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Religious or Secular: Does Religious Affiliation Affect LGBTQI Collections at Private College and University Libraries?

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Changes from 2019 Poster Session to 2021 Data Files:

- Added 50 Methodists schools to the study
- A couple of small colleges went out of business and were replaced in the sample by the next school by research number for that religious affiliation
- Used 2019 IPEDS fall enrollment data
- Data for schools updated to 2021 when substantial changes from earlier data
- State political affiliation – states designated as Democratic or Republican based upon which party the state supported in at least two of the 2012, 2016, and 2020 presidential elections
- Added eVideo data, when available
- Raw data spreadsheet includes tab with additional schools within the study's universe
- 2021 Scoring Rubric - Library scoring for "Items per 1,000 Students in Catalog" are in increments of 500 instead of 400

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Religious or Secular: Does Religious Affiliation Affect LGBTQI Collections at Private College and University Libraries?

Academic & Research Libraries (ACRL) Conference
Poster Session

March 2019

Introduction



This study represents an attempt to determine whether the religious affiliation of a college or university influences the campus climate for LGBTQI individuals and whether this climate is reflected in the resources libraries provide to their communities. The project first attempts to assess the campus climate by examining a number of variables (see box to right). The second stage is an examination of the library resources that are provided for LGBTQI topics. Lastly, the study tries to assess whether there is any correlation between the two measures.

The fifty secular schools included in this study serve as a control group.

Methodology



I utilized the 2016 Peterson's Guide to Four-Year Colleges and various websites to identify colleges and universities suitable for inclusion in this research project. This created a research universe of over 800 schools. Each institution was assigned a unique research number through the use of a random number generator. The first fifty research numbers from the Baptist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, and secular categories are included in this analysis. Student population figures came from the 2013/2014 IPEDS survey.

After choosing schools for the sample, I explored each college's website to gather relevant data.

Search Terms



I used the following strategy to search both the title and subject fields in library catalogs.

lgbt* OR queer OR homosexual* OR lesbian* OR gay OR gays
OR bisexual* OR transgender* OR transsexual* OR intersex*

Some catalogs could not handle such a long search string, so multiple searches became necessary. In such cases, there is undoubtedly some duplication of results.

These same search terms (plus sexual orientation) were used for searching academic catalogs for LGBTQI related courses.

Data Breakouts



No college or university is defined by just one feature, no matter how important. The primary variable in this study is religious affiliation, but the following also exert significant influence:

- Size of the Institution (Very Small, Small, Medium, Large)
- Degree Granting Status (Bachelors, Masters, Doctoral)
- Political Status - the institution resides in a Democratic or Republican leaning state. The results of the 2016 presidential election was the basis for each state's designation as Democratic or Republican.

Reports of Findings



Only generalized data are reported in this study, not data for individual schools. There are two primary reasons for this. Most importantly, this project attempts to examine the influence of religious affiliation on a broad scale so that some conclusions might be drawn from the data.

Secondly, the nature of this study does not lend itself to precise data. College environments change and library resources are always in flux. And due to the time consuming nature of data gathering for this project, the data have been collected over a 2-3 year period. These factors do not lend themselves to precision.

Student and Institutional Demographics



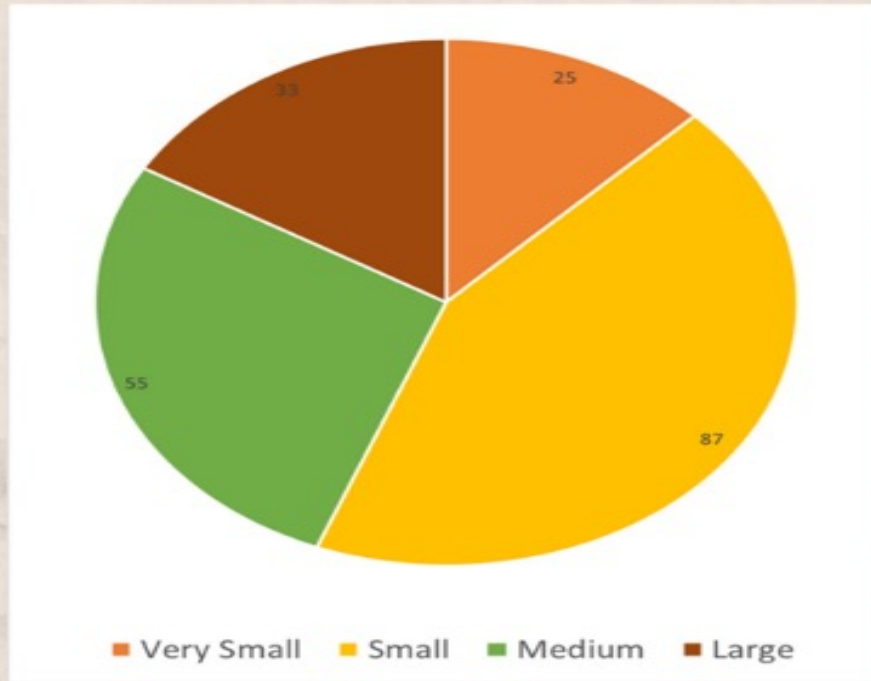
One key to understanding a study's results is to know something about the population that is being studied. For this project, this means looking at both the student population of the colleges and universities in the sample as well as organizational demographics. The following table and charts give a brief overview of both populations.

Table 1 provides various breakdowns for the student population. The median student population by size of institution and by religious affiliation are the more important elements.

Table 1: Student Population Demographics

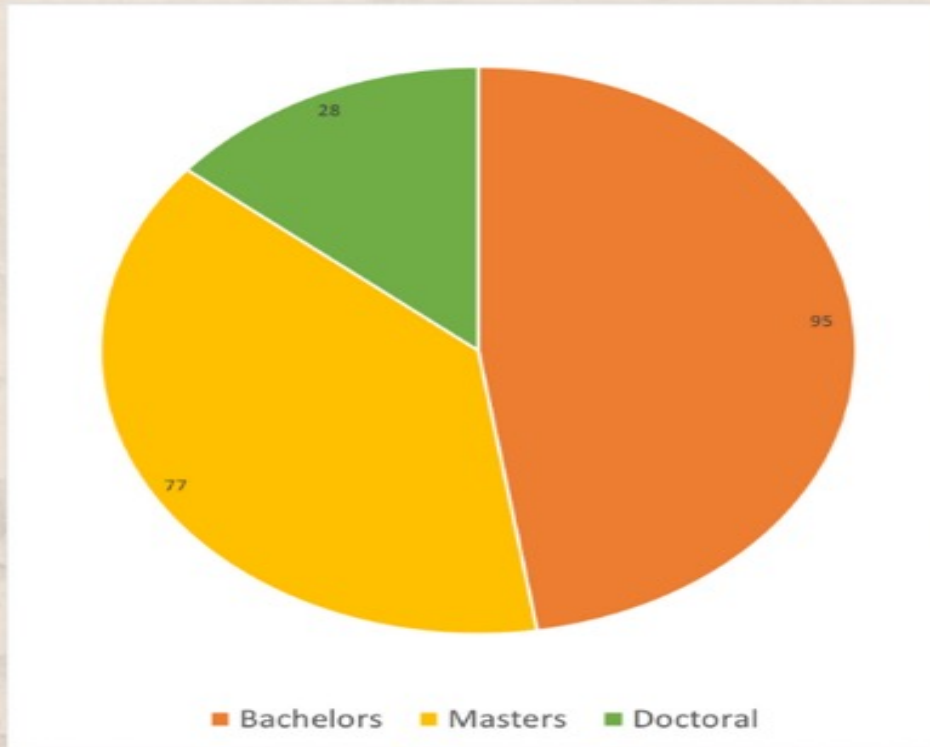
Student Population by Size of Institution			Student Population by Religious Affiliation		
	Total Students	Median Population		Total Students	Median Population
Overall	696,917	2,230	Secular	228,810	2,439
Very Small	17,619	720	All Affiliations	378,749	1,391
Small	147,681	1,626	Baptist	146,467	2,085
Medium	187,847	3,427	Presbyterian	94,655	1,448
Large	343,770	9,015	Roman Catholic	226,985	2,845
Student Population by Degree Granting Status			Student Population by Political Status		
	Total Students	Median Population		Total Students	Median Population
Bachelors	145,071	1,402	Democrat	346,224	2,618
Masters	262,744	3,067	Republican	350,693	2,074
Doctoral	289,102	9,638			

Chart 1: Size of Institution



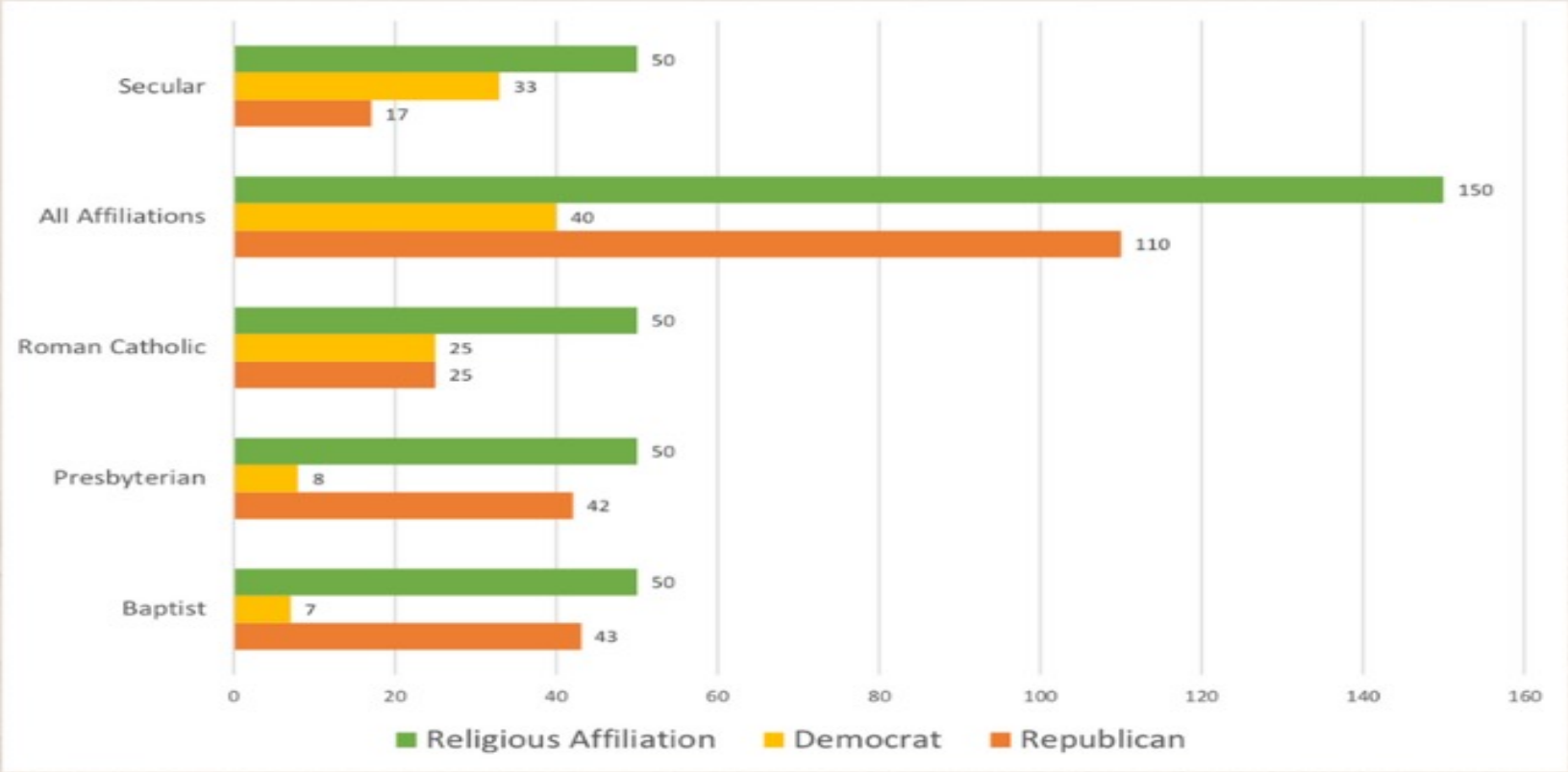
- Baptist and Presbyterian - majority in the very small and small categories
- Roman Catholic - small to medium with some large
- Secular - small to large

Chart 2: Degree Granting Status



- Bachelors granting institutions make up almost 50% of this sample.
- Some of the Masters level colleges are also relatively small in size.
- Doctoral institutions are mostly Roman Catholic and Secular

Chart 3: Religious Affiliation and Political Status



A state's political environment can provide significant influence on the campus climate at academic institutions.

The principal takeaways from this graph are:

- Secular colleges reside predominately in Democratic leaning states
- Roman Catholic colleges are evenly split politically so they might prove a good indicator of the strength of political influence
- Baptist and Presbyterian colleges predominately reside in Republican leaning states. Since they also share other demographic characteristics, they provide the best comparison for the influence of religious affiliation upon the campus climate for LGBTQI individuals and the provision of LGBTQI focused library resources.



Campus Climate
Variables



Academic Catalogs

Academic catalogs can provide considerable insight into what topics of study are considered important at a college or university. I searched course descriptions to learn whether the college offered classes focused upon LGBTQI topics or courses in which LGBTQI subjects were a constituent part.

Diversity Resources and Student Organizations

Colleges and universities are increasingly emphasizing the benefits of having diverse campus communities. The presence of a diversity, inclusion, or multicultural center/office provides some indication of a commitment to these values. Some offices focus upon racial and ethnic diversity, others broaden their scope to include LGBTQI individuals.

Another tool for measuring the acceptance of LGBTQI individuals on campus is the presence of an LGBTQI student organization or club. Usually these are undergraduate clubs, though some are also open to grad students, faculty, or staff.



Notices of Non-Discrimination

Most colleges publish a notice of non-discrimination on their websites, though sometimes it takes some digging to locate them. Taken all together, these statements include a wide range of protected groups. Almost all statements included sex and/or gender. This study looked at whether a non-discrimination statement explicitly mentioned either sexual orientation or gender identity / gender expression.

Campus Climate Scoring System

To better compare institutions, I created a scoring system for the variables included in the project.



LGBTQI Keyword in Course Title

- 1-5 courses - 2 points
- 6-10 courses - 3 points
- 11-15 courses - 4 points
- 16-20 courses - 5 points
- 21 or more courses - 6 points

LGBTQI Keyword in Course Description

- 1-10 courses - 1 point
- 11-20 courses - 2 points
- 21-30 courses - 3 points
- 30 or more courses - 4 points

Women's and Gender Studies Program

- Major - 2 points
- Minor - 1 point



Diversity / Inclusion / Multicultural Center - 2 points

LGBTQI Student Club - 2 points

Non-Discrimination Statements Mentioned:

Sexual Orientation - 1 point

Gender Identity / Gender Expression - 1 point

Library Resources



For the library portion of this study, I primarily looked at research guides, databases, books (print and electronic), and videos to assess how well libraries provide access to LGBTQI resources. I tried searching the contents of databases via discovery services, but was too often blocked by logon requirements to make this feasible. I found that:

A relatively low number of libraries provided LGBTQI specific research guides. Undoubtedly, some libraries incorporated this type of information into broader subject guides.

In general, larger libraries tended to offer more LGBTQI focused databases, though this was not universal. It is also important to remember that more generalized databases also provide some access to this literature.

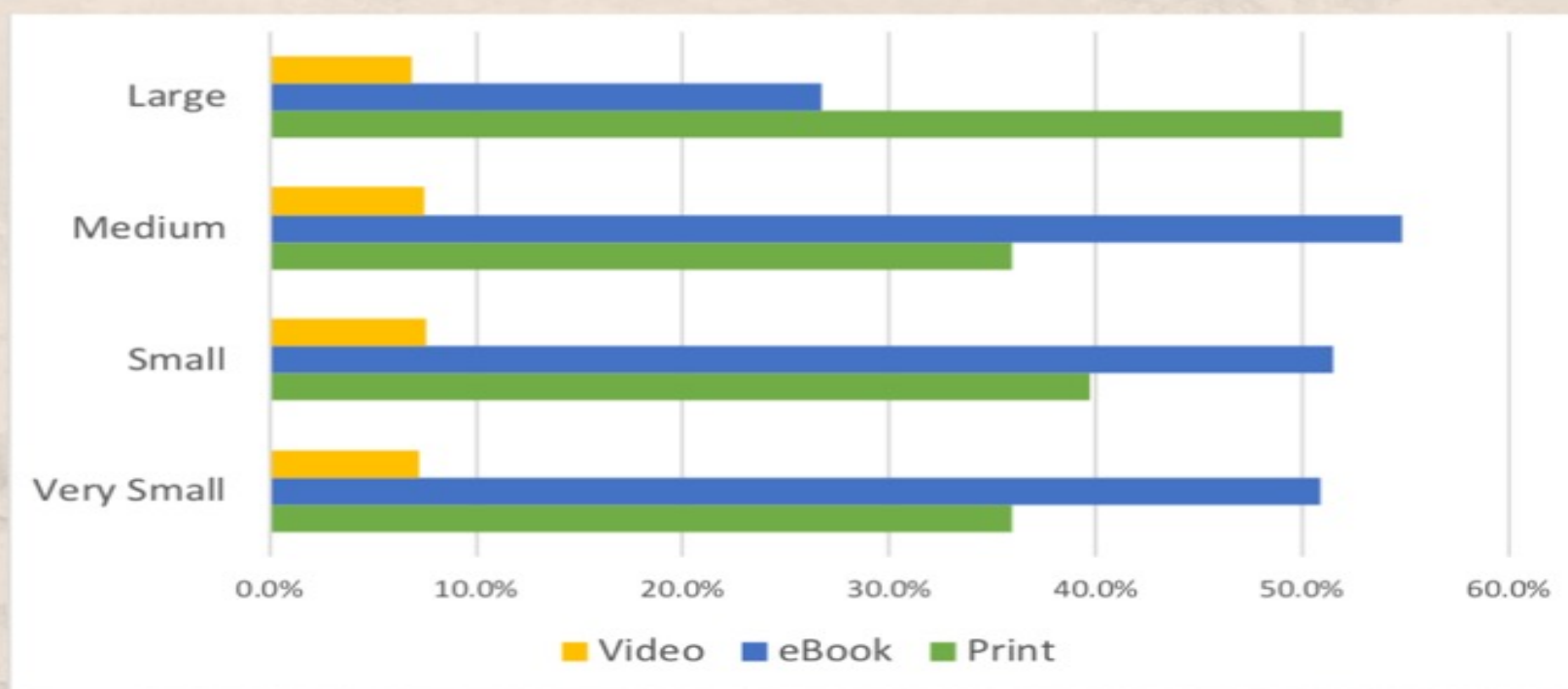
Books and videos on sexual orientation made up the majority (75%-85%) of LGBTQI items identified in the catalog. Resources focused upon transgender (7%-8%) and intersex (1%-2%) topics constituted much smaller portions of a collection. This breakdown was consistent across all types of institutions.

Video holdings (5-10%) are pretty consistent across libraries. Over the course of 2-3 years of gathering data, I noticed the eVideos were becoming more prominent.

One of the unexpected findings from this study was the role eBooks play in small and mid-size libraries. For these libraries, there are more eBook titles in their catalogs than print books. One wonders if eBooks at some institutions fundamentally changes the tone of a collection.

The next chart breaks out the various types of holdings by the size of institution.

Chart 4: Percentage Holdings by Size of Institution and Type of Resource



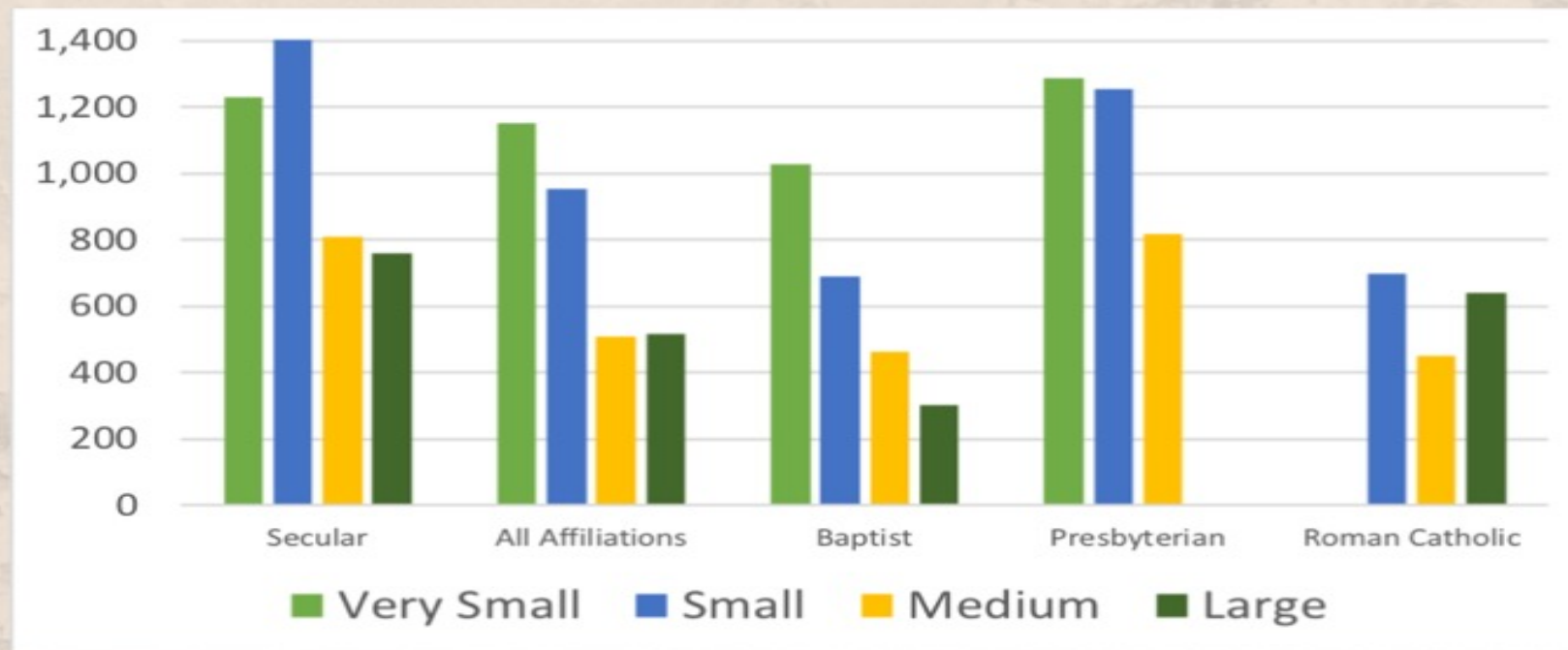
Items Per 1,000 Students



I also wanted to compare libraries by their overall catalog holdings. Just taking the total holdings per institutions did not suffice given the large disparities in size. I therefore calculated the number of catalog items per 1,000 students which made comparisons possible.

Chart 5 shows the breakdown by religious affiliation and size of institution. This graph offers a good comparison on two of the primary variables.

Chart 5: Items Per 1,000 Students by Religious Affiliation and Size of Institution



A few points are of notable interest.

- Libraries at secular institutions provide more items per 1,000 students than religiously affiliated libraries. This is true for all sizes of libraries.
- The category that really stands out are Presbyterian libraries. They rate highly across all sizes of institutions.
- Roman Catholic libraries provide fewer catalog items than one might expect, especially given the number of medium sized libraries in the sample.
- Medium sized libraries have lower ratios of items per student than their smaller library counterparts.

The next chart shows how library resources breakdown by political status.

Chart 6: Items Per 1,000 Students by Religious Affiliation and Political Status

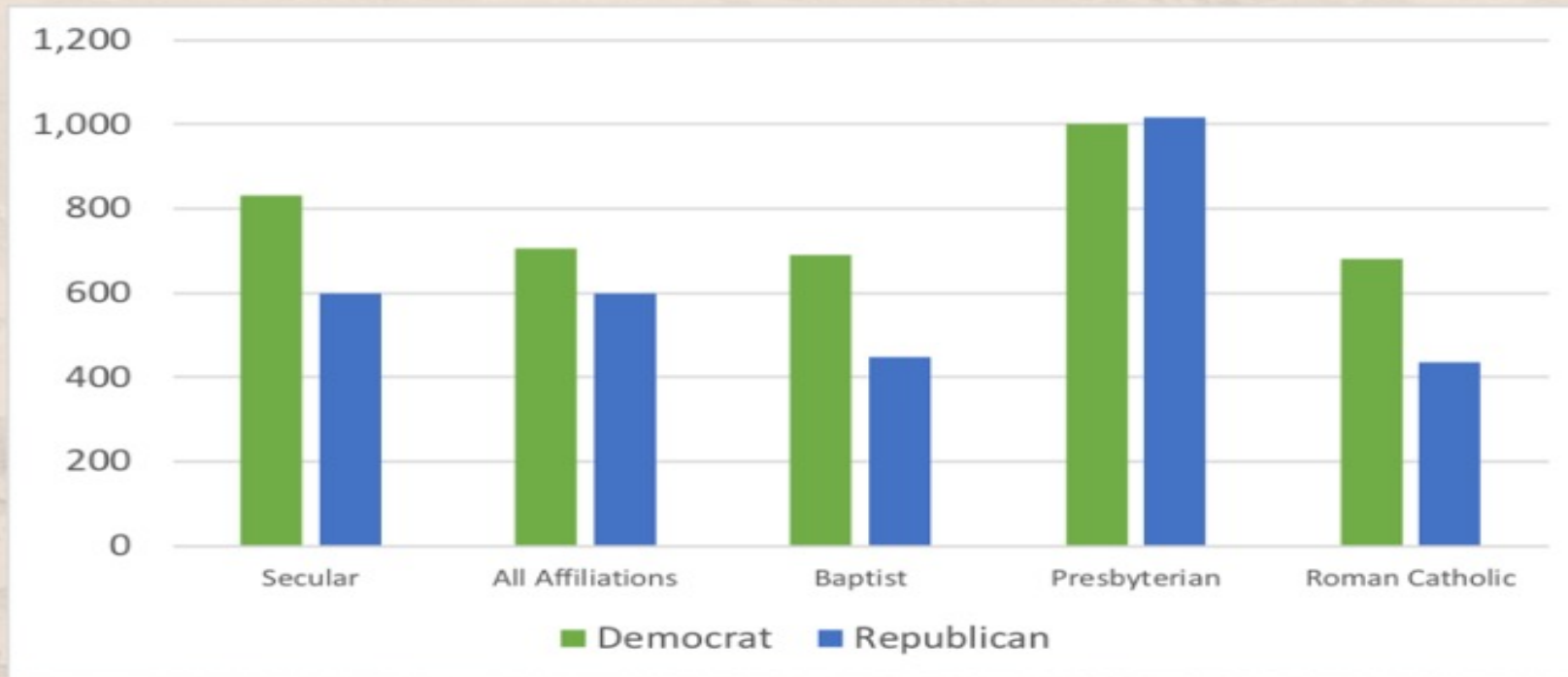


Chart 6 illustrates the influence of the state political environment upon library resources.



- Presbyterian libraries really stand out, whether they reside in Democratic or Republican states.
- Libraries in Democratic leaning states usually provide more LGBTQI related catalog items for their campus patrons.
- Though not shown in this chart, this Democratic / Republican relationship remains true across most institutions by size. For very small schools, there is no real difference by political status.

Medium Sized and Master's Level Institutions - What is Going On?



One noticable feature for library resources is that medium sized and Masters level universities tend to provide fewer catalog items per 1,000 students than their smaller and larger library counterparts. Some possible explanations are:

- The availability of eBooks improves the ability of small libraries to provide LGBTQI materials much more than medium sized libraries
- Medium sized libraries have more databases resources than small libraries, so need less in the way of books or videos
- Mid sized libraries provide a base of resources, but do not collect comprehensively like large libraries
- A combination of the above factors
- Other reasons ?

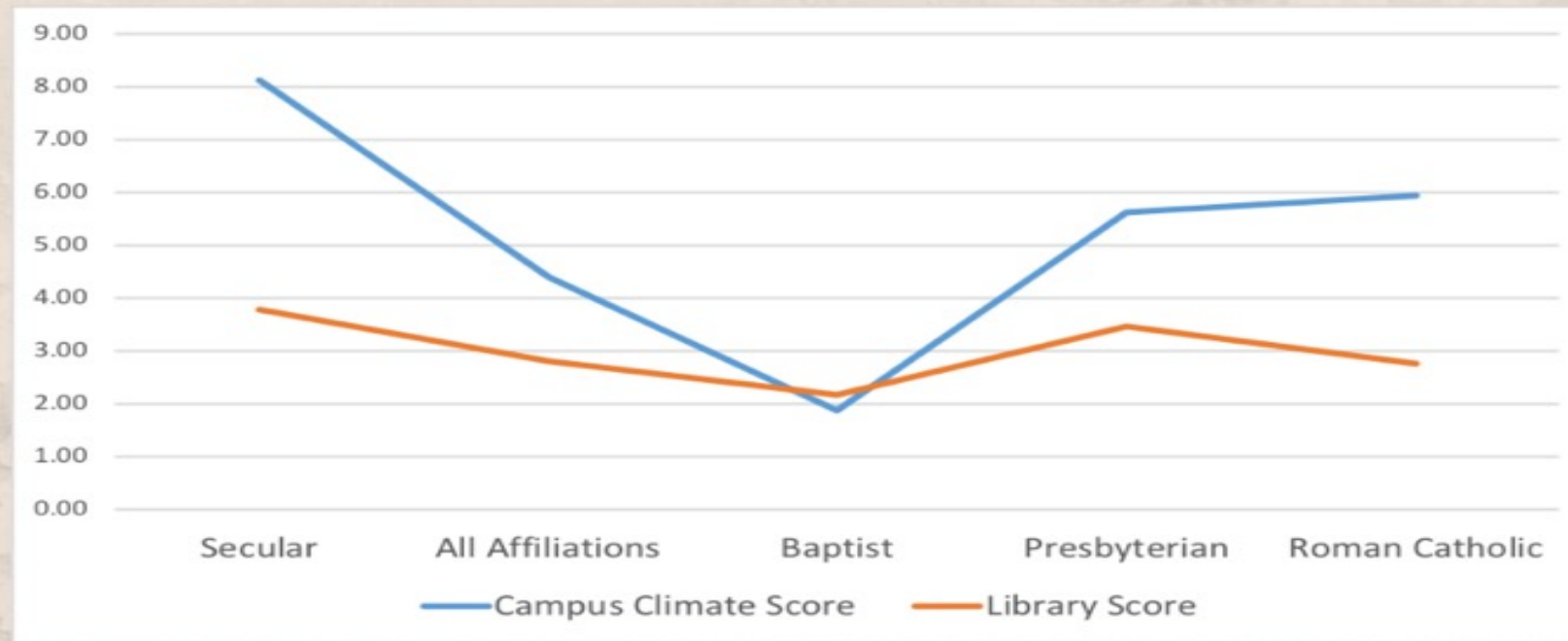
Convergence or Divergence



The final charts are an attempt to tie the data all together. I combined the campus climate and library variables into two scores and graphed the results. This series should show how much, if any, the campus climate and library resources tend to mirror each other or whether they diverge along the four dimensions used for this analysis.

The first graph focuses upon the primary variable in this study - religious affiliation.

Chart 7: Religious Affiliation by Campus Climate and Library Scores



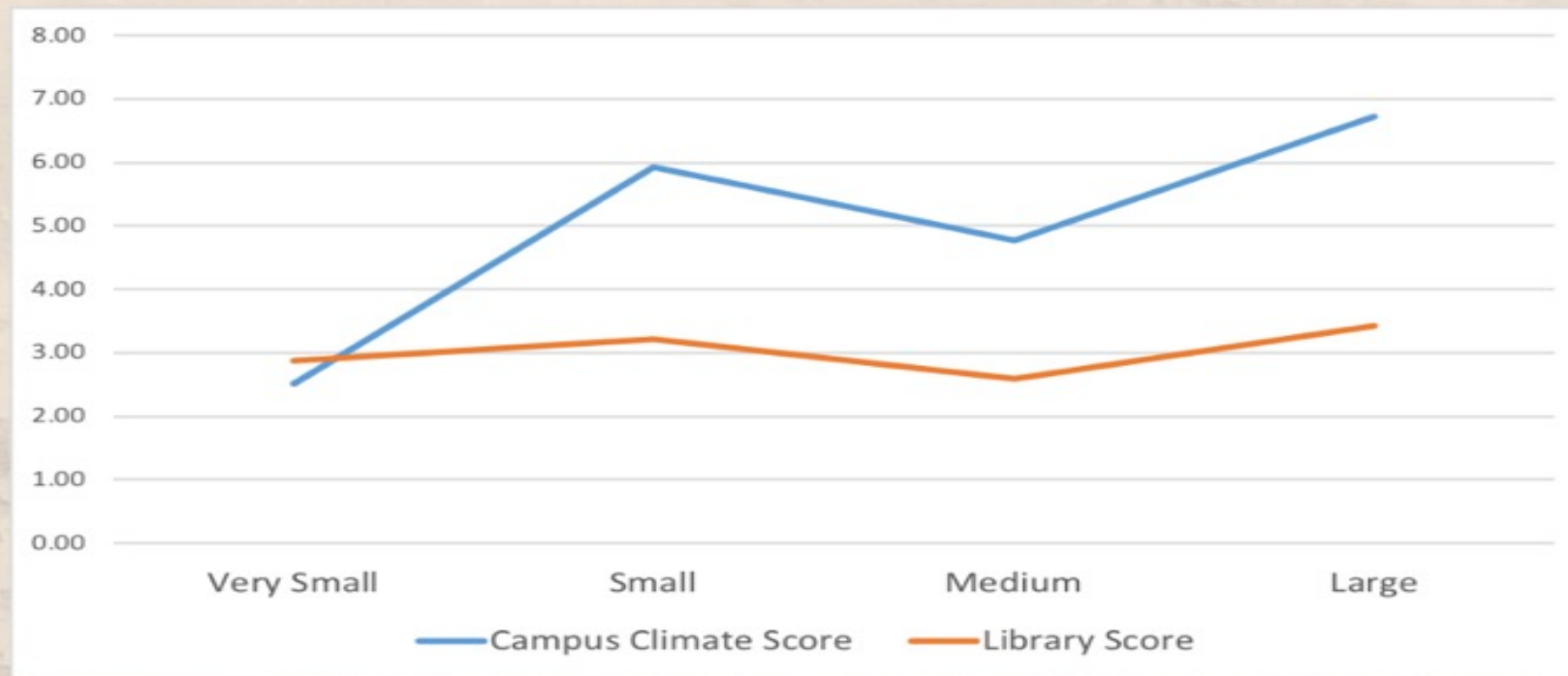
Religious Convergence



- Secular schools score higher than their religiously affiliated counterparts on both scales.
- Baptist schools score low on both dimensions, especially the campus climate for LGBTQI students.
- Secular, Baptist, and Presbyterian scores tend to correlate. Roman Catholic colleges show some divergence with a higher campus climate score, but a somewhat lower library score. This suggests that Roman Catholic libraries are not quite keeping up with their campus communities.

The next chart looks at the size of institutions in relation to campus climate and library scores.

Chart 8: Size of Institution by Campus Climate and Library Scores



Size - Convergence and Divergence

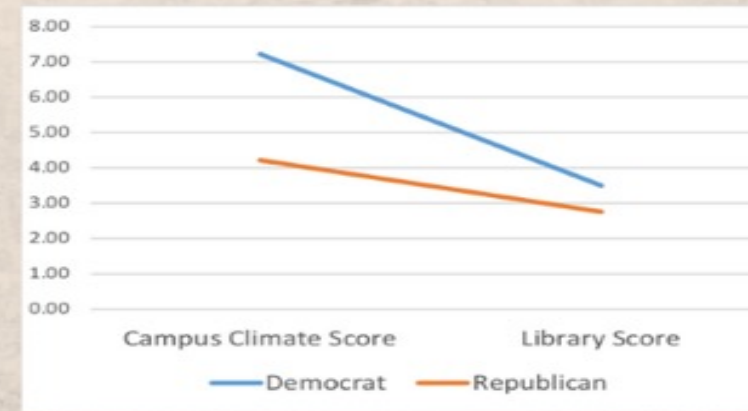
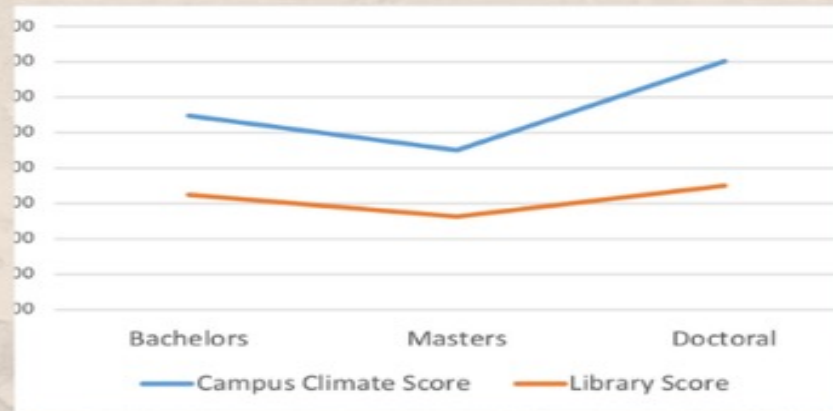


- For small, medium, and large institutions, the scores show some correlation.
- Very small schools score much better on library resources than on campus climate. Given the variables comprising the campus climate score, it is not surprising that very small schools score low on this dimension.

The final two graphs are by degree granting status and by political status.
For the political dimension, what conclusion do you draw?

- Colleges in Democratic leaning states provide more LGBTQI friendly campus environments, OR
- Colleges in Republican leaning states do a better job of providing library resources

Chart 8: Degree Granting Status / Chart 9: Political Status by Campus Climate and Library Scores



Principal Findings



1. There appears to be a positive relationship between the campus climate and the availability of LGBTQI related library resources.
2. Secular colleges score higher than religiously affiliated schools overall and on most comparisons to individual religious groups.
3. A comparison of Baptist and Presbyterian colleges provides the clearest evidence of religious affiliation influencing both campus climate and library resources. The two groups have similar profiles in that the colleges reside in mostly Republican leaning states and have many smaller, Bachelors granting institutions among their members.

4. Presbyterian colleges score the highest on making LGBTQI library resources available to their campus users, relative to their student population.

5. On most measures, colleges in Democratic leaning states scored higher than comparable colleges in Republican leaning states.

6. The availability of eBooks has the greatest impact upon smaller colleges relative to their print collections.



Areas for Further Research



Why are Presbyterian colleges more LGBTQI friendly compared to Baptist schools when they share many of the same demographic characteristics?

Are there significant differences between a college's print and eBook offerings in terms of how they portray LGBTQI individuals and issues?

Some libraries within the scope of this study have access to resources beyond their own holdings. They might be members of state networks (e.g., OhioLink), regional networks (e.g., Appalachian College Association), or a metropolitan region. What effect do these networks have on a library's ability to provide resources on LGBTQI topics?

College / University Profiles

The findings reported in this study are generalized so no individual schools are identified. I thought it might also be interesting to show how the variables in this study applied at individual colleges and universities. The following profiles give an overview of one school from each group of colleges in this study. The first institutions by research number were chosen for these profiles so the profile may not be representative of the group.



R1011



R1011 is a Southern Baptist affiliated university residing in a Republican leaning state. The student population is between 1,000 and 2,500 enrollees and is considered a small school in this study. The campus climate score is two due solely to the existence of a multicultural center or office on campus. Its non-discrimination statement did not mention either sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, but did note that, by law, the university can discriminate in order to fulfill its religious mission.

The library score for r1011 is one as its catalog holdings for LGBTQI topics is between 1 and 400 items per 1,000 students. The library has no LGBTQI focused research guides or databases.

R1054



Research number r1054 is a Masters level secular university. It resides in a Democratic leaning state and scored a ten on the campus climate. It offers a minor degree and a small number of courses on LGBTQI themes. It scored well on the climate survey by providing resources through a multicultural / diversity office and by recognizing a LGBTQI focused student organization. This university includes both sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in its non-discrimination policy. For this study, r1054 is classified as a large institution with a student population over 5,000.

The library score for this university is two. The library provides access to one LGBTQI focused database and its catalog holds between 1 and 400 items per 1,000 students.

R1063



This university is affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (USA) and resides in a Republican leaning state. This is a small university with a population between 1,000 and 2,500 students. R1063 scored a two on the campus climate assessment. A small number of course descriptions include LGBTQI related topics. Interestingly, the non-discrimination statement mentioned gender identity/expression, but not sexual orientation.

The library score for this university is a two as it's catalog includes between 400 and 800 LGBTQI focused items per 1,000 students. The library does not have any LGBTQI focused research guides or databases.

R1109



School r1109 is a Roman Catholic Masters level university run by a religious order and it scored a 14 on the campus climate evaluation. The university scored in all categories. The Women's and Gender Studies program offers both a major and minor. It also offers a number of classes that focus upon LGBTQI topics and others in which LGBTQI topics are included in the course descriptions. The campus has a Multicultural Center a LGBTQI resource center, and an LGBTQI student organization. The non-discrimination statement explicitly mentions both sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. R1109 is located in a Democratic leaning state. R1109 is classified as a large university in this study with a population over 5,000 students.

The library score is five as it offers one LGBTQI focused research guide, two LGBTQI focused databases, and it's catalog holds between 400 and 800 items per 1,000 students.