

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <http://www.researchgate.net/publication/269277415>

LGBT bias and discrimination: Occurrence, outcomes, and the impact of policy change.

TECHNICAL REPORT · AUGUST 2014

READS

211

1 AUTHOR:



[Kamden Strunk](#)

Auburn University

35 PUBLICATIONS 13 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

LGBT Bias and Discrimination: Occurrence, Outcomes, and the Impact of Policy Change

A brief report prepared for the Long Beach City Council by:

Kamden K. Strunk, Ph.D. & William C. Takewell, M.Ed.

Report reviewed and cosigned by:

Marie E. Adkinson, M.Ed., Ann E. Blankenship, Ph.D., Alesha K. Knox, M.Ed., Leslie A. Locke, Ph.D., Georgianna L. Martin, Ph.D., & Lissa D. Stapleton, Ph.D.

Research Initiative on Social Justice in Education (RISE)

College of Education and Psychology

The University of Southern Mississippi

August, 2014

Report reviewed by national experts, whose comments appear in appendices:

M. V. Lee Badgett, Ph.D. – Distinguished Scholar, The Williams Institute

Jackie Blount, Ph.D. – Professor and Senior Associate Dean, The Ohio State University

Warren J. Blumenfeld, Ed.D. – Lecturer, University of Massachusetts-Amherst



Contents

Executive Summary	2
LGBT Bias and Discrimination: Occurrence, Outcomes, and the Impact of Policy Change	3
Bias and Discrimination against LGBT Individuals	3
School Bullying of LGBT Individuals	3
College and University Bias and Discrimination	4
Workplace Discrimination	4
Healthcare Discrimination	5
Discrimination and Bias in Public Settings	5
Bias and Discrimination in Mississippi	6
Harmful Impacts of Bias and Discrimination	7
Policy Change and Associated Outcomes	7
References	9
Appendix A: Comments from M.V. Lee Badgett, Ph.D.	12
Appendix B: Comments from Jackie Blount, Ph.D.	13
Appendix C: Comments from Warren J. Blumenfeld, Ed.D.	15

Executive Summary

Bias and discrimination are an ongoing, persistent problem for LGBT Mississippians. They report experiencing discrimination, harassment, assault, and negative experiences with public official, among others. These experiences with bias and discrimination begin early on, with pervasive issues in the K-12 schooling system, and continue through college and university settings. In adult life, LGBT Mississippians experience workplace bias and discrimination, medical stigma, difficulty accessing medical care, and public bias and harassment. All of these experiences take a toll, resulting in a number of negative outcomes. These include depression, suicidal thoughts, lowered academic outcomes, lowered ability to perform at the job, and lower overall physical health. However, these experiences can be lessened and negative effects mitigated.

Diversity resolutions, nondiscrimination policies, and nondiscrimination ordinances make a real and positive difference in the lives of LGBT people. They provide affirming messages, decrease the perception that anti-LGBT discrimination and bias is officially sanctioned, and provide a sense of social support. All of these factors combine to result in better outcomes for LGBT people, and for the communities in which they live.

LGBT Bias and Discrimination: Occurrence, Outcomes, and the Impact of Policy Change

The purpose of this brief report is to describe bias and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans* (LGBT) individuals, with particular focus on the U.S. South, especially Mississippi and the Gulf Coast. This will be accomplished with a combination of published, peer-reviewed scientific research, publicly available survey data, and work conducted by researchers at state universities in Mississippi. This report will first document the extent to which individuals in the Gulf South and in Mississippi experience bias and discrimination in a variety of settings. Finally, the report describes the ways in which policy changes such as diversity resolutions and nondiscrimination policies can make a real difference, and highlights cases where this has occurred.

Bias and Discrimination against LGBT Individuals

Bias against LGBT individuals occurs in schools, colleges, workplaces, housing, in law enforcement and the judicial system, medical care, and public settings and accommodations. Bias can take the form of school bullying ([Varjas, et al., 2006](#)), differences in college admissions and financial aid, hiring and firing ([Tilcsik, 2011](#)), workplace harassment ([Badgett, Lau, Sears, & Ho, 2007](#)), false arrest ([Gregory, 2013, July](#)), difficulty gaining access to adequate medical care ([Mays & Cochran, 2001](#)), particularly for trans* individuals, medical stigma ([O’Byrne & Watts, 2014](#)), denial of service in public accommodations ([Huebner, Rebchook, & Kegeles, 2004](#)), and outright street harassment ([Stop Street Harassment, 2014](#)). In this review, bias and discrimination are first discussed in schools, where LGBT individuals are likely to first encounter them. Then, the issues that LGBT individuals encounter in colleges and universities with bias and discrimination are discussed. Workplace and healthcare issues are then reviewed as issues that are likely to arise more commonly in adulthood. Then, bias and discrimination in public settings are reviewed – settings that cannot be escaped, outgrown, or avoided. Finally, the outcomes associated with experiencing bias and discrimination are described. Through reviewing bias and discrimination in this order, a more complete picture to emerges of the ways in which experiences of bias and discrimination for LGBT individuals are part of daily life, from early schooling through late adulthood, and what these experiences mean to LGBT Mississippians.

School Bullying of LGBT Individuals

U.S. K-12 school environments are troubled spaces for LGBT students. They consistently report feelings of unsafety at school, with 63.5% reporting feeling unsafe at school because of

their sexual orientation and 49.5% because of their gender identity in a recent survey (GLSEN, 2011). That feeling comes from verbal harassment (81.9% reported), physical harassment (38.3% reported), assault (18.3% reported), online/electronic harassment (55.2% reported). Too often, derogatory remarks come from teachers and administrators, with 56.9% of students reporting they heard a homophobic remark or disparaging remark about their gender identity at school (GLSEN, 2011). The school environment is perhaps most dangerous for trans* students who become particular targets for harassment, assault, and disparaging comments in the K-12 environment (McGuire, Anderson, Toomey, & Russell, 2010). In a context that often discourages difference, bias on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender diversity often becomes layered with racial bias and other biases, highlighting the importance of comprehensive strategies toward inclusive diversity (Pritchard, 2013). However, researchers have found that positive home and community supports can have a protective influence for LGBT youth against the harmful effects of bias and discrimination (Espelage, Aragon, Birkett, & Koenig, 2008).

College and University Bias and Discrimination

The bias and discrimination experienced by LGBT individuals in the K-12 setting does not end on graduation. Those choosing to pursue college degrees find similar environments in the college setting. Students report biased language and acts on the part of other students and faculty at the college level (Rankin, et al., 2010). In many ways, the same patterns that exist in K-12 education spill over into colleges and universities. Even in graduate education, students report experiences with stigmatization and bias (Hylton, 2006). In the college admissions process, LGBT students may be more closely scrutinized and even discriminated against due to difference (Strunk & Bailey, 2014). Furthermore, in these settings, a sense of institutionalized bias exists ([Ferfolja, 2007](#)), and even faculty who espouse nondiscrimination as a value tend not to speak up or even actively participate in discrimination and bias ([Norris, 1992](#)).

Workplace Discrimination

Nationally, up to 43% of LGBT individuals have experienced workplace discrimination, with 17% being fired because of their sexual or gender identity, 28% receiving a negative performance evaluation based on LGBT identity status, and 41% experiencing abuse or vandalism based on their LGBT identity (Burns & Krehely, 2011). While these figures are self-reported by LGBT individuals, 30% of straight employees also report witnessing discrimination and harassment against their LGBT coworkers (Burns & Krehely, 2011). Not only are these

workplace harassment incidents unfortunate in their own right, but can also negatively affect companies. Workers who report harassment and discrimination are less productive, more distracted, more fatigued at work, more likely to experience health issues, and more likely to search for a new job – all of which costs businesses money (Mallory, Herman, & Badgett, 2011).

Healthcare Discrimination

Healthcare and medical stigma remains a concern for LGBT individuals, especially in the U.S. South. LGBT people report experiencing bias and discrimination from healthcare providers related to their sexual identities and gender identities (Campbell, 2013). Over one third of LGBT individuals report experiencing bias or discrimination from a healthcare provider, and about a third also report they do not discuss their sexual identity with their healthcare provider, resulting in a further medical risk factor (Richards, 2012). This discrimination and bias also extends into mental health services where gaps exist in mental health treatment seeking and mental health outcomes between LGBT individuals and their straight counterparts (Burgess, Lee, Tran, & van Ryn, 2007). In fact, researchers have suggested a link between the health disparities noted in LGBT populations and the stigma they experience from healthcare providers (Lim, Brown, & Sung Min, 2014). Among those living in the U.S. South, disclosure rates were particularly low among those living in rural settings, suggesting the particular concerns of LGBT individuals living in smaller towns and rural settings in the South ([Austin, 2013](#)).

Discrimination and Bias in Public Settings

LGBT individuals also experience ongoing discrimination and bias in public settings, whether on the street, in a theater, at a restaurant, or during the utilization of government services. This tends to be particularly true for trans* individuals, who experience ongoing subtle discrimination known as microaggressions. These may take the form of subtle transphobic language, inappropriate references to the body of a trans* individual, and implied physical threats, among others (Nadal, Skolnik, & Wong, 2012). Although trans* individuals report higher exposure to these forms of discrimination and bias, all LGBT individuals are susceptible to these subtle and not-so-subtle ongoing forms of discrimination in public spaces. LGBT individuals are subject to verbal harassment, threats of violence, and actual physical violence. This creates an environment that can become psychologically and emotionally damaging for individuals who identify as LGBT, particularly in smaller towns and rural settings. External bias can also become internalized, leading to psychological problems of lowered self-esteem,

depression, social isolation, somatic problems, suicidal ideation, attempts, and completion (Prinstein et al., 2001; Rigby 2003).

LGBT individuals report ongoing experiences with bias, discrimination, and harassment. In one survey, 37% of LGBT individuals reported experiencing public harassment during the previous 6 months (Huebner, Rebchook, & Kegeles, 2004). That is, once LGBT individuals leave the environment of schools and colleges, they continue to experience bias and discrimination – it simply moves into the sphere of the public. In fact, LGBT individuals often report accounts of being denied service, turned away from establishments, or provided a lower quality of service than others on account of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

However, perhaps one of the most destructive forms of discrimination and bias comes from public officials and public servants. In the United States, LGBT individuals still find themselves subject to arrest and police harassment due to their sexual or gender identity. As recently as last year in Louisiana, individuals were arrested for consensual same-sex relationships, despite court orders barring the practice (Gregory, 2013, July; and the Supreme Court decision, *Lawrence v. Texas*, 2003). Trans* individuals are regularly arrested in urban areas on suspicion of intent to engage in solicitation (Strangio, 2014, April). LGBT individuals are targeted for selective police action around morals ordinances, through raids of LGBT gatherings and establishments, and pride demonstrations (Amnesty International, 2005). The end result is a disruption of many of the places deemed ‘safe’ by LGBT individuals that previously provided a degree of stability and shelter against public discrimination and bias. Such police actions may not be officially sanctioned in all cases, and official policies favoring diversity and inclusion can make a difference in the level of such disruptive and potentially abusive police actions (Amnesty International, 2005).

Bias and Discrimination in Mississippi

In Mississippi alone, 54% of those living in rural settings and 37% of those living in more urban settings report having experienced workplace harassment (HRC, 2014). About 42% report experiencing bullying in high school related to being LGBT-identified, with about one in three reporting experiencing harassment on at least a weekly basis. About 25% have experienced harassment from a public servant such as a police officer. For LGBT Mississippians, bias and discrimination appear to be real and pervasive components of their experience in the state.

Although research on rates of discrimination and bias against LGBT individuals is less available than for other locations, what is available is clear. For Mississippi's approximately 78,000 self-identified LGBT citizens, workplace harassment, school bullying, public harassment, bias, and discrimination are ongoing realities of life in the state. A one in two chance of being discriminated against at work, a one in three chance of being harassed at school, and a one in four chance of being harassed by a public servant can certainly affect one's feeling of safety and well-being.

Harmful Impacts of Bias and Discrimination

In fact, experiences of discrimination and bias are associated with lowered psychological well-being (Doyle & Molix, 2014). In schools, bullying is associated with lower educational outcomes (Aragon, Poteat, Espelage, & Koenig, 2014) and lower self-esteem (Kosciw, Palmer, Kull, & Gretak, 2013). Not only is experiencing bias and discrimination at school associated with poor educational outcomes, it influences later life outcome as well. Those who report having been the subject of anti-LGBT harassment in school are more likely to experience depression, suicidal thoughts, and substance abuse problems ([Russell, et al., 2011](#)). Experiences with workplace discrimination are associated with lower overall health and less days feeling healthy (Bauermeister, et al., 2014). These experiences are also associated with economic harms – particularly lower income ([Klawitter, 2011](#)). LGBT individuals are more likely to contemplate suicide than others ([Irwin & Austin, 2013](#)), and their experiences with discrimination and bias are a possible explanation for this difference. Although nationally LGBT individuals are more likely to contemplate or attempt suicide, this is particularly true in the South, where 40% had seriously considered suicide and 15% had attempted suicide in a recent study (Irwin & Austin, 2013). Feelings of social isolation and other effects of discrimination appear to be particularly strong in Southern and rural areas (Swank, Frost, & Fahs, 2012). Some negative outcomes associated with experiencing discrimination and bias may be mitigated by self-disclosure (Morman, Schrodt, & Ternes, 2013) and positive institutional support ([Kosciw, et al., 2013](#)).

Policy Change and Associated Outcomes

As an increasing number of companies, school districts, municipalities, and states adopt diversity resolutions, nondiscrimination policies, ordinances, and laws, the evidence regarding their impact has become more widely available. With the documented negative outcomes associated with bias and discrimination against LGBT individuals, the natural question arises as

to whether the passage of diversity resolutions and nondiscrimination ordinances actually makes a difference in the everyday lives of LGBT people. In areas with such ordinances and resolutions, LGBT individuals report higher feelings of social support, more positive messages from the environment, and higher levels of self-disclosure than in other areas (Riggle, Rostosky, & Horne, 2010). Of course, such ordinances and resolution also result in less actual and perceived bias and discrimination (Badgett, 2007). As previously discussed in this report, social support and self-disclosure can be protective factors against the negative outcomes associated with bias and discrimination. Supportive environments, including those with nondiscrimination policies, were associated with lowered suicide risk and other mental health issues among LGBT youth, as well ([Hatzenbuehler, 2011](#)). Offering such policies can help recruit and retain a more ethnically and racially diverse workforce, especially for colleges and universities (Cook & Glass, 2008). These policies make a difference in the emotional well-being of employees, as well (Tejeda, 2006). Although the evidence on these policies' impact is still emerging, the picture is relatively clear: they make a positive difference for LGBT people and can help the communities, companies, and schools that adopt them as well.

References

- Amnesty International (2005). Stonewalled: Police abuse and misconduct against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in the U.S. Retrieved from <http://www.streetwiseandsafe.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/StonewalledAI.pdf>
- Aragon, S. R., Poteat, V. P., Espelage, D. L., & Koenig, B. W. (2014). The influence of peer victimization on educational outcomes for LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ high school students. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 11(1), 1-19.
- Austin, E. L. (2013). Sexual orientation disclosure to health care providers among urban and non-urban Southern lesbians. *Women and Health*, 53(1), 41-55.
- Badgett, M. V. L. (2007). "Discrimination based on sexual orientation: A review of the economics literature and beyond." In M. V. L. Badgett and J. Frank (Eds.), *Sexual Orientation Discrimination*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Badgett, M. V., Lau, H., Sears, B., & Ho, D. (2007). Bias in the workplace: Consistent evidence of sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination. The Williams Institute. Retrieved from <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Badgett-Sears-Lau-Ho-Bias-in-the-Workplace-Jun-2007.pdf>
- Bauermeister, J. A., Meanley, S., Hickok, A., Pingel, E., Van Hemer, W., & Loveluck, J. (2014). Sexuality-related work discrimination and its association with the health of sexual minority emerging and young adult men in the Detroit metro area. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 11(1), 1-10.
- Burgess, D., Lee, R., Tran, A., & van Ryn, M. (2007). Effects of perceived discrimination on mental health services utilization among gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons. *Journal of LGBT Health Research*, 3(4), 1-14.
- Burns, C., & Krehely, J. (2011). Gay and transgender people face high rates of workplace discrimination and harassment: Data demonstrate need for federal law. Center for American Progress. Retrieved from http://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2011/06/pdf/workplace_discrimination.pdf
- Campbell, S. (2013). Sexual health needs and the LGBT community. *Nursing Standard*, 27(32), 35-38.
- Cook, A., & Glass, C. (2008). The impact of LGBT policies on ethnic/racial and gender diversity among business school faculty. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 1(3), 193-199.
- Doyle, D. M., & Molix, L. (2014). Perceived discrimination and well-being in gay men: The protective role of behavioural identification. *Psychology and Sexuality*, 5(2), 117-130.
- Espelage, D. L., Aragon, S. R., Birkett, M., & Koenig, B. W. (2008). Homophobic teasing, psychological outcomes, and sexual orientation among high school students: What influence do parents and schools have? *School psychology review*, 37(2), 202-216.
- Ferfolja, T. (2007). Schooling cultures: Institutionalizing heteronormativity and heterosexism. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 11(2), 147-162.
- GLSEN (2011). The 2011 school climate survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth in our nation's schools. Report of the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED535177.pdf>
- Gregory, S. (2013, July). Louisiana sodomy sting: How invalidated sex laws still lead to arrests. Time. Retrieved from <http://nation.time.com/2013/07/31/louisiana-sodomy-sting-how-invalidated-sex-laws-still-lead-to-arrests/>
- Hatzenbuehler, M. L. (2011). The social environment and suicide attempts in lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth. *Pediatrics*, 127(5), 896-903.

- Huebner, D. M., Rebchook, G. M., & Kegeles, S. M. (2004). Experiences of harassment, discrimination, and physical violence among young gay and bisexual men. *American Journal of Public Health*, 94(7), 1200-1203.
- Human Rights Campaign (2014). This is our home. Report on 2014 survey of LGBT Mississippians. Retrieved from http://hrc-assets.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com//files/assets/resources/HRC_ProjectOneAmerica_MS.pdf
- Hylton, M. E. (2006). Queer in southern MSW programs: Lesbian and bisexual women discuss stigma management. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 146(5), 611-628.
- Irwin, J. A., & Austin, E. L. (2013). Suicide ideation and suicide attempts among white Southern lesbians. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Mental Health*, 17(1), 4-20.
- Klawitter, M. (2011). Multilevel analysis of the effects of antidiscrimination policies on earnings by social orientation. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 30(2), 334-358.
- Kosciw, J. G., Palmer, N. A., Kull, R. M., & Greytak, E. A. (2013). The effect of negative school climate on academic outcomes for LGBT youth and the role of in-school supports. *Journal of School Violence*, 12(1), 45-63.
- Lim, F., Brown, D. V., & Sung Min, J. K. (2014). Addressing health care disparities in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender population: A review of best practices. *American Journal of Nursing*, 114(6), 24-35.
- Mallory, C., Herman, J., & Badgett, M.V. L. (2011). Employment discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in Oklahoma. The Williams Institute. Retrieved from <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Mallory-Herman-Badgett-OK-Emp-Discrim-Jan-2011.pdf>
- Mays, V. M., & Cochran, S. D. (2001). Mental health correlates of perceived discrimination among lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults in the United States. *American Journal of Public Health*, 91(11), 1896-1876.
- McGuire, J.K., Anderson, C. R., Toomey, R. B., & Russell, S. T. (2010). School climate for transgender youth: A mixed method investigation of student experiences and school responses. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 10, 1175-1188.
- Morman, M., Schrodtt, P., & Tornes, M. J. (2013). Self-disclosure mediates the effects of gender orientation and homophobia on the relationship quality of male same-sex friendships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 30(5), 582-605.
- Nadal, K. L., Skolnik, A., & Wong, Y. (2012). Interpersonal and systemic microaggressions: Psychological impacts on transgender individuals and communities. *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling*, 6(1), 55-82.
- Norris, W. P. (1992). Liberal attitudes and homophobic acts: The paradoxes of homosexual experience in a liberal institution. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 22(3-4), 81-87.
- O'Byrne, P., & Watts, J. (2014). Include, differentiate, and manage: Gay male youth, stigma, and healthcare utilization. *Nursing Inquiry*, 21(1), 20-29.
- Prinstein, M. J., Boergers, J., & Vernberg, E. M. (2001). Overt and relational aggression in adolescents: Social-psychological functioning of aggressors and victims. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 30, 477-489.
- Pritchard, E. D. (2013). For colored kids who committed suicide, our outrage isn't enough. Queer youth of color, bullying, and the discursive limits of identity and safety. *Harvard Educational Review*, 83(2), 320-345.
- Rankin, S., Weber, G., Blumenfeld, W., & Frazer, S. (2010). State of higher education for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. Charlotte, NC: Campus Pride.

- Rigby, K. (2003). *New perspectives on bullying*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Riggle, E. D. B., Rostosky, S. S., & Horne, S., (2010). Does it matter where you live? Nondiscrimination laws and the experiences of LGB residents. *Sex Research and Social Policy*, 7, 168-175.
- Richards, S. (2012). Gay and bisexual men 'neglected' by primary health services. *Practical Nurse*, 42(8), 7.
- Russell, S. T., Ryan, C., Toomey, R. B., Diaz, R. M., Sanchez, J. (2011). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender adolescent school victimization: Implications for young adult health and adjustment. *Journal of School Health*, 81(5), 223-230.
- Stop Street Harassment (2014). Unsafe and harassed in public spaces: A national street harassment report. Retrieved from <http://www.stopstreetharassment.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/2014-National-SSH-Street-Harassment-Report.pdf>
- Strangio, C. (2014, April). Arrested for walking while trans: An interview with Monica Jones. ACLU Blog of Rights. Retrieved from <https://www.aclu.org/blog/lgbt-rights-criminal-law-reform-hiv-aids-reproductive-freedom-womens-rights/arrested-walking>
- Strunk, K. K., & Bailey, L. E. (2014). The difference one word makes: Imagining sexual orientation in graduate school application essays. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Swank, E., Frost, D. M., & Fahs, B. (2012). Rural location and exposure to minority stress among sexual minorities in the United States. *Psychology and Sexuality*, 3(2), 226-243.
- Tejeda, M. J. (2006). Nondiscrimination policies and sexual identity disclosure: Do they make a difference in employee outcomes? *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, 18(1), 45-59.
- Tilcsik, A. (2011). Pride and prejudice: Employment discrimination against openly gay men in the United States. *American Journal of Sociology*, 117, 586-626.
- Varjas, K., Mahan, W. C., Meyers, J., Birckbichler, L., Lopp, G., & Dew, B. J. (2006). Assessing school climate among sexual minority high school students. *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling*, 1(3), 49-74.

Appendix A: Comments from M.V. Lee Badgett, Ph.D.

Your report carefully documents the numerous challenges faced by LGBT people, pointing to academic research that has carefully studied such issues. That body of research is now large and creates a compelling concern that LGBT face bias and discrimination, and that treatment causes economic, psychological, and physical harm.

Appendix B: Comments from Jackie Blount, Ph.D.



Office of the Senior Associate Dean

172 Arps Hall, 1945 N. High Street
614 688-4571

Date: August 27, 2014

To: Members of the Long Beach City Council

From: Jackie Blount, Sr. Associate Dean

RE: Review of LGBT Bias and Discrimination Report

The report prepared by Strunk and Takewell, *LGBT Bias and Discrimination*, offers a concise, accurately-articulated summary of policy and social science research on the lived experiences of LGBT persons. Over the past 25 years, a burgeoning body of research has emerged from around the country describing the complex and cumulative damage experienced by LGBT-identified persons as they navigate their lives in schools, institutions of higher education, workplaces, broader communities, and governmental bodies.

This larger body of work has led to a series of changes in laws and policies. In Pre-K 12 schools, for example, studies such as the *2011 School Climate Survey* conducted by GLSEN (cited in the report), which documents in detail the many forms of harassment and discrimination experienced by LGBT students, have compelled school boards around the country to institute nondiscrimination policies, social support systems, and procedures for handling problems. Board members publicly express their desire to give all students safe places to learn; however, given federal court decisions such as *Nabozni* (1996), school boards also risk legal action if they fail to provide such protection. Institutions of higher education face similar pressures. Sue Rankin, one of the researchers cited in Strunk and Takewell's report, has conducted the most definitive and far-reaching set of surveys of climate for LGBT persons on college campuses that currently exist. To address the issues raised in Rankin's studies, Boards of Regents/Trustees in many institutions have endeavored to support nondiscrimination policies as well as to establish support systems for LGBT students. However, given a number of high profile stories about the dangerous consequences of failing to address systematic bias, harassment, and discrimination, such as the 2010 suicide of Rutgers student, Tyler Clementi, colleges and universities also risk legal action should they fail to do enough. Parallel situations exist beyond schools – such as in workplaces, among healthcare providers, and with governmental and community service providers. Emerging research helps compel leaders to become aware of and then improve conditions for LGBT persons, and yet the potential for legal action sometimes provides added impetus.

Strunk and Takewell have faithfully encapsulated this larger body of research with attendant policy implications. Furthermore, they have shown particular relevance of this work to many parts of the South, especially including Mississippi and the Gulf Coast. These authors delineate many of the costs to LGBT persons who continue to face unchallenged harassment and discrimination. What many policy studies and recent legal precedents suggest, though, is that those costs extend to larger communities who face higher collective health care costs and lower productivity, for example. And as states, regions, and the federal government pivot toward making nondiscrimination policies and laws the norm, those municipalities that fail to address systematic discrimination and harassment against LGBT persons may become marginalized as businesses, other organizations, and tourists, for example, choose to spend their money elsewhere. In short, Strunk and Takewell accurately depict the current social and policy climate where as officials learn about the implications of discrimination and harassment against LGBT persons, they often seek to mitigate the problems that result. And over time officials will face added pressure to do so to avoid fiscal and/or legal costs.

Appendix C: Comments from Warren J. Blumenfeld, Ed.D.

Dr. Blumenfeld's comments were offered in a format difficult to directly copy into this document. Therefore, quotes are provided: "Overall I think [the report] is very well written and comprehensive... LGBT people still routinely face discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, insurance, and many other aspects of our lives. In addition, within those states that do not provide marriage equality for same-sex couples, we are deprived of the over 1,300 state and national benefits that are accorded to legally-married different-sex partners. Transgender people suffer from high murder rates. Our history is not being told in the schools."