

THESIS:  
PERCEPTION OF ENVIRONMENT BY LGBT STUDENTS  
ON A COLLEGE CAMPUS

by  
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## ABSTRACT

Bullying is a serious problem that affects the educational experience of students throughout the country. Among those at highest risk for being bullied include students identifying themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT). These students are prone to experiencing verbal abuse through the use of homophobic remarks (Patrick et al., 2013). Mistina Brown completed a study in 2011 that examined the wording on the Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network's (GLSEN) Local School Climate Survey (LSCS) and found that excluding certain words had a significant impact on participants' responses. The present study sought to build upon those findings and determine if LGBT students on a college campus perceive a more homophobic environment than students identifying themselves as straight. The results of regression analysis indicated that sexual orientation affects the frequency of types of homophobic remarks heard. Yet, there was not a significant difference in the overall frequency of homophobic remarks heard by heterosexual versus homosexual individuals.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GLSEN: Gay, Lesbian, and Straight, Education Network

LSCS: Local School Climate Survey

LGBTQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Questioning

NASP: National Association of School Psychologists

ACLU: American Civil Liberties Union

## CHAPTER I

### **Introduction**

The school environment should be a safe place of learning for all students, regardless of sexual orientation, race, or gender. Bullying is a common problem that affects many youth throughout the country. In fact, approximately 30% of all students reporting being bullied by their peers sometime during their school careers (Nansel et al., 2001). Until recently, bullying has most often been associated with primary and secondary school, but, increasingly, it is being recognized as a problem that exists at all age levels and in varying degrees (Monks and Smith, 2006). Although many schools have taken steps to eliminate bullying, the problem continues.

Although there are some inconsistencies regarding the definition of bullying, most researchers agree that peer victimization implies a differential power status between bullies and their victims, repeated acts over time, and treatment that is physically, verbally, and/or psychologically damaging to victims (Smith & Brain, 2000). Bullying manifests in various ways, including physical violence, verbal abuse, emotional and psychological abuse, etc. Olweus (1991) stated physical bullying includes hitting, kicking, grabbing toys, from other children, and engaging in very rough and intimidating play while psychological bullying includes name calling, teasing, taunting, making faces, and making threats. Manifestations of bullying behaviors may be blatant or concealed. Bullying also includes hidden behaviors such as spreading rumors and social exclusion (Espelage, Bosworth, and Simon, 2000).

In addition to bullying that takes place at school, bullying can also occur via electronic communication, known as “cyberbullying.” Ybarra and Mitchell (2004)

identify this form of Internet harassment as involving the use of technology to intentionally act aggressively towards another person. Like bullying, cyberbullying occurs in a variety of forms, including harassment through emails, posts on web pages, exclusion from cyber social groups, etc. (Beran & Li, 2007). Cyberbullying is especially dangerous because the level of supervision may be lower and harassment may be easily concealed when using personal devices. Beran and Li, (2007) found that cyberbullying occurs at a similar rate as bullying in schools. As technology continues to be incorporated in students' daily lives, it is likely that cyberbullying will remain a serious problem for school

According to the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), bullying is the most common form of violence in America (Anderson et al., 2001). A study conducted by Espelage, Bosworth, and Simon (2000) found that only 19% of the sample of middle school students reported that they had not participated in bullying behaviors within the past thirty days. One reason that bullying is a problem in schools may be because people have not changed their thinking from that of the past, that bullying is “normal” and that children need to learn to resolve problems on their own; therefore, some teachers do not feel the need to intervene. Psychologists are now warning parents and teachers that bullying is a problem that could result in serious consequences for both victims and their bullies. NASP cites that bullying is often a factor in school related deaths. Although NASP states that 25% of teachers see nothing wrong with bullying or putdowns, the existence of bullying is associated with higher rates of school dropout, poor social development, higher rates of criminal activity, and many other negative consequences (2003).

If adult perspectives about bullying were changed, the occurrence of bullying might decrease. Espelage and Swearer (2003) agree, stating: “If students attend schools in which bullying behaviors are accepted by adults and peers, it is plausible that they will engage in more of these behaviors...” (p. 10). The opposite would probably be true as well. If students attend a school where bullying is not accepted, then it is probable that fewer instances of bullying would occur in that school.

Among those at greatest risk for being bullied by peers are youth whose non-gender conformity or sexual orientation places them in the minority, this includes those who identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT). Those questioning their sexual orientation, a group of adolescents who represent about 5% of American high school students (GLSEN, 2006), possibly fit into this category as well. Such individuals also tend to be subjected to derogatory comments, name-calling, and/or jokes pertaining to their actual or perceived sexual preference (Horowitz & Loehnig, 2005). It has also been noted that crimes against gay males and lesbians in college, ages 19-22, occur with greater frequency than crimes against the general population in the school setting (Comstock 1991). Some 25% of lesbian and gay students are crime victims, while 9% of the general population of students are crime victims (Comstock, 1991). In a study of 218 teachers and students in Pennsylvania, over 80% of students reported hearing homophobic remarks in their school setting (Grant, 2006). The LGBT population of students represents a group of individuals prone to bullying and violence throughout school and college environments.

Although many children and adolescents experience bullying, homophobic bullying often goes unnoticed, unreported, or is handled inappropriately. According to

Jim Larson, (2008) research conducted by the National Mental Health Association in 2002 found that 78% of the general population of students reported that gay students, and those who were thought to be gay, were teased or bullied at school and in the community. The study also found that 93% of students heard homophobic remarks such as “fag,” “homo,” “dyke,” or “queer” on a notable basis. A survey of 6,209 middle and high school students found that less than 20% of students reported that staff frequently intervened when derogatory remarks about gender expression or sexuality were made by other students (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008). Many teachers and school staff look the other way when students call a perceived queer student “fag” or “dike.” When students use phrases such as “that’s so gay,” some teachers provide no consequences and, therefore, allow the problem to continue.

It is not unreasonable to think that most LGBT students may define all remarks such as “queer,” “dyke,” and “faggot” as homophobic. In fact, in 2010 GLSEN, in conjunction with the Ad Council, launched the “Think before you speak” campaign. The purpose of this campaign was to raise awareness about the prevalence of, and negative consequences associated with the casual use of offensive language and phrases such as “that’s so gay.” The campaign recognizes that individuals often use this language without intending to be disrespectful or derogatory. They argue, however, that the accepted use of these insulting terms creates an unfriendly climate for LGBT students where they feel “disrespected, unwanted, and unsafe.” Regardless of intent, homophobic language should not be tolerated in school environments.

Many students who regularly hear homophobic language (e.g., “queer,” “faggot,” “that’s so gay,” etc.) may not be offended by them personally. Some of these students

may in fact use the words regularly themselves. These students may even determine that the words they are hearing are used in a joking manner and therefore do not constitute “homophobic” remarks. As a result, while these remarks are still likely to cause distress to LGBT students within the environment, they may be underreported due the wording of the survey questions. According to a study completed by Brown (2011), undergraduate students attending Middle Tennessee State University consistently reported that homophobic comments occur at school and are said by other students at a rate that can be characterized between “sometimes” and “often.” Because people who identify themselves as straight may not define these remarks as “homophobic,” there may be a discrepancy in perceived environment homophobia between straight and LGBT students. Much of the research concerning bullying LGBT students has focused on students in primary and secondary schools; therefore, more research is needed to determine whether or not such a problem exists at the college level and to what extent.

### **Legal Implications**

Although federal courts have ruled that public schools have an obligation to protect students from harassment due to their sexual orientation ("Know your rights," 2013), a bill introduced in the House of Representatives April 15, 2011 known as the Safe Schools Improvement Act (2011), seeks to clearly define “bullying” and includes comprehensive and standardized anti-bullying policies to help protect students in elementary and secondary schools. The bill defines bullying as any means of conduct, including an electronic communication, that adversely affects the ability of one or more students to participate in or benefit from the school's educational programs or activities by placing the student (or students) in reasonable fear of physical. It defines harassment

as any conduct, including an electronic communication, that adversely affects the ability of 1 or more students to participate in or benefit from the school's educational programs or activities because the conduct, as reasonably perceived by the student (or students), is so severe, persistent, or pervasive. The bill seeks to prohibit bullying or harassment because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation and perceived or actual gender identity. The bill also mandates that states catalog and report data on bullying and harassment to the Department of Education. If passed, the bill will require schools to take responsibility for negligence toward protecting LGBT students.

Because of the widespread problem of bullying, 45 states have laws on bullying and 22 states have adopted cyberbullying statutes ("Division of violence," 2011); however, because current legislation may or may not be fully implemented, it is important for schools and communities to remain vigilant in their efforts to stop bullying. One of the first things schools can do is survey their students to obtain information about student perception of the problem. Many school personnel do not realize the impact of homophobia and other forms of bullying and harassment on their own schools and students. Raising awareness to the problem of bullying is an important step for schools to take in order to provide a safe environment for all students.

In addition to raising awareness, anti-bullying programs and interventions should be implemented in schools to decrease bullying behavior and provide a safe educational environment for students. Published, research based programs targeting bullying and other violent behaviors can be used to create and promote positive school climates. These programs are intended to educate students, faculty, and staff about using appropriate social skills and conduct, identifying individual strengths and abilities, making

connections with others, and identifying and responding to bullying, which benefits everyone in schools, particularly LGBT youth. Any program designed to address the needs of LGBT youth should also include efforts to educate and support parents and the community through collecting information about services and establishing involvement with other organizations committed to equal opportunity for education and mental health services for all youth. NASP recommends that, when addressing discriminatory remarks and behaviors, it is important to (a) identify explicitly the remarks or behaviors as being heterosexist or homophobic, (b) indicate such remarks or behaviors as being unacceptable, and (c) aid the person making the comments or engaging in the behaviors to make more appropriate choices in the future.

### **Negative Implications of Bullying**

Regardless of the type of bullying that occurs, peer victimization has been associated with a variety of negative outcomes. Co-morbidity exists between bullying and mental health disorders, such as attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, depression, oppositional defiant disorder, and conduct disorder (Kumpulainen, Rasanen, & Puura, 2001). There is also a greater likelihood that instigators of bullying behavior will engage in criminal behaviors, domestic violence, and substance abuse as adolescents or adults (Farrington, 1993). Children who engage in bullying are also more likely than their peers to have lower academic achievement and struggle with career performance in adulthood (Carney & Merrell, 2001).

Victims of bullying often suffer from feelings of loneliness and low self-esteem in addition to developing anxiety and fears about school (Bullock, 2002). Children who are bullied come to believe that school is unsafe and children are mean. At school, these

students are frequently fearful and intimidated, which hampers their ability to concentrate in class and learn effectively (Bullock, 2002). Support for the relationship between being bullied and externalizing behavior problems was found by Sullivan, Farrell, and Klierer (2006), who concluded that different forms of peer victimization were significantly related to cigarette use, drug and alcohol use, and delinquent behaviors in a sample of urban middle school students.

For some young victims, school becomes such an aversive place that they desire to cease attending altogether. Although specific studies regarding the relationship between school avoidance or refusal and bullying are few, some researchers have speculated that suffering from peer victimization keeps many students from attending school each day, causing many young people to miss valuable instructional time, thus further undermining their capacity to be successful academically (Buhs, Ladd, & Herald, 2006; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996). This is especially true for LGBT students. A survey of more than 3,500 students of all ages found that sexual minority students were more likely to skip school because they felt more unsafe than other students (Goodenow, Szalacha, & Westheimer, 2006). All students should feel safe in a school environment; however, because LGBT students are more likely to be victims of bullying, they may be more likely to avoid school-related activities.

### **Expanding Mistina Brown's Thesis Research**

Mistina Brown conducted a study in 2011 to determine whether altering the wording of the Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network's (GLSEN) Local School Climate Survey-School-based Version (LSCS) to exclude the words "homophobic", "sexist," and "racist" had a significant impact on participants' responses. In order to

evaluate her hypothesis, she distributed the LSCS to a population of undergraduate students on a college campus. She divided the participants into two groups, giving one group the LSCS and the other group a modified version of the survey in which the words “homophobic,” “racist,” and “sexist” were not displayed in the wording of the survey questions. Brown found that the LSCS is a valid measure of the frequency of remarks which are perceived to be homophobic, racist, or sexist but that the survey may have questionable validity for at least two questions when measuring the perceived frequency of specific remarks. For example, male respondents reported having heard remarks such as someone being called a “bitch,” or comments about women’s bodies “sometimes” to “often” ( $M = 2.34$ ) on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “frequently” to “never,” while female respondents reported having heard these comments “often” to “frequently” ( $M = 1.90$ ). However, when the word “sexist” was not displayed in the survey, female respondents were more likely to report having heard the comments “frequently” ( $M = 1.58$ ) where as males were still likely to report having heard the comments “sometimes” to “often” ( $M = 2.09$ ). This suggests that female respondents may consciously qualify the statements they hear as those intended to be sexist and those by which no sexist intent is meant. Because Brown’s sample population did not provide a fair representation of LGBT students, the present study aimed to collect data from a population of college students who identified themselves as LGBT. The original version of the survey was used and compared to the straight participants who received the original version in Brown’s study. (See copy of the survey in Appendix A).

This study was meant to build upon the study completed by Mistina Brown in her 2011 thesis research. The purpose of Brown’s study was to determine whether or not

changing the wording of the Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network's (GLSEN) Local School Climate Survey-School-based Version (LSCS) to exclude the words homophobic, sexist, and racist has a significant impact on participants' responses. She found the differences in wording impacted the constructs that were being measured for two of the questions on the survey. In Brown's study, the sample group contained mostly heterosexual students and did not provide adequate representation of students identifying themselves as LGBT. In the present study, additional data was collected in order to better represent LGBT students on a college campus. The importance of doing this was to build upon the data collected by Brown and conduct further analyses on individual questions while exploring how sexual orientation affects a participant's answers. The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not sexual orientation affects perception of school climate.

### **Hypotheses**

**Hypothesis 1.** Respondents who identified themselves as LGBT reported hearing significantly more homophobic remarks such as "that's so gay" on a college campus than individuals identifying themselves as heterosexual.

**Hypothesis 2.** Respondents who identified themselves as LGBT reported significantly more students overall make homophobic remarks on a college campus than individuals identifying themselves as heterosexual reported.

## CHAPTER II

### Method

#### Participants

Group 1 consisted of 31 participants identifying themselves as heterosexual while Group 2 consisted of 31 participants identifying themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or questioning. Participants included in Group 2, the LGBT group, were recruited through the utilization of Middle Tennessee State University's (MTSU) premier student run Queer-Straight Alliance and Gay Straight Alliance, Lambda. Some of the participants in Group 2 were recruited personally by the researcher based on knowledge of their sexual orientation. Participants are students who are currently students at Middle Tennessee State University, some of which are members of Lambda. Participants either completed the survey at a regularly scheduled Lambda meeting or at an informal meeting with the researcher in April 2013. Relatively equal numbers of males and females were sampled. All participants are 18 years or older.

Mistina Brown recruited the participants included in Group 1 in 2010 for her Thesis project. Brown recruited participants through the utilization of Middle Tennessee State University's (MTSU) undergraduate psychology research classes. Participants included only students 18 years of age and older who were enrolled at MTSU and had completed at least one undergraduate psychology course. Overall, Brown recruited 191 students to participate in her study; however, two participants were excluded due to "excessive omission of survey responses." Therefore, 189 participants' surveys were encoded and analyzed using statistical analyses software (SPSS).

## **Materials and Apparatus**

The survey used in this study was based on the Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network's (GLSEN) Local School Climate Survey-School-based Version (LSCS). Permission to use GLSEN's LSCS was obtained by Mistina Brown on February 7, 2011 via electronic mail. This survey is made up of five sections (A through E) and contains a total of 40 questions. The survey was designed to obtain students' demographic information and their perceptions about MTSU's school climate toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) students as well as their perceptions about school climate for female students, students from ethnic minority backgrounds, and students who are perceived to act less feminine or less masculine than their same gender peers (Brown, 2011).

**Section A.** Section A of the survey consists of eight questions. Four of the questions aimed to measure the students' perceptions of the frequency of homophobic remarks made at MTSU. Responses to these four questions were answered on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "Frequently" to "Never." One of the eight questions aimed to measure the students' perception of how many other students engage in homophobic verbalizations. Responses to this question were answered on a three-point Likert scale, ranging from "Most of the Students" to "A Few of the Students." The final three questions asked how often students perceived professors or other students intervening when homophobic remarks were made. Responses to these three questions were answered on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from "Always" to "Never."

**Sections B and C.** Sections B and C contain seven questions each. For each section, three of the questions aimed to measure the students' perceptions as to how often

racist and sexist remarks are made on campus. Responses to these three questions were answered on a five point Likert scale, ranging from “Frequently” to “Never.” One question aimed to measure the students’ perception of how many other students make racist and sexist remarks. Responses to these questions were answered on a three-point Likert scale, ranging from “Most of the Students” to “A Few of the Students.” The final three questions aimed to measure how often students perceive professors or other students intervene when racist and sexist remarks are made. Responses to these three questions were answered on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from “Always” to “Never.”

**Section D.** Section D consists of eight questions aimed to measure students’ perceptions in terms of climate for students who were are perceived as being less masculine or feminine as their same gender peers. Four of the questions intended to measure students’ perceptions as to how often negative remarks are made on campus regarding other students’ gender expression. Responses to these questions were answered on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from “Frequently” to “Never.” One question aimed to measure students’ perception of how many other students participate in negative verbalizations regarding gender expression. Responses to these questions were answered on a three-point Likert scale, ranging from “Most of the Students” to “A Few of the Students.” The final three questions aimed to measure how often students perceive professors or other students intervening when homophobic remarks are made. Responses to these three questions were answered on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from “Always” to “Never.”

**Section E.** Section E consists of ten questions and was intended to measure demographic information of the respondents. Included were questions regarding age,

gender, race or ethnicity, sexual orientation, and grade level classification. Respondents were asked to fill in their exact age rather than select a category. With the exception of age, respondents were asked to make only one selection from an established list of options. Where appropriate, questions included the option to select “other” and to explain.

**Additional Information.** Mistina Brown edited the survey slightly to make it more appropriate for use with college students. Although the overall content remained the same for both surveys, the words “in school” were replaced with “at school” so as to better reflect a the layout of a college campus. Additionally, “teacher” was changed to “professor” and the words “boys” and “girls” were replaced with “men” and “women.” Due to inapplicability, Section E of the survey was removed entirely. Furthermore, specifics about locations within schools where homophobic remarks were heard were removed to reflect a general campus location. In order to make data collection more applicable to college students, participants were asked to specify their current school classification (i.e., freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) instead of their “grade.” The instructions to “check all terms that apply to you” for ethnicity and gender were replaced with “check the term that applies to you,” which restricted respondents to one category. “Other” was included as a category to allow for students to fill in their own ethnicity and gender.

### **Procedure**

The researcher gave a brief synopsis of the study at the beginning of the meeting. Potential participants were given a consent letter containing information about the purpose of the study and their rights as participants should they choose to participate.

They were asked to sign one copy of the consent letter and keep a copy for their records. The researcher then collected the consent forms.

Students who agreed to participate and signed the consent forms were administered the survey and asked to complete it presently. Survey completion took no longer than 25 minutes. Participants were instructed to place their completed surveys into a manila envelope once finished. Participants who chose not to complete the survey were also asked to place the incomplete survey in the same manila envelope. After placing their survey in the manila envelope, participants were handed a debriefing form (Appendix C) and asked if they had any questions. After all participants received the debriefing form, the researcher exited the meeting.

## CHAPTER III

### Results

The data collected was coded and interpreted using Statistical Packaging for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The data collected in this experiment comprises Group 2, while data previously collected by Mistina Brown represents Group 1. Because the sample size collected by Mistina Brown is much larger than the sample that was collected in this study, students comprising Group 1 participants were randomly matched to students with similar characteristics (i.e., age and gender) in Group 2 in order to prevent confounding variable effects.

Independent samples *t*-tests were conducted for individual questions regarding the frequency of specific homophobic remarks heard to determine significant differences between the two groups. A comparison of means based on the Likert scales was conducted to determine whether significantly different rates of frequency exist between the two samples of participants. Each response on the five point Likert scale was assigned a numerical value between 1 and 5 with “Frequently” being 1 and “Never” being 5. Therefore, a lower mean value will correspond with a higher reported frequency. Independent samples *t*-tests were conducted for additional questions to further analyze how each group perceived who was making the remarks (i.e., students or staff) and the frequency they occurred.

Sixty two individual’s responses were coded and analyzed in this study. Of the 62 participants, 31 participants comprised Group 1 and 32 comprised Group 2. Complete descriptive statistics including gender, age, race, and sexual orientation are provided in

Table 1. Independent samples *t*-tests were used to test all hypotheses. See Table 2 for descriptive statistics on hypotheses testing. See Table 3 and Table 4 for *t*-test results.

### **Hypothesis 1**

Hypothesis 1 stated that respondents who identified themselves as LGBT reported hearing significantly more homophobic remarks such as “that’s so gay” on a college campus than individuals identifying themselves as heterosexual.

For Section A-Question 1, using an alpha level of .05, the independent samples *t*-test indicated that the average frequency of hearing expressions such as “that’s so gay” or “you’re so gay” used at school according to respondents in Group 2 ( $M = 2.29, SD = 0.78, n = 31$ ) was significantly different than the average frequency according to respondents in Group 1 ( $M = 2.39, SD = 1.05, n = 31$ ),  $t(60) = 0.410, p = 0.03$ . (Note: A lower mean value corresponds with a higher reported frequency.) These results provide support for Hypothesis 1.

For Section A-Question 2, using an alpha level of .05, the independent samples *t*-test indicated that the average frequency of hearing expressions such as “faggot,” “dyke,” or “queer” used at school according to respondents in Group 2 ( $M = 3.26, SD = 0.93, n = 31$ ) was significantly different than the average frequency according to respondents in Group 1 ( $M = 2.48, SD = 1.21, n = 31$ ),  $t(60) = -2.828, p = 0.026$ . (Note: A lower mean value corresponds with a higher reported frequency.) These results do not provide support for Hypothesis 1.

For Section A-Question 3, using an alpha level of .05, the independent samples *t*-test indicated that the average frequency of hearing homophobic remarks from other students according to respondents in Group 2 ( $M = 2.87, SD = 0.85, n = 31$ ) was not

significantly different than the average frequency according to respondents in Group 1 ( $M = 2.52, SD = 1.00, n = 31$ ),  $t(60) = -1.512, p = 0.289$ . (Note: A lower mean value corresponds with a higher reported frequency.) These results do not provide support for Hypothesis 1. For Section A-Question 5, using an alpha level of .05, the independent samples  $t$ -test indicated that the average frequency of hearing homophobic remarks from teachers or school staff according to respondents in Group 2 ( $M = 4.84, SD = 0.37, n = 31$ ) was not significantly different than the average frequency according to respondents in Group 1 ( $M = 4.77, SD = 0.50, n = 31$ ),  $t(60) = -0.577, p = 0.217$ . (Note: A lower mean value corresponds with a higher reported frequency.) These results do not provide support for Hypothesis 1.

## **Hypothesis 2**

Hypothesis 2 stated that respondents who identified themselves as LGBT reported significantly more students overall make homophobic remarks on a college campus than individuals identifying themselves as heterosexual reported.

For Section A-Question 4, using an alpha level of .05, the independent samples  $t$ -test indicated that the average ranking of how many students made homophobic remarks at school according to respondents in Group 2 ( $M = 2.45, SD = 0.62, n = 31$ ) was not significantly different than the average ranking according to respondents in Group 1 ( $M = 2.26, SD = 0.68, n = 31$ ),  $t(60) = -1.166, p = 0.914$ . (Note: A lower mean value corresponds with a higher reported frequency.) These results do not provide support for Hypothesis 2.

Table 1

*Full Demographic Descriptive Statistics*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Gender		
Male	31	50.0
Female	29	46.8
Transgender	2	3.2
Age		
18-20	42	67.7
21-23	11	17.7
24-30	8	12.9
31+	1	1.6
Race		
White	46	74.2
African American	10	16.1
Hispanic	3	4.8
Asian	1	1.6
Native American	1	1.6
Other	1	1.6
Sexual Orientation		
Straight	31	50.0
Lesbian	6	9.7
Gay	17	27.4
Bisexual	8	12.9

*N* = 62

Table 2

*Descriptive Group Statistics for Hypotheses Testing*

<i>Corresponding Question</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Section A – Question 1	1	2.39	1.05
	2	2.29	.78
Section A – Question 2	1	2.48	1.21
	2	3.26	.93
Section A – Question 3	1	2.52	1.00
	2	2.87	.85
Section A – Question 4	1	2.26	.68
	2	2.45	.62
Section A – Question 5	1	4.77	.50
	2	4.84	.37

*N* = 62

Table 3

*Effect of Sexual Orientation on the Reported Frequency of Hearing Certain Comments*

Corresponding Question	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>P</i>	95% CI	
				LL	UL
Section A – Question 1	0.410	60	0.030	-0.375	.568
Section A – Question 2	-2.828	60	0.026	-1.322	-0.227
Section A – Question 3	-1.512	60	0.289	-0.824	0.115
Section A – Question 5	-0.577	60	0.217	-0.288	0.159

*N* = 62, \* *p* < .05

*Note.* CI = Confidence Interval, UL = Upper Level, LL = Lower Level

Table 4

*Effect of Sexual Orientation on the Reported Number of Students Making Homophobic Remarks*

Corresponding Question	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>P</i>	95% CI	
				LL	UL
Section A – Question 4	-1.166	60	0.914	-0.526	.138

*N* = 62, \* *p* < .05

*Note.* CI = Confidence Interval, UL = Upper Level, LL = Lower Level

## CHAPTER IV

### Discussion

According to the data analyses conducted, hypothesis 1 was accepted only when comparing data from Question 1 on the survey. Question 1 concerned the frequency of remarks heard using the expression “that’s so gay,” or “you’re so gay.” For Question 1, Group 2 reported hearing significantly more remarks using the expression than Group 1. However, on Question 2, which concerned the frequency of other homophobic remarks heard such as “faggot,” “dyke,” and “queer,” Group 1 reported hearing significantly more remarks than Group 2. The other two questions (Questions 3 and 5) concerning the frequency of homophobic remarks heard from other students and staff did not differ significantly for either group. Interestingly, the data suggests that sexual orientation may have an impact on the kind of homophobic remarks that a person hears more often. According to the data collected in this study, heterosexuals are more likely to have heard homophobic remarks such as “faggot,” “dyke,” and “queer,” whereas homosexuals are more likely to have heard the expressions “that’s so gay” or “you’re so gay.” One possible explanation is that the phrase “that’s so gay” has become quite common and is therefore used more openly around LGBTQ students than the words “faggot,” “dyke,” and “queer,” which may be considered a higher degree of insult. Because these words may be considered more offensive, it is possible that they are used less frequently around LGBTQ students and more often as a social insult among heterosexuals. Furthermore, because most participants reported that professors and other school staff “Never” make these comments, Middle Tennessee State University likely portrays a positive climate for LGBTQ students at an institutional level.

Hypothesis 2 stated that respondents who identified themselves as LGBT would report significantly more students overall make homophobic remarks on a college campus than individuals identifying themselves as heterosexual reported. Although Group 2 overall reported that more students make homophobic remarks, the means were not significantly different; therefore, Hypothesis 2 was rejected. One explanation for the results is that sexual orientation does not have an effect on the perception of the number of students overall making homophobic remarks. Participants ranked how many students made homophobic remarks by selecting “most of the students,” “some of the students,” or “a few of the students.” The means for both groups fell between “some of the students” and “a few of the students” indicating that, although some students do make homophobic remarks, the majority of students on MTSU’s campus do not.

### **Limitations**

It is important to note that the population sampled in this study is not a comprehensive representation of the population intended for GLSEN’s Local School Climate Survey. The students in this project were all over the age of 18 and were attending a public university in the southeast United States. There are vast differences between middle/high school environments and a university environment. Furthermore, university environments vary from state to state. The sample size of this study is relatively small and does not reflect a representative sample of Middle Tennessee State University students as a whole. Some of the students sampled in this study knew each other personally and/or were involved in similar campus organizations (e.g., Lambda) and may have similar experiences and viewpoints.

In order for the results of this study to be more meaningful, similar studies would need to be conducted in other universities across the country with larger sample sizes. Furthermore, the data collected in this study only represents the experiences of college students. Data should be collected from students of different ages to provide a better representation of the experiences of younger and/or older students. It might also be interesting if a longitudinal study surveyed students as they progress through elementary, middle, and high school to determine if age impacts perception of homophobia.

Regardless of limitations, the data does give some support for the hypothesis that individuals identifying themselves as homosexual perceive a more homophobic environment than individuals identifying themselves as heterosexual. However, this was only found to be true for the use of the expression “that’s so gay.” This suggests that some variability exists among the kinds of remarks heard by homosexual and heterosexual individuals. According to information contained in the 2010 “Think before you speak” campaign sponsored by GLSEN, in conjunction with the Ad Council there are negative consequences associated with the casual use of offensive language such as “that’s so gay,” regardless of intent. Therefore, researchers and schools should continue to raise awareness about using homophobic language in schools in order to promote a more positive climate for LGBT students.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

**GLSEN's Original Local School Climate Survey**



**Local School Climate Survey**  
**School-Based Version**

## Section A

This first set of questions is about homophobic remarks you may have heard at our school. Please circle the answer that best describes your experience at our school.

1. How often do you hear the expression "That's so gay," or "You're so gay" in school?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
2. How often have you heard other homophobic remarks used in school (such as "faggot," "dyke," "queer," etc.)?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
3. How often do you hear these homophobic remarks from other students?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
4. Would you say that homophobic remarks are made by:	Most of the students	Some of the students	A few of the students		
5. How often do you hear these homophobic remarks from teachers or school staff?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
6. How often do you hear homophobic remarks in:					
a) Classes	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
b) Hallways	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
c) Bathrooms	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
d) Locker Rooms	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
e) Buses	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
f) Athletic Field/Gym	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
g) Schoolyard or School Grounds	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
h) Cafeteria	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
7. When you hear homophobic remarks, how often has a teacher or other school staff person been present?	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never	
8. When homophobic remarks are made and a teacher or other school staff person is present, how often does the teacher or staff person intervene?	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never	
9. When you hear homophobic remarks, how often does another student intervene?	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never	

## Section B

This next set of questions is about racist remarks you may have heard at our school. Please circle the answer that best describes your experience at our school.

1.	How often have you heard racist remarks used in school (such as "nigger," "kike," "spic," "gook," etc.)?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
2.	How often do you hear racist remarks from other students?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
3.	Would you say that racist remarks are made by:	Most of the students		Some of the students	A few of the students	
4.	How often do you hear racist remarks from teachers or school staff?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
5.	How often do you hear racist remarks in:					
	a) Classes	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	b) Hallways	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	c) Bathrooms	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	d) Locker Rooms	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	e) Buses	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	f) Athletic Field/Gym	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	g) Schoolyard or School Grounds	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	h) Cafeteria	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
6.	When you hear racist remarks, how often has a teacher or other school staff person been present?	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never	
7.	When racist remarks are made and a teacher or other school staff person is present, how often does the teacher or staff person intervene?	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never	
8.	When you hear racist remarks, how often does another student intervene?	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never	

## Section C

This set of questions is about sexist remarks you may have heard at our school. Please circle the answer that best describes your experience at our school.

1.	How often have you heard sexist remarks used in school (such as someone being called a "bitch" or comments about girls' bodies or talk of girls being inferior to boys)?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
2.	How often do you hear sexist remarks from other students?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
3.	Would you say that sexist remarks are made by:	Most of the students		Some of the students	A few of the students	
4.	How often do you hear sexist remarks from teachers or school staff?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
5.	How often do you hear sexist remarks in:					
	a) Classes	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	b) Hallways	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	c) Bathrooms	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	d) Locker Rooms	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	e) Buses	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	f) Athletic Field/Gym	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	g) Schoolyard or School Grounds	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	h) Cafeteria	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
6.	When you hear sexist remarks, how often has a teacher or other school staff person been present?	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never	
7.	When sexist remarks are made and a teacher or other school staff person is present, how often does the teacher or staff person intervene?	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never	
8.	When you hear sexist remarks, how often does another student intervene?	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never	

## Section D

This set of questions is about negative remarks you may have heard at our school related to people's gender expression. Please circle the answer that best describes your experience at our school.

1.	How often have you heard comments about students not acting "masculine" enough?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
2.	How often have you heard comments about students not acting "feminine" enough?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
3.	How often do you hear these kinds of remarks from other students?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
4.	Would you say that these kinds of remarks are made by:	Most of the students	Some of the students	A few of the students		
5.	How often do you hear these remarks from teachers or school staff?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
6.	How often do you hear these kinds of remarks in:					
	a) Classrooms	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	b) Hallways	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	c) Bathrooms	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	d) Locker Rooms	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	e) Buses	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	f) Athletic Field/Gym	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	g) Schoolyard or School Grounds	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	h) Cafeteria	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
7.	When you hear these remarks, how often has a teacher or other school staff person been present?	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never	
8.	When these remarks are made and a teacher or other school staff person is present, how often does the teacher or staff person intervene?	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never	
9.	When you hear these kinds of remarks, how often does another student intervene?	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never	

## Section E

This set of questions is about harassment or fights that you may have encountered at our school. For each question, please circle or check the answer that best describes your experience at our school.

1.	In the past month, how many times have you skipped a class because you felt uncomfortable or unsafe in that class?	0 times	1 time	2 or 3 times	4 or 5 times	6 or more times
2.	In the past month, how many days did you not go to school because you felt unsafe at school or on your way to school?	0 times	1 day	2 or 3 days	4 or 5 days	6 or more days
3.	Do you feel unsafe at our school because of... (check all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> your sexual orientation <input type="checkbox"/> your race or ethnicity <input type="checkbox"/> your gender <input type="checkbox"/> how you express your gender (how traditionally "masculine" or "feminine" you are in your appearance, or in how you act) <input type="checkbox"/> your religion <input type="checkbox"/> because of a disability or because people think you have a disability				
4.	In the past year, how often have you been verbally harassed (name calling, threats, etc.) at our school because of...					
	a) your sexual orientation?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	b) your gender?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	c) how you express your gender?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	d) your race or ethnicity?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	e) your religion?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	f) because of a disability or because people think you have a disability?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

## Section E (continued)

<b>5. In the past year, how often have you been physically harassed (shoved, pushed, etc.) at our school because of...</b>					
a) your sexual orientation?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
b) your gender?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
c) how you express your gender?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
d) your race or ethnicity?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
e) your religion?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
f) because of a disability or because people think you have a disability?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
<b>6. In the past year, how often have you been physically assaulted (punched, kicked, injured with a weapon) at our school because of...</b>					
a) your sexual orientation?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
b) your gender?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
c) how you express your gender?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
d) your race or ethnicity?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
e) your religion?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
f) because of a disability or because people think you have a disability?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
<b>7. How often have you been sexually harassed at our school, such as sexual remarks made toward you or someone touching your body inappropriately?</b>	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
<b>8. How often have you had mean rumors or lies spread about you in school?</b>	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
<b>9. How often have you had your property stolen or deliberately damaged, such as your car, clothing or books?</b>	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

## Section F

This last section is about some of your personal characteristics.

- 
1. Below is a list of terms that people often use to describe their sexuality or sexual orientation. Please check all those terms that apply to you.

Gay       Lesbian       Bisexual       Straight/  
Heterosexual       Questioning

If none of these terms apply to you, please tell us how you describe your sexuality or sexual orientation: \_\_\_\_\_

- 
2. Below is a list of terms that people often use to describe their gender. Please check all those terms that apply to you.

Male       Female       Transgender       Transgender  
Male-to-Female       Transgender  
Female-to-Male

If none of these terms apply to you, please tell us how you describe your gender: \_\_\_\_\_

- 
3. What is your race or ethnicity? Please check all those terms that apply to you.

White or       African American       Hispanic or       Asian or       Native  
European American      or Black      Latino/Latina      Pacific Islander      American

Other (please tell us what is your race/ethnicity) \_\_\_\_\_

- 
4. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

- 
5. What grade are you in? \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for completing the survey!

APPENDIX B  
Adapted Survey

**Section A**

This first set of questions is about homophobic remarks you may have heard at our school. Please circle the answer that best describes your experience at our school.

- |    |  |                      |                      |                       |        |       |
|----|--|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--------|-------|
| 1. | <b>How often do you hear the expression “That’s so gay,” or “You’re so gay” at school?</b>   | Frequently           | Often                | Sometimes             | Rarely | Never |
| 2. | <b>How often have you heard other homophobic remarks used at school (such as “faggot,” “dyke,” “queer,” etc.)?</b>                                       | Frequently           | Often                | Sometimes             | Rarely | Never |
| 3. | <b>How often do you hear these homophobic remarks from other students?</b>   | Frequently           | Often                | Sometimes             | Rarely | Never |
| 4. | <b>Would you say that homophobic remarks are made by:</b>  | Most of the students | Some of the students | A few of the students |        |       |
| 5. | <b>How often do you hear these homophobic remarks from professors or school staff?</b>   | Frequently           | Often                | Sometimes             | Rarely | Never |
| 6. | <b>When you hear homophobic remarks, how often has a professor or other school staff person been present?</b>  | Always               | Most of the time     | Some of the time      | Never  |       |
| 7. | <b>When homophobic remarks are made and a professor or other school staff person is present, how often does the professor or staff person intervene?</b> | Always               | Most of the time     | Some of the time      | Never  |       |
| 8. | <b>When you hear homophobic remarks, how often does another student intervene?</b>   | Always               | Most of the time     | Some of the time      | Never  |       |

### Section B

This next set of questions is about racist remarks you may have heard at our school. Please circle the answer that best describes your experience at our school.

- |    |  |                      |                  |                      |                       |       |
|----|--|----------------------|------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| 1. | <b>How often have you heard racist remarks used at school (such as “nigger,” “kike,” “spic,” “gook,” etc.)?</b>                                      | Frequently           | Often            | Sometimes            | Rarely                | Never |
| 2. | <b>How often do you hear racist remarks from other students?</b>   | Frequently           | Often            | Sometimes            | Rarely                | Never |
| 3. | <b>Would you say that racist remarks are made by:</b>  | Most of the students |                  | Some of the students | A few of the students |       |
| 4. | <b>How often do you hear racist remarks from professors or school staff?</b>   | Frequently           | Often            | Sometimes            | Rarely                | Never |
| 5. | <b>When you hear racist remarks, how often has a professor or other school staff person been present?</b>  | Always               | Most of the time | Some of the time     | Never                 |       |
| 6. | <b>When racist remarks are made and a professor or other school staff person is present, how often does the professor or staff person intervene?</b> | Always               | Most of the time | Some of the time     | Never                 |       |
| 7. | <b>When you hear racist remarks, how often does another student intervene?</b>   | Always               | Most of the time | Some of the time     | Never                 |       |

### Section C

This set of questions is about sexist remarks you may have heard at our school. Please circle the answer that best describes your experience at our school.

- |    |   |                      |                      |                       |        |       |
|----|---|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--------|-------|
| 1. | <b>How often have you heard sexist remarks used at school (such as someone being called a “bitch” or comments about womens’ bodies or talk of women being inferior to men)?</b> | Frequently           | Often                | Sometimes             | Rarely | Never |
| 2. | <b>How often do you hear sexist remarks from other students?</b>  | Frequently           | Often                | Sometimes             | Rarely | Never |
| 3. | <b>Would you say that sexist remarks are made by:</b>   | Most of the students | Some of the students | A few of the students |        |       |
| 4. | <b>How often do you hear sexist remarks from professors or school staff?</b>  | Frequently           | Often                | Sometimes             | Rarely | Never |
| 5. | <b>When you hear sexist remarks, how often has a professor or other school staff person been present?</b>   | Always               | Most of the time     | Some of the time      | Never  |       |
| 6. | <b>When sexist remarks are made and a professor or other school staff person is present, how often does the professor or staff person intervene?</b>                            | Always               | Most of the time     | Some of the time      | Never  |       |
| 7. | <b>When you hear sexist remarks, how often does another student intervene?</b>  | Always               | Most of the time     | Some of the time      | Never  |       |

**Section D**

This set of questions is about negative remarks you may have heard at our school related to people's gender expression. Please circle the answer that best describes your experience at our school.

- |  |                      |                      |                       |        |       |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--------|-------|
| <b>1. How often have you heard comments about students not acting "masculine" enough?</b>  | Frequently           | Often                | Sometimes             | Rarely | Never |
| <b>2. How often have you heard comments about students not acting "feminine" enough?</b>   | Frequently           | Often                | Sometimes             | Rarely | Never |
| <b>3. How often do you hear these kinds of remarks from other students?</b>  | Frequently           | Often                | Sometimes             | Rarely | Never |
| <b>4. Would you say that these kinds of remarks are made by:</b>   | Most of the students | Some of the students | A few of the students |        |       |
| <b>5. How often do you hear these remarks from professors or school staff?</b>   | Frequently           | Often                | Sometimes             | Rarely | Never |
| <b>6. When you hear these remarks, how often has a professor or other school staff person been present?</b>  | Always               | Most of the time     | Some of the time      | Never  |       |
| <b>7. When these remarks are made and a professor or other school staff person is present, how often does the professor or staff person intervene?</b> | Always               | Most of the time     | Some of the time      | Never  |       |
| <b>8. When you hear these kinds of remarks, how often does another student intervene?</b>  | Always               | Most of the time     | Some of the time      | Never  |       |

**Section E**

This last section is about some of your personal characteristics.

1. **Below is a list of terms that people often use to describe their gender. Please check the term that applies to you.**

Male  Female  Transgender

**If none of these terms apply to you, please \_\_\_\_\_  
tell us how you describe your gender:**

2. **What is your race or ethnicity? Please check the term that applies to you.**

White or European American  African American or Black  Hispanic or Latino/Latina  Asian or Pacific Islander  Native American

Other (please tell us what is your race/ethnicity) \_\_\_\_\_

3. **How old are you?** \_\_\_\_\_

4. **Including this semester, how many *semesters* have you attended MTSU?** \_\_\_\_\_

5. **How many of your friends identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgendered?** \_\_\_\_\_

6. **How would you describe your religious affiliation? Please check the term that applies to you.**

Christian (please specify, e.g., Baptist, Church of God, Catholic, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Muslim  
 Jewish  
 None  
 Other (Please specify \_\_\_\_\_ )

7. **How frequently do you attend religious services or participate in activities affiliated with your religious organization (e.g., church, synagogue, temple, coven, etc.)**

Never  Less than once a year  Once or twice a year  Once or twice a month  Once a week  More than once a week

8. **How does your religious organization view persons identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered?**

Positively  Somewhat Positively  Neutral  Somewhat Negatively  Negatively

9. **How do you view persons identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered?**

Positively  Somewhat Positively  Neutral  Somewhat Negatively  Negatively

10. **How would you describe your sexual orientation? Please check the term that applies to you.**

Straight  Lesbian  Gay  Bisexual  Questioning  Other (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C

**Participant Consent Letter****Participation Consent Form****Principal Investigator: M. Kelly Powell****Study Title: Perception of Environment by LGBT Students on a College Campus****Institution: Middle Tennessee State University**

Name of participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

The following information is provided to inform you about the research project and your participation in it. Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask any questions you may have about this study and the information given below. You will be given an opportunity to ask questions, and your questions will be answered. Also, you will be given a copy of this consent form.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You are also free to withdraw from this study at any time. In the event new information becomes available that may affect the risks or benefits associated with this research study or your willingness to participate in it, you will be notified so that you can make an informed decision whether or not to continue your participation in this study.

For additional information about giving consent or your rights as a participant in this study, please feel free to contact the MTSU Office of Compliance at (615) 494-8918.

**1. Purpose of the study:**

You are being asked to participate in a research study because you are a member of MTSU's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgendered (LGBT) student organization, Lamda. This purpose of this study is to collect data to determine the level of homophobic remarks, such as "that's so gay," that are noticed by LGBT individuals.

**2. Description of procedures to be followed and approximate duration of the study:**

Students who choose to participate in this study who return their informed consent form to the researcher will be given the survey. Filling out the survey should take 10-20 minutes.

**3. Expected costs:**

N/A

**4. Description of the discomforts, inconveniences, and/or risks that can be reasonably expected as a result of participation in this study:**

Questions on the survey may cover sensitive material and may cause participants to recall negative experiences or memories related to the issue of bullying. Because participation is voluntary, any participant experiencing a negative reaction to the survey may withdraw their participation immediately.

**5. Compensation in case of study-related injury:**

N/A

**6. Anticipated benefits from this study:**

- a) The potential benefits to science and humankind that may result from this study include: raising awareness about how LGBT students perceive their school environment and providing information about school climate and how homophobic remarks affect LGBT students.
- b) The potential benefit to you from this study is that you contributed to raising awareness about issues LGBT students face at school.

**7. Alternative treatments available:**

N/A

**8. Compensation for participation:**

None

**9. Circumstances under which the Principal Investigator may withdraw you from study participation:**

**Individuals that would be excluded from participating in this study include: individuals under the age of 18, individuals who identify themselves as straight, and individuals who are not students at MTSU.**

**10. What happens if you choose to withdraw from study participation:**

**Students who choose to withdraw from study participation may discontinue filling out the survey immediately. Their survey data will not be included in the study.**

**11. Contact Information.** If you should have any questions about this research study or possible injury, please feel free to contact Kelly Powell at (606) 922-8531 or my Faculty Advisor, Dr. Monica Wallace at \_\_\_\_\_.**12. Confidentiality.** All efforts, within reason, will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private but total privacy cannot be promised. Your information may be shared with MTSU or the government, such as the Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board, Federal Government Office for Human Research Protections, and the TN Department of Education if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.**13. STATEMENT BY PERSON AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY**

**I have read this informed consent document and the material contained in it has been explained to me verbally. I understand each part of the document, all my questions have been answered, and I freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this study.**

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Date

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Signature of patient/volunteer

Consent obtained by:

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Date

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Signature

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Printed Name and Title

## APPENDIX D

**Participant Debriefing Form**

Thank you for participating as a research participant in the present study concerning the perception of environments by homosexual vs. heterosexual individuals. This purpose of this study is to collect data to determine the level of homophobic remarks, such as “that’s so gay,” that are noticed by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgendered (LGBT) individuals.

Again, we thank you for your participation in this study. If you know of any friends or acquaintances that are eligible to participate in this study, we request that you not discuss it with them until after they have had the opportunity to participate. Prior knowledge of questions asked during the study can invalidate the results. We greatly appreciate your cooperation.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to ask the researcher, Kelly Powell, at this time (email: [mkp3g@mtmail.mtsu.edu](mailto:mkp3g@mtmail.mtsu.edu); telephone: (606) 922-8531) or the faculty advisor, Dr. Wallace (email: [monica.wallace@mts.edu](mailto:monica.wallace@mts.edu); telephone (615) 898-2165).

In the event that you feel psychologically distressed by participation in this study, we encourage you to contact MTSU’s counseling center at Keathley University Center 326-S, P.O. Box 53, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN 37132 or call (615) 898-2670.

Thank you again for your participation.

## APPENDIX E

**Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval**

April 17, 2013  
Mary Kelly Powell  
Department of Psychology  
[mkp3g@mtmail.mtsu.edu](mailto:mkp3g@mtmail.mtsu.edu)

Protocol Title: Perception of Environment by LGBT Students on a College Campus

Protocol Number: 13-288

Dear Ms. Powell:

The MTSU Institutional Review Board, or a representative of the IRB, has reviewed the research proposal identified above. The MTSU IRB or its representative has determined that the study poses minimal risk to participants and qualifies for an expedited review under the 45 CFR 46.110 Category 2, 4, and 7.

Approval is granted for one (1) year from the date of this letter for up to 100 participants.

According to MTSU Policy, a researcher is defined as anyone who works with data or has contact with participants. Anyone meeting this definition needs to be listed on the protocol and needs to provide a certificate of training to the Office of Compliance. **If you add researchers to an approved project, please forward an updated list of researchers and their certificates of training to the Office of Compliance (Box 134) before they begin to work on the project.** Any change to the protocol must be submitted to the IRB before implementing this change.

Please note that any unanticipated harms to participants or adverse events must be reported to the Office of Compliance at (615) 494-8918.

You will need to submit an end-of-project form to the Office of Compliance upon completion of your research located on the IRB website. Complete research means that you have finished collecting and analyzing data. **Should you not finish your research within the one (1) year period, you must submit a Progress Report and request a continuation prior to the expiration date.** Please allow time for review and requested revisions. Your study expires **April 17, 2014**.

Also, all research materials must be retained by the PI or faculty advisor (if the PI is a student) for at least three (3) years after study completion. Should you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me or the Research Compliance Office.

Sincerely,

**Beverly J. Boulware**

Research Compliance, IRB Committee  
Middle Tennessee State University