Retrospective Perspectives of High School Climate

By

Tianna J. Olsen

A Thesis Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Education Specialist
School Psychology Graduate Program

At

The University of Wisconsin- Eau Claire

May, 2020
Graduate Studies

The members of the Committee approve the thesis of

Tianna J. Olsen presented on May 20th, 2020

______________________________
Jeffrey Goodman, Ph.D., Chair

______________________________
Melissa Coolong-Chaffin, Ph.D., NCSP

______________________________
Kyle S. Whipple, Ph.D.

APPROVED: ______________________________
Darrell Newton, Ph.D., Dean of Graduate Studies
Retrospective Perspectives of High School Climate

By

Tianna J. Olsen

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 2020
Under the Supervision of Dr. Jeffrey Goodman

This study examined the retrospective perspectives of high school climate among individuals attending a midsize, Midwestern university. Participants included undergraduate students who met inclusion criteria. These participants completed an online survey regarding their high school experiences. Overall, the study found differences in climate between rural and urban settings. Further, there was a difference between LGBTQIA reports of climate in comparison to heterosexual individuals.
To my loving and supportive mother, I appreciate your endless encouragement and dedication to educational and academic excellence. I would not be where I am today without your guidance.
Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Jeffrey Goodman of the Psychology Department at the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire. Dr. Goodman provided me with guidance and support throughout the creation and writing of my thesis project. I cannot truly express my thanks and appreciation for his expertise and dedication to this learning experience.

I would also like to thank my thesis committee members, Dr. Kyle Whipple and Dr. Coolong-Chaffin at the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire for participating in the review of my thesis.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Tables</th>
<th>vi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. METHODS</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection of Human Subjects</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling Strategy and Participants</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials and Measures</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. RESULTS</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. DISCUSSION</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Research</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Student Email</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Faculty Email</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Consent Form</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Survey</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Debrief Form</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Evidence of Participation Form</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Participant Demographics</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Mean Climate Variable Scores</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Comparisons of Rural vs. Urban Climate</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Comparisons of LGBTQIA vs. Heterosexual Climate Experience</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 LGBTQIA Discrimination</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1. Introduction

Review of Literature

Heteronormativity is the acceptable norm in most cultures and societies. According to De Oliveria, Costa and Nogueria (2013), heteronormativity is an underlying belief of sexuality that illegitimatizes homosexuality. Individuals who identify outside of the heterosexual, cisgender realm are deemed abnormal within heteronormative societies. This global ideology seeps into all aspects of an individual’s life including public and private spaces and leads to an environment where nonheteronormative individuals are valued differently (Peake, 2017). In 2017, it was estimated that about 4.5% of the U.S. adult population identified with the LGBTQIA community (The Williams Institute, 2019). Within diverse communities, the heterosexual cultural norm can cause a series of complications. Such complications may include an increased risk of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV, depression and suicidality, poor academic performance, and higher levels of bullying and victimization (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC, 2019). Youth who identify in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA) community are particularly vulnerable part of our school population due to complications previously discussed (CDC, 2019). Although there is no reference that gives us a single national prevalence rate of LGBTQIA youth, information from the 2017 YRBS suggests that approximately 10.5% of high school age students identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual (Kann, McManus & Harris 2018).

Many youths hide their true sexual and gender identities for a variety of reasons. This may include fear for physical safety, feeling ashamed and isolated, worry of parent reaction, and stress over peer interactions (Kaufman, et al., 2008). However, it can often
be a great developmental milestone leading to better overall well-being for those who do come out (Kosciw, Palmer & Kull, 2015). Unfortunately, coming out can lead to a variety of negative repercussions for the individuals who do decide to take this step. Current findings suggest that individuals are also coming out at younger ages such as within the adolescent period of development (Shilo & Savaya, 2011). The environments that exist in a majority of our schools today can perpetuate these negative effects and lead to a variety of negative outcomes (Orue & Calvete, 2018). These negative outcomes include an increased risk of bullying and victimization, microaggressions, and various mental health outcomes (CDC, 2019). However, school climate, staff perceptions and various staff roles can change the experience LGBTQIA individuals have in the school setting. School climate is defined as attitudes, behaviors, perceived safety and standards of faculty, staff, students, and administrators within high schools concerning levels of access, inclusion and respect for individual and group needs, abilities and potential (Hurtado, 1992; Rankin, 2003). Resources and standards within a school setting may include a gender and sexualities alliance (GSA), an LGBTQIA resource center, supportive staff members, access to resources related to LGBTQIA issues and topics, curriculum that includes LGBTQIA content, and comprehensive school policies.

Although research on school climate has become relevant among college campuses, there is a lack of research among high school settings. Therefore, understanding the previous research and implications and building on these ideas is imperative for the outcomes of all students. Literature on LGBTQIA high school climate has been increasing, inclusive of students’ experiences and the influence of school
resources and standards. Recent research studies on these topics will be summarized below.

**Bullying and Victimization**

Bullying has been recognized as a concern in the school system for many years and much effort has been put into finding effective school interventions and responses to diminish bullying behaviors (Reisner, 2020). For students in the LGBTQIA community, homophobic bullying becomes an increased area of distress. According to Orue & Calvete (2018), homophobic bullying is when the motivation for bullying is a prejudice against individuals who are perceived as or identify as LGBTQIA. Individuals holding homophobic attitudes are more likely to participate in this type of bullying and those participating in such behaviors are more likely to have homophobic attitudes, perpetuating the relationship through participation and attitudes (Orue & Calvete, 2018).

Results from a nationwide survey of 7,898 students between the ages of 13 and 21 show that 75% of LGBTQIA students report having experienced verbal harassment, 74% reported experiencing verbal harassment related to their gender expression, 49% experienced a form of cyberbullying, and 36% expressed having been physically harassed (Kosciw et al., 2014).

Victimization is also linked with LGBTQIA youth and coming out. Kosciw and colleagues (2015) found that higher reports of in-school victimization were related to higher outness, or being open to the public with their sexual identity, to students and staff. However, outness was also related to a decrease in depression and higher self-esteem, making the impacts of coming out unclear (Kosciw et al., 2015).

**Microaggressions**
Another type of discrimination experienced by LGBTQIA youth are microaggressions. Microaggressions are messages communicating negative, hostile or derogatory slights towards marginalized individuals or groups (McCabe, Dragowski, & Rubinson, 2013). Those in the LGBTQIA community are often the target of verbal microaggressions (McCabe et al., 2013). Words such as “gay”, “faggot” and “homo” are casually used in conversation among adolescents in today’s society (Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer & Boesen, 2014). These words are offensive and derogatory terms that, even when not directed at an individual, come off with negative connotations. In McCabe and colleague’s (2013) study, 43% of school psychologists reported hearing these biased words in their schools at least once a month. Even more alarming, more than 45% of these same participants reported having heard other staff making homophobic comments in the school setting within the last year. This reflects the negative and sometimes unconscious consequences the norms of our society perpetuate.

Mental Health

One area of great concern for LGBTQIA students is mental health. During the adolescent years, mental health is something to monitor for all students. Adolescence is a time of change and difficult transitions, which causes stress in the average student’s life. Between the physical changes due to puberty and the educational changes from middle school to high school, the adolescent development period is full of stressful events for youth. However, this becomes a greater area of concern for those with adverse experiences, such as those in the LGBTQIA community. The minority stress model, which is an elaboration of the social stress theory, explains the excess stress individuals from stigmatized identities, including those identifying as LGBTQIA, are exposed to in
relation to their social position (Meyer, 2003). The negative stigma around individuals who do not conform to heteronormative social norms can create and perpetuate a hostile environment for students. Therefore, they may be dealing with added stressors that can potentially correlate with harmful mental health outcomes. However, even simple additions to curriculum can improve these outcomes for students. For example, Proulx, Coulter, Egan, Matthews & Mair (2019) found that adverse mental health outcomes were reduced when schools implemented inclusive sex-education curriculum.

Suicide has become one of the leading causes of death among adolescents in our society, and for LGBTQIA students the risk is even greater (The Trevor Project, 2020). According to Stone et al. (2014), bisexual men and women were more likely to report serious suicide attempts relative to heterosexual men and women. DeCou and Lynch (2018) also found elevated risk of suicide for LGBTQIA individuals. Beyond this, rurality was also a correlate of increased suicidality in adolescent patients emphasizing the need for research that specifically examines the experiences of LGBTQIA students in rural communities (DeCou & Lynch, 2018).

**School Standards and Resources**

School climate plays a large role in the experiences of LGBTQIA students. Many studies have focused on school climate at the college level, which is known as campus climate. Heteronormativity can affect the climate of schools and campuses alike. Often times, the perceptions of campus climate differ among LGBTQIA students, non-LGBTQIA students, and faculty/staff. Brown, Clarke, Gortmaker, and Robinson-Keilig (2004) assessed the campus climate at a Midwestern university and found differences in the perceptions among each group assessed. Even when non-LGBTQIA students found
their campus climate to be positive, those associated with the LGBTQIA community often had differing perceptions. Often times, those in the LGBTQIA community still had negative views on campus climate even after non-LGBTQIA students rated it as positive (Brown et al., 2004). This is likely due to the differing experiences between LGBTQIA and non-LGBTQIA individuals.

Hinrichs and Rosenberg (2002) completed a similar study of attitudes towards LGBTQIA students on college campuses. The results of this study suggest that heterosexual individuals report being less tolerant of gay men than lesbian women (Hinrichs & Rosenberg, 2002). This finding is important as it may lead to an explanation of the differences in experiences for each individual. For example, gay men may have a more negative experience due to the decrease of tolerance towards these types of relationships.

A profound finding among campus climate studies is that of perceived positive climates. Some studies focus solely on the experiences of LGBTQIA identifying students. Tetreault, Fette, Meidlinger and Hope (2013) distributed a survey among LGBTQIA college students. The survey included questions pertaining to familial support, campus climate perceptions, and experiences confronting bias. Students who reported feeling safe and supported on campus were more likely to report a positive campus climate.

For school staff, it becomes increasingly important to be informed on how to create a positive and safe environment for these students. Staff play various important roles in creating encouraging environments for all students. For students facing increased difficulty, there is a stronger need for staff to focus in on how they can make positive
changes. Previous research has provided schools with multiple routes to take in creating a supportive environment. For example, Cooper and colleagues (2014) suggest a multidisciplinary approach in which school counselors and psychologists collaborate to educate and train all staff on becoming and developing allies.

Unfortunately, reports indicate that negative LGBTQIA comments are still being made among staff members. One study reported 44% of educators had heard other staff making derogatory comments about LGBTQIA topics (Dragowski, McCabe & Rubinson, 2016). This can have a negative impact on school climate. Research on school climate has shown the positive effects of an encouraging school climate on individuals of the LGBTQIA community. As mentioned above, students who reported feeling safe and supported were more likely to report a positive climate (Tetreault et al., 2013). School staff play an imperative role in the perceptions of positive climates.

Support is a crucial part of creating a positive environment for LGBTQIA students. Marshall and colleagues (2015) conducted a study in which marginalized sexually oriented individuals who had self-identified as being bullied, participated in an interview. Every participant of this study discussed the importance of support and its effects on coping and the difficulties they faced from bullying (Marshall et al., 2015). This study shows the importance of school personnel and their influences in the lives of LGBTQIA students. Among the participants, 6 specifically talked about their main form of support coming from a member of their schools’ staff (Marshall et al., 2015). Beyond this, Marshall also found that over 50% of participants reported their lowest points were when they felt they were without support, further emphasizing the need for support among these students.
With providing support to students, some staff become informal mentors for their students. These mentoring relationships can create positive outcomes for the youth involved. Studies have examined what these mentors look like and the qualities they should possess in order for individuals to trust them and feel comfortable sharing with them. For example, Mulcahy and colleagues (Mulcahy, Dalton, Kolbert & Crothers, 2016) found that LGBTQ+ students reported that they wanted their mentors to be open-minded, non-judgmental, and good listeners. Beyond this, the participants also emphasized the importance of their mentor being interested in all aspects of their life, not just to be there as a support for their sexual orientation or gender identity (Mulcahy et al., 2016).

Students involved in mentoring relationships expressed a variety of positive outcomes. For example, individuals with a mentoring relationship reported lower levels of isolation and loneliness at school (Mulcahy et al., 2016). These relationships also led to increased school activity and consideration of postsecondary options for diverse individuals (Mulcahy et al., 2016).

**School Policies**

In addition to establishing a positive school climate and support for LGBTQIA students, school policies can also play an important role in the school environment for LGBTQIA individuals. According to Kull, Greytak, Kosciw & Villenas (2016), students who are in districts where antibullying policies directly address bullying and harassment of students based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression reported feeling safer in their school and experiences less victimization. To further emphasize the
importance of inclusive, comprehensive policies, they found that students in districts with no policy verses a generic bullying policy did not differ from one another (Kull et al., 2016).

**Context**

Many studies have focused on how context may affect LGBTQIA students’ outcomes. Kosciw and colleagues (2015) found that LGBTQIA students in rural areas exhibited lower levels of academic success and well-being when compared to students in urban and suburban areas. They also found that missed days of school and levels of depression were greater for students in rural districts. In a study of 611 middle and high school students in a rural setting, it was found that positive perceptions of safety were associated with affirming school climates (De Pedro, Lynch & Esqueda, 2018).

The difference in outcomes for students in rural verses urban school settings may be due, in part, to a lack of resources. In larger areas, not only is there greater diversity of the people in each community, but there is usually an increase of resources and unique experiences. Within rural communities, LGBTQIA individuals face disparities in mental and physical healthcare (Rosenkrantz, Black, Abreu, Aleshire & Fallin-Bennett, 2017), as well as few community based LGBTQIA programs and groups (Palmer, Kosciw & Bartkiewicz, 2012). LGBTQIA students in rural areas may not have the same resources of support available to them as those in larger cities. This is significant because prior studies have indicated that LGBTQIA individuals often join organizations to access support, find a sense of belongingness, and establish community (Paceley, Keene & Lough, 2015). Support groups are associated with positive effects such as resources such
as support groups are associated with positive effects such as decreases in school-victimization, increased psychological health, and decreases in substance use (Heck, Flentje, & Cochran, 2011).

Summary and Statement of Problem

Little is known about the high school climate for LGBTQIA students in the Midwest whether it differs based on rural versus urban high school settings. Further, there is a lack of information about climate in rural schools.

The primary purpose of the current study was to describe traditional, undergraduate university students’ retrospective perspectives of the public high school climate regarding LGBTQIA issues. Two primary and two secondary research questions guided this study.

Primary research questions:

1. Among traditional, undergraduate students at a midsize, Midwestern University, what are retrospective perspectives regarding public high school climate in the areas of attitudes, behaviors, safety, and standards?

2. Among traditional students at a midsize, Midwestern University, do retrospective perspectives regarding public high school climate differ among participants who attended high school in rural versus urban settings?

Secondary research questions:

1. Among those who experienced harassment or assault, how many reported it?

2. What type(s) of LGBTQIA discrimination were experienced?
Chapter 2. Methods

Protection of Human Subjects

This study was reviewed and approved by the University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire (UWEC) Institutional Review Board (IRB). See Appendix A.

Sampling Strategy and Participants

A convenience sample of eight-hundred and thirty-three traditional, undergraduate college students who attended public high school and were currently enrolled at a midsized, Midwestern university participated in this study. Students were invited to participate through an email invitation sent by campus email to all students (See Appendix B). This email included a link to an electronic survey in Qualtrics. The survey was open for five weeks, and two additional email reminders were sent at three and four weeks after the initial invitation. University faculty received a separate email notification of the study in the event that they would want to offer extra credit to students for participation as is common at this university setting (See Appendix C).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The following inclusion criteria were used in this study: traditional, undergraduate college student; age 18 to 29; and attended a public high school. Ability to read English was required since the survey was available in that language only. Partially complete submissions were excluded based on the assumption that respondents may have changed their mind about participating prior to submitting the survey. In addition, responses with nonsensical entries were also excluded (e.g., Response for gender was ‘TRUMP 2020’).
Materials and Measures

Quantitative data were collected through an anonymous electronic survey using Qualtrics. The link to the anonymous Qualtrics survey was distributed by university email. The first portion of the survey asked about demographic information (see Appendix E) including age, current year in school, gender identity, race, sexual orientation, and relationship status.

The second section of the survey included questions related to the demographics of the participant’s high school. This included graduating class size, location of high school, proximity to a city the size of Eau Claire (approx. 70,000), and classification of school. Participants had the option to indicate whether they attended a public, private, or religious high school.

During primary investigation, individuals reporting being within a 50 mile or less radius of a city the size of Eau Claire were considered to be urban. However, it was soon discovered that many communities considered rural are, in fact, within a fairly close radius of a large city. For secondary investigation, graduating class size was examined in order to determine rural vs. urban school districts. Those with less than one-hundred students in their graduating class were considered rural and those with one hundred or more were considered urban. This was done to more accurately reflect this variable, because many rural schools in the Midwest are located within 25-50 miles of a city the size of Eau Claire (70,000). Many rural Wisconsin school districts are located within as little as 25 miles of an urban setting and we wanted to capture the fact that they are rural, given that the dynamic in rural communities often differs from those identified as urban. We opted to only include public students in the sample to operationalize the high school
setting based on class size. Given that private/religious schools often have fewer class sizes, even when located in a large, urban setting, they were excluded from the study. Overall, it was determined that proximity to an urban city did not prove to be a valid measurement of rurality. However, graduating class size in a public school district more accurately captured the cultural dynamics relevant for this variable.

The final sections of the survey included questions about high school climate. High school climate was conceptually defined, based on work from Hurtado (1992) and Rankin (2003), as attitudes, behaviors, perceived safety and standards of faculty, staff, students, and administrators within high schools concerning levels of access, inclusion and respect for individual and group needs, abilities and potential (Hurtado, 1992; Rankin, 2003). The four high school climate dimensions of attitudes, behaviors, perceived safety, and standards were operationalized in the Qualtrics survey as follows.

Attitudes were assessed through five survey items that measured how frequently participants heard homophobic, or negative gender expression remarks from other students, teachers, or staff. Items were dichotomized (no=responded never to the item; yes=indicated remarks were heard). The number of yes responses were summed to calculate an attitude score (low score is positive, high score is negative).

Behaviors were assessed through nine survey items that measured whether or not participants experienced verbal harassment, physical harassment, or physical assault for any of the following three reasons: sexual orientation, gender, or gender expression. Items were dichotomized (0=no; 1=yes). The number of yes responses was summed to calculate a behavior score (low score is positive, high score is negative).
Perceived safety was assessed through five survey items that asked if participants felt unsafe at school or missed classes/activities due to feeling unsafe or uncomfortable in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity. Items were dichotomized (0=no; 1=yes). The number of yes responses was summed to calculate a perceived safety score (low score is positive, high score is negative).

School standards were assessed through six survey items that measured presence of positive LGBTQIA resources, policies, and practices. Items were dichotomized (0=no; 1=yes). The number of yes responses was summed to calculate a standards score (high score is positive, high score is negative).

Two additional survey items addressed the secondary research questions. Participants were asked if they reported harassment or assault incidents that occurred in school (yes or no). Participants also were asked to identify the type(s) of LGBTQIA related discrimination they experienced in high school from a prepopulated list of examples with other included as an option.

**Procedure**

Upon approval for this study from the UWEC IRB, all students enrolled at the university were sent an email informing them of the study and including a link to the anonymous Qualtrics survey. Potential participants first viewed the informed consent page and chose “I consent” before moving to the body of the survey (See Appendix D). Anyone who chose “I do not consent”, was sent directly to the end of the survey. Completion of the informed consent form along with the survey took approximately 10 minutes. The survey data was collected and stored securely within Qualtrics. Participants were provided a debriefing form explaining the purpose of the study (See Appendix G).
At this time, they were given the opportunity to save an *evidence of participation* form to use in courses offering extra credit for participation (See Appendix F).

**Data Analysis**

The study data were analyzed quantitatively with Jamovi (Version 1.0.8.0) using common descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. Dichotomous and categorical variables were described using frequencies and percentages. Continuous variables were summarized using frequencies, means with standard deviations, medians, and modes. Independent samples *t*-tests were used to compare those who attended a rural versus an urban high school for statistically significant differences in mean safety score, attitude score, behavior score, and standards score.
Chapter 3. Results

The final sample for this study included 833 participants with an average age of 19.9 (SD = 1.46) and range of 18 to 28 years. The majority of participants were female (70.1%), heterosexual (77%), Caucasian race (91.6%), and attended high school in an urban setting (77.1%). The distribution was fairly even between year in school, see Table 3.1.

The first primary research question for this study examined retrospective perspectives regarding public high school climate. Means and standard deviations were calculated for each dimension of school climate for the total sample. Mean attitude score was 2.69 (SD = 1.32). Mean perceived safety score was 0.415 (SD = 0.934). Similarly, the average behavior score was 0.389 (SD = 1.03). The mean standards score was 2.40 (SD = 1.32), see Table 3.2.

The second primary research question for this study examined retrospective perspectives regarding public high school climate for differences among participants who attended high school in a rural versus urban setting. An independent t-test was calculated to determine if mean scores for each of the dimensions of high school climate differed significantly between rural and urban participants. Standards scores were significantly higher in urban over rural districts, $t(831) = -9.491, p < .001, d = -.78$. The mean standards score among urban-graduating participants was 2.63 (SD = 1.33) on the 6-point scale compared to a mean of 1.64 (SD = 0.978) among participants from rural districts. The difference between the groups’ averages (Mdiff = -0.98, 95% CI [-1.12, -0.78]) was large in magnitude. No significant differences were observed between rural and urban-graduating participants for mean behavior score $t(831) = -1.55, p = .122, d = -.12$, safety
score $t(831) = .50, p = .618, d = .04$, or attitude score $t(831) = 1.51, p = .132, d = .12$, see Table 3.3.

An independent t-test was calculated to determine if mean scores for each of the dimensions of high school climate differed significantly between participants who identified as being heterosexual versus LGBTQIA. Perceived safety scores were significantly worse for LGBTQIA over heterosexual students $t(827) = -9.43, p < .001, d = -.78)$. The mean perceived safety scores among LGBTQIA students was .952 (SD = 1.43) on the 5-point scale compared to a mean of .257 (SD = .650) among heterosexual participants. The difference between groups’ averages (Mdiff = -.695, 95% CI [-.839, -.550]) was large in magnitude. Similarly, perceived attitude score was significantly worse for LGBTQIA students in comparison to heterosexual students $t(827) = -6.56, p < .001, d = -.905$. The mean attitudes score among LGBTQIA participants was 3.23 (SD = 1.29) on the 5-point scale compared to a mean of 2.53(SD = 1.28) among heterosexual participants. The difference between the groups’ averages (Mdiff=-.697, 95% CI [-.905, -.488]) was medium in magnitude. Behavior scores were significantly worse for LGBTQIA over heterosexual students $t(827) = -7.24, p < .001, d = -.601$ The mean behavior score for LGBTQIA students .851 (SD = 1.44) on the 9 point scale compared to a mean of .251 (SD = .826) among heterosexual participants. The difference between the groups’ averages (Mdiff = -.600, 95% CI [-.762, -.437]) was medium in magnitude. No significant differences were observed between heterosexual and LGBTQIA identifying participants for mean standards score $t(827) = -1.44, p = .151, d = -.12)$, see Table 3.4.

A two-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of sexual orientation and school location on standards scores. There was not a statistically significant
interaction between sexual orientation and school location on standards scores, $F(1, 825) = 1.708$, $p = .192$. The main effect of sexual orientation on standards scores was not significant, $F(1, 825) = .07$, $p = .792$. The main effect of school location on standards scores was significant, $F(1, 825) = 71.322$, $p < .001$. Standard scores in rural schools were rated as significantly lower than urban schools irrespective of students’ sexual orientation, see Figure 3.8.

A two-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of sexual orientation and school location on perceived safety scores. There was not a statistically significant interaction between sexual orientation and school location on safety scores, $F(1, 825) = 0.168$, $p = .645$. The main effect of sexual orientation on safety scores was significant, $F(1, 825) = 64.04$, $p < .001$. The main effect of school location on safety scores was not significant, $F(1, 825) = .862$, $p = .353$. LGBTQIA students reported significantly lower perceptions of safety than heterosexual students across both types of schools, see Figure 3.9.

A two-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of sexual orientation and school location on behavior scores. There was not a statistically significant interaction between sexual orientation and school location on behavior scores, $F(1, 825) = .125$, $p = .723$. The main effect of sexual orientation on behavior scores was significant, $F(1, 825) = 32.5$, $p < .001$. The main effect of school location on behavior scores was not significant, $F(1, 825) = 1.711$, $p = .191$. LGBTQIA students reported significantly more discriminatory behaviors than heterosexual students across both types of schools, see Figure 3.10.
A two-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of sexual orientation and school location on attitude scores. There was not a statistically significant interaction between sexual orientation and school location on attitude scores, $F(1, 825) = .296, p = .587$. The main effect of sexual orientation on attitude scores was significant, $F(1, 825) = 26.089, p < .001$. The main effect of school location on attitude scores was not significant, $F(1, 825) = 1.13, p = .288$. LGBTQIA students reported significantly more negative attitudes among school staff and students than heterosexual students did across both types of schools, see Figure 3.11.

The first secondary research question for this study examined the number of participants who reported experiencing harassment or assault. Experiences of harassment or assault were reported by 187 participants (24.45%). Of the participants who reported such experiences, 23 indicated they reported the incident to school staff (12.3%).

The second secondary research question for this study examined the type(s) of LGBTQIA discrimination experienced among participants. One or more types of LGBTQIA discrimination was reported by 290 (34.8%) participants. A chi-square test was conducted to compare percentages of responses of yes and no in terms of discrimination by sexual orientation: LGBTQIA (43.6%) individuals were significantly more likely to report experiencing discrimination than were Heterosexual individuals (32.1%), $\chi^2 (1, N = 829) = 8.45, p = .004$, see Figure 3.6.

Of the 290 participants, 69 (23.8%) reported they were from a rural setting while 221 (76.2%) reported coming from an urban setting, see Figure 3.7. A chi-square test conducted to compare percentages of responses of yes and no in terms of discrimination by school location found no differences in rates of experiencing discrimination between
rural (36.1%) and urban (34.4%) schools, \( \chi^2 (1, N = 833) = 0.188, p = .665 \). Among those that reported any type of discrimination, the most frequently reported type was clothing restrictions (n = 212; 73.1%) followed by discipline for PDA (n = 51; 17.6%). Twenty-eight participants (9.7%) indicated ‘other’ for this item. Not all participants provided comments to describe the other type of discrimination experienced. Among those who did, examples of responses that were written in included: *encouraged to be a non-practicing homosexual, culture of harassment at school, forced to use biological sex restrooms and locker rooms despite knowing gender identity*, see Table 3.5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.1</th>
<th>Participant Demographics (N = 833)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>19.9 (1.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-cisgender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did not report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual orientation</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LGBTQIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did not report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All other responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year in School</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Junior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Setting</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.2

Mean climate variable scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Climate Variable</th>
<th>M (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitude Score</td>
<td>2.69 (1.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior Score</td>
<td>0.389 (1.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Safety Score</td>
<td>0.415 (0.934)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards Score</td>
<td>2.40 (1.32)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3

Comparisons of Rural vs. Urban Climate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Climate Variable</th>
<th>Rural M (SD)</th>
<th>Urban M (SD)</th>
<th>t score</th>
<th>p value</th>
<th>M diff</th>
<th>95% CI Lower</th>
<th>95% CI Upper</th>
<th>Cohen’s d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitude Score</td>
<td>2.81 (1.28)</td>
<td>2.65 (1.33)</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>0.132</td>
<td>0.164</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.377</td>
<td>0.124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior Score</td>
<td>0.288 (0.73)</td>
<td>0.419 (1.10)</td>
<td>-1.55</td>
<td>0.122</td>
<td>-0.131</td>
<td>-0.297</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>-0.127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Safety Score</td>
<td>0.445 (1.06)</td>
<td>0.407 (0.893)</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.618</td>
<td>0.039</td>
<td>-0.113</td>
<td>0.190</td>
<td>0.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards Score</td>
<td>1.64 (0.978)</td>
<td>2.63 (1.33)</td>
<td>-9.49</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>-0.982</td>
<td>-1.185</td>
<td>-0.780</td>
<td>-0.782</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CI is confidence interval, M diff is mean difference
### Table 3.4

**Comparisons of LGBTQIA vs. Heterosexual Climate Experience**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Climate Variable</th>
<th>LGBTQIA M (SD)</th>
<th>Heterosexual M (SD)</th>
<th>t score</th>
<th>p value</th>
<th>M diff</th>
<th>Lower CI</th>
<th>Upper CI</th>
<th>Cohen’s d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitude Score</td>
<td>3.23 (1.29)</td>
<td>2.53 (1.28)</td>
<td>6.56</td>
<td>&lt;.00</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.905</td>
<td>-0.488</td>
<td>-0.544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior Score</td>
<td>0.851 (1.44)</td>
<td>0.251 (0.826)</td>
<td>7.24</td>
<td>&lt;.00</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.762</td>
<td>0.437</td>
<td>-0.601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Safety</td>
<td>0.952 (1.43)</td>
<td>0.257 (0.650)</td>
<td>9.43</td>
<td>&lt;.00</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.839</td>
<td>0.550</td>
<td>-0.782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Score</td>
<td>2.52 (1.29)</td>
<td>2.36 (1.33)</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.373</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>-0.119</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CI is confidence interval, M diff is mean difference.

### Table 3.5

**LGBTQIA Discrimination (n=290)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of discrimination</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disciplined for public displays of affection that were acceptable among non-LGBTQIA</td>
<td>51 (17.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing restrictions preventing clothes deemed “inappropriate” based on biological sex</td>
<td>212 (73.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prohibited from using LGBTQIA topics in school (discussions or writing assignments)</td>
<td>42 (14.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted from attending a dance or school activity with someone of same gender</td>
<td>13 (4.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>28 (9.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Some participants selected multiple options; percentage total is greater than 100%.
Figure 3.6

Figure 3.7
Figure 3.8.  
*Note.* Six-point scale.

Figure 3.9.  
*Note.* Five-point scale.
Figure 3.10.
*Note.* Nine-point scale.

Figure 3.11.
*Note.* Five-point scale.
Chapter 4. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate high school climate regarding LGBTQIA issues. An additional aim was to examine whether climate differs among participants who attended high school in rural versus urban settings. Implications of the results will be discussed below.

Overall, findings from this study suggest that there are differing views of school climate between those who identify as LGBTQIA in comparison to those identifying as heterosexuals. Similarly, aspects of climate are different among rural versus urban school settings. Results also suggests that overall attitudes of staff and students within schools are negative towards LGBTQIA topics.

Findings from this study indicate traditional, undergraduate university students in the Midwest retrospectively perceive their high school climates as positive in the areas of behaviors, safety, and resources. In general, participants seemed to feel safe with most denying that they missed or avoided school or extracurricular events due to safety concerns. Similarly, most participants denied experiencing verbal or physical harassment or physical assault. Most participants also reported the presence of multiple LGBTQIA resources or policies in their school. In contrast to these positive findings, most participants reported experiencing nearly three different types of negative messaging within the school setting from other students or staff personnel within the school. These results have many implications for districts and their staff members, including school psychologists. It is important that school staff serve as role models for students by refraining from contributing to negative messaging and clearly communicating it is not acceptable. Administrators should have conversations with staff regarding inappropriate
versus appropriate language within the district. Further, school psychologists may have
an expanded role, possibly presenting research on negative impacts of such comments
and working with students who are using such language or those who are impacted by
negative remarks. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) provides
guidance on specific roles a school psychologist may have. These roles include
developing comprehensive antibullying policies, supporting gender and sexuality
alliances, providing consultation with teachers to develop inclusive curriculum, family
collaboration and serving as an affirmative counselor (NASP, 2017). As school districts
address individuals’ attitudes, consideration should be given to the possibility that larger
societal issues, including social media, may be contributing to the problem. Social media
plays a significant role and is highly influential among the younger generation. Research
suggests that 63% of teens have their own cell phone and 93% of teens spend some
portion of time online (CDC, 2009). Many public figures may normalize, and even
authorize negative attitudes such as those examined in this study. Although not discussed
in this study, this may even influence cyberbullying behaviors. Previous studies have
looked into such behaviors and their impact on LGBTQIA youth. According to Kosciw
and colleagues (2013), 49% of LGBTQIA individuals reported experiencing electronic
harassment. This suggests a need for future studies specifically examining and comparing
negative messaging in schools by format: face to face, electronic, or other.

Similar to previous studies, this study indicates that perspectives of school climate
do differ between LGBTQIA students and heterosexual students. Preceding findings
suggest that even when heterosexual students rate the climate as being positive,
LGBTQIA students still had negative views of campus climate (Brown et al., 2014).
Comparably, within the current study LGBTQIA students reported lower levels of safety, more discriminatory behaviors and more negative attitudes among school staff and environments in comparison to heterosexual peers.

The results of this study indicate that retrospective perspectives regarding high school climate do not differ significantly between students who attended high school in rural versus urban settings in the areas of safety, behaviors, and attitudes. Specifically, reports regarding how often participants missed school activities or events due to safety concerns, experienced verbal or physical harassment or physical assault, or heard different types of negative LGTBQIA messaging from other students or staff were similar between rural and urban schools. These findings contrast with result from a prior study which suggested that LGBTQIA youth in rural communities experience greater levels of harassment and assault related to their gender expression and sexual orientation in comparison to individuals within urban communities (Kosciw and Diaz, 2006). Given that this is an older study, the results of the current study may indicate there has been improvement for those attending school in a rural setting. A more recent study suggests there are supports in place for LGBTQIA students residing in rural communities, but there is room for growth (De Pedro et al., 2018). Ultimately, there is a need for further research with larger, more representative samples to gain clarity on if or how these school climate dimensions differ between rural and urban settings.

Findings from this study indicate LGTBQIA standards differ significantly between rural and urban districts. On average, participants who graduated from rural districts reported access to one less resource of the six that were examined in this study compared to participants who graduated from urban settings. The standards score
included resources such as the presence of a gay straight alliance (GSA), LGBTQIA resource center, supportive staff, access to resources, positive LGBTQIA curricular content, and comprehensive policies against LGBTQIA bullying. This suggests that rural school districts have fewer resources and structures to support LGBTQIA students. These results are consistent with previous research which suggested rural communities are often behind in resources when compared to those of larger population, especially within the Midwest (Marshall et al., 2015). Similarly, studies have shown that rural communities as a whole lack resources and outlets for individuals identifying as LGBTQIA (Snively, 2004). Future research is needed to identify which resources are most helpful for improving school climate. Studies should examine resource characteristics such as structure, format, and frequency of use for their effects on school climate.

**Limitations**

Data for this study was obtained with convenience sampling from one midsize, Midwestern university, so the results cannot be generalized to other geographical locations. Additionally, the sample consisted of mostly female (70.1%), Caucasian (91.6%), and heterosexual (77.0%) individuals. Therefore, data from this study may not be generalizable across population groups.

Exclusion criteria may be another limitation of this study. Given the difficulty in measuring rural and urban settings, data analysis ended in the exclusion of private schools. However, private schools likely include many LGBTQIA students and may have practices very different than public schools.

This study involved retrospective perspectives of participants’ high school setting and experiences. Responses were subject to recall and may not accurately reflect their
high school reality. Along with this, the majority of questions were close ended, potentially excluding aspects of climate that participants had experienced throughout their high school education.

Future Research

Given that mental health is a topic of great concern for LGBTQIA individuals, it would be interesting to see how school safety plays a role on one’s mental health. Between the physical changes due to puberty and the educational changes from middle to high school, the adolescent development is full of stressful events for youth (CDC, 2019). With the added stressor of adverse experiences relevant in the lives of LGBTQIA youth, this becomes an even greater area of concern. The negative stigma around individual’s who do not conform to heteronormative social norms and potential hostile environments may take a toll on their mental health. Therefore, looking into how school climate can potentially correlate with mental health outcomes among these adolescents is pertinent.

Previous research suggests school staff play an important role in the experience’s students have throughout their high school education (Mulcahy, Dalton, Kolbert & Crothers, 2016). Given the role that school staff play in creating positive and safe environments for all students, it may be of importance to look into their views of school climate and its impact on students. For example, in this study, participants were able to give insight into their beliefs of the attitudes and behaviors of staff in their school as well as the policies staff created and enforced. It may be beneficial to do a similar study involving staff and compare and contrast students versus staff perceptions. Potential differences may lead to information on how to better structure school environments.
Implications

The results of this study further confirm the LGBTQIA resource disparity experienced in many rural school districts. Gender and sexualities alliance (GSA) have become highly prevalent among college campuses and even in some high schools. This type of group includes both individuals who identify as LGBTQIA and those who serve as allies. In a school setting, this may include both staff and students. Research indicates that this type of group, or similar supportive and inclusive groups, can lead to positive outcomes among LGBTQIA individuals both socially and academically (McCormick et al., 2014). Rural school districts that currently do not have a GSA may want to consider starting one. This type of program would take little financial investment to implement in a rural school but would add to the available resource base for LGBTQIA students.

As noted above, the results of this study highlight the lower number of LGBTQIA resources available in rural settings. Therefore, school psychology and education programs in higher education may want to include discussion about the inequities between rural and urban districts in the curriculum. This issue of resource disparities extends beyond LGBTQIA topics (Hartley, 2004). In programs interested in advancing equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) initiatives, the addition of topics discussing both the gap in services and resources between rural versus urban districts as well as ways in which to support LGBTQIA students is imperative. School psychologists, teacher, and school administrators need to be informed on best practices for supporting all students. Given the increased risk of negative outcomes among those within LGBTQIA communities, adding content on concerns and resources for these students is necessary and important.
Running head: LGTBQIA SCHOOL CLIMATE

References


LGBT Demographic Data Interactive. (January 2019). Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law.


Appendix A. Student Email

Hello UW-Eau Claire Students,

My name is Tianna Olsen and I am currently a student in the school psychology program here on campus.

I am conducting a retrospective survey on high school campus climate. The survey is available through Qualtrics. I have attached the link below. At the end of the survey, you will have the option to print a certificate of completion form. If you are enrolled in courses that offer extra course credit for survey participation, make sure to print this form.

If you have any questions regarding the survey, please feel free to contact me. Thank you!

Link will be added here once survey is published

Tianna Olsen, M.S.E.

School Psychology Graduate Student

Graduate Assistant Coordinator, Academic Intervention Clinic

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
Appendix B. Faculty Email

Hello UW-Eau Claire Faculty,

My name is Tianna Olsen and I am currently a student in the school psychology program here on campus.

For my thesis, I am conducting a retrospective survey on high school campus climate. The survey will be available for students to participate in on Qualtrics. Students will receive an email from me with a link to the survey. At the end of the survey, participants will have the option to print a certificate of completion form. If you are offering extra course credit for survey participation, this will be a survey available.

If you have any questions regarding the survey, please feel free to contact me. Thank you!

Tianna Olsen, M.S.E.

School Psychology Graduate Student
Graduate Assistant Coordinator, Academic Intervention Clinic
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
Appendix C. Consent Form

Previous School Perceptions
Principal Investigator
The principal investigator of this project is a current school psychology student interested in the campus climate of high schools.

Purpose
Schools strive to create a climate that is welcoming and inclusive. We invite you to participate in the following survey regarding the current high school climate. This will require you to retrospectively reflect on your high school career. The term climate is being used in this context to mean:

The attitudes, behaviors and standards of faculty, staff, administrators and students within high schools concerning the level of access, inclusion and respect for individual and group needs, abilities and potential.

The results of the Fall 2019 survey will provide important information about our current school climate.

What will you be asked to do?
If you decide to participate, you will provide responses to a survey that will take between 5 and 10 minutes to complete. The survey questions pertain to your experiences at and perceptions of various aspects school climate. You must be a current student, 18 years of age or older, to participate. Please answer the questions as openly and honestly as possible. Any comments provided will not be connected to your name.

Discomforts and Risks
There are possible risks associated with participation. Risks include:
- Demographic questions include gender identity and sexual orientation.
- Previous experiences with discrimination may be thought of as an invasion of privacy.
- Some questions may cause mild negative emotions if/when the question becomes a reminder of triggering experiences/events.

Should you wish to speak with someone regarding discomfort or would benefit from counseling, you may make an appointment with UW-Eau Claire Counseling Services by calling (715)-836-5521 or visiting Vicki Lord Larson Hall (Old Library) 2122. After hours resources can be accessed by calling the Northwest Connections Mental Health Crisis Line at 1-888-552-6642 or through the SMS Emotional Support Line by texting "HOPELINE" to 741741.

Benefits to the participant
By participating in this project, you may gain insights into your own and others previous experiences in school. Participants will have the opportunity to share experiences and views on school climate as well as gain insight into how their own actions may impact others.
Potential benefits to schools
The results of the survey will provide important information about current school climate and will help us determine areas in need of enhancement at the high school level.

Voluntary Participation
Participation in this assessment is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you do not have to respond to any questions on the survey that you do not wish to answer. **Individuals will not be identified and only group data will be reported.** Participation is not a condition of receiving services through UW-Eau Claire and choosing not to participate will not affect your standing at the university.

Statement of Confidentiality
In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the assessment, no personally identifiable information will be shared. It is anticipated that around 200 individuals will participate in this study. Group data for groups of fewer than 10 individuals will not be reported. Responses will be combined to eliminate any potential for demographic information to be identified. This survey does not ask for your name and no personally identifying information (e.g., IP addresses) is collected. Any comments that could potentially identify an individual will have such information removed from the data set. Once downloaded from Qualtrics, data will be stored on a password-protected device in a secure location.

Statement of Accessibility
We have made every effort to maximize the accessibility of this survey in the Qualtrics online environment. However, if you find the survey inaccessible and wish to complete it in an alternative format, please contact ssd@uwec.edu or 715-836-5800 or Centennial 2106 for assistance.

Right to Ask Questions
**You can ask questions about this research. Questions concerning this project should be directed to:**
Tianna Olsen
School Psychology Graduate Student
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
Email: olsentj4780@uwec.edu

**Questions concerning your rights as a research participant should be directed to:**
Dr. Michael Axelrod
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
17 Schofield Hall
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
Eau Claire, Wisconsin 54702-4004
Telephone: (715) 836-2373

Participation in the survey indicates your consent to participate in this study. Please do not complete this survey more than once.
Appendix D. Survey

Start of Block: Demographics
What is your age?
What is your year in school?

- Freshman/First Year (1)
- Sophomore (2)
- Junior (3)
- Senior (4)
- Graduate Student (5)
- Nontraditional/Other (6)

What is your gender identity? (optional; choose all that apply)

- agender (1)
- androgyne (2)
- demigender (3)
- genderqueer or gender fluid (4)
- man (5)
- questioning or unsure (6)
- trans man (7)
- trans woman (8)
- woman (9)
- additional gender category/identity: please specify (10)
What is your race?

- White/Caucasian (1)
- Black or African American (2)
- American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
- Asian (4)
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)
- Other (6)

☐ prefer not to disclose (11)
What is your sexual orientation? (optional; choose all that apply)

- asexual (1)
- bisexual (2)
- gay (3)
- straight (heterosexual) (4)
- lesbian (5)
- pansexual (6)
- queer (7)
- questioning or unsure (8)
- same-gender loving (9)
- an identity not listed: please specify (10)
- prefer not to disclose (11)
Q8 What is your relationship status?

- In a relationship (1)
- Single (2)
- Engaged (3)
- Married (4)

End of Block: Demographics
Start of Block: High School Demographics

How big was your graduating class?

- <50 (1)
- 50-100 (2)
- 100-150 (3)
- 150-200 (4)
- 200-250 (5)
- 250-300 (6)
- >300 (7)

Where was your high school located? (e.g., city/town and state)
How close was your high school to a city the size of Eau Claire (About 70,000)?

- <25 miles (1)
- 25-50 miles (2)
- 50-75 miles (3)
- >75 miles (4)

What was your high school classified as?

- Public (1)
- Private (Non-Religious) (2)
- Religious (3)

Start of Block: School Climate
We are interested in your past experiences related to sexual orientation and gender identity **during the time that you were a high school student**. For the next group of questions, please think back to your experiences in high school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q12 Safety</th>
<th>Yes (1)</th>
<th>No (2)</th>
<th>Not Applicable (3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you feel unsafe at school due to your sexual orientation, gender expression, or other personal characteristics? (1)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you miss school because you felt unsafe or uncomfortable? (2)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you avoid gender-segregated areas due to feeling unsafe? (3)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you avoid school functions due to feeling unsafe or uncomfortable? (4)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you avoid extracurricular activities due to feeling unsafe or uncomfortable? (5)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q26 Please continue to consider these questions as they relate to your experiences **during the time that you were a high school student**.

Q14 While in school or attending school functions, did you hear:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never (1)</th>
<th>A few times (2)</th>
<th>Often (3)</th>
<th>Multiple times (4)</th>
<th>Always (5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homophobic remarks (i.e. &quot;gay&quot; or &quot;faggot&quot;) (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative remarks about gender expression (i.e. &quot;he's not acting masculine enough&quot;) (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative remarks about transgender individuals (i.e. &quot;it&quot;) (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you hear teachers or staff make homophobic remarks? (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you hear teachers or staff make negative remarks about gender expression? (5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q27 Please continue to consider these questions as they relate to your experiences during the time that you were a high school student.

Q31 Click to write the question text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Based on sexual orientation</th>
<th>Based on gender</th>
<th>Based on gender expression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you experience verbal harassment? (e.g. threatened, name calling) (1)</td>
<td>Yes (1)</td>
<td>No (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you experience physical harassment? (e.g. shoved, pushed) (2)</td>
<td>Yes (1)</td>
<td>No (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you experience physical assault? (e.g. punched, kicked) (3)</td>
<td>Yes (1)</td>
<td>No (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q28 Did you report the harassment or assault incident to the school?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- I did not experience harassment or assault (3)

Q29 Why did you choose not to report the incident?

Q30 How did the school staff take action after reporting the incident?

Q32 Did you experience LGBTQIA-related discrimination at your high school? (select all that apply)

- Disciplined for public displays of affection that were acceptable among non-LGBTQIA students (1)
- Clothing restrictions preventing clothes deemed "inappropriate" based on biological sex (2)
- Prohibited from using LGBTQIA topics in school (discussions or writing assignments) (3)
- Restricted from attending a dance or school activity with someone of same gender (4)
- Other (5) ____________________________

End of Block: School Climate
Q19 Did your school have a gay straight alliance (GSA)?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Unknown (3)

Display This Question:
If Did your school have a gay straight alliance (GSA)? = Yes

Q20 Did you participate in the GSA?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Display This Question:
If Did you participate in the GSA? = Yes

Q28 How often did you participate in the GSA

Q29 Did your school have an LGBTQIA resource center?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Unsure (3)

Display This Question:
If Did your school have an LGBTQIA resource center? = Yes
Q31 How often did you visit the LGBTQIA resource center?

Q30 Did you attend events/programs/etc. that were LGBTQIA focused/relevant?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q21 Do you participate in the GSA on UW Eau Claire's campus?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Didn't know we had one (3)

Q22 Were there supportive teachers/school staff?
- One staff member (1)
- Two staff members (2)
- Three staff members (3)
- Four staff members (4)
- Five staff members (5)
- Six or more staff members (6)
### Q27 Click to write the question text

| Did your school provide access to LGBTQIA-related internet resources through school computers? (1) | Yes (1) | No (2) | Unknown (3) |
| Did your school teach positive LGBTQIA-related content in class? (2) | Yes (1) | No (2) | Unknown (3) |
| Did your school teach negative LGBTQIA-related content in class? (3) | Yes (1) | No (2) | Unknown (3) |

End of Block: School Support and Resources

Start of Block: School Policies

### Q17 Did your school have anti-bullying/harassment policies in place?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Unknown (3)

Display This Question:

If Did your school have anti-bullying/harassment policies in place? = Yes

Were these policies comprehensive? (e.g. including protections for sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression)

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Unknown (3)

End of Block: School Policies
Appendix E. Debrief Form

You’re almost finished! Please read this debriefing statement and print off the evidence of participation slip.

Debriefing
The purpose of this research is to examine the current high school climate in an effort to inform future changes in schools to create the best possible learning environment for all students.

We understand that certain questions on this survey may make certain participants uncomfortable. The survey questions have been designed to evaluate a range of beliefs and attitudes toward LGBTQ+ individuals. Please contact us if you wish to know the results of our study or have feedback concerning aspects of the study.

Contact Information:
If you have any questions or concerns about the nature of this study, please contact Tianna Olsen, school psychology student, email: olsentj4780@uwec.edu.
Appendix F. Evidence of Participation Form

Previous School Perceptions

Evidence of Participation
____________________ has participated in a psychology research study titled, "Previous School Perceptions." This study is being conducted by Tianna Olsen (School Psychology Student) at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. The study involves a single session and takes 15 minutes or less to complete. Thank you for your participation in the study. If you have any remaining questions, please contact Tianna Olsen.

____________________________________
Participant's Signature and Date of Participation

Print this page for your records.