Michael Craw is interested in understanding why some neighborhoods within declining cities – such as Benton Harbor, Flint and Detroit – are able to remain economically stable or even grow.

"Within Detroit, there’s a lot of variation because we have several neighborhoods which have gained population and gained wealth or at least have remained stable," said Craw, assistant professor of social relations and policy in James Madison College.

"If we figure out the process by which it happens," Craw said, "then we have a better chance of making Michigan cities more attractive to people and especially skilled labor and talented persons that businesses are (in turn) drawn to."

Craw has also been involved in a campus climate survey of LGBT, or lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, people at colleges and universities across the country, including Michigan State University. The research was led by Sue Rankin, a professor and researcher at Pennsylvania State University.

More than 1,000 students, staff and faculty at MSU filled out the survey last fall. Such a survey hadn’t been done at MSU since 1992, Craw said.

"It’s very important to have a good climate and have the university well-known for tolerance and respect," Craw said.

He said that the climate is important for making MSU a more attractive place for talented students, staff and administrators, and not just those who identify as LGBT. How the university treats minorities and people from oppressed classes says a lot about its openness to research and ideas that may not be very popular, which is very important in academia, he said.

"All that’s a way of saying that this is a matter of making the university maintain its position as a world-class research institution."