An Assessment of Campus Climate in Sexual Minority College Students: Recommendations for Creating an Inclusive Campus

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AN ASSESSMENT OF CAMPUS CLIMATE IN SEXUAL MINORITY COLLEGE STUDENTS: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CREATING AN INCLUSIVE CAMPUS

by

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B.A., Athens State University, 2007

A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Sociology and Family Studies
College of Arts and Sciences

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH ALABAMA
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2016

Approved by:
Major Professor
Dr. Amber Paulk
Abstract

While several studies have clearly identified a link between sexual minority status and discrimination, harassment, and victimization on college campuses, less is known about sexual minority students and other indicators of campus climate. The goal of the current study was to examine the association between sexual minority status and students’ perceptions of their connection to the university, trust in the university to keep them safe, and confidence in sexual assault reporting system at their university. Contrary to the predictions, there was no significant difference between LGBTQ students and non-LGBTQ students in their connection to the university and trust in the university to keep students safe. However, LGBTQ students did report significantly lower confidence in the sexual assault reporting system at the university than non-LGBTQ students. The implications of the findings and recommendations for creating an inclusive campus climate are discussed.
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Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge my professors Drs. Amber Paulk and Andrea Hunt for their dedication to each of their students and for their tireless work in promoting the construction and support of healthy families of diverse formations. Drs. Paulk and Hunt have each demonstrated professionalism, a passion for the field of Sociology and Family Studies, and a commitment to both the UNA and the greater Shoals community. Their encouragement and faith in my potential have been sustaining. My hope is to accomplish even a small portion of all they envision for my future.
Dedication

This work is dedicated to the students of both Florence High School’s Gay-Straight Alliance and the University of North Alabama’s Student Alliance for Equality. The young people involved in these organizations have demonstrated a commendable capacity to accept one another’s differences and have shown unfaltering support for each other. I am hopeful for the future of our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth. They are an inspiration to me both personally and professionally.
I. INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

Contemporary research findings clearly identify a link between sexual minority status and discrimination, harassment, and victimization on college campuses (Rankin, 2004; Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010; Yost & Gilmore, 2011). Less is known, however, about sexual minority students and other indicators of campus climate. Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 requires that all schools receiving federal funds prohibit discrimination based on sex, and its scope was subsequently expanded to include sexual orientation and gender identity. While not yet mandated, all universities receiving federal funds have been encouraged to conduct campus climate surveys in order to demonstrate they are meeting federal guidelines. (The White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, 2014).

In its First Report, the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault (2014) released a toolkit to guide universities in the development of campus climate surveys which, in part, included measures designed to assess students’ (a) connection to the university - how much students feel valued, respected, and a sense of belonging at their university; (b) trust in the university to keep students safe - how much students trust that their university is doing all it can to keep them safe and trust that if an incident were to occur that their university would handle it appropriately; and (c) confidence in the sexual assault reporting system at the university – how confident students are that if they reported a sexual assault that the report would be taken seriously and that perpetrators would be held accountable.
The importance of this connection, trust, and confidence is highlighted by research examining how the experiences and outcomes of students are impacted by their campus environments. A number of studies, including the National School Climate Survey (which focuses exclusively on high school students), have examined campus climate from the perspective of sexual minority college students and have netted consistent findings indicating that these students report significantly more discrimination, harassment, and victimization than their non-sexual minority peers (Rankin, 2004; Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010; Yost & Gilmore, 2011). Rankin (2004) conducted a multi-institutional survey that included over 1,000 sexual minority college students. Nearly 30% of respondents reported experiencing harassment, 20% reported worrying about their physical safety, and, as a result, over one-third of the sample reported that they believed it was necessary to hide their sexual minority status on their campuses. In conjunction with the non-profit organization, Campus Pride, Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, and Frazer (2010) conducted the most comprehensive study of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) college students to date. The national study surveyed over 3,000 sexual minority college students and found that they were twice as likely as their peers to be the target of derogatory comments and seven more times likely to report the harassment they received was based on their sexual minority status.

**Purpose and Research Questions**

Given that LGBTQ students routinely report more discrimination, harassment, and victimization than their peers (Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010; Yost & Gilmore,
2011), it is important to understand how this disenfranchisement is associated with other indicators of campus climate. The goal of the current study was to examine the association between sexual minority status and students’ perceptions of their connection to the university, trust in the university to keep them safe, and confidence in sexual assault reporting system at their university. Since research has consistently found that sexual minority students are more likely to feel disenfranchised than their non-sexual minority peers (Ottenritter, 2012), it was hypothesized that LGBTQ students would report lower levels of connection, trust, and confidence in their university than non-LGBTQ students.
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Campus Climate

What is campus climate?

Campus climate has been defined as “the cumulative attitudes, behaviors, and standards of employees and students concerning access for, inclusion of, and level of respect for individual and group needs, abilities, and potential” (Rankin, 2005, p. 17), and alternatively as the “metaphorical temperature gauge” through which we assess whether a college provides a welcoming and “receptive atmosphere,” or, a “cool and alienating learning environment” (Cress, 2008, p. 96). Over the past 50 years, extensive research has been devoted to understanding the impact of campus climate on student success both inside and outside the classroom (Brown, Clarke, Gortmaker, & Robinson-Keilig, 2004). With the “traditional” student of the past (i.e., white, male, recently out of high school, from an educated middle-class family, living on campus and attending full-time) giving way to students largely from nontraditional backgrounds on many campuses, there is an increased focus on institutions’ provision of enriching environments in order to maximize success for all students (Rendon, 1994).

On Transition and Skill Acquisition

Increasingly, universities are providing a variety of services and programming designed to assist students with adjustment to college life (Liu & Chang, 2014). How students navigate this transition can be a harbinger of their future successes or failures, making the campus experience a vital component of the students’ dedication to “reaffirm their initial goals and
commitments” (Fischer, 2007, p. 126). Students’ self-concepts and ability to navigate the campus experience are strengthened by an environment that supports their ability to manage time and priorities (Hurtado et al., 2007); these skills are associated with “perceptions of… academic control...[and] optimism”—leading to improved social and academic outcomes (Filipkowski et al., 2016, p. 726).

In addition to minority statuses of some kind, many students arrive on campus with other underlying factors which impact their adjustment and, ultimately, their experience of the campus environment. Of importance to note, students who have experienced adversity prior to arriving on campus are more likely to exhibit a number of poor health indicators and risky behaviors including physical symptoms related to stress, the use of tobacco products, and sexual activity outside of a committed relationship (Filipkowski, Heron, & Smyth, 2016). According to Smedley, Myers, and Harrell (1993), life event stressors contribute to psychological distress among first year college students, particularly those who identify as a minority. However, research indicates that transition programming that focuses on problem solving skills and coping mechanisms have been successful in decreasing both vulnerable students’ perceptions of stress and participation in risky behaviors (Filipkowski, Heron, & Smith, 2016).

The Importance of Involvement

Studies have found a strong association between students’ engagement in campus activities and connection to their institutions (Ottenritter, 2012; Wang, 2014). These findings are consistent with Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model (1979) in which individuals’ exchanges with
their (multiple) environments help them to derive meaning from the world around them. Whether through interactions with faculty, involvement with student organizations, or participation in collaborative learning activities, Ottenritter (2012) asserts that students are more likely to perceive their experiences as positive and to stay enrolled when they invest time and energy in the campus community.

Foubert and Grainger (2006) studied the effects of involvement in clubs and organizations on student development and collected data from students in their freshmen year and again during their senior year. Their findings indicate that engagement has a particularly strong impact on students in the early part of their studies with benefits evident in “academic autonomy and… lifestyle planning,” relative to their peers who were less engaged (p. 178). Students who demonstrated motivation to engage with the campus community were found to fare better academically, with identifying a “purpose,” and with development of cultural competency (p. 180). Understanding the association between early campus involvement and student outcomes, including retention, many universities encourage first year students to participate in student organizations (McCannon & Bennett, 1996).

**Perception of Climate**

Research indicates that students’ perceptions of campus climate have been associated with a variety of student outcomes, including academic achievement, social adjustment, and retention (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Rankin et al., 2016; Reason, Terenzini, & Domingo, 2006). Kimmel (2016) identifies bullying—specifically with regard to acts of sexual
discrimination and aggression (both verbal and physical)—as a primary contributor to “hostile (campus) environments” which has been consistently associated with increased student distress (p. 2010). Title IX legislation requires that universities protect students from harassment and discrimination and demands that bullying no longer be viewed as a rite of passage. Designed to address behaviors that create a hostile learning environment, Title IX disciplinary action can be taken when it is deemed that incidents have “limit[ed] a student’s ability to participate in or benefit from” their educational and/or extracurricular activities (p. 2020).

The college campus provides both nurturing and sustaining environments for the students who live on and study in them and, therefore, must acknowledge the impact of the environment on “shaping behavior” of students, faculty, and staff alike (Ottenritter, 2012, p. 532). In doing so, it is important for campus leadership to acknowledge the power in the use of language and how it sets the tone for both acceptance of a student’s own identity and for receptiveness of others/peers (Ottenritter, 2012). Importantly, the perceived climate is indicative of the level of support students can expect from instructors—a factor that is correlated with positive self-esteem and “ameliorat[ion]” of hostile experiences (Woodford, Kulick, & Atteberry, 2015, p. 75).

**Diversity in the Campus Community**

Reason (2008) tells us that many institutions have adopted a viewpoint that valued the role diversity plays in the creation of a positive campus climate. She asserts that diverse cultural representation among the campus population has an “inherent… positive value” in the creation of a “healthy, vibrant” environment (p. 262). Meanwhile, Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen,
and Allen (1998) assert that the lack of representation from diverse populations on a campus has a negative effect on the “psychological and behavioral climate” as it leads to the perpetuation of stereotyping and discriminatory attitudes (p. 3). Furthermore, Brewer and Pierce’s (2006) research on the impact of social identity complexity (which involves having membership in multiple groups) indicates that having varied experiences leads to increased tolerance for those unlike ourselves. Therefore, a diverse campus community with many opportunities for interaction can breed inclusivity and diminish prejudicial attitudes and behaviors.

Campus Climate and Sexual Minorities

Rates of depression, substance abuse, and suicide are known to be elevated among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, or questioning (LGBTQ) individuals in comparison to their heterosexual, cisgender counterparts (King et al., 2008; Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer, & Boesen, 2014; Mereisha, O’Cleirighb, & Bradford, 2014). Sexual minorities report lower levels of self-esteem and higher levels of depression than non-sexual minorities (Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer, & Boesen, 2014) and they are at an increased risk for substance abuse and suicide (Mereisha, O’Cleirigh, & Bradford, 2014). In a meta-analysis of 25 studies, King et al. (2008) found that substance abuse was 1.5 times higher among lesbians, gays, and bisexuals (LGB), and LGB individuals were twice as likely as heterosexuals to attempt suicide.

Several studies have found an association between increased rates of depression, substance abuse, and suicide among sexual minorities and their disproportionate experiences with victimization and discrimination at school relative to their heterosexual, cisgender peers.
(Almeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar, & Azrael, 2009; Martin-Storey & Crosnoe, 2012; Russell, Ryan, Toomey, & Diaz, 2011). Since 1999, the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) has conducted the biennial National School Climate Survey in order to assess the incidence and prevalence of bullying and harassment directed at LGBTQ students and examining the impact of hostile school climates on LGBTQ youth. The 2013 survey had nearly 8,000 respondents ages 13 – 21 from all 50 U.S. states who attended a K-12 school during the previous year (Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer, & Boesen, 2014). Of the students who identified as LGBTQ in the 2013 survey, 64% reported hearing homophobic language frequently at school and half reported being subjected to anti-gay remarks from their teachers and/or school staff. Seventy-five percent (75%) of LGBT students reported experiencing verbal harassment (e.g., slurs, threats), 36% reported physical harassment (e.g., pushed, shoved), and 16% reported being physically assaulted (e.g., punched, kicked).

Contemporary research on the effects of campus climate on the adjustment of LGBTQ college students indicates that there is a public perception that campuses are a “bastion… of diversity and acceptance,” but that minority students still find them to be “hostile” and rife with anti-LGBTQ attitudes (Brown, Clarke, Gortmaker, & Robinson-Keilig, 2004; Yost & Gilmore, 2011). While there is movement as a society away from traditional heterosexism in which sexual minorities are viewed as perverse or immoral, there is a new wave of contemporary heterosexism in which a message is conveyed that the gays are demanding special privileges and disproportionate attention to their struggles (Brown, Clarke, Gortmaker, & Robinson-Keilig,
Whether blatant or subtle, the effects of both traditional and contemporary heterosexisms are similar in that they promote stigmatization and discriminatory behaviors leading to “psychiatric distress and other negative outcomes” for LGBTQ students (p. 520).

The tone set by a campus climate can give permission for harassment and discrimination against LGBTQ students to occur and, in doing so, have a significant impact on the adjustment to college and the pursuit of personal, academic, and career goals (Walls, Kane, & Wisneski, 2010). Many LGBTQ students and university employees (faculty and staff) report a perceived presence of homophobia on their campuses (Nagoshi et al., 2008). Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, and Allen (1998) indicate that this type of hostility can be linked with negative academic outcomes for minority students as evidenced by poor grades, low test performance, and attrition. According to Kosciw (2004), this perception of a negative atmosphere often leads to missing of classes or entire days of instruction for fear of, or, in direct reaction to discriminatory treatment. In addition to lessening the likelihood of successful program completion, the resulting “academic disengagement” has negative consequences for the overall development of LGBTQ students (Hong, Woodford, Long, & Renn, 2016).

In the US, sexual minority students are significantly more likely than non-sexual minority students to experience discrimination and harassment based on their sexual and/or gender identity (Tillapaugh, 2016) with as many as 75% experiencing verbal abuse and 25% reporting threats of physical violence (D’Augelli, 1992). As a result, LGBTQ students are more likely to report “fear and hypervigilance” during their transition to college (D’Augelli, 1992; Eliason,
LGBTQ students often seek support from their fellow students, as well as faculty and staff members, to cope with the strain of discrimination and victimization. Members of the campus community, however, vary widely in their ability to provide counsel and compassion. Research indicates that transgender students, in particular, have found faculty members are generally less understanding than student affairs staff members and that females are more empathetic than males (McKinney, 2005). Furthermore, upperclassmen are reported to be more compassionate toward LGBTQ students than are freshmen who are new to the campus community (Worthen, 2011).

Several studies have found an association between the increased rates of depression, substance abuse, and suicide among sexual minorities and their disproportionate experiences with victimization and discrimination at school (Almeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar, & Azrael, 2009; Martin-Storey & Crosnoe, 2012; Russell, Ryan, Toomey, & Diaz, 2011). A supportive environment, one which encourages acceptance of one’s true self, is crucial to reduction of self-hatred and harm. According to Sterling Honig (2015), often school/college programs and interventions are reactive to crisis situations with very little attention paid to prevention of negative outcomes by focusing on the creation of a positive and inclusive climate for LGBTQ students. She reports findings, however, that goals are beginning to shift away from merely “identifying” bullies/problems toward crafting safe environments for all students (p. 21).

Negative messages about sexual and/or gender minorities or the absence of inclusive policies and programs can be damaging to sexual minority students’ academic and personal
growth (Ottenritter, 2012). Derogatory language that perpetuates heterosexist/anti-gay attitudes come in many forms—the callous statement, “that’s so gay!” is used frequently by people who may, or may not, mean to propagate heterosexist/anti-gay attitudes (Woodford, Howell, Silverschanz, & Yu, 2012). Engrained in our culture’s vernacular, this offensive statement has been described as “low-level, tolerated background noise” in school/college settings (p. 430). Though it is sometimes used as an in-crowd “expression of empowerment,” it is more largely viewed as a microaggression (defined as a “subtle insult… (verbal, non-verbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of [minority status], often automatically or unconsciously” by Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2001, p. 60) against students of differing sexual orientation. The effects of hearing this and other more blatant negative messages can lead to psychological distress and the internalization of stigma and rejection. Research indicates that this “nonassaultive heterosexist harassment” is a precursor to reduced scores on assessments of mental health for its victims (Woodford, et al., 2012). Unlike racial slurs which carry a taboo, the authors assert that this type of verbal assault is often tolerated and lends to an unwelcoming or hostile environment.

The absence of inclusive language, policies, and practices within campus communities can be detrimental to student outcomes in similar ways as the presence of outright negative messages about sexual minorities (Ottenritter, 2012). Stressing the importance of student retention, Ottenritter emphasizes the significance of an environment which supports and encourages constructive attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors toward LGBTQ individuals to maximize positive developmental outcomes. Conveying positive messages to sexual minority
students helps to bolster in them a belief in their abilities to “confidently navigate their way in the world” and feel that they are not simply tolerated but are embraced and empowered (p. 534).
III. METHODS

Procedures

Participants were recruited from a four-year public regional university in the South East. Prior to data collection, the university’s Institutional Review Board approved all research protocols. The online survey was developed and administered through Qualtrics, which enabled all data to be collected anonymously. As an additional measure to maintain anonymity of respondents, the feature in Qualtrics that collects IP address information was disabled.

All students at the university were sent a link to the online survey through the university’s email system. A link to the survey was also posted on the university’s Homepage, and its Facebook and Twitter pages. Notifications were also posted at key locations on campus. All individuals who clicked on the survey link were provided with more information about the survey and their rights as a participant. In order to participate, individuals had to provide consent before entering the survey. At the end of the survey students were presented with the opportunity to enter a drawing for one of the following prizes: 1 $50 gift card to the university bookstore; 2 $25 gift cards to a coffee chain; and 5 $10 gift cards for university dining. Students were also given the opportunity to print a certificate of completion to present to instructors who were offering extra credit for participation in the survey.

Participants

A total of 979 surveys were completed. With regards to gender, participants were asked “How do you identify?” and asked to select one of the following options: male; female;
transwoman; transman; or other. If participants indicated “other” they were asked to please specify. As for sexual orientation, participants were asked “Which of the following sexual orientations do you most identify with?” and asked to select from one of the following options: heterosexual; homosexual; bisexual; questioning; or other. If participants indicated other they were asked to please specify.

When asked to identify the gender that they most closely identified with, 73% of the sample identified as female and 26% identified as male. One percent of the sample ($N = 8$) identified as transgender or other. Five of those individuals identified as a transwoman, one identified as gender queer, one identified as intersex, and one chose not to specify (See Table 1). When asked to identify the sexual orientation that they most closely identified with 91.4% identified as heterosexual. From the overall sample, 3.8% identified as homosexual ($N=32$), 3.4% identified as bisexual ($N=29$), 0.8% identified as questioning ($N=7$), and 0.6 indicated other ($N=5$). Of the participants who indicated other, two individuals identified as asexual, two identified as pansexual/omnisexual, and one indicated that ‘love is love’ (See Table 2).

While the following demographic variables were not included in the analyses, they are presented to provide the reader with general information regarding the sample. The mean age of participants was 23.1 years old ($SD=7.29$). However, since there was such a wide range of ages reported (16 – 64 years old), the median age of participants (21 years old) may be a more accurate representation of the typical age of participants in our sample (See Table 3). The class standing of participants was as follows: 20.2% freshman, 17.4% sophomore, 26.4% junior,
29.0% senior, 6.6% graduate student, and 0.4% special student (See Table 4). On average, participants reported attending the university for 4.79 semesters ($SD=3.69$, See Table 5). In terms of race/ethnicity, 74% of participants identified as Caucasian, 17% identified as African-American, 6.5% identified as bi- or multiracial, 1.5% identified as American Indian, 0.8% identified as Asian, and 0.2% identified as Pacific Islander (See Table 6). In a separate question, 3.2% identified as Hispanic/Latino (See Table 7). This racial composition approximates well the racial makeup of the University.

Table 1. Participant Demographics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Characteristics</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td><strong>Gender Identity</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>63.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transwoman</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>979</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sexual Orientation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>774</td>
<td>79.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexual</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
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<td>3.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
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<td>.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial Identity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
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<td>.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>14.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Identity in response to: Are you Hispanic/Latino?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>979</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Table 2. Participant Age.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>23.08</td>
<td>7.285</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. 239 participants declined to specify age and, therefore, are not included in the table.*
Table 3. Participant Semesters of Attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semesters of Attendance</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>855</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>3.685</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. 124 participants declined to specify length of attendance and, therefore, are not included in the table.

Measures

In order to compare LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ students on measures of campus climate, a new variable was created to reflect sexual minority status using the variables of gender and sexual orientation. Participants who identified as transgender, homosexual, bisexual, questioning, or other were coded as 1. All other participants were coded as 0. Within the current sample, 9.1% of participants identified as LGBTQ and 90.9% identified as non-LGBTQ.

Campus Climate

In the current study, three indicators of campus climate were assessed: connection to the university, trust in the university to keep students safe, and confidence in the sexual assault reporting system at the university. The measures used to assess each indicator are detailed below. The full scale can be found in Appendix A.

Connection to the university. Connection to the university was measured using the School Connectedness Scale (McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002), which assesses participants’ perceptions of belonging and value on their universities on a Likert scale of 1 – 4 (1
= strongly disagree; 4 = strongly agree). The scale contains 9 items, and sample items include: “I feel valued in the classroom/learning environment,” “I feel like I am a part of this college/university,” and “I feel close to people on this campus.” The mean for the School Connectedness Scale was a 3.30 (SD = .51) and the alpha coefficient was .91.

**Trust in the university to keep students safe.** Trust in the university to keep students safe was measured using the Trust in the College Support System Scale (Sulkowski, 2011), assesses participants’ perceptions of their university’s ability to keep students safe and respond effectively if an incident were to occur on a Likert scale from 1 – 4 (1 = strongly disagree; 4 = strongly agree). The scale contains 6 items, and sample items include: “My college does enough to protect the safety of students,” and “College officials handle incidents in a fair and responsible manner.” The mean for the Trust in the College Support System Scale was a 2.78 (SD = .47) and the alpha coefficient was .74.

**Confidence in the sexual assault reporting system at the university.** Confidence in the sexual assault reporting system at the university was measured using the Department of Defense Equal Opportunity Climate Survey, which assesses participants’ perceptions of how their university would respond to a student reporting a sexual assault on a Likert scale of 1 – 4 (1 = not likely at all; 4 = very likely). The scale contains 12 items, and sample items include: “The university would take the report seriously,” and “The university would take corrective action against the offender.” The mean for the Trust in the College Support System Scale was a 3.20 (SD=.50) and the alpha coefficient was .83.
Analysis

A MANOVA was conducted to determine if LGBTQ students differed from non-LGBTQ students on measures of campus climate (See Table 8). Although the groups were very unequal in size, MANOVA is robust against homoscedasticity assumption violations (Braver, MacKinnon, & Page, 2003). Preliminary tests for normality, linearity, and homogeneity of variance-covariance were conducted. The Box’s $M$ value was 13.04 with a $p$-value of <.05, which is significant based on the guideline developed by Huberty and Petoskey (2000) of $p$<.005. Therefore, Pillai’s trace was reported, because it provides the most conservative $F$ statistic and is considered by many statisticians to be the most powerful and robust multivariate test (Carey 1998; Olson 1976).
IV. QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Prior to testing the hypotheses, bivariate correlations were conducted. There was a large, positive correlation between trust in the university and confidence in the sexual reporting system ($r = .562, p < .001$). There was a medium, positive correlation between connection to the university and trust in the university ($r = .489, p < .001$) and medium, positive correlation between connection to the university and confidence in the sexual reporting system at the university ($r = .388, p < .001$).

The results indicated that LGBTQ status was a significant predictor of campus climate [Pillai’s trace = .019, $F (3, 776) = 5.03, p < .01$]. The univariate effects indicated that there was no difference between LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ students on the School Connectedness Scale or Trust in the College Support System Scale. However, on the Department of Defense Equal Opportunity Climate Survey, LGBTQ students ($M=3.00; SD=.59$) reported significantly lower scores than non-LGBTQ students ($M=3.22; SD=.48$), indicating that sexual minority students had significantly lower confidence in the sexual assault reporting system at the university than non-sexual minority students. The effect size was small (Cohen’s $d = .41$) but statistically significant, $F (1, 3.67) = 14.67, p < .001$. 
Table 4. Univariate Statistics Comparing LGBTQ vs. Non-LGBTQ on Connection to University, Trust in the College Support System, and Confidence in the Sexual Assault Reporting System.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>LGBTQ</th>
<th>Non-LGBTQ</th>
<th>Cohen’s d</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connection to the University</td>
<td>3.26 .56</td>
<td>3.32 .49</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust in Support System</td>
<td>2.71 .51</td>
<td>2.80 .46</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in Reporting System</td>
<td>3.00 .59</td>
<td>3.22 .48</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The means and standard deviations are from untransformed data. ***p<.01
V. CONTENT ANALYSIS

Introduction

Yost and Gilmore (2011) report that approximately half of LGBTQ college students have experienced verbal attacks/harassment. While many people downplay the effects of sex- and gender-biased language, even in subtle forms, on queer students, Woodford, et al., (2012) assert that it contributes to an “unwelcoming and exclusionary, if not outright hostile” campus environment (p. 433). The messages conveyed by universities should include words and imagery that express a commitment to diversity, setting the tone for their campus climates. This communication should make a strong statement about the institution’s mission to combat the use of discriminatory or biased language. Opportunities exist for web-based promotion of campus diversity via a number of avenues including: through description of demographics (student, faculty, and staff), through welcome statements from administration, through open publication of nondiscrimination policies, and through distinct visual images reflective of the institution’s commitment to inclusion (Hegeman, Gray Davies, & Banning, 2007).

Shin and Gulati (2011) state that “diversity is not a technical term”—most people have a general idea of what it means and, furthermore, people are able to identify when its presence is lacking within an organization (p. 5). Moreover, true diversity reflects the kind of “heterogeneity” that could be expected if a population (in our case, a campus community) was “created under ideal conditions consistent with justice, fair equality of opportunity, and adherence to anti-discrimination principles” (p. 6). In an examination of multiple universities’
websites for signs of diversity and inclusion, Boyer, Brunner, Charles, and Coleman (2006) assert that an institution’s website is a powerful tool for recruitment, retention, and relationship building. One significant finding from this study is that universities with higher scores on the diversity index (a measurement of variance among a population) were also those whose websites explicitly mentioned the presence of programs for “non-traditional” students from minority groups (p. 145). This finding suggests that advertising diversity is positively correlated with the successful creation of a diverse community. In the age of technology, universities’ websites could be considered the front line for their advertising efforts.

**Method**

Researchers found that diversity pages have the most “contradictory” content with text and images frequently presented in disagreement with one another (Boyer, Brunner, Charles, & Coleman, 2006, p. 138). These findings beg the question of whether the website of this university in the Southeastern US is using its potential to convey a positive message about the university’s dedication to inclusion and whether the words and images contained within its pages are consistent in the message they convey. Given the lack of confidence in the sexual assault reporting system among LGBTQ students as compared to their non-LGBTQ peers, an analysis was conducted of the university’s website with a focus on three key locations: the homepage and departmental pages for both the Office of Diversity and Institutional Equity (ODIE) and the university’s Title IX Office. The purpose was to examine the respective pages’ content for signs
of inclusiveness, and the presence of language and images that are both gender neutral and sensitive to the needs of the university’s LGBTQ population.

Results

In general, this university uses gender non-binary terms with near consistency across the web pages reviewed. The promotion of academic programs includes non-stereotypical images—not visual representations of gendered stereotypes surrounding the respective majors (e.g., female student in ad for STEM majors, male student in ad for Nursing majors). There is, however, a lack of visual representation for symbols associated with gender and sexuality inclusiveness (e.g., rainbow icon) and a lack of links to resources and organizations for sexual minority students. Some programming information is dated or inaccurate and there is a distinct lack of promotion of events to promote the inclusion of the campus’ LGBTQ population. Full results of the content analysis are displayed in Tables 9-11. This information is used to inform recommendations for ways to strengthen university’s web-based promotion of a diverse community on its campus.
### Observations

*Table 5. Measures of inclusiveness on the university’s Homepage.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problematic Findings</th>
<th>Missing Information</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presence of stereotypical representations of student activity participants; promotion of males as athletes and females in roles that require them to dress in ways fitting with beauty standards that could be considered polarizing (e.g., dance line outfits/hair/makeup)</td>
<td>No presence of a statement of diversity or symbols to indicate inclusion of differing gender and sexuality (e.g., rainbow icon)</td>
<td>STEM programs show gender inclusivity with both male and female students in ads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No link to or statements about diversity programming of any kind</td>
<td>Nursing programs demonstrate gender inclusivity with both male and female students in ads</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table 5. Measures of inclusiveness on the Office of Diversity webpage.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problematic Findings</th>
<th>Missing Information</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In defining diversity, gender and sexual orientation are included, but with no acknowledgement for differing gender expressions/transgender</td>
<td>No presence of symbols to indicate inclusion of differing gender and sexuality (e.g., rainbow icon)</td>
<td>Resources tab links to an extensive list of resources available locally and nationally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Diversity Plan has not been updated since 2008</td>
<td>No link to RSOs for diverse student populations (e.g., SAFE)</td>
<td>Link available to an exercise that helps the user identify and understand implicit/hidden biases held</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic information lists a number of categories—none of them are related to sexuality and gender is presented as a binary—no category for any gender identity other than male or female</td>
<td>Heritage/Awareness—no links to organizations for populations highlighted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity Calendar—no events on campus within past 60 days at time of review</td>
<td>Newsletter chronicling current activities/events has not been updated since Spring of 2014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6. Measures of inclusiveness on the Title IX Office webpage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problematic Findings</th>
<th>Missing Information</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being an Active Bystander—includes gender normative language, no reference to non-binary gender identities</td>
<td>Consent policy is clearly visible and includes no gender-biased language (note—there is a link to the State of Alabama’s Consent Policy which does contain gender-biased language)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAD—dated and inappropriate information which promotes only females as victims of violence and males as perpetrators of that violence</td>
<td>Definitions of Terms—some of the language used includes gender non-binary language (not all definitions have been updated)</td>
<td>Title IX Resource page includes gender non-binary terms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Demographic information is comprehensive—including categories for sexuality and gender minorities
VI. DISCUSSION

While it is well-documented that sexual minority college students are significantly more likely than non-sexual minorities students to experience discrimination, harassment, and victimization on college campuses (Rankin, 2004; Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010; Yost & Gilmore, 2011), less is known about sexual minority students and other indicators of campus climate. The goal of the current study was to examine the association between sexual minority status and students’ perceptions of their connection to the university, trust in the university to keep them safe, and confidence in sexual assault reporting system at their university. It was hypothesized that LGBTQ students would report lower levels of connection, trust, and confidence in their university than non-LGBTQ students.

Contrary to the predictions, there was no significant difference between LGBTQ students and non-LGBTQ students in their connection to the university and trust in the university to keep students safe. One possible explanation for this finding is that the university where data were collected has an active registered student organization on campus called the Student Alliance for Equality (SAFE; formerly the university’s Gay-Straight Alliance, or, GSA), which promotes connectedness and the establishment of positive relationships with and among those students who identify as a sexual or gender minority or as a straight ally. Fabiano, Perkins, Berkowitz, Linchenbach, and Stark (2003) define a social justice ally as a person who identifies as a member of a majority population and who “works to end oppression… through support of, and as an advocate with and for, the oppressed population” (p. 106). Previous research has found that
students who attend schools with ally programs such as GSAs are less likely to report feeling unsafe in their environment and are significantly more likely to know how to find and seek help from a supportive faculty or staff member than their counterparts attending schools without the presence of a GSA (Walls, Kane, & Wisneski, 2010). Therefore, one potential explanation of the findings is that having an active GSA-style organization on campus positively impacted LGBTQ students’ perceptions of their connection to the university and trust in the campus to keep students safe.

Another potential explanation is that LGBTQ students who felt less of a connection to the university and less trust in the campus chose not to complete the survey. Watanabe, Olson, and Falci (2016) indicate that individuals who feel disenfranchised are less likely to participate in campus climate surveys. The authors conducted an analysis of data collected from social media websites to determine the level of survey response from disenfranchised community members. Findings substantiated long-suspected claims that those with fewer social ties are less likely to participate in the research. Another notable complication in the collection of accurate data is a reluctance to truthfully disclose sexual identity even when anonymity is ensured especially among those who fit into multiple minority categories (e.g., race, ethnicity, etc.) (Kim & Fredriksen-Goldsen, 2013). The lack of disclosure of sexual and/or gender identity paired with a reluctance on the part of marginalized group members to participate in climate surveys is problematic to the generalizability of findings.
It is possible that current and future studies will be less-riddled with concerns about generalizability than past research. Macapagal, Coventry, Arbeit, Fisher, and Mustanski (2016) discovered that the majority (75.5%) of adolescent participants reported feeling comfortable answering survey questions about their sexuality and/or gender identity as long as the information was not being shared with parents (pp. 8-9). McInroy (2016) asserts that online methods for gathering data from “marginalized and hard-to-reach populations” are increasing survey participation and will continue to do so going forward, hopefully lending to more accurate representations of the LGBTQ community (p. 83). McInroy cautions that, while online surveys can provide a relatively “safe, anonymous context,” there are concerns among some researchers about the quality, ethics, and methodological soundness of this survey delivery method (p. 92).

With regard to our third predictor of campus climate and consistent with predictions, LGBTQ students reported significantly lower confidence in the sexual assault reporting system at the university compared to non-LGBTQ students. The university’s Title IX Office is charged with the task of preventing sexual discrimination and responding to incidences of sexual harassment and violence on campus. A review of their published information uncovers gender normative language in some areas of their web pages and a lack of acknowledgement for gender non-binary identities. Additionally, some of the prevention materials are dated and promote gendered stereotypes regarding perpetrators of sexual violence. This sets a tone that could fuel a distrust for the reporting system and subsequent response to incidences of sex-based violence.
Research indicates that sexual minority college students report significantly more discrimination, harassment, and victimization than their non-sexual minority peers (Rankin, 2004; Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010; Yost & Gilmore, 2011), which may result in lower confidence in the sexual assault reporting system at their universities. LGBTQ individuals are significantly more reluctant than their non-sexual minority peers to report their victimization to authorities (Jackson, Valentine, Woodward, & Malone, 2016) though they are known to experience sexual assault at similar or higher rates than non-sexual minority students (Johnson, Matthews, & Napper, 2014). Sexual assault victims have consistently identified fear of not being believed as one of the primary barriers to reporting victimization (Sable, Danis, Mauzy, & Gallagher, 2006). LGBTQ individuals may be even less likely to be believed than heterosexual, cisgender victims as a result of homophobia and/or a lack of training on how to appropriately respond to violence against sexual and gender minorities (Lev & Lev, 1999).

Limitations and Future Directions

Limitations should be taken into consideration in a review of these findings—the sample used in this study was a convenience sample and does not necessarily represent the viewpoints of all LGBTQ students present on the university’s campus. The perspectives of individuals who have chosen to leave the institution, those who are uncomfortable disclosing (even in a confidential manner) their sexuality and/or gender identity, and those who have chosen not to participate in the gathering of data are not represented. Furthermore, the data was taken at one point in time and does not represent longitudinal findings which could provide a more
representative picture of the LGBTQ population at this university with the shifting attitudes and increasing supports that accompany policy changes and new programming.

Further research should be conducted within this university setting to determine any shift in attitudes or perceptions over time with the changing of the general social climate toward the issues and concerns of the LGBTQ population. An investigation delving into the impact of existing LGBTQ supports should be conducted. Policies and programs targeted at education about the LGBTQ population and how trained allies can provide safeguards against negative mental health impacts should be implemented. The identification and assignment of personnel devoted expressly to meeting the needs and concerns of sexual and gender minority students at the university could be beneficial in bolstering outcomes and the overall retention of LGBTQ students.
VII. EXISTING RESOURCES

It is important to acknowledge the resources that are currently in place to provide support to the campus’ LGBTQ community. An important component of supportive programming is the visibility of symbols of inclusion. Katz, Federici, Ciovacco, and Cropsey (2016) assert that “mere exposure” to a symbol like one denoting the presence of Safe Zones can have a positive impact on perception of climate for the campus community at-large, not only for its LGBTQ members. While no formal initiative is yet in place to encourage the display of LGBTQ welcoming/affirming symbols at this university, it is important to note that some offices on campus are already doing so in their efforts to demonstrate inclusive missions and attitudes.

Welcoming and Affirming Offices

- **Center for Women’s Studies**—conveniently located in the heart of campus near the campus’ main library, this office promotes itself as welcoming to all and displays on its entrance and within its offices both the logo for the Human Rights Campaign (HRC; an organization whose mission is to advocate for LGBTQ equality [https://www.google.com/search?q=Human+Rights+Campaign&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8]) and the rainbow sticker (readily accepted as a symbol of affirmation for the LGBTQ community)

- **Student Counseling Services**— located a short walk from the center of campus behind the university’s laboratory school, some of its counselors also display the HRC logo and the rainbow sticker as well as affirming messages of self-acceptance in their offices.
Student Alliance for Equality (SAFE)

Mentioned earlier, the university’s Student Alliance for Equality (SAFE) is a recognized student organization that has been in existence, initially as a Gay-Straight Alliance until a name change was made in efforts to convey a more-inclusive mission, for a number of years. The group’s mission is to increase visibility for the LGBTQ student population on university’s campus and to foster positive relationships within a setting that is safe not only physically, but also mentally and emotionally. While SAFE draws a strong membership from a relatively-small student population, based on the numbers who report self-identifying at LGBTQ on campus climate surveys, not all sexual minority students are involved. Efforts should be made to identify unaddressed needs among the LGBTQ campus population and to encourage the use of existing supports.
VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Safe Zones Ally Training Program

An important component of the effort to improve campus climate and, in so doing, the experiences of its LGBTQ members is the provision of activities and organizations that offer opportunities for students to be with other sexual minorities and affirming allies. In light of current supports and this study’s findings, the chief recommendation for action is the implementation of a trained ally program like Safe Zones on this university’s campus. Programs such as this enable students, faculty, and staff to “visibly demonstrate their acceptance of LGBT[Q] people,” in part, through the display of an icon advertising signifying their achievement of ally status (Evans, 2002, p. 522).

Gender and sexuality ally training programs have been identified as a best practice in the promotion of a positive campus climate for sexual minorities (Alvarez & Schneider, 2008; Rankin, 2004). Alvarez and Schneider (2008) argue that the establishment of safe zones on college campuses is key to providing both protection for and empowerment to students, faculty, and staff with sexual orientations and/or gender identities that differ from societal norms. A study by Evans (2002) examined the impact of Safe Zones on college campus climate and found that, post-implementation, LGBTQ students reported a significant increase in the amount of support they received from members of the campus community (Evans, 2002). It is likely that, in a more inclusive environment, sexual minority students will be more confident in the sexual assault reporting system and may seek out support services with greater frequency.
Alvarez and Schneider (2008) argue that the establishment of safe zones on college campuses is key to providing both protection for and empowerment to students, faculty, and staff with sexual orientations and/or gender identities that differ from societal norms. The push in contemporary scholarship to increase the presence of ally training programs on college campuses revolves around a change in the understanding of the programs’ purposes—shifting from the prevention of negative, heterosexist climates to the active encouragement of inclusive ones. Evans’ (2002) study examining the impact of the implementation of LGBTQ Safe Zones ally training initiatives on campus climate uncovered several significant benefits for both students and for their institutions:

- Increased visibility—campus populations at-large were more aware of their LGBTQ community members and the challenges they face; increased devotion to student governing bodies’ responsibility to represent all students regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, or other minority factors
- Increased support—more frequent, open discussions of LGBTQ needs led to minority students’ self-reporting perceptions of improved support from their university communities
- Improved image—the institutions experienced decreases in negative perceptions of their policies and practices (as being overly-conservative)
- Attitude shift—both LGBTQ students and cisgender, heterosexual students (to a lesser degree) reported increasing positive attitudes toward the campus queer communities
• Affirmation—LGBTQ students felt more engaged with and connected to their campus communities; an increased sense of belonging, feelings of being valued

• Open communication—increase in honest dialogue and an ability to disclose identities; discovery that friends/roommates/faculty are allies

• Validation—even for those students whose own families had rejected or marginalized them, there were reports of an improved sense of value and worth

• Networking—LGBTQ staff and faculty found opportunities to collaborate with one another that they may not have discovered without an outward expression of support for the LGBTQ community

With regards to any possible detrimental effects, Evans reports that negative impacts surrounding the establishment of Safe Zones were minimal and primarily involved verbal harassment—a phenomenon not without presence in campus communities to begin with. Evans’ work gives empirical validity to the importance of providing safe, inclusive spaces on college campuses for LGBTQ students.

**University Web Page**

While an examination of the three chosen areas of the university’s website (the homepage, the Office of Diversity and Institutional Equity, and the Title IX Office) finds that the institution is promoting a message of inclusion and diversity, that message is not necessarily consistent with the findings of this study. In addition to the recommendation made to implement a Safe Zone ally training program, it is advisable that key areas of the website be updated to
include visual representations of acceptance of the university’s LGBTQ population. This is important not only to the perceptions of and retention of current students, but also to the recruitment of students who are entering college in a time of shifting attitudes toward the increased acceptance of sexual and gender minorities.

The web site’s representation of the university’s individual academic programs is successfully portraying images which represent gender inclusion (e.g., male students in Nursing and female students in STEM majors), going against biased stereotypes often attached to some fields of study. It is advisable to do the same with regard to athletics, band, and other activities—to choose images that do not hinge upon students’ perpetuation looks and/or behaviors that are in keeping with gender stereotypes. While it is recognized that many of these activities (e.g., dance line and football) are deeply-entrenched at this university, the message of inclusion would benefit from showing students of differing genders participate in activities that are not laden with gendered stereotypes.

The Office of Diversity and Institutional Equity (ODIE) and the Title IX Office have made progress with regard to the use of gender-neutral/non-binary language. There is, however, outdated information—some of which expresses archaic attitudes about sexual assault victimization (RAD, in particular). It is advisable that links to student organizations be added to these pages as they are not always easy to locate. Additionally, the ODIE newsletter and calendar should be updated to emphasize and advertise all efforts at increasing LGBTQ inclusion and acceptance on this campus.
Conclusion

LGBTQ students are experiencing discrimination, harassment, and victimization at rates higher than their heterosexual, cisgender peers (Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010; Yost & Gilmore, 2011). As a result, many articulate a sense of disenfranchisement that is positively associated with negative perceptions of campus climate (Ottenritter, 2012). While key offices and programs on this university’s offices have already taken steps toward conveying more inclusive messages and promotion of policies that positively impact the experiences of LGBTQ students, there is still work to be done. The current study reveals that the LGBTQ students are less trusting than their non-LGBTQ classmates of the university’s sexual assault report system and its ability to adequately respond to reports of victimization from sexual/gender minorities.

Research has much to offer about the importance of ally training programs such as Safe Zones and their potential to improve retention and recruitment of LGBTQ students. Funding and support should be given to the effort to establish a Safe Zones initiative on this university’s campus and to initiate the hire of personnel dedicated to addressing the needs of this important segment of the student body.
IX. REFERENCES


[http://campusclimate.ucop.edu/what-is-campus-climate/](http://campusclimate.ucop.edu/what-is-campus-climate/)


http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2016.09.005


APPENDIX A: SCALES OF MEASUREMENT

School Connectedness Scale.

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

4=Strongly Agree  3=Agree  2=Disagree  1=Strongly Disagree

a. I feel valued in the classroom/learning environment.
b. Faculty, staff, and administrators respect what students on this campus think.
c. I think faculty are genuinely concerned about my welfare.
d. I think administrators are genuinely concerned about my welfare.
e. I feel close to people on this campus.
f. I feel like I am a part of this college/university.
g. I am happy to be at this college/university.
h. The faculty, staff, and administrators at this school treat students fairly.
i. I feel safe on this campus.

Trust in the College Support System Scale.

Please indicate your level of agreement to the following statements:

4 = Strongly Agree  3=Agree  2=Disagree  1=Strongly Disagree

a. College officials (administrators, public safety officers) should do more to protect students from harm. (Negatively worded item - RECODED)
b. If a crisis happened on campus, my college would handle it well.
c. The college responds too slowly in difficult situations. (Negatively worded item - RECODED)
d. College officials handle incidents in a fair and responsible manner.
e. My college does enough to protect the safety of students.
f. There is a good support system on campus for students going through difficult times.
If someone were to report a sexual assault to a campus authority, how likely is it that:

- 4=Very Likely  3=Moderately Likely  2=Slightly Likely  1=Not at all Likely

a. The university would take the report seriously.
b. The university would keep knowledge of the report limited to those who need to know in order for the university to respond properly.
c. The university would forward the report outside the campus to criminal investigators.
d. The university would take steps to protect the safety of the person making the report.
e. The university would support the person making the report.
f. The university would take corrective action to address factors that may have led to the sexual assault.
g. The university would take corrective action against the offender.
h. The university would take steps to protect the person making the report from retaliation.
i. Students would label the person making the report a troublemaker. (Negatively worded item – RECODED)
j. Students would support the person making the report.
k. The alleged offender(s) or their associates would retaliate against the person making the report. (Negatively worded item – RECODED)
l. The educational achievement/career of the person making the report would suffer. (Negatively worded item – RECODED)