

OUR CAMPUS, OUR LIVES: AN ASSESSMENT OF CAMPUS CLIMATE FOR
LGBTQ+ STUDENTS AT SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY

A Thesis submitted to the faculty of
San Francisco State University
In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree

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2016
HMSX
• B64

Master of Arts

In

Sexuality Studies

by

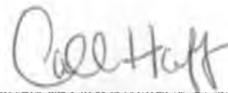
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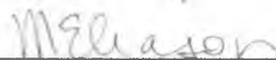
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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read *Our Campus, Our Lives: An Assessment of Campus Climate for LGBTQ+ Students at San Francisco State University* by Justin Michael Boese, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree Master of Arts in Sexuality Studies at San Francisco State University.



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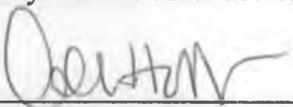
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OUR CAMPUS, OUR LIVES: AN ASSESSMENT OF CAMPUS CLIMATE FOR
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2016

In the last two decades, campus climate research has fostered increased awareness of the issues facing LGBTQ students and important changes in campus policy, programming, and resources. Despite being located in the SF Bay Area and having a history of diversity and social justice, SF State has not previously performed a large-scale LGBTQ campus climate survey and lacks data on the LGBTQ student population. Our Campus, Our Lives responds to that need with a campus climate study consisting of an online survey and in-person interviews with LGBTQ students, providing a picture of how these students perceive and experience the campus environment at SFSU inside and outside the classroom. Our Campus, Our Lives represents an important first step toward more comprehensive campus assessment and can inform recommendations to SF State administrators, staff, faculty, and students committed to creating a more inclusive and engaged community and learning environment.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis.



Chair, Thesis Committee

5/23/16

Date

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all the students who participated in the study, especially those who gave their time to do in-person interviews. Without all of you, this research would not have been possible. Thank you to Colleen Hoff and Mickey Eliason, my dedicated thesis committee and two fantastic professors who not only helped me succeed in this project, but added to the invaluable education I received at SF State. I would also like to thank the rest of the wonderful faculty in the Department of Sociology and Sexuality Studies, as well as the Department of Health Education. Last but certainly not least, my deep gratitude for my family and everything they have done for me; thank you to my loving and dedicated partner, for staying up with me during the many late nights and never letting me give up, and to my amazingly supportive mother and father, who have helped guide and encourage me every step of the way in this long journey. I couldn't have done it without you.

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Literature Review

Introduction

Legal rights, protections, and representation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people in the United States are quickly expanding. These advances help shift cultural attitudes towards sexual minorities, and many young people in the U.S. have been positively impacted by the changing climate of LGBTQ rights and increased recognition in both media and politics (Yost & Gilmore, 2011). However, LGBTQ people still face significant challenges compared to their non-sexual and gender minority peers, including significantly higher rates of harassment, abuse, and discrimination in secondary schools, from fellow students, teachers, school staff, and even administration (Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer, & Boesen, 2014).

In the last two decades we have learned that creating a safe and supportive learning environment is important for the wellbeing and success of LGBTQ students (Mayo, 2014), and this is also true for college students specifically (Rankin, 2005). To address this, many colleges and universities across the country have added protections for gender identity and sexual orientation to their nondiscrimination policies (Marine, 2011). Despite this progress, many colleges and universities continue to be places where violence and hostility against LGBTQ students persists (Yost & Gilmore, 2011). The issue of campus climate for LGBTQ youth in higher education is complex and multi-faceted, and deserves continued attention and critical thought so that we can effect positive change on campuses across the country.

In reviewing the literature on LGBT campus climate, I will begin by discussing the concept of “campus climate” and describe the Campus Pride Index model that informs my research. Then I will review prominent research that has been conducted on the topic and how it intersects with research on the health outcomes of LGBTQ people. Practices and insight for staff working in student affairs will be discussed on how to take steps towards improving campus climate. Finally, I will analyze the Campus Pride Index score for SFSU, and review the state of LGBTQ-oriented services, resources, and policies that exist on campus.

In this research, the acronym “LGBTQ” or “LGBTQ+” is used to encompass a diverse range of sexual and gender identities. While it does not explicitly reference all gender and sexual minorities (GSM), it is meant to be inclusive of such identities. The LGBTQ acronym is also used interchangeably with the term “queer and trans” in the paper, in part to tie in the language of San Francisco State University’s Queer and Trans Resource Center. “Queer” here is used as an umbrella term for non-heteronormative experiences and identities, and highlights the positionality of individuals who find themselves marginalized in relationships, communities, and institutions. The concept of queer positionality also acknowledges that individuals and experiences are “raced, classed, and gendered, and that these identities are relational, complex, and fluid positions rather than essential qualities” (Martine and Gunten, 2002). It should be acknowledged that much of the research on campus climate in higher education has focused specifically on gay, lesbian, and bisexual people, and therefore many queer and trans individuals have been left out of the literature

(and subsequently, services and resources). When discussing a particular publication or organization, the original language and acronyms used in the literature are preserved in order to provide context for the work.

What Is Campus Climate?

According to Susan Rankin, a Senior Research Associate and Associate Professor at Pennsylvania State University and a founding member of the Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals, campus climate is 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” (2005). While this definition describes the psychological and social aspect of campus climate, a number of models have been developed in order to conceptualize a wider range of factors, including academic and institutional aspects.

Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson and Allen (1998) identified four dimensions of campus climate: the historical inclusion or exclusion of different groups, structural diversity in the number of groups represented on campus, the psychological climate of attitudes and perceptions among and between groups, and behavioral climate based on intergroup relations. A later model offered by Rankin and Reason (2008) described six factors that influence campus climate: access and retention, research and scholarship, inter- and intra-group relations, curriculum and pedagogy, university policies and services, and external influences such as local, state, and national government.

With these models in mind, the term “campus climate” is used in *Our Campus, Our Lives* to describe a broad span of factors, ranging from personal experiences and perceptions to institutional policy. The study touches on all of the aspects identified in the Hurtado et al. and the Rankin and Reason frameworks, with the exception of external influences. Some aspects of the study, such as the survey instrument, were strongly informed by the Campus Pride Index, which uses its own eight-factor model of campus climate assessment.

Campus Pride Index

Campus Pride is a leading national nonprofit focused on the campus environment for LGBTQ students in higher education. The organization was founded in 2001, and their primary goal is "to develop necessary resources, programs and services to support LGBTQ and ally students on college campuses across the United States." The Campus Pride Index is a tool developed by Campus Pride to assist colleges in improving LGBTQ campus climate. Development of the index began in 2001 with a national team of LGBTQ researchers, and launched in 2007. It has been tested by national organizations and professions within LGBTQ campus life and higher education, and it is weighted to take the type and size of an institution into account. There is an advisory board for the index, which reviews the instrument annually and oversees changes and improvements. The tool was recently updated in 2015 with a new assessment to reflect higher national standards.

While the Campus Pride Index is not a substitute for campus climate research on a particular campus, it is designed to be an effective step in identifying ways to improve LGBTQ campus climate. The tool is comprised of over 50 self-assessment questions that are categorized into eight LGBTQ-friendly factors. The factors are as follows:

- 1) LGBT Policy Inclusion
- 2) LGBT Support & Institutional Commitment
- 3) LGBT Academic Life
- 4) LGBT Student Life
- 5) LGBT Housing
- 6) LGBT Campus Safety
- 7) LGBT Counseling & Health
- 8) LGBT Recruitment & Retention Efforts

When completed, the school receives a confidential report that includes the index score and recommendations for improvement. The campus is assigned a score for each of the eight factors, as well as an overall score. The scores use a five-star system, where three stars represents the mid-range possible score. Public users can then see a basic profile on the Campus Pride Index website, though a school may opt out of sharing any information online.

The index does not take into account the personal experiences and perspectives of the students and staff at a given institution. This is important to note, because students on campus may perceive campus climate as better or worse than the score implies based on the social environment of the campus community both in and out of the classroom. Furthermore, the score and recommendations are based on the self-assessment questions alone, which may be vulnerable to bias and inaccuracy.

Research on Campus Climate for LGBTQ Youth

For many queer and trans students who go into higher education, college can be a chance to meet other LGBTQ people, date, “come out,” and express themselves in a variety of ways they have not been able to do previously in life (Yost & Gilmore, 2011). Furthermore, higher education is a chance for students to learn about LGBTQ issues and history for the first time, which can be deeply transformative for queer and transgender people. Several empirical studies have found that the perception of a campus as a non-discriminatory environment is important to student success and well-being. Perceptions of racism or sexism in academic institutions lead to poorer outcomes, including lower engagement and inhibited academic and intellectual development (Rankin, 2006). Perceiving or experiencing discrimination has a similar impact on LGBTQ students, including poor retention (Tetreault, Fette, Meidlinger, & Hope, 2013).

In a survey of fourteen universities in the U.S. (four private and ten public) done in 2004, Rankin found that 36% of undergraduate LGBT college students had experienced harassment in the past year. Furthermore, 20% of respondents reported that they feared for their physical safety because of the gender identity or sexual orientation, and 51% reported concealing their orientation or identity to avoid intimidation (Rankin, 2005).

The *2010 State of Higher Education for LGBTQ People* report, published by Campus Pride, provided results from a national campus climate survey. Notably, this survey included faculty, staff, and administrators as well as students. Among the findings

of the report were that LGBTQ respondents were seven times more likely to indicate that harassment they experienced was based on their sexual identity than their heterosexual counterparts (Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld & Frazer, 2010). Much of this harassment occurred in the classroom or in public while walking on campus. Transgender and gender non-conforming respondents were more likely to experience harassment than sexual minority students.

Many students experience multiple forms of discrimination and may belong to several marginalized groups. LGBT people of color experience more negative experiences than white LGBT students (Rankin, 2005; Tetreault et al., 2013). LGBT college students with disabilities often do not receive the care that they would normally receive due to being marginalized based on their gender identity or sexual orientation (Harley, Nowak, Gassaway, & Savage, 2002). It is vital for researchers, educators, administrators, and school staff to be aware of the multiple, intersecting identities that make up the complex tapestry of student experiences.

It is also important not to erase differences in the experiences of sexual minority students. While acronyms and umbrella terms such as “LGBTQ” are useful for looking at discriminatory attitudes in a broad sense, the experiences of students with specific gender identities and sexual orientations may greatly vary. One example of this is evident when looking at mental health among LGB college students. The Fall 2009 American College Health Association’s National College Health Assessment, which sampled over 27,000 college students, found that while LGB students in general reported higher levels of

mental health issues than their heterosexual peers, students who specifically identified as bisexual actually reported worse mental health, including higher numbers of suicide attempts, than those who identified as gay or lesbian (Oswalt & Wyatt, 2011). This increase in mental health issues was correlated with lower perceived academic performance.

Transgender people face a whole host of challenges and stresses related to their gender identity that non-transgender (cisgender) LGB students do not, such as how their gender identity is or is not acknowledged and respected by institutions and educators. This can include issues like whether or not a university allows a student to use their preferred name if they have not had a legal name change yet, or whether their identity is respected when it comes to gender-segregated residence halls and other campus housing (Beemyn, Curtis, Davis, & Tubbs, 2005). Transgender individuals also face higher rates of harassment, violence, and attempted suicide than their cisgender peers (Effrig, Bieschke, & Locke, 2011; Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld & Frazer, 2010). Transgender students have unique needs that are not addressed by general LGB inclusiveness.

As awareness of LGBTQ issues has increased, more campuses have expressed a dedication to diversity, resulting in changes to institutional policies, student recruitment, and more (Yost & Gilmore, 2011). However, it is important to examine perception versus actual experiences. It is possible for an academic institution to appear to be a supportive environment while still being ineffective at supporting marginalized groups. Furthermore, research on campus climate found that different groups of students are likely to have

different perceptions and experiences of the campus environment, and in many cases LGBTQ students rate campus climate lower than heterosexual, cisgender students (Rankin, 2005). Even the availability of resources is not in itself a good indicator of good outcomes for queer and trans students. In fact, one large-scale study found that the availability of LGBT student life resources was positively associated with the binge drinking of queer men and the smoking of queer women (Marine, 2011). It is for this reason that it is especially important to hear the perspectives of LGBTQ students in their own words when assessing campus climate; making assumptions about the effectiveness of programs and the experiences of students may conceal negative outcomes.

LGBTQ Centers and Student Affairs

In *Stonewall's Legacy: Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Students in Higher Education*, a monograph in the ASHE Higher Education Report Series, Susan Marine dedicates a section of this invaluable text to describing the history, form, and function of “the BGLT Resource Center” (2011, 81-100). These centers, focused on providing services and support to queer and trans students, take a variety of characteristics and names, sometimes called LGBTQ centers, LGBT resource centers, queer resource centers, pride centers, and various other titles. Marine includes an overview of their major functions and purposes, and notes that in order to successfully implement programs and services for LGBT youth, these centers must be able to assess the specific needs of the students on their campus. Marine states that this data collection

must go beyond a mere census of LGBT students, and reminds readers that because campus climate may look very different to LGBT students of different backgrounds, identities, and communities, a diverse sample is very important (p. 89-90). She goes on to describe the important and growing role of professional staff employed as LGBT center directors, the politics of these centers on campus, and how LGBT issues fit into the realm of higher education student affairs (Marine, 2011).

In a special issue of *New Directions for Student Services* titled *Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation: Research, Policy, and Personal Perspectives*, several contributors weighed in on the role of student affairs professionals in leading efforts to improve campus climate, including the establishment and leadership of LGBT centers (Sanlo, 2005). It is clear from the literature that it is vital that institutions commit professional staff and financial funds to serving LGBTQ students on their campus. For those colleges and universities just beginning to address these issues, there are various resources available to help guide the process of assessing campus climate and establishing a center to support their queer and trans students, from social-science and health research to personal accounts of LGBT center directors, student leaders, and student affairs professionals. University staff should familiarize themselves with the literature available so that they can effectively gauge campus climate and meet the needs of a diverse student body.

The Associated Students Queer and Trans Resource Center

The Queer and Trans Resource Center (QTRC) is still a relatively new program at San Francisco State, only formed in 2012 (Barrington, 2014). It is important to clarify that the QTRC is not run by the University administration directly. The center is run by Associated Students (AS), the non-profit student government association for the school. It has a small space in the student center, which it shared with EROS (Education and Referral Organization for Sexuality) up until the beginning of the Spring semester of 2016 when EROS moved to a new room. Funding and programming is understandably very limited, and the existence of the QTRC does not necessarily fulfill the need for a university-run LGBTQ center with more space and funding.

I spoke at length with Sebastian Ochoa-Kaup, the director of the Queer and Trans Resource Center. As someone who has been working there since 2013, his experience with the QTRC and his knowledge of LGBT affairs on campus was very insightful. When asked why he thought there wasn't any kind of LGBT center on campus before 2012, he answered:

I think there was just an unspoken assumption that the students on campus were getting the resources they needed off campus, that there wasn't homophobia or transphobia on this campus, that there wasn't a need for physical support for students. The QA (Queer Alliance) has existed since the 70s, people probably assumed that's enough. Which is kind of ridiculous.

Because it was the first program of its kind on campus, there was no existing framework or history to build on. There was some concern from the management of Associated Students about whether it was a good idea to even start the program when

there was not a wealth of resources available to allocate to it; this was reflected by the fact that they were started as a sub-program of EROS, and had to share an office with that program. While there was and still is vocal support for the program in Associated Students, the merger between Associated Students and the Cesar Chavez Student Center, which began in the fall of 2013, has hindered development of the program. As an example, Sebastian noted they are the only AS program with only two employees; increasing the staff is intended as soon as budgets have been stabilized, but that has yet to happen.

Other limitations and challenges stem from the structure of Associated Students (AS) itself, which Sebastian characterized as “very weird,” and not typical among other CSUs. “It’s weird that our multicultural center is through AS and we don’t have anything through our university . . . All of our student service type programming is through AS.” Reviewing the literature, it seems that solely student-run LGBT resource centers in higher education are also not typical, both in general and among other CSUs. Sebastian confirmed this based on his own extensive research on LGBT programming in the CSU system. Describing his own ideal scenario for the QTRC, he suggested connecting the Women’s Center, the QTRC and EROS into a “gender and sexuality equity center.”

However, he still expressed downsides to keeping LGBT resources on campus limited to an Associated Students program. Since the program has already been established, and has done a lot of great work considering the lack of support, there isn’t as much motivation to hire professional staff for it. He expressed concern that the

existence of the QTRC made it easier for the administration not to do anything else since there is less pressure on them to do so – pressure which was in turn unfairly placed on the student staff of the QTRC to cover the full duties of a college LGBT center on their own. Further, even if there was motivation and funding for a full-time professional staff position, it could be hard to attract someone with training and experience to the position, as most qualified applicants would probably rather work in an administration-funded student affairs position than for a small program in the student government auxiliary.

These are important factors to consider, because having professional staff for an LGBT resource center is a necessity. Student staff are limited in experience, often have no formal training, and are restricted to working 20 hours a week, which limits programming and operational hours. Furthermore, there is no one with more experience to guide them; Sebastian said that no one higher up in Associated Students management or leadership has experience running an LGBT center. “If the center was through the university, it would have professional staff. It’s not that we don’t want students involved, that’s super cool, but it’s just something that is necessary for continuity in programming, and for being able to dedicate 40 hours a week to this kind of program.”

SFSU Campus Pride Index Score

San Francisco State University's Campus Pride Index profile became publically available during the summer of 2015. Previous to this, the campus had not submitted a self-assessment and was not scored or ranked on the Campus Pride Index website. It is

currently one of nineteen colleges in California that have a public profile on the site. The overall index score for the university is a 3 out of 5 stars, representing a mid-range score. This places it under the scores of ten of the other eighteen colleges, including other public institutions such as San Diego State University, UC Davis, UC LA, CSU Northridge, CSU Long Beach. The rating is tied with several institutions such as CSU Chico and UC San Diego.

In addition to the overall score, there are also 1-5 star ratings broken down by each of the eight LGBTQ-friendly factors. On the public profile, each factor has multiple items that are either checked or unchecked depending on whether the school fulfills the requirement of the item. The factor-based scores and items can be seen on Table 1, shown below. Looking at the eight factors, a few things stand out. The only factor that SFSU received 5 out of 5 stars on was LGBTQ Housing and Residence Life, which includes items such as gender-inclusive housing, LGBTQ theme floors, and LGBTQ training for housing staff. None of the other seven factors rise to 4 stars or above. LGBTQ Student Life and LGBTQ Campus Safety both have 2 out of 5 stars, and LGBTQ Recruitment and Retention Efforts has 1.5.

Table 1: SFSU Campus Pride Index Scores

LGBTQ Policy Inclusion 3/5 stars		LGBTQ Housing & Residence Life 5/5 stars	
Non-discrimination statement inclusive of sexual orientation	✓	LGBTQ living space, theme floors and/or living-learning community	✓
Non-discrimination statement inclusive of gender identity	✓	Roommate matching for LGBTQ students to find LGBTQ-friendly roommate	✓
Health insurance coverage to employee's same sex partner	✓	Gender-inclusive housing for new students	✓
Accessible, simple process for students to change their name on University records and documents	✓	Gender-inclusive housing for returning students	✓
Accessible, simple process for students to change their gender identity on university records and documents		Gender-inclusive/single occupancy restroom facilities in campus housing	✓
Students have option to self-identify sexual orientation on admission application or post enrollment forms		Gender-inclusive/single occupancy shower facilities in campus housing	✓
Students have option to self-identify gender identity/expression on admission application or post enrollment forms		Trains residence life and housing staff at all levels on LGBTQ issues and concerns	✓
LGBTQ Support and Institutional Commitment 3.5/5 stars		LGBTQ Campus Safety 2/5 stars	
Resource center/office with responsibilities for LGBTQ students	✓	Procedure for reporting LGBTQ related bias incidents and hate crimes	✓
Paid staff with responsibilities for LGBTQ support services	✓	Active ongoing training for hate crime prevention	✓
Ally program or Safe Space/ Safe Zone	✓	active outreach to LGBTQ students and student organization	
Actively seek to employ diversity of faculty & staff including visible, out LGBTQ people	✓	Train campus police on sexual orientation issues	
Standing advisory committee that deals with LGBTQ issues		Trains campus police on gender identity/expression issues	
LGBTQ alumni group		Supports victims of LGBTQ sexual violence and partner violence	✓
LGBTQ Academic Life 3.5/5 stars		LGBTQ Counseling & Health 2.5/5 stars	
LGBTQ Studies program	✓	LGBTQ counseling/support groups	✓
LGBTQ specific course offerings	✓	Trans-inclusive trained counseling staff	✓
Actively recruit faculty for LGBTQ-related academic scholarship	✓	Free, anonymous and accessible HIV/STI testing	
New faculty/staff training opportunities on sexual orientation issues		LGBTQ-inclusive health information and safer sex materials available	
New faculty/staff training opportunities on gender identity issues		Trans-inclusive student health insurance policy which covers ongoing counseling services	
LGBTQ faculty/staff organization		Trans-inclusive student health insurance policy which covers hormone replacement therapy	✓

Table 1: SFSU Campus Pride Index Scores (Continued)

LGBTQ Student Life 2/5 stars		LGBTQ Recruitment & Retention 1.5/5 stars	
LGBTQ & Ally Student Organization	✓	Annually participates in LGBTQ admission fairs	
LGBTQ & Ally graduate student organization		LGBTQ student scholarships	✓
LGBTQ social fraternity/sorority		LGBTQ mentoring programs to welcome and assist LGBTQ students in transitioning to academic and college life	
Regularly plans LGBTQ social activities	✓	Special Lavender or Rainbow Graduation ceremony for LGBTQ students and allies	✓
Regularly offers educational events surrounding intersectionality of identities for LGBTQ people	✓	Admissions counselors receive LGBTQ-inclusive training and resources	
LGBTQ inclusive career services			
*Data from https://www.campusprideindex.org/campuses/details/342?campus=san-francisco-state-university			

It is important to note that the ratings for each factor are not necessarily a simple proportion of the checked items. For example, two of the four items under LGBTQ Recruitment and Retention are checked, but the score for the category overall is 1.5 out of 5. Presumably, this reflects the more detailed information and in-depth review that is included in the Campus Pride Index assessment process but is not publically viewable.

The SFSU Campus Pride Index profile raises several questions in regards to this research. Firstly, concerning many of the items that SFSU did meet the requirements for, are those programs, policies or services well-known, utilized, and effective? For example, Table 1 shows that SFSU met all the criteria for LGBTQ-friendly housing and residential life. However, how many students does the Rainbow Floor housing at SFSU admit, and how affordable is it? How many students know about and are utilizing the psychological and counseling services or support groups on campus? Are LGBTQ students informed

about the events that are on campus, or aware of the presence of LGBTQ faculty and staff? The existence of a particular resource or service does not speak to its effectiveness, and this illustrates a limitation of the Campus Pride Index scores. Without data from an in-depth campus climate study, these questions can't be answered.

There are also issues concerning the accuracy of the index assessment on several accounts. Under the LGBTQ Support & Institutional Commitment factor, two of the items which are marked as fulfilled are debatable: having a resource center/office with responsibilities for LGBTQ students, and having paid staff with responsibilities for LGBTQ support services. While Associated Students does receive funding from student fees, there is significant distance between the QTRC and the university administration. The Queer and Trans Resource Center staff consists of two employees: an assistant director position that is filled by current students, and therefore cannot go above half-time, and a director position, which has historically been a student position, but is currently filled by a recent alumni of the university. Both of these are employees of AS rather than the university.

Other than the employees of the QTRC, there are no other staff people on campus whose sole job is to handle LGBTQ support services – which means none at all among the university administration. This position rightfully belongs in the office of student affairs, or as it is called at SFSU, the office of the Vice President of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. As mentioned previously, there are AS administrative staff within the office of the Dean of Students – which is in turn under the Office of the Vice

President of Student Affairs. However, this somewhat removed connection is not the same as having a full-time personnel position within the administration itself that is specifically focused on LGBTQ affairs and student support, who can provide professional knowledge in the area, and who can inform LGBTQ-inclusive policies.

It is unclear whether these distinctions were evident in the self-assessment responses that were provided to Campus Pride or whether they would have changed the rating the school received. Regardless of the Campus Pride Index score, it limits both the capability of the school to serve LGBTQ students and the image of public institutional support for the LGBTQ community. It is also unclear whether the assessment for SFSU was conducted before or after the Campus Pride Index tool was reworked, and therefore whether the score for SFSU reflects the new, higher national benchmarks. Finally, there may have been some changes in school policy since the self-assessment was submitted to Campus Pride.

Conclusion

Research has shown that LGBTQ students in higher education face unique challenges and risks and benefit from efforts to improve campus climate (Rankin, 2005; Yost and Gilmore, 2011; Marine, 2011). Furthermore, certain LGBTQ students, such as students of color, students with disabilities, and transgender students, often have worse outcomes than their other LGBTQ peers and therefore have needs that are best met when the complexity of their experiences and identities are acknowledged (Rankin 2005;

Harley, Nowak, Gassaway, & Savage, 2002; (Efrigg, Bieschke, & Locke, 2011).

Conducting campus climate surveys is a valuable first step in assessing the needs of queer and trans students, and LGBT centers on college campuses can use data to tailor services to specific campus communities (Marine, 2011).

Methods

The study uses a nested, mixed-methods design. In the first phase, cross-sectional data was collected through an online survey of LGBTQ+ identified students. The survey primarily consisted of closed-ended questions regarding students' gender and sexual orientation, demographic and educational background, and perceptions and experiences of various aspects of campus climate and services. Several open-ended questions were included, which gave participants the option to provide examples of their experiences or make additional comments. The second phase consisted of semi-structured in-person interviews. Students who took the survey had the option to volunteer for an interview, and a sample was chosen randomly from this pool. The goal of this approach was to explore a greater range of responses from participants than using one type of data alone, and to determine if interview responses confirm/disconfirm survey responses, or provide context for the quantitative findings.

Mixed-methods research combines techniques in collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data in order to strengthen research. Drawing on published campus-climate studies and related literature, a survey was created to address the

categories used by the Campus Pride Index rating system, as well as various topics that are not covered by the 8 LGBTQ-friendly factors. Qualitative data was collected through open-ended survey items, as well as private interviews with participants, in order to better understand their perspectives as students at SFSU. The quantitative and qualitative data sets were analyzed separately before comparing them. The study was approved by SFSU's Institutional Review Board (protocol number X15-62).

Phase 1: Online Survey

Participants

The pool of potential participants included all currently-enrolled students at SFSU who were 18 years old or older and self-identified as LGBTQ+. For the purposes of the study, "LGBTQ+" included lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer, as well as any other gender and sexual minorities who identified with the acronym. It was kept intentionally open to allow students of various queer or trans identities to participate without putting a defined limit on which gender and sexual minorities were included, but also without using the term "gender and sexual minorities" or "GSM", as the term is not one commonly used on campus. Beyond this, there were no inclusion or exclusion criteria used. Students could be enrolled in any capacity, class standing, or program type.

Recruitment

Because the participant population was unknown, and could not be targeted directly, multiple forms of recruitment were used. Recruitment posters were posted on public bulletin boards on campus. Flyer handouts were passed out to students and left with various organizations on campus. The project had a letter of support from the Queer and Trans Resource center on campus, who helped distribute flyers and made announcements about the study on their Facebook page. The QTRC also sent emails to all of the academic departments on campus, providing information about the study and asking them to share it with students. Professor Mickey Eliason also provided a letter of support on behalf of both the Health Education Department and the LGBTQ Scholar's Network. Professor Eliason spread the word through both networks via email and word out mouth.

Facebook was a big part of the recruitment strategy of the study. A Facebook page for the study was created that had a link to the study site and a summary of the research. Frequent recruitment announcements were made on this page, and student viewers were encouraged to share information with their peers. Approximately 50 other organizational Facebook profiles for academic departments, campus programs, and student organizations at SFSU were contacted via private messages. The messages provided information on the primary researcher's academic background at SFSU, the purpose and nature of the study, and who the academic advisors for the study were. The organizations were asked to share news of the study any way they could so that as many

LGBTQ+ students as possible could participate. They were also invited to ask any questions they might have about the study.

Word of mouth was very important for recruitment. Several professors were asked to share information directly with their students. All of the professors who taught courses in the LGBT Studies and Sexuality Studies minor programs were emailed, as well as around 70 additional professors in many different departments, asking them for assistance in spreading the word to students. Included in the email was the recruitment flyer and the link to the survey to make it easy for them to share. Snowball sampling was highly beneficial, and helped to reach the largely invisible population of LGBTQ+ students on campus. All the survey participants were asked to tell their friends and peers about the research.

Confidentiality

Identifying personal information was protected during the research. The online survey did not collect the names of participants. Students were informed that participation was completely optional, and that the only people with access to the survey data would be the primary research advisor and the two faculty research advisors, Colleen Hoff and Mickey Eliason. At the end of the survey, students were told about the interview portion of the survey, and were given a space to provide an email address that they could be contacted by if they were interested in participating. They were informed that participation in the interview segment, like the survey, was completely optional, and

that they would receive a \$25 Amazon.com gift card for their time. This was the only personal information that was collected. For students who did not offer an email address to be contacted, the survey was completely anonymous. Once a sample of participants for the interview phase was obtained, the email information from the participants was deleted.

Instrument

Because it was challenging to find a campus climate survey that covered all the topic areas that were of interest, and because it was desirable to tailor items to SF State specifically, an original instrument was designed. Various other campus climate surveys were consulted, but much of the current instrument was based on the Campus Pride Index tool, addressing most of the factors and items in some form. The resulting survey had 70 items in total, 66 of which were closed-ended questions. 4 of the items were open-ended questions, in which students could provide moderate-length text responses. This provided a small amount of qualitative data alongside the bulk of quantitative data. The survey was organized into 5 sections; demographic information, campus climate, the Queer Alliance, the Queer and Trans Resource Center, and institutional support. Incomplete surveys were recorded and kept, and students were not required to answer every question.

Phase 2: In-person Interviews

Participants and Recruitment

Participants for the in-person interviews were selected from the pool of participants for the online survey who volunteered email addresses to be contacted about the interview portion of the survey. From those that provided an email address, 5 at a time were chosen randomly using a random number generator and contacted for participation. If there was no response within one week of contact, another was chosen randomly from the pool. This was continued as necessary until 5 interviews were successfully completed.

Confidentiality

The interview participants were informed of all the interview procedures and the risks involved in participating in the research. They were assured that participation was optional, and that they could quit at any time, in which case all information and data from their interview would be destroyed. Participants signed informed consent forms that were securely stored, with only Mickey Eliason and myself having access to the forms. Interview audio was recorded, but no names or identifying information was recorded during the interview. Interview data is not linked to the survey responses of participants, and is securely stored in order to protect confidentiality. Pseudonyms are used in the analysis and discussion of the interview data.

Procedure

Potential participants were informed that interviews would take place at a time convenient for them and at a location on campus they felt familiar with, but suggested locations were given. Four of the interviews took place in the Sexuality Studies graduate student lounge, and one was done in a professor's office. Interviews were held between the hours of 9:00 am and 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday, as fit both the schedule of the participant and myself. The interviews were semi-structured, using a 10-item interview guide. Examples of some of the questions include "how do you feel as an LGBTQ Student at SFSU?" and "Imagine I'm a new LGBTQ student on campus. What would you tell me about the LGBTQ community here?" The interviews were flexible in nature, giving opportunities for participants to bring up issues, stories, or topics that they felt were important, and asking follow-up questions to encourage them to elaborate. Interviews went up to an hour and a half in duration, but most ended at around one hour.

Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative survey data was exported from Qualtrics to SPSS for analysis. Some values were recoded and consolidated. Analysis focused on univariate analysis using frequency tables and central tendencies. Several cross tabulations were generated, and chi-square and logistic regression tests were used to search for relationships between various dependent and independent variables.

Qualitative Analysis

Analysis of the interview data and qualitative survey data consisted of extensive notes and partial transcription followed by coding. Open coding was used to identify themes and topics. Quotations and comments were categorized by the 8 LGBTQ-friendly factors of the Campus Pride Index where applicable, but other codes were created for issues that are not included in the index, such as gender-neutral restrooms. The qualitative data was then compared to the quantitative data to verify trends and themes in the quantitative findings.

Results

Demographics

136 participants agreed to the terms of consent and started the survey. Participants were not required to answer every question, and most did not. Because of this, the number of responses for each question can vary. Data from incomplete surveys was not discarded. Of the 136 students who started the survey, about 104 made it through the demographic and general campus climate questions, which comprised the first 30 items in the 70 item survey. Ninety-three students made it to the last quantitative item and finished the survey, and 50 volunteered for the interview portion of the study upon completion. A random number generator was used to select participants from the group of 50 until 5 interviews had been successfully completed.

Because not much is known about the population, a significant number of the survey items are concerned with demographics and information pertaining to the students' academic standing. The age, class standing, gender identity, and sexual orientation of the participants is displayed in Table 2. The participants had an average age of 22.8, with a range of 18 to 54 ($n = 123$). About 82% of the students were ages 18 to 24. According to the school website, the average age of all students as of Fall 2015 is 23.4, which is very close to the results of the survey (SF State Facts, 2015).

There was an obvious imbalance in the reported class standing of the participants. Thirty-five percent identified as juniors and 25% identified as seniors, with much lower percentages for freshman, sophomore, and graduate students. Freshman made up the smallest group, at only 10%. Of the 5 interview participants, one was a Freshman who had just started school at SF State that semester, one was a transfer student from Community College of San Francisco with Junior standing, and three were Seniors who had been at SF State since they were Freshman.

The larger number of junior and Senior students is likely explained by the number of students who transferred from community college to SF State as juniors. Sixty-two percent of the students who reported junior standing and 34% of students who reported senior standing were transfer students from community colleges. Together with 8 other students who transferred from other 4-year universities, transfer students accounted for about 41% of the survey participants.

Gender

Due to the complex nature of gender identity for queer and trans people, participants were given a selection of gender options and were allowed to choose all that they felt applied to them. Additionally, there was an option to select “other” and write in a gender option. The frequencies with which each term was selected are shown in Table 2.

In order to get a clearer sense of the gender distribution of the sample, participants were manually sorted into a smaller set of gender categories. This also has the advantage of showing a gender distribution without repetition. For the purposes of this sorting, participants who marked either “Man/Masculine” and “Woman/Feminine” without marking “Transgender” or “Genderqueer/Non-Binary” were put into “Non-trans Woman” and “Non-trans Man” categories even if they did not check the “Cisgender” option (see Table 2). The reason why more students did not specify that they were cisgender is likely because many people are unfamiliar with the term, and cisgender individuals rarely, if ever, need to label themselves as such. This is an example of cisnormativity, in which cisgender identity is assumed because society sees it as the default. Four of the five students who selected “Other” were not sorted into these categories, and so were counted as missing for the simplified gender data.

As is shown in Table 2, women who did not identify as transgender or genderqueer/non-binary made up about half of the sample. Notably, transgender and genderqueer/non-binary students made up over a quarter of the sample, and

genderqueer/non-binary in particular was a more common selection for students who took the survey than was expected. Two of the students who participated in the interview portion of the study identified as cisgender women and use female pronouns (she/her/hers). Two use male pronouns (he/him/his) but one identified as a cisgender man and the other described his gender as queer. The fifth interview participant identified as gender non-conforming and uses gender neutral pronouns (they/them/their).

Orientation

Unlike gender identity, the item for sexual orientation was not a multi-response question. Instead, students were asked “Which term best describes your sexual orientation?” and were given a list of options. Once again participants could select “other” and write in a text response. The initial orientation options were asexual, bisexual, gay, heterosexual/straight, lesbian, queer, questioning, and other. Twelve respondents chose “other” and wrote in “pansexual” as their sexual orientation, constituting 10% of the sample, so a new category was created and those responses were recoded. Whereas bisexuality describes sexual attraction to two genders (usually men and women), pansexuality refers to people who can have sexual attraction to people of any gender, including trans, genderqueer, and non-binary individuals.

Table 2. Sample Demographic Characteristics

Age (range)	Mean	Median
18-54	22.8	21
Class Standing	Frequency	Percent
Freshman	13	9.6
Sophomore	17	12.5
Junior	46	33.8
Senior	35	25.7
Graduate Student	16	11.8
Other/Missing	9	6.6
Total	136	100
Gender Identity (Multiple Response)	Frequency	Percent
Man / Masculine	37	30.1
Woman / Feminine	66	53.7
Genderqueer / Non-binary	23	18.7
Transgender	10	8.1
Cisgender (That is, not transgender)	29	23.6
Other (if you wish, please specify)	5	4.1
Gender Identity (No Repetition)	Frequency	Valid Percent
Non-trans Woman	59	49.6
Non-trans Man	28	23.5
Transgender or Genderqueer/Non-binary	32	26.9
Total	119	100
Sexual Orientation	Frequency	Valid Percent
Asexual	3	2.4
Bisexual	26	21.1
Gay	25	20.3
Heterosexual/Straight	15	12.2
Lesbian	19	15.4
Queer	17	13.8
Questioning	3	2.4
Pansexual	12	9.8
Other	3	2.4
Total	23	100
Race/Ethnicity	Frequency	Valid Percent
African American / African / Black	6	4.9
Asian / Asian American	16	13.0
Hispanic / Latino	24	19.5
Middle Eastern / Southwest Asian / North African	3	2.4
Pacific Islander	2	1.6
White / European	49	39.8
Mixed racial/ethnic identity (Hispanic/Latino and White)	9	7.3
Mixed racial/ethnic identity (other)	14	11.4
Total	123	100.0

More people identified as bisexual than any other sexual orientation, making up 21% of the sample. Gay was second at 20%, followed by lesbian and queer at 15% and 14% respectively. Table 3 shows a cross-tabulation of the simplified gender categories and sexual orientation. Non-trans women show more variation in stated orientation than non-trans men; most identified as bisexual (27%), lesbian (24%) and straight (20%). A higher percentage of transgender/genderqueer/non-binary students identified as queer (25%) or pansexual (16%) than other respondents, which makes sense given that gay, lesbian, heterosexual, and even bisexual imply an assumed gender binary which those students themselves may not fit into. Non-trans women identified as bisexual, queer, and pansexual at a noticeably higher rates than non-trans men, a significant majority of whom identified as gay (68%).

Table 3. Cross-tabulation of Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation
(Frequency and Percent Within Gender)

	Asexual	Bisexual	Gay	Straight	Lesbian	Queer	Pansexual	Questioning /Other	Total
Non-trans women	2 3.4%	16 27.1%	0 0.0%	12 20.3%	14 23.3%	7 11.7%	6 10.2%	2 3.4%	59
Non-trans men	1 3.6%	3 10.7%	19 67.9%	1 3.6%	0 0.0%	2 7.1%	1 3.6%	1 3.6%	28
Transgender/ Genderqueer/ Non-binary	0 0.0%	6 18.8%	4 12.5%	1 3.1%	5 15.6%	8 25%	5 15.6%	3 9.4%	32

One of the interview participants identified as pansexual, two as queer, one as queer and pansexual interchangeably, and one as gay. Sharon (all names used are

pseudonyms) gave some insight into why she identified as a queer woman rather than a lesbian:

I personally choose the term queer because the term “lesbian” comes with a lot of stereotypes that I don’t want to associate myself with. Specifically, like, masculinity. I don’t want to be seen as a stereotype in any type of sense. The term lesbian allows for a lot of connotations to be put on me that I don’t want. I think the term queer allows for (pause) I think it allows for more positive connotations, like I guess, choosing one’s own identity outside of how everyone else thinks you should be.

Not all students shared the same level of comfort with the term. Two survey participants noted in text comments that they disliked the term “queer” because of its history as a slur, and noted that they didn’t like its use in the names of the Queer Alliance and Queer and Trans Resource Center. Allison, another interview participant, noted that while her parents did not like the term “queer,” she felt it had been reclaimed, and hadn’t personally experienced the negative connotations of it. Rather, she noted that in high school the terms “gay” and “dyke” were both used as slurs instead, and so those terms carried negative connotations. Sharon added that there were negative connotations to “bisexual” as well.

Race

Almost 40% of the participants identified as white/European, which is about twice as many as the 20% who identified as Hispanic/Latino. Of the 23 participants (19%) who identified with more than one racial/ethnic group, 9 of them chose Hispanic/Latino and White/European together (7%), so a new category was created for this group.

Considering that Asian students make up 32% of the population at SFSU, the small percentage of Asian identified students in the sample (13%) suggests they are underrepresented in the sample (SF State Facts, 2015). In the interview sample, three participants identified as white, one as African American, and one as Asian American.

Housing

Most of the students in the sample reported living off campus. 71 out of 123 (58%) said they lived off campus either independently or with roommates, and an additional 18 (15%) lived off campus with family. Of the 31 students living on campus, only 6 reported that they were living in the rainbow community on campus, the LGBT theme housing in The Village at Centennial Square. When asked “Do you feel secure in your current housing situation? (i.e., your housing situation is affordable and dependable, and you know where you are going to live for the next year),” 26% (32/123) of the participants said “No.”

Ability and Mental Health

Students were asked about conditions that impacted their learning, working, or living activities, and were free to mark any and all that applied. Of those who responded to the question, about 50% reported “none.” Of those who did report such a condition, “Mental health/ psychological condition” was the most common selection at 35%, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder was next at 12% (14/119), with 7 students checking both

boxes (Table 4). Despite the high percentage of students who reported one or more of these conditions, only 9 out of 123 (7%) said they were registered with the SFSU Disability Programs and Resource Center.

Table 4. Conditions that impact learning, working, and living activities (Frequency and percent of students who selected each condition)

Condition	Frequency	Percent
Acquired / Traumatic brain injury	2	1.7%
Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder	7	5.9%
Asperger's / Autism Spectrum	2	1.7%
Blind / Low vision	2	1.7%
Deaf / Hard of hearing	0	0.00%
Learning Disability	5	4.20%
Medical Condition	0	7.6%
Mental health / Psychological condition	42	35.3%
Physical / Mobility condition	3	2.5%
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	14	11.8%
Speech / Communication Condition	0	0.00%
Substance use disorder (drugs, alcohol)	8	6.7%
Other (please specify)	4	3.4%
None	59	49.6%

Campus Climate

Participants were asked to rate campus climate both generally and for different categories of LGBTQ+ people. Students were first asked how they describe the campus environment for them personally, and for LGBTQ+ students in general. Then they rated

campus environment for a set of specific subgroups. The ratings were on a 5-point scale, ranging from very accepting to very unaccepting. A sixth option, “not sure,” was provided so that people who felt they were not informed enough to give a rating were not lumped together with those who selected the “neutral” option. The frequencies, valid percentages, and means of the ratings for each subgroup can be seen in Table 5. The answers of “not sure” were not included in the averages, but are included in the valid percent. In this instance, higher means indicate less favorable ratings of campus climate, while lower means indicate higher levels of reported acceptance.

In general, students who took the survey rated the campus climate of SFSU as accepting. A majority of respondents rated it as “very accepting” or “somewhat accepting” in all instances except for trans women, trans men, and gender non-conforming/ non-binary people. Responses were most favorable for gay men; over 80% of respondents rated campus climate as “very” or “somewhat” accepting for gay men, with a mean rating of 1.54. In comparison, only 44% rated campus as accepting for trans women, with a mean rating of 2.48. The next highest means were for trans men (2.33), gender non-conforming/non-binary people (2.40), and LGBTQ+ identified people of color (2.19), indicating less favorable ratings those groups. Respondents answered “not sure” for those categories more than most others as well.

Table 5. Ratings of LGBTQ+ campus climate for various groups of students

	1: Very Accepting	2: Somewhat Accepting	3: Neutral	4: Somewhat Unaccepting	5: Very Unaccepting	Mean	Not Sure	Total
For you personally	47 44%	37 35%	14 13%	5 5%	1 1%	1.81	2 2%	106
For LGBTQ+ students in general	43 41%	40 38%	10 9%	6 6%	0 0%	1.79	7 7%	106
Trans women	21 19.8%	26 24.5%	17 16%	16 15.1%	4 3.8%	2.48	22 20.8%	105
Trans men	20 18.9%	32 30.2%	19 17.9%	13 12.3%	1 .9%	2.33	21 19.8%	106
Gender non-conforming/ non-binary	28 26.7%	20 19%	25 23.8%	12 11.4%	5 4.8%	2.40	15 14.3%	106
Bisexual men	30 28.3%	30 28.3%	18 17%	9 8.5%	1 .9%	2.10	18 17%	106
Bisexual women	41 38.7%	36 34%	11 10.4%	3 2.8%	1 .9%	1.77	14 13.2%	106
Lesbian women	57 53.8%	30 28.3%	11 10.4%	0 0%	2 1.9%	1.60	6 5.7%	106
Gay men	66 62.3%	22 20.8%	7 6.6%	2 1.9%	3 2.8%	1.54	6 5.7%	106
LGBTQ+ people of color	30 28.8%	28 26.9%	17 16.3%	9 8.7%	4 3.8%	2.19	16 15.4%	104
Other LGBTQ+ identified people	28 26.9%	28 26.9%	17 16.3%	6 5.8%	3 2.9%	2.12	22 21.2%	104

The interview participants each had different perspectives on the campus environment, ranging from very positive to fairly negative. For instance, Allison, a queer woman finishing her first semester at SF State, described the school as very accepting,

noting that it was much better than her conservative hometown. Eric, who identifies as a gay man, described the campus as “encompassing and diverse,” and said he had never had any negative or homophobic experiences. A comment provided by a survey participants echoed this sentiment: “I would just like to add that since coming to SFSU, I have experienced and witnessed the lowest rate of discrimination ever.”

Not all students had such a positive view. Jeremy, who identifies as queer both in terms of gender identity and sexual orientation, said he felt “ambivalent” about his experiences as a student. While he described the campus environment as “not overtly hostile” he went on to say “I guess I feel more marginalized on campus than off campus, at least within the context of San Francisco as a city.” Alex, who is gender non-conforming and pansexual, and uses neutral they/them/their pronouns, had mixed experiences; they described fairly positive experiences in the dorms and working in residential life, but described difficulty in the classroom and frustration with the administration in some incidences.

Students were also asked to rate how likely it is for specific groups of LGBTQ+ students to experience discrimination or harassment at SFSU; the results are displayed in Table 6. This measure, while still rated on a relative, 5-point scale, provides a more specific perspective of campus climate than the general acceptance ratings. In this item, the lower numbers (1 and 2) on the scale indicate higher perceived likelihood of discrimination, and higher numbers (4 and 5) indicate lower perceived likelihood. This means that unlike Table 5, higher means are more favorable than lower means.

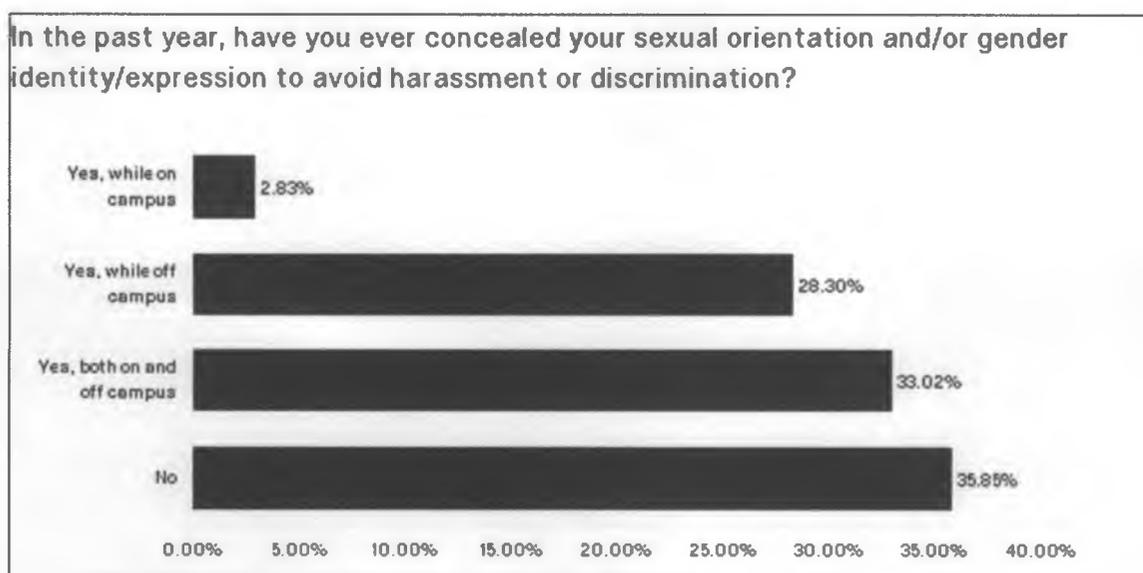
Table 6. Rated Likelihood of Harassment or Discrimination for LGBTQ+ Subgroups

In your opinion, how likely is it for the following groups to experience harassment or discrimination at SFSU?								
	1: Very Likely	2: Somewhat Likely	3: Neither likely nor unlikely	4: Somewhat Unlikely	5: Very unlikely	Mean	Unsure	Total responses
Trans women	18 (18%)	35 (35%)	6 (6%)	12 (12%)	11 (11%)	2.55	18 (18%)	100
Trans men	13 (13%)	29 (29%)	16 (16%)	14 (14%)	10 (10%)	2.74	18	100
Gender non-conforming / non-binary people	14 (13.9%)	35 (43.7%)	11 (10.9%)	11 (10.9%)	17 (16.8%)	2.80	13 (12.9%)	101
Bisexual women	3 (3%)	19 (19.2%)	16 (16.2%)	19 (19.2%)	30 (30.3%)	3.62	12 (12.1%)	99
Bisexual men	7 (6.9%)	25 (24.8%)	21 (20.8%)	15 (14.9%)	20 (29.8%)	3.18	13 (12.9%)	101
Lesbian women	2 (2%)	16 (16%)	17 (17%)	29 (29%)	27 (27%)	3.69	9 (9%)	100
Gay men	3 (3%)	19 (18.8%)	15 (14.9%)	21 (20.8%)	32 (31.7%)	3.67	11 (10.9%)	101
LGBTQ+ identified people of color	12 (12%)	30 (30%)	15 (15%)	12 (12%)	19 (19%)	2.95	12 (12%)	100
Other LGBTQ+ identified people	5 (5%)	24 (24%)	21 (21%)	11 (11%)	16 (16%)	3.12	23 (23%)	100

Once again, results were least favorable for transgender and non-binary people, as well as LGBTQ+ identified people of color. Fifty-three percent of surveyed students said that they felt it was either “very likely” or “somewhat likely” for trans women to experience harassment or discrimination at SFSU, compared to a combined 23% who said it was

unlikely to some degree; the mean rating was 2.55. The ratings were best for lesbian women, with only 18% of respondents answering that it was “very” or “somewhat” likely for them to experience harassment or discrimination, and a mean rating of 3.69. The ratings for gay men were comparable. Some students specifically mentioned these differences. A survey participant commented “I feel people are much more accepting with the gay and lesbian communities. However, people are still unaccustomed to intergender individuals and transgendered people.” In his interview, Eric said “I think that gay men, especially gay white men, have it easier than any other group. I think that transgender individuals have it a lot worse than the rest of us.”

Figure 1. Concealment of sexual orientation or gender identity



Students were asked whether they had ever concealed their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression in order to avoid harassment or discrimination within the past

year. Including students who did so both on and off campus, 36% of respondents concealed their sexual orientation and/or gender identify/expression to avoid harassment or discrimination at some time during the past year while on the SFSU campus (Figure 1). Including students who did so both on and off campus, 61% of respondents concealed their sexual orientation and/or gender identify/expression to avoid harassment or discrimination at some time while off campus. Although the survey did not ask students how many times they concealed their sexual orientation and/or gender identify/expression in the past year, these percentages are high enough to raise concern for the well-being of LGBTQ students attending SFSU while they are on campus as well as while they are in the larger community.

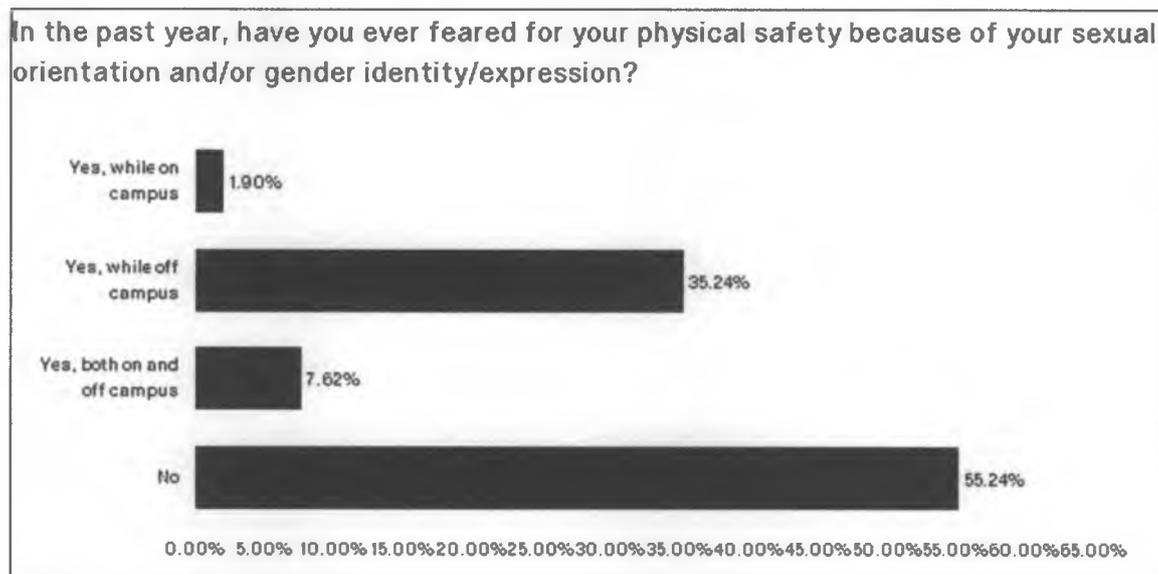
While the survey did not identify specific reasons why students may conceal their sexual orientation or gender identity, the experiences of one of the interview participants gives some potential insight into the issue. Speaking of her experiences in the freshman dorms, Allison described how people treated her differently after her sexual orientation was revealed:

I noticed there was a difference between when I first got there and when my boyfriend came down to visit. He's gender fluid. And after that people were looking at me differently, because maybe they didn't know I was identified as queer or anything. So there was a big difference between when I first got there and after that with the way people treated me and the way people looked at me. And like, I would be in the bathroom brushing my teeth and someone would be in a towel going to shower and they'd look like they were freaked out that I was there.

Allison made it clear that her experiences have not changed her decision to be “out” at school, saying “whatever, I don’t care what they think.” However, these sorts of reactions could lead other students to conceal their sexual orientation or gender identity in certain situations.

Campus safety is a crucial component of LGBTQ campus climate. Students were asked if they had ever feared for their physical safety because of their sexual orientation or gender identity on or off campus. The results can be seen in Figure 2. Taking into account how many students feared for their physical safety both on and off campus, about 10% of respondents feared for their physical safety because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identify/expression while on the SFSU campus at some point during the last year. Taking into account how many students feared for their physical safety both on and off campus, 43% of respondents feared for their physical safety because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identify/expression while off campus. Although the numbers of LGBTQ students who feared for their physical safety while on the SFSU campus and while in the larger community are lower than the numbers who concealed their identity in response to the previous survey question, the fact that any LGBTQ students reported fearing for their physical safety because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identify/expression should be cause for concern.

Figure 2. Fear for physical safety because of sexual orientation and gender identity



Because the survey question regarding harassment or discrimination incidents experienced by or witnessed by LGBTQ students while attending SFSU allowed for responses to a variety of forms of harassment or discrimination, it yielded a fairly complex set of responses, which can be seen in Table 7. In terms of forms of harassment or discrimination experienced by LGBTQ students, the most frequent were: pressure to conceal sexual orientation and/or gender identity (29%); anti-LGBTQ comments by students in class (22%); verbal harassment (19%); sexual harassment (12%); anti-LGBTQ comments by instructors (10%), and anti-LGBTQ content in readings, films, or other media assigned in class (10%). These same forms of harassment and discrimination were also those frequently witnessed by students regarding someone else's actual or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression, although not in the same

order of frequency. In addition, students also witnessed problems finding or keeping roommates (17%) and problems finding or keeping housing (13%).

Table 7. Experienced & witnessed discrimination & harassment (frequency and percent)

While attending SFSU, have you experienced or witnessed any of the following based on your or someone else's actual or perceived gender identity/expression or sexual orientation?		
	I personally experienced this based on my actual or perceived gender identity/expression or sexual orientation.	I witnessed someone else experiencing this based on their actual or perceived gender identity/expression or sexual orientation.
Verbal harassment	20 (19.2%)	27 (26%)
Physical assault	1 (1%)	3 (2.9%)
Denial of services	4 (3.8%)	6 (5.7%)
Sexual harassment	12 (11.5%)	16 (15.4%)
Sexual abuse/assault	2 (1.9%)	4 (3.9%)
Threats of violence or other consequences	4 (3.9%)	8 (7.7%)
Threats to expose your sexual orientation and/or gender identity	6 (5.8%)	8 (7.7%)
Pressure to conceal your sexual orientation and/or gender identity	30 (28.8%)	22 (21.2%)
Vandalism / Graffiti / damage to or destruction of property	2 (1.9%)	4 (3.9%)
Problems finding / keeping housing	6 (5.7%)	13 (12.5%)
Problems finding / keeping roommates	9 (8.7%)	18 (17.3%)
Employment discrimination	3 (2.9%)	5 (4.8%)
Differential treatment by a teacher or TA	7 (6.7%)	7 (6.7%)
Anti-LGBTQ comments by students in class	23 (22.1%)	23 (22.1%)
Anti-LGBTQ comments by instructors	10 (9.6%)	10 (9.6%)
Anti-LGBTQ content in readings, films, or other media assigned in class	10 (9.6%)	7 (6.7%)

These fairly high incidences of harassment and discrimination reported by LGBTQ students while attending SFSU are quite alarming. The relatively high reports of anti- LGBTQ comments by students in class, and by instructors as well as anti-LGBTQ materials assigned in class are directly related to LGBTQ students' academic experiences at SFSU. It is also worth noting that smaller numbers of students reported threats to expose sexual orientation and/or gender identify, denial of services, sexual abuse/assault, and physical assault. Given the seriousness of these incidents, the fact that any of the surveyed LGBTQ students reported them is cause for concern.

While Eric and Sharon did not talk about negative experiences of discrimination or harassment very much, other interview participants did. Alex talked quite a bit about their personal experiences as a student, as well as an RA for the rainbow floor. Speaking about transitioning from a conservative hometown to SFSU, they said that "It [SFSU] was a much more open environment, where maybe I wasn't respected because people still question my gender pronouns... but it's a lot less hateful comments, it's more out of curiosity and just not knowing how to ask those questions." The image that they painted of the school environment was complex, not black and white. Alex elaborated on the subject:

I will say that I have been assaulted more on campus than I had in my hometown, but I think it's also because I've been more open and not afraid to be more of who I am, being now in the city. I also know it's been on campus or nearby campus that I've felt the most hate from people, and I think that's because people are coming from all different parts of the world just to come to our campus for school or just to live in the city. Not all of them are going to have respectful view. . . I

think our campus is really good about trying to be inclusive and making people feel comfortable, but I know that they can't make you feel safe all the time.

Jeremy also had quite a lot to say about campus climate. Unlike Alex, he was less forgiving in his comments about campus environment and safety.

The thing that I find sort of upsetting is that San Francisco State as an institution sort of makes all this promissory rhetoric about how it's a space of social inclusion and social justice, and how its goal is to engage students in critical thinking, when it, I feel, doesn't take any every-day action to sort of back up those claims. You know, as far as "safe spaces," I don't feel that safe.

Classroom Environment

Incidences of discrimination, prejudice, or harassment sometimes took place in the classroom. Survey participants were given the option to comment on specific incidences that they wanted to share, and several described specific negative experiences. "I had an incident in class where a student wrote a very homophobic and transphobic paper, and a couple of us were trying to explain why, but the instructor ended up shutting us down, explaining at that class – and in the next class – that our 'political view' had no bearing on the class or the quality of the writing... This was a graduate creative writing class," one student commented. Some incidences were not targeted at specific students, but still made them feel uncomfortable. "While I do not really count it as harassment," another student said, "I do remember one moment in a Cognitive Psychology course I took over a year ago where a student was adamant about arguing with the professor because he believed there were only two genders, male and female." While this particular

experience appears to be a victimless incident, such experiences can still make students uncomfortable, or encourage them to conceal their orientation or gender identity.

Sexuality Studies courses are not exempt from problematic incidences. In one instance, a survey respondent describes such an experience:

One of my teachers for a Human Sexuality class, [the professor], repeatedly makes transphobic comments, encourages transphobic ideas and conversations, and when I spoke to [the professor] after class one day, [they] expressed that my complaints amounted to me overacting and that [they] would not take action to change [their] transphobic curriculum. . . My gender dysphoria has become a massive source of anxiety that it wasn't prior to taking this class and it's directly affecting my depression and general mental health.

Alex also described some issues in Sexuality Studies courses, mainly with what they described as “outdated” lecture material, or professors who had not kept up with current and appropriate language concerning trans identity. Online courses presented challenges as well, as changing preferred name in the iLearn system is difficult. In general, Alex had more issues with courses in other departments, and had grown used to having to educate their professors on gender identity.

Starting in the social work program, I had to explain it to almost all of my professors. I had to explain what pronouns were to them. Some respect it, some don't. Preferred name – a lot of them still don't respect that. . . Before every class I've learned I have to send them an article on trans students in higher education and do a paragraph or two email about “here's what my name is on your roster, here's what I like to go by,” and break it down for them. Even as a teacher at SF State, they're not taught really about trans students. Luckily in the Sexuality Studies department that's not a large battle.

Not all incidences are obvious or overtly offensive, and sometimes they can occur in otherwise accepting classroom atmospheres. Allison described a political science class in which she felt the teacher responded had fostered an accepting environment regarding LGBTQ issues, and responded positively to a group project in which she was able to talk to the class about non-binary gender identities. However, talking about that same project, she described how another classmate, whose project addressed gender inequality but only focused on cisgender men and women, seemed to take issue with her group's presentation. "Somebody even asked them afterwards if there was a specific reason that they only chose to focus on cisgender females and males. And the girl who was answering the question got really irritated and she was like 'No, we didn't focus on any *others*,' and then gave me this really annoyed look. And it was really because that class had been really great that entire time but then like, yeah, that was really bad."

Allison said that while the professor raised his eyebrows at the interaction, he did not otherwise respond or address the incident. Furthermore, she didn't seem to blame him for not doing so. Small incidences such as these, which can be categorized as "micro-aggressions," may occur more frequently than students report. Likewise, students such as Allison may not, for one reason or another, expect their professors to do anything about them. However, it is clear by her description that it did have a negative impact on the classroom environment, and that tension may not have gone unnoticed by other students in the class as well.

Alex noted that when identity was disrespected or invalidated in the classroom, it could potentially become a teachable moment. However, this is very dependent on both the willingness of students to engage it the topic and the attitudes of the professor. They observed that “female-bodied” teachers were more willing to have discussions rather than simply move on, but that they had seen multiple instances of male professors ignoring the issue, without repercussions for the disrespectful students or conversations that could lead to education. “I think that’s also because sometimes professors don’t know the weight of what it could feel like for someone on the other end, because they’re not seeing it as like a racial slur, which they would immediately stomp out.”

While negative experiences can happen in any subject, it seems to be more prevalent in general education courses. Sharon said that she hadn’t had any issues in LGBT-related courses, but that in some GE classes the comments of other students came off as bigoted or homophobic at times. Alex was very specific in describing the issue, saying that “If it’s a general ed class? I know I’m not going to be stood up for most likely.” Jeremy had favorable things to say about Sexuality Studies courses, noting that his experiences were much better within the department than in others, and that he felt the atmosphere in those courses were overall respectful and considerate. However, he said that he had taken Sociology courses where he was surprised about how unaware some of the faculty were about LGBTQ identity. He also commented that “More broadly, I would be surprised if any training was provided to faculty about how to respond to students who are sort of non-conformists.”

In other cases, sometimes non-LGBT Studies and non-Sexuality Studies courses have fewer incidences simply because of the subject matter. Eric noted that in his experience double-majoring in Cellular and Molecular Biology and Classics, LGBT issues didn't come up in his classes at all, so there wasn't much opportunity for homophobia to be expressed. However, both Alex and Jeremy expressed that they believed all teachers should receive information about LGBTQ identity. Jeremy said that he thought teachers should receive training on LGBT issues, while Alex said that even having small written materials available for teachers to reference would be helpful, particularly regarding gender identity, preferred names, and pronouns.

Experiences Outside of the Classroom

The incidences reported in Table 7 are not limited to the classroom. Table 8 shows the survey data collected regarding the location of experienced or witnessed incidences. This data does not specify how many times the respondent experienced or witnessed an incident in each location, only that they did so at least once within the past year. The specific locations on campus with the highest combined frequencies were on-campus housing (combined frequency of 18), in the classroom while class is in session (14), and student organizations, clubs, or events (12). There was also a combined frequency of 22 for "other areas on campus," which suggests that incidences often occur in locations on campus that were not specified by the survey.

Identifying some of the other places where problematic incidences occur, Jeremy

mentioned the sidewalks and designated smoking areas. “There are a lots of ways in which there is a lot of gender micro-aggressions that are sort of going unchecked. . . There’s a lot of young, mostly guys, who kind of stand around in these clumps and are smoking and the conversations are pretty awful.” Alex identified several other areas on campus where harassment was common: “Even waiting at the bus stop at the top of the school, somewhere like that. The perimeter, or parking garages especially.” The worst experiences that Alex described took place along Holloway Avenue, or in the Park Merced neighborhood right next to the campus: “I’ve had people yell things from cars, people drive by, stop, park their car, get out and come at me. I’ve had things thrown at me. Things like that where you know that they’re students because of their bumper sticker, but you also know they are off campus and they feel safe to do and act as they please.”

One survey respondent submitted a text response that said “The majority of incidences are simply people yelling slurs or hateful language, never any direct confrontations, and only ever off campus.” While the experiences of some of the other participants suggest this is not true for everyone, it does raise the point that LGBTQ+ students are not free from experiencing discrimination or harassment off-campus just because they are in the SF Bay Area. In fact, table 8 shows that survey participants reported discrimination and harassment off campus in the Bay Area at fairly high rates, higher than the numbers on campus. Students reported personally experiencing such an incident at a frequency of 26, which makes up a full quarter of survey participants. This

was even higher for witnessing discrimination or harassment occur to someone else, with a frequency of 42 (about 40% of the sample).

Table 8. Discrimination and Harassment by Location: Frequency and Valid Percent

Have you experienced or witnessed discrimination or harassment based on gender identity/expression or sexual orientation at the following locations with the last year?		
	I personally experienced discrimination or harassment here.	I witnessed someone else experiencing discrimination or harassment here.
On-campus housing	8 (7.69%)	10 (9.61%)
Off-campus housing	11 (10.57%)	10 (9.61%)
SFSU classrooms, while class is in session	5 (4.80%)	9 (8.65%)
SFSU classrooms, while class is not in session	2 (1.92%)	5 (4.80%)
Cesar Chavez Student Center	1 (0.96%)	5 (4.80%)
Campus Library	1 (0.96%)	4 (3.84%)
A university-sponsored activity or event	3 (2.88%)	7 (6.73%)
A student organization / club activity or event	3 (2.88%)	9 (8.65%)
Other areas on campus	6 (5.77%)	16 (15.38%)
Off campus in the SF Bay Area	26 (25%)	42 (40.38%)
Other	4 (3.84%)	1 (0.96%)

Gender Identity, Names, and Pronouns

As is already apparent from some of the described incidences, issues concerning gender identity and pronouns came up a lot in both the survey comments and the in-person interviews. One student commented on experiencing prejudice based on their gender identity/expression in the survey: “When wearing female clothing, I receive many

stares and mean looks. I'm in the early to middle stages of transitioning, so I am expecting more of the same until I go full-time femme." Another commented on something they witnessed in the classroom: "I heard someone call their TA an it out of confusion of pronouns." Some of the other comments provided by students included "Staff fail to acknowledge chosen pronouns or identities," and "The major source of difficulties is with professors just assuming pronouns, regardless of how a student presents."

A student shared frustration with administrative issues regarding their gender identity: "I may not be able to get the name I use printed on my Master's thesis, and instead my birth name may be printed on my master's thesis. My birth name is on my SFSU ID card and on all my class rosters. iLearn uses my birth name." Alex spoke at length about the difficulty they faced when trying to use a preferred name. "Just the forms to get into [SFSU], it's legal name only, there's no preferred option even for ID cards. It's legal name only unless you go through the name change process and then you can get it on your certificate when you graduate."

Jeremy also expressed frustration with administrative forms that were not accessible for trans, non-binary, or queer students. In one quote, he describes a particular situation as well as how it made him feel about the administration overall:

I feel that the administration, and to some degree the faculty, make gestures towards inclusion that I don't feel are anything more than a show, I guess. For instance, this is one of my biggest pet peeves. I'm a special major, right, and I have to go to advising all the time, and every time you go you have to check in on the computer and I have to fill out this form and its "male," "female," or "prefer

not to answer.” Well, first of all, male and female aren’t genders, and then second of all, I *would* prefer to answer but you’re not providing me the space to do that. So it’s ways in which the system sort of makes me feel not just that I’m invisible, but that I have to work to be seen.

This extra effort, in which students like Jeremy or Alex feel they have to “work to be seen,” inevitable colors their perception of campus climate, and affects how they feel treated by the university.

The Queer Alliance and LGBTQ Community

The first item listed for “LGBTQ Student Life,” one of the 8 factors measured in the Campus Pride Index, is the existence of an LGBTQ & Ally Student Organization (Table 1). At SF State, this takes the form of the Queer Alliance. According to the SFSU website, the “Queer Alliance is a student organization created to provide a safe place and outlet for friendly students of all genders, sexualities and identities.” Often referred to as the QA, the organization has a room in the Cesar Chavez Student Center, and organizes events and activities.

Several items in the survey asked students about their experiences with the QA (see Table 9). Surprisingly, fewer than a quarter reported involvement with the organization QA; only 23% of the students in the sample had attended a meeting, activity, or event organized by the QA. Of those who reported experience with the Queer Alliance, about half of respondents characterized those experiences as “very positive” or

“somewhat positive.” Forty-two percent said it was at least somewhat likely that they would attend an activity or event in the future.

Table 9. Queer Alliance, Participation and Perceptions

Have you attended any meeting, activity, or event organized by the Queer Alliance?		
Answer	Frequency	Percent
Yes	24	23%
No	81	77%
How would you describe your experiences with the Queer Alliance?		
Answer	Frequency	Percent
Very positive	11	11%
Somewhat positive	8	8%
Neutral	12	12%
Somewhat negative	5	5%
Very negative	1	1%
No experience	67	64%
How likely are you to attend an activity or event organized by the queer alliance in the future?		
Answer	Frequency	Percent
Very likely	8	8%
Somewhat likely	36	34%
Neither likely nor unlikely	26	25%
Somewhat unlikely	7	7%
Very unlikely	17	16%
Unsure	11	10%

The comments that survey participants provided about the Queer Alliance were varied in nature. Quite a few reflected a lack of familiarity with the organization; “I’d be interested in learning more about it.”; “I recall QA giving announcements before some of my classes, but I don’t recall what the content of these announcements were.”; “I just don’t know what they do exactly.”; “I knew we had a GSA-like organization on campus, but have never seen any information about meetings or participating.”; “I know that this

organization exists, but I don't know who they are, where they are, or what they do."

Several students described difficulty when it came to getting involved for one reason or another, such as "Their scheduling and meeting usually conflict with my classes. I never get to attend," "It seems like I never have time to attend the meetings or I usually have class or theatre projects that conflict with it," and "I just don't have the time!"

Half of the 20 write-in responses appeared negative in nature, and the exclusivity or insular nature of the organization as a social clique was a common theme. "I went to the room a couple of times because I wanted to get involved, but I just didn't feel that welcome there," wrote one student. Other students described similar experiences. "Very cliquish, I did not feel welcome the times I attended their events or visited their lounge." "I visited the Queer Alliance and the individuals there seemed very cliquey. It didn't feel like a very welcoming space. I haven't been involved since that experience." "When I tried to figure out more about Queer Alliance by dropping by twice I just felt very unwelcome." Some comments were more specific in their criticism. One student wrote "No real way to get involved, to connect with members of queer alliance. More events, especially coordinated with EGAY would be nice." EGAY refers to Everything Great About You, the LGBT and Ally network for residential life at SFSU. "Very cis-led and pro gay rights, little on trans rights and little to do with organizing, simply a 'hang out spot,' poor programming attitudes and follow through."

A fewer number of comments were positive in nature; "The QA is an awesome place. I just wish they were granted funding by the school."; "I am glad that SFSU

actually has both a Queer Alliance and a Queer and Trans Resource Center, and I am glad that [both organizations] have their own offices in the student union and are clearly visible.”; “Keep up the work! While we live in a city like San Francisco, our school lacks LGBTQ+ clubs and programs that are accessible to everyone.”

The QA did not come up as a topic of discussion in the interviews except with Alex. Alex’s personal experience with the Queer Alliance mirrored many of the student comments; they said they didn’t fit in as a student, that it was a cliquy “hang-out spot” that hosted occasional activities. Speaking from their perspective working for residential life, and their involvement with EGAY, Alex noted that while they are primarily a social organization and host their own activities, they do also assist other organizations with events at times.

There is more to campus community than just the Queer Alliance, however. Each of the interview participants were asked about their perception of campus community, and they all had different things to say. Sharon described her experiences of finding community as “amazing,” describing her involvement with slam poetry with great enthusiasm. She helps run a spoken word organization called SPEAK (Spoken Word Expressed by All Kinds) and characterized the community as open and intersectional. “I think it’s important to find spaces where, I mean that encourage you to love unconditionally. Because, it’s like, people talk about loving unconditionally, but I don’t think there’s enough of that.” However, she also noted that she initially had some difficulty finding communities she wanted to be a part of. Sharon said that in her

experience, the Black Student Union (BSU) lacked LGBT representation, doesn't address homophobia in the black community, and didn't feel very intersectional. Sharon expressed that that in general, there seemed to be organizations that focused on either racial identity and issues or LGBT identity and issues, but not both.

Eric and Allison didn't have as much to say as Sharon. Allison expressed that she hadn't yet been involved in community on campus, and said that she didn't feel much sense of LGBT community "from where I am in the dorms." Allison also said that she would have applied to be on the rainbow floor in the village, but hadn't because she wasn't out to her parents when she filled out the housing application. Eric said that he felt most students on campus are not as connected or active as they could be, but that the campus community was very active as far as events. He said that teachers were helpful in connecting students to community events, though he noted that his professors in the Humanities were better in that regard than those in STEM. When asked if he felt there was LGBT community on campus, Eric said "I'm sure there is," but didn't have personal experience with it.

Eric's opinion differed greatly from Jeremy's, who had a lot to say about it. As a transfer student, he said that he had felt there was a great deal of campus community at CCSF that didn't seem to exist at SF State, particularly when it came to LGBT community.

I guess that what it comes down to is that at State, I don't feel connected to it in any way... I feel like the classes are so large I just come and I go and nobody notices. But also, since the class is so large it's really hard to make friends. So I

have a couple friends here but not nearly as many... It's like I don't feel socially connected, I don't feel connected to the teachers, so it's sort of like, I think about city college and I actively miss it.

Describing the community he experienced at CCSF, Jeremy said that one big difference was that the faculty there felt invested in engaging students in meaningful ways; they were visibly involved in student organizations and often advocated for them. This included the Queer Resource Center there. He also expressed that the physical spaces on campus at SFSU felt divided and isolated, "like it's not designed to have community." Though Eric has a much more positive view of campus community, he noted that there were very few rooms in the student center that were open for use by student organizations and events, and suggested that one thing the university could be better about is allowing easier access to spaces to use.

Alex expressed that they had good experiences with EGAY and community in residential life, but that finding community could be difficult because SFSU is a "commuter school," and queer community tended to come together for specific events but dissipate afterwards. Alex said that "unless there's a problem, people don't join together," but also went on to say that they felt there was more of a sense of community now than when they first started at SFSU. Overall, student experiences of campus community, whether LGBTQ or other communities, appeared to be quite varied.

The Queer and Trans Resource Center and other LGBT Resources

Of all the interview participants, only Alex spoke about having personal experience with the Queer and Trans Resource Center. Once again, Alex's perspective was both that of a student and of an RA deeply involved in LGBTQ community in residential life. They said that they hadn't utilized it much as a student, in part because it had been initially unclear what resources the center offered. Commenting about how the QTRC had recently acquired its own office separate from EROS (Education and Referral Organization for Sexuality), which it had shared an office with initially, Alex expressed that they had been great connected, despite the downside of having less space. Separately, they said that it "doesn't seem like they are communicating as much." The lack of professional staff was also a concern they had about the resource center, pointing out that the student staff of AS organizations like EROS and the QTRC had no formal training and limited hours based on their own course loads.

Survey respondents provided fewer comments about the QTRC than about the QA. "I would like to see more publicity of their services!" one student said. Another said "Again, I am so glad that [the QTRC] actually exists. I am also grateful that it exists in the student union and visible from the entrance floor lobby. It sends the message that the university acknowledge that queer people exist and that they are all welcome." While 53% of the survey participants said they were aware of the existence of the QTRC, only 18% had utilized any of its services or attended any events and activities yet (see Table 10). A good portion (38%) said they were at least somewhat likely to do so in the future.

Table 10. Queer and Trans Resource Center, Awareness and Utilization

Are you aware of the Associated Students Queer and Trans Resource Center?		
Answer	Frequency	Percent
Yes	55	53%
No	48	47%
Have you utilized any services or attended any events or activities offered by the Queer and Trans Resource Center?		
Answer	Frequency	Percent
Yes	19	18%
No	85	82%
How likely are you to utilize any services or attend an activity or event offered by the Queer and Trans Resource Center in the future?		
Answer	Frequency	Percent
Very likely	8	8%
Somewhat likely	31	30%
Neither likely nor unlikely	28	27%
Somewhat unlikely	8	8%
Very unlikely	13	13%
Unsure	15	15%

Institutional Support

In order to measure LGBTQ+ students' perceptions of various aspects of institutional support and commitment, they were asked to rate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements regarding the university. The items were once again on a scale from 1-5. The responses of "strongly agree" and "somewhat agree" were combined for the purpose of displaying the data, as were those of "strongly disagree" and "somewhat disagree." The mean reflects the strength and direction of student responses, with lower averages indicating more agreement and higher averages indicating more disagreement. The answers of "unsure" are included for the purposes of the percentages, but not in the means.

Academics

Table 11 shows the data regarding several aspects of academic life at SF State. Notably, only 8.42% of students agreed that there are enough LGBT scholarships available for students. Answers were fairly divided on the issue of whether the school offers enough LGBTQ-related courses, with 38% agreeing that there were enough. A considerable number of students (57%) were unsure whether the library has a significant number of LGBTQ-related books and periodicals, suggesting an unfamiliarity with the topic. A little over half (52%) strongly or somewhat agreed with the statement “LGBTQ+ Students are well supported in succeeding academically.” Agreement or disagreement with that statement does not necessarily have to do with LGBTQ academia specifically. Several of the interview participants spoke of general academic difficulties. Sharon said that she felt one of the biggest obstacles for students was simply getting the classes that they need. As a newly enrolled freshman, Allison described difficulties registering for classes as well, particularly because she hadn’t been able to attend orientation. Jeremy expressed the opinion that large class sizes, especially for general education classes, made it difficult to get “face time” with professors. “Even if you get the classes,” he said, “there’s no guarantee what that educational experience will be like as far as, if I have questions about the material, is there anyone I can go ask?”

Table 11. Institutional Support: Academic

Statement:	Strongly Agree (1) or Agree (2)	Neither Agree or Disagree (3)	Disagree (4) or Strongly Disagree (5)	Mean	Unsure	Total
LGBTQ+ Students are well supported in succeeding academically.	48 (51.6%)	26 (37.4%)	6 (6.3%)	2.43	15 (15.8%)	95
There are enough LGBT Scholarships available to SFSU Students.	8 (8.4%)	15 (15.8%)	37 (39.0%)	3.58	35 (36.8%)	95
SFSU Offers enough LGBTQ-related courses.	36 (37.9%)	24 (25.3%)	19 (20.0%)	2.68	16 (16.8%)	95
The university library has a significant number of LGBTQ-related books and periodicals.	27 (29.4%)	11 (12.0%)	1 (1.1%)	2.10	52 (56.5%)	92
LGBTQ+ Students are accepted and supported in the classroom environment by their professors and teaching assistants.	57 (60.6%)	24 (25.5%)	6 (6.4%)	2.26	7 (7.5%)	94

Resources, Services, and Housing

About half of the survey participants strongly or somewhat agreed that “the university provides accessible and helpful services and resources for LGBTQ+ students,” and 20% were unsure (see Table 12 below). Over 40% were unsure whether the university adequately meets the on-campus housing needs of LGBTQ+ students, and very few (9%) agreed that it was accessible and affordable for LGBTQ+ students.

Table 12. Institutional Support: Resources, Services, and Housing

Statement:	Strongly Agree (1) or Agree (2)	Neither Agree or Disagree (3)	Disagree (4) or Strongly Disagree (5)	Mean	Unsure	Total
The university provides accessible and helpful services and resources for LGBTQ+ students.	50 (52.6%)	22 (23.5%)	4 (4.2%)	2.30	19 (20.0%)	95
The university adequately meets the on-campus housing needs of LGBTQ+ students.	26 (28.3%)	18 (19.6%)	8 (8.7%)	2.62	40 (43.5%)	92
On-campus university housing is accessible and affordable for LGBTQ+ students.	8 (8.5%)	21 (22.3%)	35 (37.2%)	3.66	30 (31.9%)	94
On-campus university housing provides a safe and supportive environment for LGBTQ+ students.	28 (30.1%)	20 (22.3%)	6 (6.5%)	2.44	39 (41.9%)	93
The university actively and effectively supports LGBTQ+ students in finding safe housing and employment.	12 (12.8%)	23 (24.5%)	22 (23.4%)	3.23	37 (39.5%)	94
The SFSU Counseling and Psychological Services Center effectively meets the mental health needs of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students.	18 (19.6%)	19 (20.7%)	10 (10.9%)	2.81	45 (48.9%)	92
The SFSU Counseling and Psychological Services Center effectively meets the mental health needs of transgender students.	9 (9.9%)	15 (16.1%)	13 (14.0%)	3.22	56 (60.2%)	93
The SFSU Student Health Center adequately meets the needs of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students.	30 (32.7%)	11 (11.8%)	12 (12.9%)	2.66	40 (43.0%)	93

Table 12. Institutional Support: Resources, Services, and Housing (Continued)

The SFSU Student Health Center adequately meets the needs of transgender students.	13 (14.1%)	12 (13.0%)	12 (13.0%)	3.00	55 (59.8%)	92
The university is effective in informing students about LGBTQ-related services, resources, organizations and events that are off campus in the SF Bay Area.	17 (18.5%)	16 (17.4%)	48 (52.8%)	3.54	11 (12.0%)	92
The university is effective in informing students about LGBTQ-related services, resources, organizations and events that are on campus.	21 (23.2%)	22 (24.4%)	38 (42.2%)	3.27	9 (10.00%)	90

Table 13 shows that over 80% of students think that there should be LGBTQ housing or themed community on campus, but only 45% were aware that SF State had such housing available. Among students who did not answer “unsure” for the statement “on-campus university housing is accessible and affordable for LGBTQ+ students,” only 8 out of 64 (13%) agreed with the statement. However, most students who did not answer “unsure” for the item “on-campus university housing provides a safe and supportive environment for LGBTQ+ students” agreed with the statement (28 out of 54; 52%). The high rates at which students answered “unsure” may reflect the fact that a majority of students in the sample live off campus.

A substantial number of students also appears to be uncertain about the capability of the Student Health Center and SFSU Counseling and Psychological Services to meet

the needs of LGBT students. For both resources, the means for transgender students are higher than those for lesbian, gay, and bisexual students, reflecting possible discrepancies in care (Table 12). Larger-scale data collection could provide insight into whether the pattern is significant. Student comments provide some insight into their experiences with these resources. “The staff of the Health Center really needs some LGBTQ+ sensitivity training or something. I’ve had two unpleasant encounters with the same staff member based on my gender identity and perceived sexual orientation and the next time it happens I am probably going to go to someone about it.” Another student expressed issues that transgender students face:

The university health center is in general a hostile place to be so if HRT (hormone replacement therapy) could be offered through the Counseling and Psychological Services Center, that would be great. The Counseling and Psychological Services Center only acknowledges that transgender people exist (on intake forms for example), but doesn’t really make any kind of effort at all to address issues relating to transgender issues (for example, gender therapy, transgender support groups, etc.). It’s an uncomfortable place for a non-cisgender person to navigate.

Almost 95% of participants reported that they believed the university should offer free, anonymous HIV/STI testing (see Table 13). Furthermore, 44% of student respondents mistakenly thought that free testing was already available. Unfortunately, free HIV/STI testing is only available at the Student Health Center for students who are signed up with Family PACT, a state program that covers family planning services for low-income men and women. In order to be eligible, you must have a “medical necessity” for family planning services; i.e., you must report that you are engaging in

heterosexual sex. As one student observed, “The health center will not test queer people for STIs without a \$100 co-pay because since they are not at risk of pregnancy they can’t sign up for Family PACT.” Another student commented, “I would really love to have free HIV testing here on campus. It would make me feel so much better knowing my status and not having to travel far to get it.”

Table 13. Awareness and Desire for Resources, Services, and Programs

Item	To your knowledge, does SFSU have or offer the following programs or services?			In your opinion, should SFSU have or offer the following programs or services?		
	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure
LGBT center run by the university administration	22 23.4%	11 11.7%	61 64.9%	73 77.7%	11 11.7%	10 10.6%
LGBT center run by Associated Students	60 63.8%	1 1.1%	33 35%	88 93.6%	2 2.1%	4 4.3%
LGBTQ+ mentorship program to support new students	11 11.7%	19 20.2%	64 68.1%	84 89.4%	3 3.2%	7 7.4%
LGBTQ+ academic retention program	4 4.3%	19 20.4%	70 75.3%	77 81.9%	5 5.3%	12 12.8%
LGBTQ+ alumni association	7 7.4%	16 17.0%	71 75.5%	79 84.0%	3 3.2%	12 12.8%
LGBTQ housing or themed community	42 44.7%	10 10.6%	42 44.7%	76 80.9%	7 7.4%	11 11.7%
Free, anonymous HIV/STI testing	41 44.1%	14 15.1%	38 40.8%	88 94.6%	3 3.2%	2 2.2%
Standing advisory committee that deals with LGBTQ issues	14 14.9%	11 11.7%	69 73.4%	85 90.4%	3 3.2%	6 6.4%
LGBTQ faculty/staff organization	33 35.1%	9 9.6%	52 55.3%	86 91.5%	2 2.1%	6 6.4%

The data in Table 13 illustrates that there are a number of resources and programs that students believe should be available, some of which are lacking. These include an

LGBTQ+ academic retention program, alumni association, and a mentorship program for LGBTQ+ students. Almost 90% thought that there should be a mentorship program, and a couple of students specifically mentioned it in their comments; “It would be fantastic if we had an LGBT+ mentorship program.”; “I would love to be involved in a pairing situation where older queer students greet and welcome younger queer students and help integrate them into the community.” About 94% said that there should be an LGBT center run by Associated Students, and almost 64% knew that one existed. Twenty-three percent mistakenly believed that there was an LGBT center run by the administration, and 78% thought that one should exist. Most participants were unaware of the existence of an LGBTQ advisory committee or faculty organization, suggesting that organizations like the Pride Committee are not very visible or well-known among LGBTQ students.

Most participants did not agree that the university is effective in informing them about LGBTQ-related resources, services, organizations, and events (Table 12). Only 23% strongly or somewhat agreed that the university is effective in informing students about such resources on campus, and even fewer, 18%, agreed its effective at informing them about resources off campus. The interviews touched on this issue in a number of ways. Allison said that she hadn’t been informed about LGBTQ resources on campus as an incoming freshman, and actually learned quite a bit about the resources and services available from taking the study. Alex also mentioned that they hadn’t learned about LGBTQ resources during orientation, and didn’t know much about what was offered on campus before being connected with EGAY.

Jeremy expressed that he had a general awareness of some of the resources on campus, such as the QTRC, but didn't know much about them or how to access them. Eric had minimal experience with LGBTQ resources on campus, and said that he "can't speak to what resources we do have, let alone what we don't have." Speaking about what it's like for new students, Sharon said "I think people just kind of learn about it as they go. Like, I'm still discovering new resources and organizations on campus, and this is my fourth year." When asked if she thought that incoming students should be told more about LGBTQ resources on campus, she went on to say, "Yeah, I mean if you make something hard enough to find eventually people will just stop looking, and that resource becomes almost pointless."

Visibility and Campus Environment

As is shown in Table 14, about 50% of the survey respondents agreed that LGBTQ+ people are visibly representing among university staff and administration, and 42.11% agreed that the university administration shows visible and meaningful support for LGBTQ+ people. Fewer agreed that the history of LGBTQ organizing on campus is recorded and shared with the student body (15%), or that the contributions and achievements of LGBTQ+ people are publically recognized on campus (17%).

Table 14. Institutional Support: Visibility and Campus Environment

Statement:	Strongly Agree (1) or Agree (2)	Neither Agree or Disagree (3)	Disagree (4) or Strongly Disagree (5)	Mean	Unsure	Total
The university administration shows visible and meaningful support for LGBTQ+ people.	40 (42.1%)	28 (29.5%)	18 (19.0%)	2.66	9 (9.5%)	95
LGBTQ+ people are visibly represented among university staff and administration.	47 (49.5%)	15 (15.8%)	18 (19.0%)	2.51	15 (15.8%)	95
The history of LGBTQ organizing on campus is recorded and shared with the student body.	14 (14.7%)	18 (19.0%)	35 (36.9%)	3.48	28 (29.5%)	95
The contributions and achievements of LGBTQ+ students, alumni, faculty, and staff are publically recognized on campus.	16 (16.8%)	20 (21.1%)	35 (35.9%)	3.34	24 (25.3%)	95
The university is effective in facilitating a sense of community for LGBTQ+ people on campus.	28 (30.4%)	21 (22.8%)	22 (23.9%)	2.87	21 (22.8%)	92
The university is welcoming to incoming LGBTQ+ students.	61 (66.3%)	20 (21.7%)	4 (4.4%)	2.15	7 (7.6%)	92
The University effectively addresses campus issues related to sexual orientation.	33 (34.7%)	19 (20.0%)	17 (17.9%)	2.75	26 (17.4%)	95
You know where to find accessible, gender-neutral bathrooms on campus.	25 (26.9%)	5 (6.5%)	50 (52.7%)	3.55	13 (14.0%)	93
There are enough gender-neutral bathrooms available on campus.	7 (7.5%)	6 (6.5%)	49 (52.7%)	4.10	31 (33.3%)	93

Jeremy mentioned the lack of visible history on campus in his interview.

I feel like State in some ways is like, participating in that erasure in a way. Because it's like we have these faculty here who have the stories, who lived through these things that are so relevant to the LGBTQ archive. It's so important to situate these identities within their histories, and those histories are not only not being privileged, but there's no space for them . . . And what does that mean as an institution of learning that we are failing to record those and even the emotional memories of our students?

A majority of students, 66%, agreed that the campus is welcoming to new LGBTQ+ students. However, less than half as many (30%) agreed that the university is effective in facilitating a sense of community for LGBTQ+ people on campus, and 35% agreed that the university effectively addresses campus issues related to sexual orientation.

The relative lack of gender-neutral bathrooms on campus came up a lot both in the survey and in interviews. Only 27% of survey respondents agreed that they knew where to find accessible gender-neutral restrooms, while 53% disagreed (Table 14). A mere 8% agreed that there were enough gender-neutral bathrooms on campus, which is the lowest level of agreement of any of the similarly scaled items. When provided a space at the end of the survey to write any additional comments that they had, a number of students mentioned them specifically. "It would be nice to have more gender-neutral bathrooms in buildings where work-study jobs are most available. The last thing anyone needs on the job is heckling from students/clients for being in the 'wrong bathroom.'"; "There should be a minimum of 1 gender-neutral bathroom in each building on campus,

and they should be set up in safe areas.” Another student gave a specific example of where gender-neutral bathrooms are missing, and the effect it has on them.

I have many negative experiences on finding gender neutral bathrooms. Almost all of my classes are at the HSS building and the nearest gender neutral building is on the first floor of the business building. That means I either have to walk a distance to use a bathroom or suck it up and face problems in either a women’s or men’s restroom. The gender neutral bathroom is not labeled that it is gender neutral and it is really gross.

As this comment suggests, not all of the gender-neutral bathrooms that are available on campus are desirable for students to utilize, and sometimes it becomes a choice between accessibility and safety. A couple of students specifically mentioned their concerns with the only gender-neutral bathroom in the Cesar Chavez Student Center; the electronic door for the single occupancy bathroom makes it handicap friendly, but the length of time it takes for the door to automatically close leaves students feeling vulnerable, as anyone passing by the busy space can see them or even walk in during that time. Thus, while there is technically a gender-neutral restroom available in the building for them to use, some students don’t feel safe using it.

Talking with students like Alex and Jeremy, it became clear that negotiating bathroom use can take up a lot of mental energy for some students, who end up having to plan ahead based on where on campus their classes are. Alex expressed how ridiculous it felt that there isn’t even a gender-neutral restroom in the HSS building, the building that houses the Sociology and Sexuality Studies department, through which the Sexuality Studies and LGBT Studies courses are offered. In Jeremy’s words, “In what way is it

equipping a student to learn if they are anxious to use such basic amenities as the bathroom? If that is a thing that they have to think about, then that is mental space that they cannot devote to school.”

Final Thoughts from Students

Except for Allison, all of the other four interview participants brought up funding as an issue on campus. When asked what was holding change back the most, Sharon answered “I think issues with like, administration wise and some things being funded over others, like new gyms and whatnot over resource center for those with mental illnesses and such.” Eric also brought up the construction of the new recreation center, the Mashouf Wellness Center, wondering why money was going to that rather than other things and asking “Who is going to use it?”

Jeremy said that he felt it was another example of the administration focusing on making the campus “look nice without actually improving learning and community.” His concerns went far beyond the new wellness center, however, expressing that from his perspective, the school was compromising the wrong things when it came to budget cuts. “I worry that this business mentality is corrupting the educational experience. That they’re like, ‘oh we’ll save money,’ but by decreasing the amount spent they’re decreasing the value of what they are able to provide.” He expressed quite strongly that it was the university’s responsibility to provide resources for students and help them transition to life in the city, in part because the school feels isolated from the rest of the

city, and students who come from other areas, especially non-urban environments, can have a hard time navigating the Bay Area.

Part of the reason I was motivated to come and talk to you was because I feel so terribly about, you know, I'm 32 and I've had plenty of time to figure out my identity and sort of build a community around me. But kids who are coming here who are like 18, 19, 20, they're not only coming to San Francisco State because of this reputation of diversity, but they're putting themselves in the position of being totally displaced from their social network, and like, without a sense of connection to where they were, and no way to build a connection to where they want to go, what is that doing to the emotional wellbeing of the student body?

Alex acknowledged that the school was facing a lot of financial difficulty, but also questioned how it was being managed.

I think that they are funds that they're allocating, in my opinion, not in the best way. Like having a health and wellness center . . . QTRC and mental health and wellness, EROS is definitely health and wellness. The QA, social health and wellness. All of these things could be connected, yet they're not going to be put in the health and wellness center. They're not going to be given those new spaces and those allocations of funds.

Not all LGBTQ+ students are actively trying to improve campus climate, but as a student who had spent time and energy trying to help instigate change on campus, Alex described feeling frustrated and ignored by the administration. "I think the administration sees our issues as something so small that it's not worth looking at." Giving a specific example, they described trying to work towards getting more gender neutral bathrooms on campus.

We've had forums about the gender-neutral bathrooms on campus, and [the administration] have come and they've asked questions and they've been a part of

it, and they're like "we're writing this down, we're going to take the feedback," and you never see it implemented.

I was one of the people who signed up because I really thought they do want to hear from us. Then they cancelled every other meeting, and it's only once a month. The meetings that they don't cancel, you show up to the room, and there's no sign posted on the door, and it's locked and dark. They don't tell you that it's been moved upstairs, and it's a meeting with three people, and you're no longer a part of it . . . The students get conveniently left out when those meetings are happening, even when they ask us to be a part of it.

This story may illustrate why a student like Jeremy would say "Administratively, I feel a little bit defeated." Alex expressed that when students who care about these issues feel ignored, or see a lack of response, it has a negative effect on campus organizing; "I think they not only grow frustrated, but also get disheartened . . . I want to make social change but I've been trying for two years and it's a really slow process where we keep getting shut down, or people aren't backing us up or listening to us on either end, so where do you go when you're stuck?" They also noted how difficult it is to work towards change as a student when you need to focus on schoolwork, and you are only on the campus for a limited time. ". . . It's so hard to change things on a campus because people transfer, come in and out, graduate, within 4-5 years you're gone."

Student experiences and perspectives are diverse and varied. Some students successfully connect with communities and resources, such as Sharon and Alex, but as Alex's experiences illustrate, finding community and resources doesn't necessarily mean that LGBTQ+ students don't face challenges on campus. Likewise, students who are not connected may experience campus differently from one another. Jeremy's experience at

SF State is suffering because of it, but Allison is quite satisfied her campus environment despite dealing with a certain amount of homophobia in the dorms or in the classroom, in part because it is a considerable improvement to the conservative town she came from. Eric had very few complaints at all about campus, and experienced it as a welcoming, diverse, and rich environment. Part of the potential challenge for the university staff and administration, which Eric acknowledged, is that diversity. “The LGBT community in my mind is so varied, which is great, that’s it’s kind of hard to pick a certain range of ways to appeal to them and to help them . . . Everyone has different levels of needed support or community.”

Challenges and Limitations

Analysis of the survey results was impeded by the small sample size. Though there were some observable trends in cross-tabulations, chi-square and logistic regression tests conducted to analyze relationships between dependent and independent variables did not produce results that were statistically significant at alpha levels of 0.05 or 0.10. The sample is not random or representative, and conducting research with such a sample would likely require the assistance of the university administration during recruitment. In particular, the sample was skewed by gender and class standing, with a lack of responses from male-identified students, as well as freshman and sophomore students.

The sample may be biased based on which departments and organizations shared information about the study to their students or members. Most departments, colleges,

and professors who were contacted during the recruitment phase did not respond. It can be assumed that most of the ones who didn't respond did not pass information on to their students, but some of them might have despite their lack of confirmation. In particular, faculty and staff in the Sociology and Sexuality Studies department, the Health Education department, and the Women and Gender Studies departments were very responsive and helpful. Students from those programs are likely overrepresented. The College of Science and Engineering was one notable exception; though they did not give any written or verbal confirmation that they would inform their students about the survey, they made an announcement for the survey in one of their email newsletters. In order to learn more about recruitment and sample demographics, future campus climate surveys may want to include items that ask students what their declared major or program is, and how they learned about the study.

Garnering community support was a significant challenge. Of the 70+ Facebook groups and pages that were contacted multiple times, including student organizations, fraternities and sororities, AS programs, and various academic departments and programs, 7 responded. Two of those who replied said that they weren't going to share information about the study because the individual operating the group or page was unsure if they were allowed to share such information. Another 2 said that they would not be sharing the information because it was not relevant to the topic of the group or page.

It is worth noting that the gender options provided cannot fully represent the variation in identities and language among LGBTQ+ people. For example, conflating

“woman” with “feminine” is potentially problematic, and in fact, one student stated as much in their text response for the “other” category. However, the language of the survey was decided on with the input of several LGBTQ+ people, including the staff of the Queer and Trans Resource Center, with the acknowledgement that some compromises were made in order to limit the number of response categories to a manageable size. The gender identities and sexual orientations of the respondents were very diverse. This has implications for both future research and various administrative matters.

Though there is a substantial amount of literature on the topic from the past two decades, continued research on campus climate for LGBTQ students in higher education is needed. Specifically, the field could benefit from longitudinal data that assesses the effectiveness of various institutional support efforts in improving campus climate. Furthermore, culture in the U.S. is changing fast in regards to LGBTQ issues (Yost and Gilmore, 2011), and researchers and university staff should consider how current political discourse on LGBTQ issues affects the campus climate of academic institutions.

Recommendations

This research represents a small step towards improving LGBTQ campus climate at SF State. Despite the limitations of the data, student responses were enlightening. The following is a discussion of 7 recommendations based on the results of this study and the review of campus climate literature and practices in LGBTQ student affairs.

1: Conduct a Comprehensive Campus Climate Assessment

A large-scale LGBTQ campus climate study is traditionally the first step in evaluating the status of LGBTQ people in higher education, and is used to inform university policy and programming. If San Francisco State University intends to improve the experiences of LGBTQ people on campus, as well as the school's reputation as a leader in diversity, social justice, and community engagement, a full-scale campus climate assessment will be very beneficial. The research study should address each of the factors outlined by the Campus Pride Index, and could include non-LGBTQ students as well in order to compare perceptions of campus climate with those of LGBTQ students. The endorsement and support of the administration would be helpful in recruiting of a random sample of the student population. Alternatively, the administration could send information about the study to the entire student population, giving every student the opportunity to participate.

Most students felt very safe on campus, and rarely experience physical violence. However, other forms of harassment or discrimination were somewhat common, and the fact that some students have had significant issues with their professors is concerning. Investigating the prevalence of harassment on the perimeter of campus and the nearby areas is also suggested. Data could be used to determine if there is a need for formal LGBTQ cultural competency programs, and to increase campus security, among other applications.

In order to get a better picture of LGBTQ campus climate, staff and faculty should be included in the future surveying efforts. Gathering information about their experiences of campus climate is important, and because of the limitations of this research, they are a large population that is missing from the data. LGBTQ university employees are at risk of facing discrimination and prejudice in higher education, whether from students or other faculty and staff. They might also experience institutional prejudice or administrative issues, like some students have. For example, issues with gender identity not being acknowledged by administrative forms or systems, or the accessibility of gender-neutral restrooms, are relevant to university employees as well as students.

Further data collection should assess student perceptions of services like the Student Health Center, and Counseling and Psychological Services. There were a number of students who expressed difficulty with these services, especially regarding transgender or gender-variant identity. A larger sample could better assess the extent and frequency of such incidences and review the inclusiveness and effectiveness of these services when it comes to serving LGBTQ+ individuals. Analysis of that data would be useful for adjusting future practices and policies. Other LGBTQ-related resources or organizations could be covered in survey items as well, such as EGAY, the Queer and Trans Resource Center, and the Queer Alliance, expanding on the data that this study provides. Campus climate data collection is not necessarily a one-time endeavor. Assessments should be

conducted periodically in order to gauge campus climate over time and evaluate the impact of changes in policy and programming.

2: Increase Communication with Students

Considering how few students agreed that the university was effective in informing them about LGBTQ-related resources, services, organizations and events both on and off campus, improving communication should be a priority. Regular and accessible communication with students can help connect them to LGBTQ resources as well as increase their sense of connection to community both on and off campus. All incoming students should receive information on LGBTQ resources and policies on campus, such as: the locations and functions of the QTRC and the QA, policies and procedures regarding name changes and preferred gender pronouns, the locations of any gender-neutral bathrooms on campus, LGBTQ support groups on campus, and a list of accessible resources and community organizations in the SF Bay Area. This information should be included in new student orientation programs, as well as distributed to students through university communications.

One of the main functions of the QTRC is to act as a referral service. In order to utilize these services, students need to be aware of the existence and purpose of the organizations, and many students in the study were not. Assisting the QTRC in connecting to LGBTQ students, and vice versa, will help connect students to the city and the wider SF Bay Area, easing the transition for many LGBTQ students who are

unfamiliar with the Bay Area and the plethora of communities, activities, and resources available to them.

Communication with students shouldn't cease after admission. Possible ways to inform the campus community about resources, organizations, and events on an ongoing basis could include the use of campus newsletters, social media, or announcements forwarded through departments and academic programs. Informing instructors about LGBTQ resources on campus and encouraging them to share that knowledge would allow them to be sources of information for students as well. Though it will take effort to make these changes, ultimately this is a low-cost endeavor that has the potential to make a big difference for LGBTQ students at SF State. Finally, university staff, especially student affairs professionals, should make their interest, support, and respect for LGBTQ students publically known on campus (Sanlo, 2005; Marine, 2011).

3: Expand Number and Access to Gender-Neutral Restrooms

It was very clear in both the survey and interview results that there is an inadequate number of gender-neutral restrooms on campus, and that this issue is relevant to many students. The lack of progress and the perceived silencing of student voices regarding this issue is concerning. The administration should make it a priority to address the lack of gender-neutral bathrooms quickly, and should strive for a minimum of one accessible gender-neutral restroom per building on campus. Student and faculty input on the location and condition of the facilities should be consulted both during and after the

process. The safety of the facilities is a factor that should be carefully considered.

Restrooms that leave students vulnerable, such as the gender-neutral restroom on the lower conference level in the Cesar Chavez Student Center, are not adequate options for LGBTQ+ students.

All incoming and current students should be informed of the locations of every gender-neutral bathroom on campus. Even with the limited number of gender-neutral restrooms already available on campus, student awareness of their locations is low. This issue is not symbolic; it is a pressing, every-day concern for many students who deserve to feel safe, and who should not be facing stress and anxiety over such basic needs. However, failing to provide gender-neutral restrooms also sends a clear and visible message to the university community, demonstrating the low level of institutional support for LGBTQ+ people on campus.

4: Provide LGBTQ competency information for faculty and staff

Survey results and student comments suggest that some faculty and staff require training or education on LGBTQ topics. In particular, university employees should be informed about how to deal with the gender identity, preferred name, and preferred pronouns of students in a respectful and inclusive manner. University policy should clearly detail guidelines for how the identities of students should be acknowledged in and out of the classroom. While some students like Alex have taken it upon themselves to educate their teachers about these topics, no student should be in the position of having to

constantly advocate for themselves in order to receive basic, respectful treatment from university employees.

Furthermore, student experiences suggest that some faculty would benefit from information or training on how to identify and address discrimination and harassment in the classroom. Just as professors should be able and willing to deal with other forms of prejudice in order to maintain a respectful learning environment, they should not let anti-LGBTQ language or actions from students go unchecked. Homophobic or transphobic slurs, for example, should not be tolerated. Taking a moment to discuss why such language is inappropriate is preferable if the professor is able to, but at the very least it should be made clear that it is unacceptable in the classroom rather than simply be ignored.

In order for faculty and staff to be equipped to address these issues, they need a basic working knowledge of LGBTQ identity. Cultural competency training can be prohibitive in both cost and time commitment, but it would not take much of either to provide employees with written materials. As LGBTQ issues continue to be addressed in education, online training courses geared towards educators may become available in the future, which would be more accessible than in-person workshops. However the university decides to address LGBTQ cultural competency for employees, the administration should be committed to finding effective ways of reducing the incidence of harassment and discrimination in the classroom.

5: Revise Forms and Systems to be Inclusive of Diverse Gender and Sexual Identities

The difficulty that trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming students experience when it comes to preferred names and gender pronouns can cause significant distress. Issues that came up in the study included getting a preferred name on a diploma, inadequate gender options on administrative forms for academic counseling, and changing displayed names on the iLearn system. When students experienced these kinds of difficulties, it often made them feel disrespected or ignored by the university administration and staff, and negatively impacts their perceptions of institutional support.

When information on sexual orientation is collected, such as in campus climate or health surveys, the options should include of a wider selection of identities than just gay/lesbian/homosexual, bisexual, and heterosexual/straight. A number of students in this study identified as pansexual, queer, or asexual, for example. While changing many of these systems could be difficult, especially for those that are standardized for the CSU system, the university should continue to improve inclusivity wherever and whenever possible.

When adding new options for gender identity and pronouns, the university should consider working with LGBTQ people on campus to identify respectful and inclusive language. Making changes without consulting the community can result in wasted time and effort and inadequate improvements. Working with the Queer and Trans Resource Center is one way to include LGBTQ students in discussions about inclusivity. If the

administration hires one or more professional staff for LGBTQ student affairs, this could be part of their formal responsibilities.

6: Reevaluate the State of Student Affairs Programming

Whether the university establishes a new university-run LGBT center or changes the structure and operation of the QTRC to better meet student needs, the placement of LGBTQ student services within the campus community should be discussed. A couple of students, as well as Sebastian at the QTRC, questioned why there was not more connection between programs focused on diversity and health, such as EROS, the Women's Center, and the Richard Oakes Multicultural Center. All of these programs deserve increased support and attention from the administration, and may benefit being unified into a larger network of multi-cultural resources and services. As Alex's criticism suggested, perhaps there are even possibilities for working these programs into the new Mashouf Wellness Center. This would show that the administration is willing to use new resources to address existing issues that affect the health and well-being of the diverse student population.

The administration should critically assess the placement of these programs within the Associated Students structure, and the capability of AS to successfully provide resources, services, and programming that adequately meet the needs of the student population. Student engagement is an important part of campus community, and the student body should have a voice when it comes to campus affairs. Research and efforts

to improve campus climate should pay attention to the potential value of student involvement and activism, as it can build self-efficacy and a sense of community for LGBTQ college students (Marine, 2011). However, it may be that important resources like the QTRC, the Women's Center, and EROS, would better serve the student body if they were not limited to the budget, staff, and other resources available to SF State's student government.

7: Hire Professional Staff

When the university relies almost entirely on student-run organizations like the QTRC to provide resources and programming, it doesn't send a message of institutional support for LGBTQ people; rather, it may convey that the university itself is apathetic towards LGBTQ students and isn't concerned with their success or wellbeing.

Furthermore, it places the heavy burden on those students to serve their LGBTQ peers and somehow make up for the lack of other resources and services, which is an unfair expectation.

Not only do professional staff bring experience and expertise to the position, they also bring a vital component that students are unable to provide: consistency. Professional staff would be able to dedicate full-time hours to LGBTQ affairs, increasing the hours of operation for a campus LGBT center, as well as have more time for other issues on campus. Furthermore, they would be able to provide consistent skills and programming over longer periods of time. As student staff graduate and leave the school,

their experience and knowledge leaves with them, and there are not always ideal candidates available to transition into the empty positions. Each time this happens the quality of programming and longer-term progress are potentially interrupted. This already presents significant challenges for the QTRC.

LGBTQ issues are multi-faceted and complex. As this study has shown, there are many factors that go into campus climate, even beyond those measured by the Campus Pride Index. The field of LGBTQ student affairs has grown extensively in the past two decades, and one thing that is clear is that the role of the LGBTQ student affairs professional has been recognized by institutions of higher education as a vital role on campus, especially within university LGBT centers (Sanlo, Rankin, & Schoenberg, 2004; Sanlo, 2005). Without someone dedicated specifically to LGBTQ services and programming, the administration lacks the specific perspective, skills, and dedicated attention to adequately address these issues and ensure that the needs of LGBTQ people on campus are heard and met.

Conclusion

I started at San Francisco State University (SFSU) as a freshman, earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Health Education here, and then entered the SFSU graduate program in Sexuality Studies. By the time I graduate from the Sexuality Studies program, I will have spent seven years as a student at SFSU. My own experiences as a queer-identified student in part led me to pursue this research. Growing up in a suburban

environment, I had little idea how to connect to resources or communities off campus in the San Francisco Bay Area, and I found little support or guidance on campus. I tried to connect with the Queer Alliance, but I was uncomfortable with the level of personal drama that seemed to be prevalent in the small, seemingly insular social community at the time, and was dissatisfied by the lack of community engagement and campus activism. The rest of my time in undergrad, I felt completely disconnected from any kind of LGBTQ community on campus.

It was only when I worked as the assistant director of the QTRC in the semester of Fall 2014, my first semester in the Sexuality Studies graduate program, that this changed. For the first time, I could connect with others who wanted to make a difference on campus for LGBTQ students. Unfortunately, while I greatly admired the people I worked with, the experience only further convinced me the need for increased attention to LGBTQ campus climate at SFSU. I felt that expectations placed on the QTRC, if only because it was most significant form of institutional support available for LGBTQ students on campus, were unreasonable given the limitations of the AS system and the lack of support from the administration.

Taking on this research project was a very difficult challenge, and one that I did not take on lightly. I chose to do it not because I thought it would be easy, but because I feel dedicated to SFSU and wanted my last, and most significant, project as a student here to give back to the university in some way. However, the general lack of response from the large majority of departments, professors, programs, organizations, and student

clubs that I contacted during my recruitment efforts was very disheartening, as was the minimal acknowledgement and support received from the administration. I have never felt more silenced and frustrated as a queer person on campus than when I was conducting this research. Nonetheless, my gratitude and loyalty remain. I have met and worked with faculty and students who are extremely passionate about these issues, and many others of great importance. The Health Education program and the Sexuality Studies program both provided academic opportunities that were liberating and transformative for me as a queer student. I don't think any other university could have given me a similar experience.

Improving campus climate for LGBTQ students will require time and resources, including funding. Though SFSU faces significant financial challenges, this issue is one that deserves more attention. The university will continue to face certain expectations and assumptions when it comes to being LGBTQ friendly, if only because of the school's location in San Francisco. Many public institutions of higher education are dealing with budget issues, but many still find ways to make LGBTQ campus climate a priority. The fact that other CSU campuses, including San Diego State University, CSU Northridge, and CSU Long Beach, are all ranked higher than SFSU on the Campus Pride Index attests to this reality.

Members of the SF State community, including students, faculty, and staff, should continue to advocate for LGBTQ people on campus, and engage the university in productive ways when possible. The administration in turn needs to connect with the

community to give LGBTQ people a real voice on campus, and affirm SFSU's dedication to diversity and social justice through meaningful and tangible action. The goal should not be to just minimize negative experiences, such as violence, harassment, and discrimination, and stop there. That doesn't constitute a positive environment, merely a neutral one, and SF State should not be satisfied with complacency and benign neglect. The goal should be to foster an environment in which LGBTQ students have the opportunity to *thrive*, something many of them may not have ever had before coming to this university. The Campus Pride Index score reflects where the university currently stands: in the middle of the road. However, if the proper administrative support can be mustered, San Francisco State University has the potential to be a leader in LGBTQ inclusiveness, support, and community involvement in higher education.

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