

School Climate Assessment Research Design

In this activity, you will work with your team to assess different aspects of our school's climate in relation to gender and sexuality. Our goal as a group is to understand how inclusive, safe and respectful the school is on these issues, and to identify where there may be need for additional action or effort to make it a place where everyone can be their fullest selves.

Overall questions we are looking to answer

- What stereotypes about gender and sexuality are being *reinforced* by the school climate? What stereotypes is the school doing a good job of *challenging* or *addressing*?
- How safe and inclusive is the school environment for:
 - Girls/women
 - Boys/men
 - People who don't fit traditional gender norms
 - People who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or questioning their sexuality
 - Transgender people
- Do issues of safety around gender and sexuality play out differently for those from different ethnic, racial or class backgrounds, those with and without disabilities, or those in different social groups ("drama crowd," "jocks," etc.)?
- What does the school most need to do in order to become safer, more inclusive and more respectful?

Instructions

1. Identify your area of focus. Each team will look at issues of gender safety and inclusiveness in a different aspect of the school:
 - School policy—including policies related to bullying, sexual harassment, gender equity, inclusiveness for LGBTQ students, etc.
 - Curriculum and course offerings—how gender and sexuality issues are reflected in the content of class lessons, textbooks, course readings, projects, etc.
 - Classroom climate—how different people are treated in class, whose voices are heard and whose are not, what stereotypes are being reinforced or challenged by classroom dynamics
 - Peer culture—how students treat each other, level of safety and respect girls feel in relation to guys (and vice versa), level of acceptance for individuals who don't fit in traditional gender boxes, climate for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or questioning students, etc.
 - Sports, clubs and activities—gender dynamics in extracurricular activities, attitudes about guys' and girls' sports and the people who play them, existence (or not) of gender-based support groups, equity-related clubs, Gay-Straight Alliance, etc.
 - Schoolwide events—how stereotypes are reflected or challenged in school assemblies, dances, concerts, plays and other performances or events
 - Physical environment—what's on the walls and how that reflects or challenges stereotypes, where certain groups feel safe or unsafe

School Climate Assessment (continued)

2. Develop one or two key research questions specific to your area that will help answer the larger questions above. For example, if your area is Physical Environment, you might choose a question like, "What images are displayed on the walls around the school and how inclusive are they?"
3. Plan your research strategies. These may include one or more of the following:
 - Surveys
 - Interviews
 - Observations
 - Reviews of school materials (textbooks, course schedules, administrative materials, etc.)
 - Examination of school policies

For example, to answer the above research question about images on the walls, you might choose to do detailed observations in different areas of the school combined with student interviews about how people feel about what is and isn't represented, messages they feel are being conveyed, etc.

Record your research question(s) and strategies on the *Team Research Plan* worksheet.

Team Research Plan

Team members:

Topic area:

Key question(s):

Please provide a detailed description of the research strategies you will be using.

- *For surveys and interviews, include who you will be looking to get information from (including how many) and what you want to know from them.*
- *For observations, explain where and when you will be observing and what you will be looking for.*
- *For policy or document review, indicate the materials you hope to review and your approach for gathering and assessing them.*