe spaces. Additionally, with this information I identified specific action steps that can be taken to begin to better the campus climate for LGBTQ-identified students, which I list previously.

As shown in the literature, students who perceive an accepting campus climate are more likely to have more positive outcomes in college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Whitt et al., 2001). Furthermore, those students who perceive a hostile campus climate are more likely to have additional negative outcomes (Cabrera et al., 2003; Terenzini et al., 1999). I have shown that participants often experience a hostile climate at MU and have given suggestions on how to potentially improve the climate for these students. It is now up to us as an educational community to take action to ensure improvement in this area.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Please pick a pseudonym for yourself. This is to protect your identity by keeping it confidential.

1. Can you tell me a little about your self?
 - a. I want to make sure I am referring to you with the correct pronouns. Which pronouns do you use?
 - b. What is your sexual orientation and gender identity?
 - c. What race or ethnicity do you identify as?
 - d. How long have you been here at Mizzou?
2. How do you feel about being a part of Mizzou?
3. Can you share your coming out story to your family or friends?
 - a. Who are you out to? Who are you not out to?
 - i. What has your experience been like as an out person on campus?
 - ii. What has your experience been like as an out person in the classroom?
 - b. How important is your LGBTQ identity to you? Do you feel like you are a part of an LGBTQ community at MU? Do you have friends who are LGBTQ identified?
 - c. What activities are you involved with on campus other than academics?
 - i. Are you out with these groups? What have your experiences been like as an out person in your extracurricular activities?
4. In 2009, the University of Missouri distributed a campus climate survey. In this survey, the LGBTQ population rated the campus climate more hostile of any other group on campus.
 - a. Do you agree with this? If so, why? If not, why not?
 - b. Have you personally ever been the victim of an instance of harassment discrimination on or off campus that you thought was motivated by your sexual orientation and/or gender expression? Can you tell me about it? Where were you? Who was discriminating against you? How did it make you feel?
 - c. Have you witnessed but not necessarily been the victim of harassment or discrimination that you thought was motivated by somebody's sexual orientation and/or gender expression?
5. Can you describe places and times when/where you feel or have felt very comfortable on campus? Are there places and times when/where you feel or have felt uncomfortable on campus?
6. Do you feel like you have been outed on campus ever? What was that like? How did it make you feel?

7. What advice would you give to a student considering coming to Mizzou who is LGBTQ identified?
8. If you were to write a memo to the administration at MU asking for or demanding something be done to better the climate for the LGBTQ student population, what would write?
9. What do you see as areas for improvement on campus? What would you like to see happen?
10. Do you know of any professors or classes or programs that are doing it right? Why do you feel like this? How do you think this class/program/professor is creating a positive climate for LGBTQ identified students?

Appendix B: Informed Consent for Research Involvement

PROJECT TITLE: A Qualitative Analysis of the Campus Climate for Self-Identified LGBTQ Undergraduate Students at the University of Missouri

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Garrett Hoffman in the Education, Leadership, and Policy Analysis Department at the University of Missouri. **Your participation in this study is voluntary.**

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: This study seeks to understand how self-identified lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer undergraduate students at the University of Missouri perceive the campus climate.

TIME: Interviews will last between 60 and 120 minutes depending on how in depth you choose to answer the questions.

PROCEDURES: You will be asked for your consent for your involvement in the study. You will then be asked a series of open-ended questions which you may answer if you so choose.

POTENTIAL RISKS/BENEFITS: Foreseeable risks of your participation are minimal. You will be asked to self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer and may be asked about potentially difficult experiences or situations. This study can provide society, educators and student affairs professionals at the University of Missouri with experiences and concrete examples of how to improve the campus climate for LGBTQ undergraduate students on campus.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your identity will not be revealed in any documents, transcripts, or presentations. The following steps will be taken to protect your identity and confidentiality.

1. Personal identifying information will be eliminated from the transcripts and any reporting of the data.
2. You may choose an alias to further protect your identity.
3. You may refuse to answer any question at any time.
4. Audio recordings will be password protected and accessible only to the investigator.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL: Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without recourse. You may refuse to answer any question and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS: Garrett Hoffman is a graduate student at the University of Missouri in the Department of Educational, Leadership and Policy

Analysis. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Garrett at gdrk9@mail.missouri.edu or Garrett's thesis advisor, Jeni Hart at hartjl@missouri.edu.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS: You may contact the Campus Institutional Review Board if you have questions about your rights, concerns, complaints or comments as a research participant. You can contact the Campus Institutional Review Board directly by telephone or email to voice or solicit any concerns, questions, input or complaints about the research study.

483 McReynolds Hall
Columbia, MO 65211
E-Mail: umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu
Website: <http://www.research.missouri.edu/cirb/index.htm>
573-882-9585

RESOURCES: If this interview brings up issues or if you would like to chat about this interview further, here is a list of support services on campus for your utilization.

MU Counseling Center

119 Parker Hall
Columbia, MO 65211
573.882.6601

Women's Center

G108 MU Student Center
Columbia, MO 65211
573.882.6621

LGBTQ Resource Center

G225 MU Student Center
Columbia MO 65211
573.884.7750
lgbtq@missouri.edu

Multicultural Center

G107 MU Student Center
Columbia, MO 65211
573.882.7152

Appendix C: Recruiting Script

Hello,

My name is Garrett Hoffman, and I am a graduate student and researcher at the University of Missouri. I am asking for your help in spreading the word about a research study I am conducting concerning how self-identified lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or queer (LGBTQ) undergraduate students at the University of Missouri experience the campus climate. This research will be used to help educators, administrators, and instructors understand LGBTQ student experiences and potentially help to facilitate the creation of a more welcoming and inclusive environment for LGBTQ students on campus. This project is building on the University of Missouri's campus climate survey conducted in 2009.

I am seeking self-identified LGBTQ undergraduate students at the University of Missouri to participate in my study. Participation is completely **voluntary** and will include an interview lasting approximately one hour. You may withdraw from the study without penalty at any time and you may refuse to answer any question and still remain in the study.

My motivation for conducting this study stems from my belief that every student has the right to live, learn, and grow in an environment that is safe, comfortable, inclusive, welcoming and values diversity. I also believe that it is the responsibility of the institution and its community members to facilitate the creation of such an environment. I am seeking to investigate how LGBTQ undergraduate students experience the campus climate at the University of Missouri and use the data to identify potential areas in need of improvement on our campus and as a catalyst to affect change on campus, if warranted.

If you have any questions or wish to see our IRB approval letter, please e-mail me at gdrhk9@mail.missouri.edu . I hope to hear from you soon.

With care,

Garrett Hoffman
University of Missouri

Appendix D: Table of Participants

Name	Year	Age	Sexual Orientation	Gender Identity	Race
Marty	Junior	23	Gay	Man	White
Tonya	Junior	20	Queer	Femme	White
Rita	Sophomore	20	Lesbian	Woman	White
Phil	Junior	20	Gay	Man	White
Elizabeth	Senior	23	Asexual	Transwoman	White
Michael	Junior	20	Queer	Transman	Biracial
David	Senior	22	Gay	Man	White
Robert	Junior	20	Gay	Man	Asian
Chris	Junior	20	Gay	Man	Black

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