

HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING AND SAFETY FOR QUEER YOUTH IN HIGH
SCHOOL, A RETROSPECTIVE STUDY

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HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING AND SAFETY FOR QUEER YOUTH IN HIGH
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A Thesis

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Abstract

of

HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING AND SAFETY FOR QUEER YOUTH IN HIGH SCHOOL, A RETROSPECTIVE STUDY

By

Sabrina Fong

This study addresses the prevalent issue of homophobic bullying and safety for queer youth in high schools. This retrospective study involves a sample of 24 participants, eighteen years of age or older, who were surveyed about their past experiences with homophobic bullying at school. These participants were members of a youth group at the Gay and Lesbian Center in Sacramento. Study findings indicated that public high schools in Sacramento are failing to adequately protect their LGBTQ students from acts of homophobic bullying and are therefore, not providing a safe space for all students to learn. Queer youth are at-risk for suicide, substance abuse, mental health problems, and homelessness when schools do not adequately meet their needs. The researcher is demonstrating the importance of recognizing homophobic bullying as a public issue and making changes in schools, in school staff, and in greater society to assist queer youth in feeling safe in their environment.

_____, Committee Chair
Dr. David Nylund, PhD., MSW

Date

DEDICATION

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. reminded us that, “At the end, we will not remember the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.” To all those who identify as heterosexual, we have a responsibility to serve as allies to the LGBTQ population. We can choose to use our privilege in society to further oppress this group or we can become advocates and fight for equality.

To “Devon” and all the queer youth experiencing acts of homophobic bullying, this project is dedicated to you. Do not be ashamed of the person you are even if others do you harm and fail to acknowledge your greatness. Your courage is inspirational. Never give up the fight...and know that I will be next to you, fighting too.

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Chapter 1

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

On November 4, 2008, hours after electing the first African-American president in the United States, Californians passed a law to ban same-sex marriage. Queer youth today live in a society where they have unequal rights and where the media constantly portrays heterosexual norms. Their peers use homophobic epithets and many of their parents disown them after they “come out.” After experiencing various forms of homophobic bullying, their schools often do little to protect them. Although many children and adolescents experience bullying, often times homophobic bullying goes unnoticed and unreported. Many teachers and school staff look the other way when students call a perceived queer student “fag” or “dike.” When students angrily protest against a grade and yell out “that’s so gay,” some teachers provide no consequences. Queer youth are quickly learning that those who are born heterosexual are placed into a dominant position in American society and hold extreme privilege. And for some reason, just because they do not fit into this category, they are subjected to violent, aggressive, hateful prejudice and bullying.

As a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning (LGBTQ) ally, I have been actively involved with advocating for LGBTQ rights and have observed discrimination and hatred towards people simply because they are attracted to someone of their same sex. I taught in the Special Education field for three years and during that time, I witnessed countless acts of homophobic bullying. I put a stop to it in my classroom and had numerous discussions surrounding LGBTQ topics with my students.

I also verbalized to my students that my classroom is a safe space for all students, including LGBTQ youth. However, as the only teacher in the school providing these resources, education, and consequences for students, the culture of the school was unchanged.

I can recall a specific incident with a former student of mine, “Devon,” who came to my classroom for help in math. He displayed feminine characteristics by hugging his peers and spoke in a higher voice than other boys his age did at school. He talked to his classmates about how he enjoyed playing with dolls at home. One day, Devon brought a doll to play with during recess outside on the playground. Other students brutally harassed him: teasing him, pushing him around and calling him derogatory names. The yard duty on staff told Devon that he should not be telling others of his feminine hobby if he did not want to experience teasing. When he ran into my classroom looking for support, he told me that he is not allowed to be himself at school and that it is not fair. The students who were harassing him received no consequences for their verbal and physical attacks on Devon and there was no record of the bullying he endured. This was not the first time Devon had experienced homophobic bullying at school and I learned that he continued to be harassed in high school.

It seems that school staff members, in general, are doing little to ensure that students like Devon are learning in an emotionally and physically safe environment. Although many schools have a zero tolerance policy for bullying, there are very few schools which have a policy that specifically addresses homophobic bullying (Wackerfuss, 2007). If a school does have an existing policy which includes

homophobic bullying, many school staff members do not enforce the policy and fail to report accounts of homophobic bullying. Neglect by school staff results in disproportionately low percentages of homophobic bullying shown on school's reports of bullying in comparison to other types of bullying. I hope to add to the already existing research and shed light on the reality of homophobic bullying in order to play a role in creating safe spaces for LGBTQ youth and address the root issues surrounding the ideology of homophobia and social injustice in society.

Background of the Problem

In the early 1900's, homophobic bullying, LGBTQ youth, and homosexuality was not discussed in educational writings. The rare occurrences when homosexuality was addressed indicated that it was a disease that some teachers acquired. Single, female teachers became suspicious figures in communities as they defied the expectations for marriage. Similarly, male teachers were questioned as they were employed in a field that was considered a "woman's profession." This idea that homosexuality is a disease continued throughout the 1920s. During the 1930s and 1940s, the National Education Association (NEA) launched a campaign to promote married women in the teaching field under the guise that they would understand children better than single women. Prejudice for LGBTQ persons continued during the McCarthy era in the 1950s when homosexuality was thought to be associated with communism. LGBTQ teachers were assumed to be in the profession since they were unable to reproduce and were seeking out to corrupt society's youth. With such erroneous claims,

it became popular to identify perceived LGBTQ individuals and dismiss them as teachers in public schools (Griffin & Ouellett, 2003).

In 1967, a student at Columbia University named Stephen Donaldson, founded the Student Homophile League which was the first LGBTQ student activist group in the United States. Following the Stonewall Riots in 1969, LGBTQ youth founded support groups such as “Gay Youth” (Stein, 2003). In the same year, the Supreme Court ruled that dismissing a teacher solely based on the fact that the individual identified as gay or lesbian was not sufficient grounds for dismissal unless it was coupled with misbehavior. Shortly thereafter in 1973, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) removed “homosexuality” from the list of mental disorders in the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). Following, organizations began to support the employment rights of gay and lesbian teachers. At the same time, the issue of LGBTQ youth in schools was not mentioned in educational literature. This exclusion of discussing LGBTQ youth in schools continued in the 1980s, as the literature regarding LGBTQ issues focused on gay and lesbian educators (Griffin & Ouellett, 2003).

In 1984, *The Advocate*, a gay and lesbian magazine, began to address the needs of gay and lesbian students. In addition, other research journals in fields such as social work, medicine, and psychology published articles on gay and lesbian youth. Schools were identified as places which are intended to be safe, but are often a source for LGBTQ harassment. However, the research was heavily focused on the individual mental health challenges of gay and lesbian youth. Then, in 1984, Harvey Milk High School was founded, the first and largest public school dedicated to providing LGBTQ

youth with a safe environment to learn. A few years later, in 1987, the Institute for the Protection of Lesbian and Gay Youth (IPLGY) was founded. In 1989, LGBTQ students and their heterosexual allies in numerous Massachusetts high schools formed the first Gay-Straight Alliances (GSA). Although gay and lesbian issues were discussed, transgender rights would not achieve visibility in society until the 1990s (Griffin & Ouellett, 2003; Stein, 2003).

In the 1990s, the Christian Right voiced their opinion that discussing homosexuality in school placed innocent youth at risk. Advocates for gay and lesbian youth argued that schools were sites of violence for queer students and it should be a safe place for all students. In 1992, the Massachusetts governor, William Weld, created a Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth. The following year, the Gay Lesbian Straight Teachers Network (which later became the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network or GLSEN) was founded. During the same year, the National Association of State Boards of Education added "sexual orientation" into their non-discrimination statement. Much of the attention for queer youth spurred from the murders of LGBTQ youth: Brandon Teena in 1993 and Matthew Shepard in 1998. Additionally, the legal decision of "Nabozny versus Podlesny" validated the need for schools to address LGBTQ harassment when a student won a million dollar lawsuit against a school district. Since 2003, there have been more than 4,000 gay youth organizations and events nationwide including: LGBTQ proms, mental health services, field trips, lavender graduation ceremonies, conferences, HIV/AIDS counseling, etc. Among these groups are seventeen Jesuit colleges and universities which recognize

LGBTQ student groups. Moreover, the development of the internet has provided innumerable resources for LGBTQ youth including offering ways for youth to interact with each other. There has been a great improvement in publicizing and addressing LGBTQ issues, homophobic bullying, and the harassment queer students face at school. However, there is much more that needs to be done to ensure the safety of this at-risk population (Griffin & Ouellett, 2003; Stein, 2003).

Statement of the Research Problem

Public high schools in Sacramento, California are doing little to stop homophobic bullying and are not providing a safe space for their queer students. Some schools do not have existing policies in regards to bullying which specifically includes homophobic bullying. If schools do have policies in place, some school staff members are not enforcing these policies and are not recognizing homophobic bullying acts occurring. On the reports of types of bullying which occurred for the previous year, the highest percentage of students reported that they felt unsafe at school due to their real or perceived sexual orientation. In a national study on bullying of high school students, it was found that nearly three times as many LGBTQ students were bullied based on their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender expression (74%) compared to self-identified heterosexual students (21%). LGBTQ students report more of every type of bias-based bullying. For example, 35 percent of the heterosexual students reported experiencing bullying because of “not fitting in,” whereas 74 percent of LGBTQ students reported being bullied for the same reason (Russell, Clarke, & Laub, 2009). This report represents the overwhelmingly high number of homophobic bullying cases

occurring in school and demonstrates why it is necessary for changes to be made in schools. Not doing so continues the heterosexist ideology that LGBTQ issues are invisible to the public eye and allows queer youth to feel unsupported at school, a place where they deserve to feel care and support.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to survey former students who are 18 years of age or older to inquire of their experiences with homophobic bullying from their previous high school years in Sacramento. This researcher hypothesized that students will report that teachers and staff often failed to assist them when they had experienced homophobic bullying and that they often felt emotionally and/or physically unsafe at school.

With this information, I described how there is little being done in schools to protect queer students. This is a highly significant issue since queer youth, as a population, is one that is susceptible for suicide, substance abuse, mental health needs, homelessness, among other dangers. In addition, I am demonstrating the importance of addressing homophobic bullying as a public issue and making changes in schools, in school staff, and in greater society to assist queer youth in feeling safer in their environments.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used for this study revolves around the use of narrative therapy, the empowerment approach, and postmodern/queer theory. Narrative therapy is explained by Nylund and Smith (1997) as a means to assist clients in separating from pathological descriptions of themselves, from totalizing their

experiences, and instead invites them to explore more empowering alternative stories. Due to society's dominant narratives, many oppressed clients who do not fit within society's "norms" internalize the stories created about them as truth. Narrative ways of working can provide clients with opportunities to deconstruct problem-saturated stories (Corey, 2005). Individuals who practice narrative therapy facilitate a safe environment in which clients can explore alternative perspectives and externalize problems as opposed to internalizing dominant discourses from society. Narrative therapists play the role of a collaborator with the client (who is the expert in his/her own life), listens empathically, avoids diagnosing, and seeks out times in which the problem did not rule the client's life.

Additionally, this study utilizes the empowerment theory which Lee (2001) defines as a process which is aimed at reducing the powerlessness "that has been created by negative valuations based on membership in a stigmatized group" (p. 33-34). Empowerment theory identifies the power blocks contributing to the problem for clients and develops strategies to reduce the effects of these power blocks. Decreasing the influence of indirect and direct power blocks can assist clients in recognizing their own power which already resides within themselves. The practice of empowerment creates the possibility to challenge the negative speech society presents about oppressed persons and groups and to develop a more positive sense of self.

The narrative approach of re-authoring stories may be significant for LGBTQ individuals who may feel the expectation that they should believe and conform to the truths the dominant society suggests, which is one of heterosexist norms and

homophobia. Queer youth often experience oppression, marginalization and stigmatization from society and may greatly benefit from a narrative approach where they are not the focus of the problem. In addition, an empowerment approach can serve the LGBTQ community as it emphasizes the clients' power amidst a society which often demeans and labels LGBTQ individuals as "abnormal." The LGBTQ community has been a continuous target for physical and verbal violence and exploitation in American society. The profession of Social Work values every individual's right to obtain equal opportunity and equal protection in our society. Therefore, social workers have the responsibility to be proactive in assisting queer youth who are often subjected to taunting, bullying, and violence and may feel powerless and vulnerable. With an empowerment approach, queer youth have the potential to rise above powerlessness.

Even more, Queer Theory encompasses numerous practices that study the relations between sex, gender, and sexual desire. It challenges hegemony (e.g. hegemonic masculinity), the idea of totalizing identities (e.g. that a person is gay, and therefore, there is a "gay" quality about him), and seeks to dismantle binaries (e.g. to include others like those who identify as transgender). The word "queer" signifies a disturbance of the norm, which is a theme of what Queer Theory represents. For LGBTQ youth, Queer Theory validates their identities as human beings and does not attempt to box them in a fixed identity and gives value to non-heterosexual sexual orientations as to challenge the heterosexual dominance in society. Social workers utilizing Queer Theory in practice with LGBTQ clients might attempt to "queer" the

media with their clients to assist these individuals to uncover queer messages that challenge societal norms (Nylund, 2007; McPhail, 2004).

Definition of Terms

For purpose of this study, homophobic is: verbal or physical aggression, intimidation, degrading subtle comments (i.e. “you’re so gay,” or “that’s so gay”) towards lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning individuals at school.

LGBTQ is: individuals at the Gay and Lesbian Center in Sacramento who may identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning in reference to their sexuality.

Queer: A term used by some LGBTQ individuals to self-identify. In the past, this term has been considered offensive and some still consider it be so. However, some LGBTQ individuals are embracing this term and “re-claiming” it in the community.

Youth is: children and adolescents who are in 9th through 12th grade in Sacramento public schools.

Safe is: a place where youth feel emotionally and physically free from harm or danger.

Assumptions

All individuals, including those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning have the right to be treated with respect, kindness, and do not deserve to suffer harassment and bullying. It is never acceptable to use bully tactics against someone based on their real or perceived sexual orientation.

Justification

If my hypothesis serves to be correct, my research will conclude that public high schools in Sacramento do not provide a safe space for queer youth and fail to sufficiently

address homophobic bullying. Social workers will benefit from these findings as they demonstrate the need for policy change, enforcement of existing policies regarding homophobic bullying, and education for school staff on queer issues. This research will assist social workers by providing a clearer understanding of their LGBTQ clients who face discrimination at school on a daily basis with little, to no support from school staff. In addition, these findings illustrate the societal ideology regarding LGBTQ issues as they are not being addressed on institutional levels (Ong, 2003).

Moreover, the social worker's code of ethics states that "Social workers should pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people. Social workers' social change efforts are focused primarily on issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice" (NASW, 1996). Therefore, it is the responsibility of social workers to act to serve these oppressed youth. The LGBTQ population is being underserved and it begins when these individuals are children and adolescents with the lack of support from their schools to protect and serve them.

The findings from this research will be presented to the school board in Sacramento and to the Department of Education in California to raise awareness about this issue to administrators. With this information, it will be the responsibility of the school systems to alter policies, attend to the lack of enforcement of existing policies by school staff, and educate teachers and staffs about the consequences of not addressing homophobic bullying in their schools (queer youth suicide rates, drug and alcohol abuse, low self-acceptance, etc). Moreover, teachers should not only provide consequences for

students who partake in homophobic bullying, but they should also educate their students about LGBTQ issues as part of their curriculum. This issue should be of interest to school administrators as it is their duty to provide a physically and emotionally safe space for effective learning for their students. And currently, their LGBTQ students are not being granted that safe space.

Limitations

This study is limited to public high schools in the Sacramento County School District and does not include non-public schools or other schools outside the SCSD. In addition, this study only accounts for those individuals over the age of 18 who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender and does not include those who are not “out” to the public.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The review of the literature revolves around three sub-thematic categories. The first subheading reviews the literature on school bullying. Next, homophobic bullying in public high schools is discussed. The final subheading examines homophobic discourses in the larger culture creating the context for bullying in schools. Schools are intended to be a safe place for learning, free from violence and persecution. Yet, the literature clearly demonstrates that this is rarely the case as students are bullied on a regular basis and many often feel unsafe in their school environment.

Bullying in Schools

Bullying in schools continues to be a prevalent problem, one that has been normalized. For many children and adolescents, bullying can be detrimental to their overall well-being, happiness, and development. In a recent study, findings indicated that 14 percent of youth between the ages of 12 and 18 reported that they had been bullied at school in the six months prior to the survey (DeVoe & Chandler, 2005). The victims of bullying were more likely to experience fear about being attacked elsewhere aside from school than their non-bullied peers. They were also more likely to carry weapons to school and to engage in physical fights than those who were not victims of bullying. Even more, those who experienced bullying often reported receiving lower academic grades than their counterparts. It is approximated that 30 percent of students are involved in bullying as either victims or as aggressors (Wiens & Dempsey, 2009).

“Bullying” has been defined in many ways. However, most research indicates that bullying involves repeated negative and aggressive acts of physical, verbal, psychological, or attitudinal behaviors where the two parties involved do not hold equal power and where the perpetrator’s intent is to harm, hurt, or humiliate the victim (Beaty & Alexeyev, 2008; Connors-Burrow, Johnson, Whiteside-Mansell, McKelvey, & Gargus, 2009; Ong, 2003). Most of the literature indicates that there are two subtypes of bullying. The first subtype is direct, physical aggression or attacks towards school victims. This subtype of bullying typically receives the most attention from school staff due to the overt nature of it. Some schools have zero tolerance policies for violent behaviors, placing priority on physical bullying over other forms of bullying (Jacobsen & Bauman, 2007). The second subtype is indirect bullying, where no physical violence occurs. Indirect bullying often involves verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors such as name-calling, blackmailing, making threats, excluding others, and spreading rumors.

Additionally, there are four classifications of students who become involved with incidents of bullying: victims, bullies, bully-victims (Connors-Burrow, et al., 2009), and bystanders (Wiens & Dempsey, 2009). With these, there are some frequent behaviors associated with the student’s classification. Those who are victims of bullying often demonstrate more internalizing and introverted behaviors, such as being quiet, withdrawn, anxious, and depressed. Victims typically develop a low self-concept and are likely to report mental health and physical health problems. Victimized students are often reported as being less accepted by their peers than others and school staff will

often explain that student victims isolate themselves and most are rejected by their classmates. Typically, these students have few friends and will often describe feelings of loneliness and unhappiness while at school. Even more, victims are more likely to report suicidal ideations compared to those who are not victimized (Flaspohler, Elfstrom, Vanderzee, Sink, & Birchmeier, 2009). Targets for bullying are usually those who are clearly different from the mainstream group like someone wearing religious garments or those who are associated with a controversial group in society such as those who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

Oppositely, bullies are seen as aggressive, impulsive, dominant, and controlling. Students who bully others will be intentional, proactive, and goal oriented in their bullying actions. They are typically socially accepted by their peers and often have positive interactions with classmates, and have friends. Bullies might explain their motivation to victimize others by explaining that it makes them feel powerful and provides them with attention. It has been reported that boys will often target others who are physically weak, irritable, or if the victim did not “fit in” and did not wear the “right” clothes. Girls are likely bullied due to being overweight, emotional, receiving good grades, or did not “fit in” (Beaty & Alexeyev, 2008).

The classification of “bully-victims” is the group which is at the greatest risk for negative psychosocial outcomes and has the greatest likelihood of suffering the most severe consequences. Bully-victims are those students who bully others and are also bullied themselves. They are more impulsive and reactive, and their actions are often more aggressive and violent than pure bullies. Bully-victims mimic pure victims as they

have few friends and are usually rejected and disliked by their peers. These students are at a high risk for substance use, suicidal ideations, depression, loneliness, poor academic achievement, poor social skills, and negative relationships with peers. They will explain that they pick on others in response to being picked on and some school staff and other students believe that bully-victims deserve the bullying that they receive. Some studies have even demonstrated that, at times, teachers have chosen not to intervene when bully-victims are being victimized (Unnever & Cornell, 2003). Individuals who are bully-victims lack social support amongst peers at school and often lack support from school staff.

Those individuals who are not directly involved in bullying episodes are considered “bystanders.” These students are frequently not recognized as being significant in creating the culture of peer aggression in school. However, bystanders often have the power to prevent or promote the victimization acts depending on how they choose to behave in an aggressive situation. Bystanders have the potential to influence the way a bullying episode occurs as they might choose to actively reinforce or encourage the bullying, passively accept the bullying, or ignore the bullying. Conversely, some bystanders might choose to intervene on behalf of the victim, actively defend the victim, or discourage the bullying by verbalizing their disapproval or reporting to a school staff member. Bullies are likely to victimize others when peers are present to demonstrate their dominance and power. It was noted that in 88 percent of bullying episodes, peers were present (Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001). It is important

to acknowledge the role bystanders play in bullying episodes as it demonstrates that bullying has an effect on entire schools, not just bullies and their victims.

Teachers and other school staff also play a significant role in preventing and stopping victimization. Studies have shown that bullying interventions are only successful if school staff members are committed to actively participate in creating a positive and safe school climate (Kokko & Porhola, 2009). Teachers and staff are often encouraged to intervene and mediate when students have conflicts where both students share power. However, in cases of bullying, the aggressor will hold the power and therefore, mediation will likely be less helpful. Instead, it is often more effective for staff to provide consistent, firm limits and discipline to stop bullying. School personnel have a legal, educational, and moral responsibility to assist victims of bullying as soon as the bullying act occurs. At times, staff members do not have the tools or knowledge to sufficiently address the problem of bullying for their students. For example, it has been noted that teachers often fail to protect victims of indirect (verbal or relational) types of bullying either because these acts go unnoticed or because the teacher underestimates the severity of the bullying (Kokko & Porhola, 2009). Thus, students learn that adults will step in only if they experience direct, physical bullying, but not if they are targets of name-calling, exclusion, etc. At times, adults themselves will participate in the acts of bullying. Adult bullying often occurs when teachers simply disregard bullying or allow it to occur. Additionally, teachers may express sarcastic or inappropriate epithets in the classroom. Moreover, teachers may engage in bullying methods to discipline students. Lastly, some school coaches engage in bullying

practices (verbal harassment, insults, and other degradation practices for example) that are normalized as methods to motivate student athletes (Ong, 2003).

School personnel are responsible by law to protect their students from discrimination, hate-motivated or biased behaviors, and violence of any kind. Specifically in California, Education Code sections 200, 220, 233, and 48900.3 consists of policies targeting hate-motivated behaviors (Ong, 2003). Similarly, the California Penal Code sections 422.6, 422.7, 422.75, 422.8, 422.9, 422.95, and 628 describe hate-motivated crimes (“State of California,” n.d.). Even more, California Assembly Bill 537 focuses on ensuring the protection of California students from discrimination and harassment from students and staff (CDE, 2001). These and many other policies are in place to protect students in California from being victimized. However, change can only occur if teachers and school staff take action to implement these policies.

There are likely many factors that contribute to bullying including familial, peer, or environmental influences. The literature indicates that youth who demonstrate aggressive behaviors have experienced poor modeling of appropriate social skills and problem-solving techniques from adults. There is often a correlation between bullying behaviors in children and inconsistent familial patterns and violence in the home (Espelage, Bosworth, & Simon, 2000). Children learn how to relate with others by how their family members relate to one another. If a family uses bullying behaviors such as insults and/or physical discipline in their interactions, children often learn that bullying is acceptable. It may be that bullies at school are victims in their homes. Children are also affected by the behaviors of their peers and the pressure they might feel to mimic

the negative actions of others around them. Bullies are typically less likely to come across disapproval themselves if they target those who do not conform to societal norms. Pointing out others' differences allows bullies to feel that they are superior and that they belong to the mainstream, accepted peer group.

In addition to familial and peer influences, environmental factors often reinforce bullying. Some children and adolescents are exposed to community violence and/or firearm possessions. The media and technology are also prevalent influences in modern society allowing children to view violent images where bullying behaviors are often depicted as humorous. Movies, television shows, video games, internet websites, and the radio tend to use embarrassment, humiliation, and harassment as entertainment for others. With the development of technological advancements, children and adolescents have additional means of targeting others via text messages, social networking sites, etc. Cyber bullying is becoming more and more of a common way in which indirect bullying occurs.

Many bullied students will suffer negative consequences and outcomes as a result of the victimization endured at school. These outcomes might involve somatic symptoms, school-related problems, psychological issues, and often includes an altered self-concept (Houbre, Tarquinio, Thuillier, & Hergott, 2006). There have been studies done on students who are bullied at school and the effects the aggressive acts have on their health. Specifically, bullied students were found to be three to four times more likely to experience headaches, gastric problems, and insomnia than non-bullied students (Beaty & Alexeyev, 2008). Somatic symptoms increased with greater exposure to

bullying and symptoms often decreased when the victim felt support from staff and other peers. Students who have been victimized often felt afraid to attend school for fear of attack either at school or on the way to or on the way home from school. These students will avoid places like restrooms, will take the shortest route to school, or will skip school altogether. Therefore, truancy can be a problem for bullied students. Additionally, bullied students may engage in retaliation as demonstrated in a national 2001 study where 15 percent of bullied students reported being involved in a physical fight and four percent reported carrying a weapon to school for protection purposes (DeVoe & Chandler, 2005). Also, students reported that there was a 90% drop in their school grades after they became victims of bullying (Gruber & Fineran, 2007).

In addition to somatic symptoms and problems related to school, victimized students typically will experience psychological challenges, some of which can be long-lasting. It is expected that bullied victims will experience feelings of humiliation, loneliness, frustration, helplessness, fear, anxiety, and confusion amongst a variety of other emotions. There has been a relationship discovered between students experiencing bullying and mental health challenges arising afterwards, especially depressive symptoms and conditions. One study noted that victimized students were five times more likely to be depressed than non-bullied students (Gruber & Fineran, 2007). Depending on the severity of the bullying endured, victims might experience symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) if the bullying events are traumatic for the victim. Common symptoms might include: nightmares, flashbacks, irritability, and

avoidance of stimuli (APA, 2000). With this, some victims will develop a negative self-concept and will display little self-confidence.

In some instances, bullying acts are correlated with hate crimes as they both tend to target individuals who are “different” and persecutes them for those differences. Under the California Penal Code, schools are required to report any hate-motivated incidents and individuals are subjected to possible persecution. Hate crimes are defined by the Penal Code as “an act or attempted act against the person or property of another individual or institution which in any way manifest evidence of hostility toward the victim because of his or her actual or perceived race, religion, disability, gender, nationality, or sexual orientation” (“State of California,” n.d.). There are often many similarities between bullying acts and hate crime incidents and bullying is often labeled as a “junior hate crime” (Englander, 2007). Targets of bullying and hate crimes are often those groups who society has already recognized as controversial. One-half of hate crimes are committed by men under 21 years old, ten percent of hate crimes occur in schools, and the fastest growing population of hate-group members are young men between 14 and 24 years old (Ong, 2003).

Homophobic Bullying in Schools

Amongst the many children and adolescents who experience victimization at school, queer youth, or those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or those perceived as being a member of this community, are often bullied on a regular basis. These students endure incidents of homophobic bullying, which are direct or indirect acts that defame persons based on their sexual orientation and also includes anti-

gay epithets (Meyer, 2008). These individuals are targeted as a result of their differences in a heteronormative society. Queer youth who experience homophobic bullying with little to no help from adults at school indirectly learn to either remain invisible or risk potential abuse by becoming visible (Sweet & DesRoches, 2007). Homophobic bullying is a prevalent problem in California schools and it is vital for changes to be made at the macro and micro levels.

In a national study of high school students, 61 percent reported feeling unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation as compared to only 10 percent of students who felt unsafe at school because of their race or ethnicity (Russell, Clarke, & Laub, 2009). Similarly, queer adolescents were three to four times more likely to report having experiences of bullying at school than their heterosexual counterparts. According to the national survey, 90 percent of LGBTQ teenagers reported experiencing verbal or physical harassment during the past year compared to 62 percent of non-LGBTQ adolescents. One in two adolescents stated that they hear others make homophobic remarks on a regular basis (Johnson, 2007). Most students in secondary schools hear their classmates make negative remarks towards others on a consistent basis and most of these comments are homophobic in nature. A 2005 report surveying 3,450 high school students online found that 52 percent of students reported hearing homophobic remarks, 51 percent hear sexist remarks, 26 percent hear racist remarks, and only 10 percent hear religious comments (Harris Interactive, 2005). These statistics are alarming especially because queer youth is a population at risk for serious problems like depression and suicide.

Victims of homophobic bullying might experience physical or verbal harassment, social exclusion, or attitudinal violence from classmates. In a nationwide survey of high school students, about 40 percent of LGBTQ students reported experiencing physical harassment or violence and approximately 80 percent acknowledged being targets of name-calling and other forms of verbal harassment (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2008). In addition to direct homophobic victimization, queer youth will likely feel unsafe in schools where anti-gay epithets are allowed without consequences. According to a 2007 report, 97 percent of students in secondary schools regularly hear the word “gay” used in a negative fashion, such as in the expressions, “you’re so gay” or “that’s so gay” (GLSEN, 2009). Homophobic banter is very common amongst teenagers and findings indicate that being the target of homophobic epithets will likely result in the victim also using homophobic epithets towards others. Several studies demonstrate that approximately 90 percent of high school LGBTQ students reported that they frequently heard remarks such as, “faggot” and “dyke” from peers at school. More surprisingly, of these students, about 40 percent of them heard these remarks from staff members (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2008; GLSEN, 2009). When a school allows and sometimes promotes the presence of anti-gay language, it creates an unsafe and unsupportive environment for queer students.

Frequently, students endure acts of homophobic bullying merely because others perceive them as LGBTQ. Even if a student does not identify as LGBTQ but displays any characteristic typical of the opposite gender, he/she will likely be a target for harassment. Gender non-conformity is intolerable in our society and those who fail to

meet society's gender norms are typically attacked with anti-gay language. Artistic males and athletic females are labeled as being a member of the LGBTQ community and therefore, experience homophobic bullying due to their perceived sexual orientation. In a California study, it indicated that 86 percent of students regularly heard others at school make negative remarks about a male not acting "masculine" enough or a female not acting "feminine" enough (GLSEN, 2009). This form of bullying based on gender non-conformity is often labeled as transphobic harassment as it signifies those who disrupt the behaviors of the gender binary (Meyer, 2008). Males are more prone to experience transphobic harassment due to society's pressure to meet the standard of hegemonic masculinity (Wackerfuss, 2007).

In addition to students who do not conform to traditional gender roles, youth who are questioning their sexuality are also subject to homophobic harassment. There is a lack of research studying youth questioning their sexual orientation even though the few studies that have been conducted demonstrate that questioning youth are at a high risk of substance abuse and other negative consequences. In one study, the findings indicated that questioning youth report more teasing, symptoms of depression, suicide ideations, and greater drug use than both heterosexual and LGBTQ students (Espelage, Aragon, Birkett, & Koenig, 2008). LGBTQ students usually have the support of other gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender youth in the school as opposed to sexually questioning youth who do not identify as heterosexual or LGBTQ and therefore, do not fit within one group.

Another form of bullying that queer youth are often faced with is sexual harassment. These types of behaviors include unwanted physical and verbal acts that have a sexual or gender component to them and might include: sexual comments, gestures, jokes or sexual messages or illustrations on lockers and on bathroom walls, being called derogatory homophobic names, having clothing pulled down, etc. (Meyer, 2008; Fineran, 2002). Most school districts have adopted policies regarding student-on-student sexual harassment. However, these safeguards are often not implemented for LGBTQ students by school staff members. One example involved a gay male student who had been harassed throughout his high school years by classmates. This student endured numerous incidents of sexual harassment including an event when he was held to the ground in a “mock rape” experience where other males taunted him and another incident when he was pushed into a urinal as other males urinated on him. Despite many notifications to the school about the harassment he received, the school did nothing to intervene claiming that “boys will be boys.” Therefore, the student sued the school district and the student won \$900,000 to settle his claim (Fineran, 2002).

Although LGBTQ issues and homophobic bullying has been a significant problem in society for many years, it has become a prominent and openly spoken about topic in society more recently. Despite the severity of homophobic bullying students have been through across the nation, this problem has had little attention from the public. This did change after the Columbine High School massacre in 1999 which found that the two shooters were students who had been consistently victimized to the point where they became perpetrators themselves. These two boys were frequently called “faggots” and

were harassed for their perceived gay identities and their female friends were called “fag-lovers” (Wackerfuss, 2007). Around the same time, the film “*Boys Don’t Cry*” reached the mainstream audience describing the true story of the brutal murder of Brandon Teena. This film depicted the severity of transgender violence and oppression and demonstrated real acts of anti-gay harassment. Matthew Shepard, an openly gay young man, was brutally murdered by his peers due to his sexual orientation. These deaths led to increased lobbying for hate crime laws and for further awareness regarding LGBTQ issues in the United States (Griffin & Ouellett, 2003). More recently, an openly gay 15- year-old, Lawrence King, was murdered at school by his classmate, Brandon David McInerney, who shot him in the head after King asked McInerney to be his Valentine days before the shooting (Setoodeh, 2008). Then, in April of 2009, 11-year-old Carl Walker-Hoover took his own life after enduring bullying at school including anti-gay remarks despite his mother’s pleas to the school to address the problem. Carl did not identify as gay, but was taunted daily with homophobic language (GLSEN, 2009).

Numerous studies and educators have agreed that it is vital for schools to implement policies surrounding bullying and harassment which specifically include sexual orientation and gender expression. However, this has not occurred in all schools, or even in most schools. Based on a national survey of 6,209 LGBTQ students, 58 percent believed that their schools had a policy for reporting incidents of harassment and bullying. However, only about 26 percent reported that their schools had a policy which specifically included protection based on one’s sexual orientation or gender expression

(GLSEN, 2009). In a nationwide survey, it was found that only eight states and the Washington District of Columbia have laws protecting students from harassment based on their sexual orientation (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2008). Students who are harassed based on their real or perceived sexual identity and feel that their schools failed to protect them can file suit under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment or Title IX. Equal protection requires that schools treat each individual equally. Therefore, if a school enforces rules against bullying when it involves heterosexual students but fails to do so when the incident involves an LGBTQ student, then a violation may have occurred under Equal Protection. Similarly, Title IX provides protection for student-on-student sexual harassment when schools do not intervene appropriately. If a student provides evidence demonstrating that harassment occurred based on his or her sexual orientation or gender expression, this individual may have a Title IX claim. In some cases, school districts can be held liable for failing to protect LGBTQ students which may result in a monetary fine (Stader & Graca, 2007).

In 2000, former governor of California, Gray Davis, signed into law the California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000. This law prohibits discrimination and harassment of students in California public schools on the basis of sex, religion, race, ethnic group identification, color or mental or physical disability. The new law added in the provision to also prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity (CDE, 2001).

Some schools that have policies which include safety for queer students have administration and school staff who are unwilling to enforce and implement these

policies into action (Short, 2007). Even though studies across the board demonstrate that queer students hear homophobic remarks and/or experience homophobic bullying daily, teachers often do not report the incidents. If a teacher does make a report, it is often noted as occurring less than other forms of harassment. Often times, teachers will explain that the homophobic remarks a student made was in a joking manner and therefore, the teacher chose not to intervene. Some school staff members do not find homophobic epithets to be a problem and will thereby, fail to get involved. It is clear that in many cases, teachers are reluctant to intervene in cases surrounding homophobic bullying, but will not tolerate any other form of bullying. The majority of students who experience homophobic bullying do not report the incidents to school staff (65%) and of those who did report to school staff members, only 37 percent of these students reported that school staff effectively intervened (GLSEN, 2009). This failure to intervene is often attributed to staff member's personal beliefs regarding homosexuality, concerns about controversy, and misunderstandings about the law and how to proceed (Stader & Graca, 2007). In any case, when school staff members step in to educate their students and provide consequences for every form of bullying or harassment except homophobic bullying it perpetuates the discrimination and violence towards queer students. Additionally, it creates potential liability issues for schools and school districts.

Much of the time, educators will unconsciously instill heterosexist beliefs in his or her classroom based on personal values. However, this form of passive anti-gay harassment is still considered a form of oppression and is often labeled as "cloaked" heteronormativity (Sweet & DesRoches, 2007). Even more, a number of studies note

that school personnel are often directly part of the problem concerning homophobic bullying. Students from a 2007 National School Climate Survey reported that they heard biased remarks from teachers and other school staff. 23 percent of these students stated that they heard staff members make negative remarks regarding a student's gender expression and 19 percent also regularly heard homophobic remarks from school staff members (GLSEN, 2009).

Including LGBTQ issues in the school curriculum has been controversial, but has been shown to improve feelings of safety for students, especially queer students. In California, 78 percent of students who learned about LGBTQ issues in their curriculum reported feeling safer in school as compared to 67 percent of students who did not learn about LGBTQ issues. Additionally, in schools where LGBTQ issues were included in the curriculum, queer students report hearing fewer rumors and lies spread about them, fewer incidents of being made fun of, and less bullying in general (Russell, Kostroski, McGuire, Laub, & Manke, 2006). Many school districts in California are already including LGBTQ topics in their curriculum and many more have interest in doing the same. With an increased awareness of LGBTQ issues in schools, students report feeling safer and school personnel will likely feel more support in addressing incidents of homophobic bullying.

Queer youth are forced to deal with stressors due to their stigmatized identity and have developed ways in which to cope, some of which are healthy and some which are not. One way that queer students cope with a homophobic school environment is to avoid stigmatization by concealing their sexual orientation. Often times, they will make

themselves less visible to others by skipping classes or even drop out of school all together to cope with the harassment (Frost & Bastone, 2007). However, with numerous absences and truancy, queer students often alienate themselves from friends and teachers and may jeopardize their academic grades. One study in California indicated that 29 percent of LGBTQ students skipped class at least once in the prior month because they felt unsafe in their school environment (GLSEN, 2009). Students who were frequently harassed because of their real or perceived sexual orientation reported a grade point average earning almost half a grade lower than those who were harassed less often (Clarke & Russell, 2009). In addition, LGBTQ students report using alcohol and other substances as a means of coping more than heterosexual students (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2008). Even more, some victimized queer students cope by fighting back and becoming aggressors themselves. For example, a group of bullied African- American lesbians formed a “gang” called DTO (Dykes Taking Over) to fight back against those who harassed them. These young women were known to sexually harass or attack heterosexual women and claimed that they were not being protected at school and were therefore, taking matters into their own hands (Johnson, 2007).

LGBTQ children and adolescents who are victimized at school often have high rates of psychological and academic problems due to the harassment they endured and may suffer long-term consequences. There is a strong correlation made between harassed queer youth and depression and suicide. The majority of students harassed based on their real or perceived sexual orientation report symptoms of depression including discontinuing activities that they previously found enjoyable. Data from the

2007 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance system demonstrated that queer youth were more than twice as likely as heterosexual youth to have attempted suicide in the past year (Almeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar, & Azrael, 2009). In another study, it was reported that 60 percent of the LGBTQ youth surveyed had at least considered suicide at some point (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2008). The Department of Health and Human Services of the United States reported that LGBTQ teenagers account for 30 percent of all adolescent suicides (Padva, 2007). These students often report feelings of anxiety and sadness, display signs of low self-esteem, and may skip school due to fear of harassment. Additionally, they are likely to participate in high-risk behaviors such as: substance abuse, unsafe sexual activity, or run away from school or home (Sweet & DesRoches, 2007).

There are always different reasons to explain why a child or adolescent chooses to become a perpetrator of homophobic bullying. For some adolescent males, homophobic bullying is a response from young men who feel that they do not measure up to society's standards of hegemonic masculinity (Wackerfuss, 2007). And in society, being accused of being a member of the LGBTQ population and receiving homophobic taunts is seemingly the most offensive insult a male can be given. Homophobic bullying has also been used to deflect suspicion of their homosexual tendencies and feelings and "prove" that they are heterosexual. Homophobic behaviors and epithets are often used in aggressive group settings and those who participated in these groups engaged in greater use of homophobic bullying acts and language than those who affiliated with less aggressive peers (Poteat, 2008). This does not necessarily indicate that every individual

in these group settings who use homophobic epithets is homophobic, but may signify pressure boys feel to demonstrate their masculinity through aggressive acts.

Some students' homophobic bullying acts do reflect their feelings of homophobia which may be a result of parental, religious, or media influences or not knowing any open LGBTQ adults. In one study of secondary school students, 58 percent of them stated that their parents or guardians were an important, if not the most important influence on their attitudes towards homosexuality (Stotzer, 2008). Caregivers may or may not choose to discuss the topic of sexuality with their children and if they do, they might leave out anything that is not heterosexuality. If caregivers are intolerant of homophobia, their children are more likely to adopt anti-heterosexist values. At the same time, if parents are openly disapproving toward LGBTQ persons, their children are more likely to take up heterosexist ideas and use homophobic language with their school peers. Similarly, children and adolescents who are exposed to religious institutions which preach anti-gay attitudes are often taught to condemn LGBTQ persons. Therefore, homophobic bullying may be promoted by the church (Whitehead, 2010). Popular culture, a significant influence on youth, also replicates heterosexist practices. Often the media portrays LGBTQ persons in stereotypical ways (Padva, 2007). If a child knows a relative or other adult who is open about their LGBTQ sexual orientation, it will likely normalize and may greatly affect the child's perceptions regarding homosexuality (Stotzer, 2009).

Different studies have indicated that queer students who attended schools with a positive climate had drastically less negative outcomes than those who experienced

homophobic bullying and/or attended a school with little protection for queer youth (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2008; Short, 2007). In 1998, a national organization was developed called the Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) network which brought GSA clubs to public high schools. These were student-run clubs that brought LGBTQ and straight students together to support one another and created a safe space to fight homophobia. The GSA network became its own independent non-profit organization in 2008. About 50 percent of California public high schools have GSA's. In Sacramento County, there are approximately 28 GSA's present at the high school level (GSA Network, 2009). In schools which had an active GSA present, queer students reported experiencing less harassment (35% versus 41%), than students who attended schools without a GSA or other clubs that provided support to LGBTQ students (GLSEN, 2009). Students and school personnel who support, advocate, and fight for LGBTQ social justice as straight allies often play a crucial role in stopping acts of homophobic bullying by defending victims and educating their peers/students.

Schools should be safe places where students feel protected from harassment, violence, and hate-motivated behaviors. In one study, it was found that of 7,000 students, 15 percent of the students identified as LGBTQ (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2008). When such a significant portion of the student body often experiences harassment and bullying regularly, it is necessary for schools to take action.

Homophobic Discourses in the Larger Culture

American society is built around categorizations and if a person fits into a dominant category (white, male, middle-class, able-bodied, and heterosexual) he

receives power and control. The binary categories of white/people of color, male/female, wealthy/poor, able-bodied/disabled, and heterosexual/homosexual places value on the former groups and leaves the latter groups powerless (McPhail, 2004). The devalued groups are often faced with ridicule, oppression, and prejudice in society. Throughout history, many targeted groups in America have been the victims of oppression because society deemed them as unworthy and “deviant.” Members of the dominant, non-targeted groups carry unmarked, invisible, unearned power and privilege in society and their behaviors are considered “normal” and “American.” Anyone who does not fit into these dominant categories are thereby labeled, stereotyped, and blamed for their shortcomings. Homophobia, or the fear and/or prejudice of homosexuality, LGBTQ individuals, and their lifestyles, is the most recent, prominent, and accepted form of oppression in American society (Perez, 2005). The heterosexist ideology in society permeates through institutions, like schools, where administrators leave out protection of LGBTQ students in policies and where the curriculum excludes discussion of LGBTQ individuals and topics. When this occurs, queer youth are often left with inequalities and a lack of support from adults, schools, and policies.

When individuals act out on their homophobic feelings and beliefs, it often leads to oppression, discrimination, and violence. Oppression has been a historical and continuous problem in the United States. Various groups in society have been targeted for failing to fit inside the box of what is considered “normal.” African-Americans were singled out for the color of their skin and were forced into slavery to serve their white oppressors. Their oppressors’ actions were justified when discrimination was written

into legislation with the Jim Crow laws which legalized the segregation between blacks and whites. Finally, in the 1960's, the Jim Crow laws were found to be unconstitutional and with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968, racist legislation was put to a stop (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.). Similarly, women were devalued, given second-class citizenship, and were not given the right to vote in the United States until 1920 with the nineteenth amendment's ratification of the Constitution. Since the Civil War, marginalized groups in the United States have fought for equal rights under the law. African Americans and women are two of the many groups in society who have been victims of discrimination. The most recent targeted group is the LGBTQ population. Although there has been work done on a micro level for the LGBTQ community, the deep rooted problem in society of heterosexism and homophobia is less often challenged. There is a great need for social workers to intervene on a macro level, especially within institutions like the school system (Craig, Tucker, & Wagner, 2008).

There are numerous examples and evidence of heterosexist/homophobic discrimination in our society. Some examples include the legal ban of same-sex marriage in most states, the military ban on LGBTQ individuals, and the lack of legal protection from anti-gay discrimination in employment and housing. The most publicized act of homophobic legislation and an example of the intensity of homophobia existing today has been the ban of same-sex marriage. With the enactment of DOMA (Defense of Marriage Act) signed into law by President Clinton in 1996, the federal government stated their definition of marriage as a union only between a man and a

woman. DOMA provides that states are not required to recognize same-sex marriages from other states (HRC, 2009). Since then, all but five states have banned same-sex couples from marrying. Currently in the United States, gay marriage has been legalized in Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, Vermont, and New Hampshire. New York, Rhode Island, the District of Columbia, and Maryland recognize same-sex marriages from other states, but do not perform same-sex marriages. New Jersey allows for civil unions, permitting same-sex couples with state-level spousal rights. California, Oregon, Nevada, and Washington have domestic partnership laws and provide nearly all state-level spousal rights to same-sex couples. Hawaii, the District of Columbia, Maine, and Wisconsin provide some state-level spousal rights for domestic partners (NCSL, 2010). There are more than 777,000 same-sex couples living together in the United States who are not granted the right to marry.

Couples who are not permitted with the right to marry are also denied all of the more than 1,100 federal benefits and protections of marriage. Couples, gay or straight, typically choose to marry because they are in love and want to honor their relationship by making a public commitment to one another. Same-sex couples are also fighting for marriage equality because marriage comes with a safety net for their children and provides them with protections that unmarried parents/couples do not receive. Unmarried couples are not granted the right to visit or make medical decisions for their sick or injured partner in the hospital. Even more, married individuals receive Social Security payments when their spouse passes away. However, same-sex unmarried couples, receive no Social Security survivor benefits despite the fact that they are paying

payroll taxes (HRC, 2009). Moreover, married persons automatically inherit their deceased spouse's properties without paying estate taxes whereas a gay or lesbian taxpayer is required to pay estate taxes on any property inherited from a deceased partner. When LGBTQ couples age, they continue to experience the ramifications of unequal benefits and rights. Unlike married older couples who have the right to live together in nursing homes, same-sex older couples are not always afforded that right. Even more, older married couples are protected from having to sell their homes due to paying high nursing home bills, but gay and lesbian older couples are not provided with the same protection (HRC, 2009).

Couples in same-sex relationships challenge heteronormative rules and threaten a system organized around patriarchal domination (Greene, 2009). Advocates for marriage equality fight against those who deny same-sex couples their rights under the mission of keeping the "sanctity" of marriage by noting the divorce rate rising above 40 percent (CDC, 2001). They challenge the argument of marriage for procreation by recognizing the married couples who choose not to have children and elderly couples and others who cannot conceive which make up approximately 7 million couples in the United States (Day, 1996). Many advocates will not engage in a dispute regarding marriage and religion because although marriage can have a religious meaning to some, it is also a legal contract. Due to the Constitution's principle of separation between church and state, the legal component is the sole means for debate.

Another prominent example of heterosexist legislation is the military ban on LGBTQ persons. The Department of Defense has made attempts in the past to ban

numerous groups in society from serving in the military. First, African-Americans were seen as unacceptable for military service as they were thought to have character deficits. Then, women were seen as a threat to morale and effectiveness and thus were inappropriate to serve. On both accounts, their accusations were proven to be inaccurate. Now, the military has another group to potentially fully integrate into the military despite much controversy. Those who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender have always served in the military, but they have also had to hide their sexual orientation to protect themselves from discharge. In the 1940s, the military used the diagnosis of homosexuality as a mental illness to justify discharging soldiers. The American Psychiatric Association included “homosexuality” as a mental illness in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) but then removed it from the list in 1973 explaining that “homosexuality per se implies no impairment in judgment, stability, reliability, or general social and vocational abilities...” (Fox, 1988, p. 529).

In the 1950s, LGBTQ soldiers were thought to be susceptible to blackmail and were therefore a threat to national security. In 1993, Congress explained their reasoning for keeping the ban of LGBTQ individuals in the military by explaining that their presence undermined unit cohesion. President Clinton made an attempt to lift the ban, but failed. As a compromise, Congress and the President enacted the policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT) in 1993. This policy acknowledged the presence of LGBTQ persons in the military, stated that sexual orientation is no longer a bar to military service, but called for an end to questions regarding sexual behavior and sexual orientation. This policy only permits LGBTQ soldiers to serve in the military on the condition that they

do not reveal their sexual orientation and refrain from any same-sex behaviors.

However, this piece of legislation has resulted in an increase of LGBTQ discharges, with approximately 10,000 between 1994 and 2003 (Sinclair, 2009). President Obama announced during the State of the Union Address in January of 2010 that he has made plans to lift DADT in order to demonstrate that LGBTQ soldiers are just as effective as heterosexual soldiers.

When a qualified LGBTQ individual applies for an employment position, he or she is not protected by a federal law from employment discrimination due to the person's sexual orientation. In 1994, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) was introduced which would prohibit discrimination against employees on the basis of one's sexual orientation or gender identity. This federal bill would apply for all non-religious places of employment that employed at least 15 workers. The ENDA seeks to provide protection for LGBTQ individuals from unequal treatment in the workplace as it requires that employers refrain from using a person's sexual orientation or gender identity as the basis for hiring, firing, or promotion. This would apply to Congress, federal, state, and local governments as well as to public and private employers, employment agencies, and labor unions. The bill would exempt small businesses (with less than 15 employees), religious organizations, and the military (i.e. "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"). Despite numerous attempts, the ENDA has yet to be enacted into law. Currently, there are 21 states and the District of Columbia which have passed laws prohibiting discrimination in the workplace based on one's sexual orientation and 13 of these states

also have statutes which prohibit employment discrimination based on gender identity (GAO, 2009).

LGBTQ individuals often face housing discrimination with no help from the government as there are no protections on the federal level for LGBTQ persons and housing. The Fair Housing Act, enacted in 1968, prohibits discrimination in the sale, rental, and other housing-related transactions based on race, national origin, color, religion, sex, disability, and family status, but does not include sexual orientation or gender identity. Although some states provide one level of protection for LGBTQ persons, housing discrimination takes a variety of forms. In the United States, approximately 40 percent of the estimated 1.6 million homeless children and adolescents identified as LGBTQ (IGLHRC, 2009). It is assumed that most of these homeless LGBTQ youth were forced to leave their home once they “came out” to their family members. Some report experiencing physical, emotional, or psychological abuse after “coming out” and felt driven from their homes to the streets (Cochran, Stewart, Ginzler, & Cauce, 2002). In addition, LGBTQ persons experience discrimination in housing when same-sex couples attempt to shop for a home. Some same-sex couples are told that they cannot put both partners’ names on the homeowner’s insurance policy. These couples are often discriminated against when filing a claim since many insurance companies refuse to acknowledge a same-sex partner as “related” or “family” (HRC, 2009).

Heteronormativity has permeated institutions like schools and this cultural dominance is reflected at the administrative level with policies that lack sensitivity to

LGBTQ issues. Teachers and other school staff are affected by heterosexual norms and often fail to enforce policies that include LGBTQ individuals. Students, who are influenced by policies, teachers, other adults in their life, and the media, also learn heterosexist ways of thinking and behaving. Public schools have a crucial role in defining cultural norms by choosing to embrace or reject sexual and gender identities (Sweet & DesRoches, 2007). If a school incorporates an anti-bullying policy which does not explicitly include issues around gender and sexual orientation, the school is indirectly creating a dichotomy where queer students are forced to either be silent and invisible or risk becoming a target for bullying by making themselves visible. Research indicates that schools which incorporate LGBTQ issues in their curriculum and promote acceptance and appreciation of all forms of diversity create an environment where queer students feel safer. However, it is rarely the case that schools will choose to discuss topics surrounding diversity, gender, or sexuality. Instead, public schools are primarily dominated by heterosexism and homophobia.

Many people promote that the school is a place for the development of citizens. Yet, schools often undermine democratic citizenship by providing a narrow view of what it means to be an American citizen. It is often the case that teachers do not directly state their opposition to homosexuality or diversity, but it is the daily discourse which embodies heterosexuality and masculinity. For example, classroom discussions about “human beings” or “humanity” are typically revolving around the White, heterosexual male as he is the person with power in society. This discourse naturally disempowers and undermines all those who do not fit into that category. Thereby, students fail to

learn open-mindedness and acceptance of others' differences (Sweet & DesRoches, 2007). Children and adolescents fail to appreciate others' differences often because they were instilled with heteronormative values from adults in their lives.

Adults develop homophobic/heterosexist beliefs and behaviors for a variety of reasons. Some individuals are fearful to be an advocate for anything that is not heterosexuality because of their own internalized homophobia, some use religion to explain their homophobic beliefs and explain that the Bible or God say that homosexuality is wrong. Even more, a person's racial or ethnic background often plays a role in one's homophobic tendencies. Society's ideologies of traditional gender roles and hegemonic masculinity often contribute to negative attitudes towards LGBTQ individuals (Rogers, McRee, & Arntz, 2009).

There are many instances when a self-identified heterosexual male will display homophobic behaviors due to an aversion to his own homoerotic potential (Massey, 2009). This internalized homophobia may be acted out with the use of violence or aggression towards openly gay persons. It is less common for heterosexuals to overtly express their hostile feelings toward LGBTQ individuals, but they may verbalize their discomfort and may avoid close interactions with those who they perceive to be LGBTQ. Individuals who identify as LGBTQ may blame themselves for being attacked which may result in negative attitudes toward the self or self-hatred (Ryan & Rivers, 2003). The anxiety and shame that often comes with internalized homophobia will sometimes cause individuals to avoid lasting relationships (Frost & Meyer, 2009). Internalized homophobia does not equate with a trait that is internal to a person, but rather it is often

a result of heterosexism found within the larger culture. Members of the LGBTQ community may buy into society's negative messages about who they are as individuals and as a group. When this occurs, queer individuals will consider themselves to be inferior to heterosexuals. Therefore, often times, LGBTQ persons will hide their sexual orientation. Approximately 80 percent of victims of anti-gay violence never report the incident for fear of being "outed" (Perez, 2005). In order to keep safe, LGBTQ persons will attempt to "pass" as heterosexual and continue behavior patterns which maintain the heterosexist system.

Homosexuality is often thought of as an issue that is more than just sexuality, it is considered by some to be a moral and religious matter. Religion can be used to bring families and groups together even in times of trouble, but it can also be used to encourage splitting, fear, and even attacks on others who the church finds to be immoral. Many members of sectarian Protestant denominations, conservatives, and regular church attendees tend to view religious texts literally and are the most condemning of homosexual behavior (Greene, 2009). Most teachings in these churches will explain homosexuality as a sin.

Often times, people will discriminate against the LGBTQ community in the name of religion. The Christian Right has a negative view of public schools because they feel that schools teach secular values and beliefs. They feel that it is wrong to include sexual orientation in school policies surrounding bullying because it teaches that "it is okay to be gay." This group states that including sexual orientation in any policy gives LGBTQ individuals "special rights" and promotes homosexuality, which is

something they find to be abnormal and unnatural. One study revealed that Christians' anti-gay beliefs and behaviors are rooted in the fear that they are losing Christian hegemony in schools and in overall society (Macgillivray, 2008). Arguments on the subject of including sexual orientation in policies, allowing same-sex marriage, teaching sex education in school, promoting LGBTQ adoptions, etc., represents a battle between the Christian Right and the more progressive public. Research indicates that members of mainline Protestant denominations and Catholics are more likely to support granting LGBTQ persons with civil rights such as marriage. And those with no religious affiliation and Jews are the most accepting of LGBTQ individuals and homosexuality (Sherkat, Mattias de Vries, & Creek, 2010).

A person's racial or ethnic background often influences one's beliefs regarding homosexuality depending on the messages a person receives. Many individuals experience multiple "isms" such as racism, heterosexism, sexism, etc. In one study, Asian American men were found to experience internalized heterosexism in addition to internalized racism. Persons who identify as Asian and LGBTQ often feel a lack of support from the heterosexual Asian community. They report attempts to seek acceptance and approval within the LGBTQ community, but are often faced with prejudice and discrimination from the White LGBTQ individuals (Szymanski & Gupta, 2009). Additionally, Asian cultures tend to be sexually conservative and consider sexual minorities a taboo subject. Some Asian men feel that coming out as "gay" would draw attention to the self and would bring shame to the family.

Research indicates that the African-American population is prone to homophobic beliefs often because of the church playing a significant role in their lives. If homophobia is prominent within this culture, it may disrupt efforts to combat the AIDS virus as Black men have a higher rate of AIDS than men in other cultures (Jenkins, Lambert, & Baker, 2007). African-Americans tend to be more religious than White individuals and most churches view homosexual behavior as negative. Therefore, there is a stereotype that African-Americans are more homophobic than their White counterparts. Yet, not all studies come to this consensus and some find that Black individuals may have a greater sensitivity to the suffering of others due to their own history of prejudice and discrimination. Some White members of society do not want to give up the advantages they possess and choose not to evaluate the unfair and unearned privilege they have. They may ignore heterosexism or believe it does not exist because they are not confronted with it and never have to deal with it.

Similar to the Asian culture, traditional Latino cultures also do not discuss issues surrounding non-heterosexual sex. Within this culture, there is often the expectation of rigid gender roles which pressure Latino men to uphold a “machismo” image (Calzo & Ward, 2009). With this image, men are aggressive, they have numerous sexual partners, and they are hyper-masculine. In addition, they should marry Latina women who will be submissive wives. A gay, Latino man or woman would automatically violate these cultural expectations.

In general society, a male who displays feminine characteristics is usually seen as a violator of gender norms and is labeled as “gay.” Gender roles and gender normative

behaviors are culturally determined and are created by society. Although sexuality and gender are socially constructed beliefs, heterosexism and homophobia are real. Those who violate society's expectations of gender normative behaviors are subject to harassment and are assumed to be members of the LGBTQ community. Homosexuality is seen to be a threat to traditional gender roles because LGBTQ individuals are often perceived to have cross-gender traits (Rogers, McRee, & Arntz, 2009).

Those individuals who are uneasy or repulsed by those who express nonnormative gender expression and identity are thought to be transphobic. Transphobia often results in discrimination towards transgender persons. One study in the United States demonstrated that 60 percent of transgender individuals have experienced some form of harassment or violence and 50 percent of these persons also experienced discrimination in the workplace. Studies examining transphobia and anti-transgender attitudes are correlated with heterosexism, a belief in traditional gender roles, and that gender (not sex) is biological (Lombardi, 2009). Transgender issues, gender identity, and gender expression are highly controversial topics even amongst social workers. The American Psychological Association continues to utilize the diagnosis of Gender Identity Disorder (GID) in the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). This disorder is explained to be a disturbance of gender identity where a person is assigned one gender at birth, but identifies as belonging to the opposite gender or the person fails to conform to society's gender roles (APA, 2000). With GID listed as a mental health disorder, it often justifies arguments against transgender identities. Many individuals are victimized for not conforming to society's traditional gender roles. This

problem does not only affect members of the LGBTQ community, but also creates a hostile climate for anyone who exhibits behaviors outside the box of what is considered “female” or “male” (Espelage & Swearer, 2008).

Homophobic and transphobic attitudes towards LGBTQ persons are the most common among heterosexual males who are in their late teens and early twenties (Rogers, McRree, & Arntz, 2009). Men are less likely to receive positive messages regarding homosexuality than women and due to the traditional masculine ideology in society, men are often found to have more homophobic attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors than women. Hegemonic masculinity, the dominant ideological norms of masculinity, is often cited as a common reason for homophobic and heterosexist behaviors. Masculinity is a socially constructed term which is thought to encompass all the ways that the ideal man should behave and think. Central to hegemonic masculinity is performing heterosexual and/or violent acts, not acting “like a woman,” and not expressing emotion. If a boy expresses “soft” emotions such as fear, sadness, and pain will mark him as gay or “girly” (Oransky & Marecek, 2009).

The media portrays the ideal man as aggressive, violent, traditionally masculine and conveys normative gender expectations (Kivel & Johnson, 2009). The media and technology are typically prominent parts of children and adolescent’s lives. Television shows and movies depict the heroic man or the desirable man as someone who trivializes gay masculinities (Avila-Saavedra, 2009). Men who display hyper-masculine characteristics are often homophobic because they may see homosexuality as a threat to traditional gender roles (Rogers, McRree, & Arntz, 2009). Often times, men will

participate in anti-gay speech or behaviors in order to “prove” their own heterosexuality to others. Hegemonic masculinity has proven to be a helpful means in identifying and understanding ways in which some men dominate women and other men (Moller, 2007).

Some men (and some women) will often play out their need to dominate and feelings of homophobia through hate crimes and other violent behaviors. Hate crimes are message crimes where the perpetrator might not know the target and where the criminal act is determined to have been motivated by hate. In California, these crimes are punishable by law under the Penal Code (Ong, 2003). According to the 2008 Federal Bureau of Investigation, hate crimes committed against sexual minorities account for 16.7 percent of all hate crimes and of these, 58.6 percent were anti-male homosexual biases (DOJ, 2009). Targets of hate crimes are usually chosen because of their membership in a given group and offenders appear to focus on those who are “different” from society’s norms (Englander, 2007). The LGBTQ community is one of the most socially acceptable groups to harass in the United States.

Homophobic discourses and heterosexism in the larger culture work to punish those who transgress heterosexual norms through physical and verbal abuse, rejection, hostility, and the removal of basic human rights. The consequences result in LGBTQ children, adolescents, and adults who become at great risk of homelessness, suicide, substance abuse, psychological distress, mental health disorders, social and familial isolation, and bullying amongst other challenges (McDermott, Roen, & Scourfield, 2008). Societal heterosexism played out through the media and legislation provides the

groundwork for institutionalized homophobia in schools where queer youth are faced with acts of homophobic bullying at school, in the community, and often times, at home.

Chapter 3

METHODS

Study Design

There is a considerable amount of research on school bullying. Hence, a descriptive research design was utilized to guide this study. A descriptive design is appropriate for the hypothesis as this design is used to study how variables relate to one another. The researcher studied the school's reported incidents of homophobic bullying and compared it to former student's experiences of homophobic bullying at school. Using a descriptive design, the study demonstrates the inconsistencies between the experiences students have with homophobic bullying versus what schools are doing to stop the problem. This is a retrospective study where participants reflected on their prior school experiences and the knowledge they acquired about homophobic bullying. The study incorporates a combination of both qualitative and quantitative approaches with greater emphasis on a qualitative approach in order to explore the detail, richness, and depth of the human experience (Royse, 2008). The research question examined is, "How do public high schools in Sacramento address homophobic bullying and provide a safe space for queer youth?"

Sampling Procedures

The participants for this research project consisted of 30 eighteen to twenty-two year olds who participate in 1 of 3 LGBTQ youth groups offered at the Gay and Lesbian Center in Sacramento. These participants have direct, free/sliding scale counseling services available to them at the Center. The researcher used convenience and snowball

sampling to gather participants. Convenience sampling was used as it could be difficult to gather respondents from the LGBTQ population within the targeted age range without directly asking them about their sexuality. Those who attend the youth groups at the Gay and Lesbian Center are individuals who are openly “out” to peers at the Center. They may or may not be “out” to their family members or other peers outside the Center. Additionally, snowball sampling was utilized as youth group participants referred the researcher to their peers in the community who were interested in participating in the study. The researcher recruited these participants by informing them that the LGBTQ community has the opportunity to benefit from this study and that as participants; they will be assisting the researcher in raising awareness about the need for schools to make greater efforts at stopping and preventing homophobic bullying in order to provide a safer space for queer youth.

Data Collection Instruments

The survey tool, a written questionnaire, utilized in this study consisted of 19 questions and took approximately 5 minutes to complete (See Attachment 2). The questionnaire was comprised of both open-ended questions for depth and authenticity and closed-ended questions for simple analysis. The risk of discomfort or harm was minimal as the questionnaire was administered to those who are 18 years of age or older and the questions asked were ones that inquired about previous experiences with homophobic bullying and did not ask about current experiences.

The surveys administered with the use of a written questionnaire were carried out in person at the Gay and Lesbian Center. The questionnaire was used instead of an

interview in order to protect the confidentiality of participants as the topic may be a sensitive one. The questionnaire is a newly developed instrument and was created by researching existing questionnaires to review the way in which previous researchers have constructed this tool. The questionnaire included a consent form explaining the purpose of the study, ethical concerns, confidentiality information, etc. In order to create a valid study, the researcher reviewed previous studies related to the research topic to provide a foundation for the development of the questionnaire. In order to ensure a reliable study, the survey tool developed is one that can be reproduced and replicated by other researchers.

Data Gathering Procedures

Participants were gathered at the Gay and Lesbian Center in Sacramento at queer youth group meetings. Surveys were administered by the researcher to those who volunteered to participate in the study. After participants completed the survey, they placed the tool in an envelope located in the back of the room at the Center. The envelope was later sealed by the researcher and a separate envelope was sealed which contained the signed consent forms. Survey answers were analyzed by the researcher to determine trends in the data.

Protection of Human Subjects

The Protocol for the Protection of Human Subjects was submitted and approved by the University and by the Division of Social Work. The study was approved as posing minimal risk to participants. The researcher also obtained authorization from The Gay and Lesbian Center to utilize members of their queer youth groups as potential

participants in the study (See Attachment 3). The participants received the contact information (phone number and e-mail address) of the researcher and of the researcher's advisor to be used if participants had any questions or comments after completing the survey. In addition, the researcher provided participants with the information to locate the on-site counselor at the Gay and Lesbian Center at 1927 L Street, (916) 442- 0185, in case feelings of discomfort arise after participating in the study. Even more, the participants received the contact information for the Sacramento Crisis Hotline at (916) 732-3637 for immediate mental health assistance if needed.

The researcher ensured confidentiality by keeping surveys anonymous and by not disclosing information to outside sources. The only data collected was information needed to further research for this specific study. Completed questionnaires were contained in a sealed envelope in a locked cabinet for the researcher's use only. During data analysis, the researcher kept surveys in a sealed envelope and the contents were only reviewed by the researcher. After data analysis, the surveys were shredded and disposed of. There was no identifying information in the research to ensure confidentiality. The participants were informed that they are free to withdraw from the study at any given time with no consequences. These voluntary participants were given a written consent form explaining the nature of this study to make certain that they have informed consent about the project and what they would be contributing to (See Attachment 1).

The queer youth population is a high-risk group in society as they are often victims of violence and discrimination. However, the researcher attempted to minimize

risk in this study by only using participants who are over 18 years of age. Parental permission was not necessary as participants were over 18 years old and it was not utilized in order to protect participants as many caregivers of LGBTQ youth do not know about their child's sexuality. Even more, this was a retrospective study and participants reflected on their past years in school instead of explaining what they are currently experiencing.

Some questions asked on the survey tool had potential to bring about memories from past experiences that may cause discomfort. However, the researcher did not anticipate that participants will become distressed by the questions asked of them. Additionally, participants were informed that they are not required to answer questions if they feel uncomfortable doing so. The purpose of the study was not to delve into deep, personal feelings but instead, it was to shed light on what schools are not doing to stop homophobic bullying.

Moreover, there was no anticipated physical risk as the participants were merely filling out a survey and placing it in a sealed envelope. Possible psychological or emotional risk involved answering questions on the survey which may be personal in nature and participants may recall memories which may cause some discomfort. However, the researcher did not foresee this potential discomfort to cause significant distress. Survey questions were presented in the past tense and the questions asked were regarding past experiences of homophobic bullying and did not address any current experiences participants may have with bullying. Additionally, the majority of questions was closed-ended and did not ask for explanatory responses. The open-ended questions

asked mostly about suggestions from participants regarding what they would like to see change in schools for queer youth.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

This study examined the issue of homophobic bullying in public high schools and the effectiveness of schools in providing a safe space for their queer students. Questionnaires designed by the researcher (see Appendix B) were distributed to 30 members of a queer youth group at the Sacramento Gay and Lesbian Center. Twenty questionnaires were completed and returned to the researcher. Using a snowball sampling technique, an additional four questionnaires were completed and returned from friends of participants at the Gay and Lesbian Center. Therefore, a total of 24 (80% of the expected sample number) were used in the research. The data is presented and analyzed within five primary categories: participant demographics, school environment, past experiences with homophobic bullying, impact of bullying on the individual, and participant's recommendations for high schools.

Demographics

The first questions presented to participants on the questionnaire asked about demographic information in order to learn how each participant self-identifies. The age range of participants was 19 to 22 years old with 50% of participants being 22 years old. All participants were high school graduates and because questions inquire only about past high school experiences, each participant noted that their most recent level of education was 12th grade. Additionally, all participants self-identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer (See Table 1). The majority of participants identified as

gay (50%). No other demographic information was presented as there was no other relevant data needed for this study.

Table 1

Demographics: Sexual Orientation

Self-Identification	Frequency	Percent
Gay	12	50.0%
Lesbian	5	20.8%
Queer	4	16.7%
Bisexual	2	8.3%
Transgender	1	4.2%

School Environment

After providing basic demographic information, participants answered questions regarding how effective they felt their high schools were at providing a safe space for queer students. Two questions inquired about anti-bullying policies in place at participant's high schools and policies which specifically included homophobic bullying and/or sexual orientation and gender expression. The majority of participants (54.2%, n=13) recalled that their high schools did have anti-bullying policies in place. However, most participants (62.5%, n=15) were either unaware or could not recall if their high schools had anti-bullying policies in place which explicitly included homophobic bullying. Only two participants (8.3%) reported that their schools had anti-bullying policies which specifically incorporated homophobic bullying and seven individuals

(29.2%) noted that they were confident that their high schools did not have policies which included homophobic bullying. This information coincides with national data from GLSEN (2009) which indicated that 58 percent of the 6,209 LGBTQ students surveyed reported that their schools had anti-bullying policies in place, but only 26 percent noted that their schools had a policy which specifically included protections for students who are harassed due to their sexual orientation or gender expression.

Participants in this study provided their perceptions regarding attitudes of their high school teachers, other school staff, and peers (not including participant's friends) towards homosexuality. It was reported that most participants ranked their teachers' attitudes as predominantly "neutral" towards homosexuality (58.3%, n=14) followed by six participants who described their teacher's attitudes towards homosexuality as "positive" (25%). Similarly, 13 participants reported that the attitudes of other school staff towards homosexuality were "neutral" (54.2%). However, an additional nine participants noted that other school staff had a negative attitude towards homosexuality (37.5%). Therefore, it can be concluded that participants felt that their teachers were more accepting of homosexuality than other school staff members. The perceptions of participants regarding how their peers viewed homosexuality varied and there was not a clear majority. Nine participants described their peers' attitudes as "neutral" (37.5%) and seven individuals reported their peers' attitudes as "negative" (29.2%). The smallest numbers included five participants who ranked their peers' attitudes as "positive" (20.8%) and three individuals who described their peers' attitudes towards homosexuality as "very negative" (12.5%). In all, "other school staff" was the category

which might require further research and exploration as participants felt that other school staff members were the least accepting of homosexuality out of the three presented categories.

The final questions directly asked participants about how effective they felt their high schools were in protecting their queer students and reinforcing safety for all students. Participants were asked if their high schools held assemblies or classroom discussions where bullying, specifically homophobic bullying, was discussed. The vast majority (83.3%, n=20) of these former students reported that their high schools did not hold assemblies nor were there classroom discussions where homophobic bullying was addressed. This number signified that homophobic bullying was not discussed in either setting, but does not necessarily indicate that bullying, in general, was not addressed. Next, participants were asked if they believed that what their high schools did to stop bullying was working. Exactly half of the participants reported that they felt that their schools failed at their efforts to stop bullying acts. The remaining participants noted that they felt that their high schools were “sort of” successful in their efforts (33.3%, n=8) and only four participants (16.7%, n=4) felt that their high schools were effective in stopping bullying. Based on the responses by these participants, the research and results match the researcher’s hypothesis that schools are not adequately addressing homophobic bullying and providing a safe space for queer students.

Past Experiences with Homophobic Bullying

The next set of questions asked participants to provide information describing their past experiences with homophobic bullying in high school. Each participant

received information written on the consent form (see Appendix A) describing homophobic bullying as acts that can involve verbal abuse and intimidation using homophobic language or physical aggression accompanied with homophobic language. Homophobic language does not have to be used in an abusive fashion; often it will be used casually or jokingly (i.e. “that’s so gay,” or “you’re so gay”) but can still be hurtful.

Participants first indicated whether or not they have ever witnessed acts of homophobic bullying at their high schools. Nearly all of the participants (87.5%, n=21) noted that they have witnessed others enduring acts of homophobic bullying. When asked about their own experiences with homophobic bullying, close to half of the participants reported that they told no one about their victimization (See Table 2). It may be an area for future focus that most participants did not tell anyone when they suffered acts of homophobic bullying. Additionally, no participants indicated that they told a parent or guardian about the bullying. This may serve as a significant discovery for future research. It is possible that they were not “out” to their parents/family members and therefore, were unable to disclose their experiences of homophobic bullying. One participant noted that her parents were not supportive of her sexual orientation and blamed the bullying on the participant. Therefore, she learned not to inform her parents when she continued to experience harassment. Those participants who did inform someone when they were bullied indicated what the identified helper did that was useful or not useful. Most participants explained that their helper was an empathetic listener, comforter, and provided advice such as, “There are many narrow-minded individuals out there and you have to ignore them and refuse their ignorance.”

Other helpers listened to the victim's stories, but were unable to empathize or understand the pain that their peers experienced. They often suggested that the victims inform school administration about their struggles. However, one participant stated, "I went to the office to speak with the school staff. They told me I was bringing the bullying upon myself."

Similarly, when asked if participants have ever reported incidents of homophobic bullying to a teacher or staff member, the vast majority of these former students (79.2%, n=19) indicated that they did not report their experiences to school personnel. Of the five participants who did report their experiences to school personnel, two participants indicated that after reporting the incidents, something was done, but it did not stop the bullying. One participant noted that something was done, but it made the bullying worse, another participant reported that nothing was done and the bullying carried on, and one individual explained that staff did something and the bullying discontinued. This closely resembles a national study GLSEN (2009) performed where 65 percent of students who experienced homophobic bullying did not report these acts to school staff. It was explained that of those who did report bullying acts to staff members, only 37 percent of these students felt that the staff's interventions were effective. Therefore, the conclusion may be drawn that students choose not to seek help/report incidents of homophobic bullying to staff because they assume that nothing will be done in response and their efforts would be futile. Additionally, students may choose not to report when they are victimized for fear that they will be "outed" or may fear retaliation.

Table 2

Who Did You Turn to For Help?

Identified Person	Frequency	Percent
No one	11	45.8%
A friend	7	29.2%
A teacher	5	20.8%
Other –relative	1	4.2%
An older peer	0	0.0%
A parent or guardian	0	0.0%
A sibling	0	0.0%

There are numerous ways in which students experience acts of homophobic bullying. Participants in this study indicated one or more form of harassment they endured in high school. When ranking the various types of bullying behaviors participants experienced, the most common form of bullying was name-calling, followed by peer exclusion, being teased about the way he/she looked, and having nasty rumors spread about the individual. A small number (three) of students included “being punched or pushed” as a form of homophobic bullying they experienced (See Figure 1). In another study, 40 percent of LGBTQ students reported incidents of physical harassment, whereas approximately 80 percent acknowledged being targets of name-calling and other forms of verbal harassment (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2008). This

is important information as many schools have zero tolerance policies implemented for violent behaviors (Jacobsen & Bauman, 2007), placing attention on direct/physical bullying. However, the large majority of victims indicated that they experienced indirect acts of bullying (i.e. name-calling, peer exclusion, etc.).

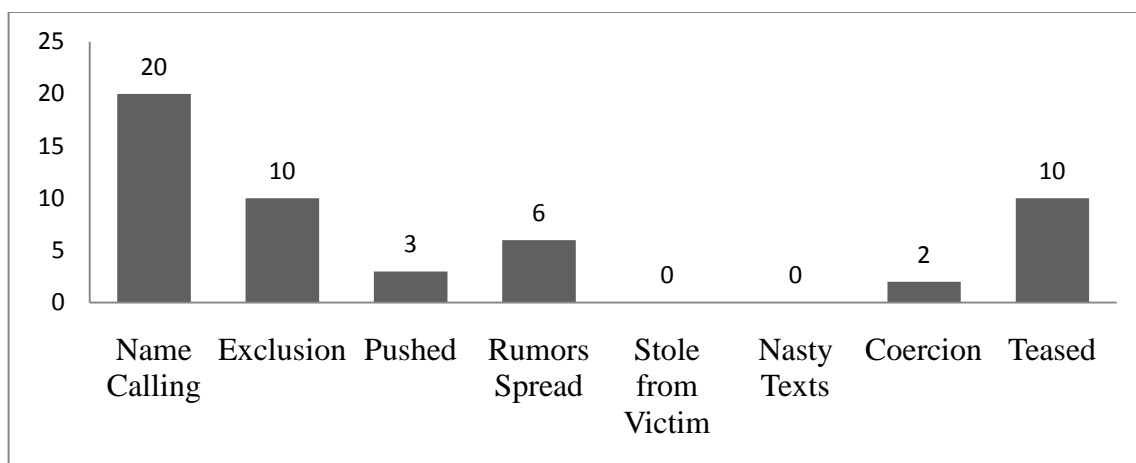


Figure 1. Type of bullying experienced. This figure illustrates the various forms of bullying acts experienced by participants.

Participants in this study noted where they experienced bullying and how often they felt victimized at school. It was found that participants reported being bullied most often in the classroom and in the hallways at school. Indirect bullying often goes unnoticed in the classroom as teachers are unaware when notes are passed or when offensive conversations are occurring or might not consider some indirect forms of harassment as “bullying.” Yet, 45.8 percent (n=11) of the participants in this study noted that they were the victims of homophobic bullying in the classroom. It is often typical that school hallways are filled with large numbers of students, especially during the transition time between classes. In addition, it is often true that there is little to no supervision by school personnel in the hallways. This might attribute to why eleven

participants from this study experienced harassment in the hallways. In addition to the classrooms and hallways, participants also noted being bullied in the cafeteria, on the way to or on the way home from school, and on the field/quad area. Although there was no numerical criterion (i.e. once a week, etc.) presented for how often participants experienced homophobic bullying, participants indicated approximately how often they experienced acts of homophobic harassment. The responses were scattered and varied greatly which may indicate that it would have been helpful to present numerical options for participants to note if they were victims of bullying once a month or three times a week, etc. The most notable responses were that seven participants felt that they were “occasionally” bullied, six noted that they were “rarely” bullied, and five reported experiencing bullying “very often.”

In order to cope and deal with being bullied, participants reported what they did in response to being harassed. Additionally, they described how emotionally and physically safe they felt at their high schools. In response to being bullied, 66.7 percent (n=16) of the sample chose to ignore the bully, 33.3 percent (n=8) stuck up for themselves without fighting, and 20.8 percent (n=5) chose to stay away from school. Only three students stated that in response to being bullied, they chose to engage in a physical fight with the bully. Based on these results, victims of bullies will rarely engage in confrontation and will instead, ignore or make themselves less visible. The literature confirms what these participants indicated, that students often attempt to make themselves invisible by concealing their sexual orientation, skipping class, or skipping school in response to being bullied (Frost & Bastone, 2007). However, it would not be

surprising if students who are bullied decided to fight back or become aggressors themselves. When this does occur and students become bully-victims, they are placed in a high-risk category as bully-victims typically suffer the most severe psychosocial consequences (Unnever & Cornell, 2003). Additionally, participants described if they felt emotionally and physically safe in school and if they did not feel safe, they explained why. According to a national study, 61 percent of LGBTQ students felt unsafe in their high schools (Russell, Clarke, & Laub, 2009). In this study, 13 students (54.2% of the sample) indicated that they felt unsafe at their high schools. This number was aligned with the national study, demonstrating that the majority of queer students are not provided a safe place at school. Half of the participants who noted that they felt unsafe at school explained that they were the only “out” LGBTQ student at their school (in small towns) that they knew of, felt targeted, and out of place. Others reported that anti-gay language was accepted and commonly used by students and sometimes by school staff which made the participants feel unsafe and felt the need to hide. This study and the research clearly demonstrates that the majority of queer students do not feel emotionally safe at school. They might not be subjected to much physical harassment, but verbal and other forms of indirect homophobic bullying occur regularly causing students to feel emotionally unsafe.

Impact of Bullying on the Individual

Each participant was provided with space to note how the homophobic bullying experienced affected each person as an individual. Responses were similar to the literature’s findings regarding the consequences and outcomes of victims who have been

bullied. The literature found that the majority of harassed queer students report depressive symptoms and suicide ideation and at times, make suicide attempts (Almeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar, & Azrael, 2009). Almost all of the participants in this study noted that due to the harassment endured, they become self-conscious, depressed, and developed negative concepts of self. One participant explained the impact the bullying had on him as an individual and stated, “It made me afraid to vocalize to others that I was gay, I had low self-esteem, and contemplated suicide.” In addition to a developed negative self-concept, victimized students often turn to alternative ways to escape the pain by using substances or dropping out of school. As one participant noted, “It made me question myself, the name-calling really upset me and motivated me to do things I’m not proud of in an attempt to escape.” About half of the participants also included that although they would never wish their experience upon anyone else, it eventually made them stronger as individuals and they now utilize their past experiences to help others and learned how to advocate for themselves.

Participant’s Recommendations for High Schools

Participants in this study presented recommendations for schools to address homophobic bullying and provide safer spaces for queer youth. The most prominent recommendation was for schools to provide education about homophobic bullying in the classroom, include LGBTQ topics in the curriculum, and provide trainings for school personnel. One participant hoped that high schools would “Teach homosexuality as normal, teach our history, give students confidence and show them they have a place in the world.” Twelve participants explained that it is important for teachers to have

classroom discussions about homosexuality and to teach students about significant LGBTQ figures in the United States' history. This finding is consistent with a California study which indicated that when students reported learning about LGBTQ issues in the classroom, they felt safer in school, heard fewer rumors spread about them, and experienced less bullying (Russell, Kostroski, McGuire, Laub, & Manke, 2006). Two participants included that it is important that homophobic bullying is discussed in a classroom setting, not just to the individual who bullies.

Of the 24 participants, 15 of them noted that teachers and school staff play a crucial role in stopping homophobic bullying at schools. One participant stated, "All staff members should follow anti-bullying policies involving sexual minorities regardless of their own beliefs and follow through with consequences in order for all students to feel safe." Although it is not common (but sometimes does occur) that teachers and school personnel will participate in using anti-gay language, educators will often, unconsciously, create a heterosexist atmosphere at school (Sweet & DesRoches, 2007). Thereby, participants found it vital for school personnel to receive trainings regarding sexual minorities, homophobic bullying, and gender expression. One participant noted, "If staff members have personal issues with homosexuality, they need to leave that at the door and be constantly reminded that they are role models. School staff should speak out to students reminding them they are safe at school and any act of bullying will not be tolerated. And if a teacher cannot provide safety, there should be a 'safe place' for students to go to"

Lastly, the majority of participants indicated that homophobic bullying in schools is a direct result of the larger culture's negative portrayal of homosexuality. As one participant explained, "I think it's bigger than schools. We need a cultural make-over." Specific recommendations included making macro change by creating and enforcing anti-bullying policies which explicitly includes sexual orientation and gender expression. Even more, six participants noted the need for change in the media and in federal legislation (i.e. same-sex marriage laws, etc.). A few participants also noted that they feel that nothing will change for queer students if the larger culture continues to rank LGBTQ individuals as second-class citizens. One individual summed up the general consensus from participants succinctly, "Teachers, support and encourage activism and self-expression/exploration and be vigilant about stopping discrimination. Make it an unwelcoming atmosphere for bullies and educate your students about homosexuality so it is normalized."

The prominent findings in this study acknowledges the role schools and school personnel play in stopping bullying based on a student's real or perceived sexual orientation. Although many participants noted that their high schools had existing anti-bullying policies in place, only 8.3 percent (n=2) of these participants reported that those policies included homophobic bullying. The majority (83.3%, n=20) of students reported that their high schools did not hold assemblies or classroom discussions where homophobic bullying was addressed. Additionally, it was found that participants felt that school staff members held a negative attitude towards homosexuality more than teachers and other peers. Even more, the majority (79.2%, n=19) of participants

indicated that they did not report their bullying experiences to anyone. Finally, half of the participants felt that their schools failed at their efforts to stop homophobic bullying.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The review of literature demonstrated that high school youth with a real or perceived LGBTQ sexual orientation experience more acts of bullying than their heterosexual peers. One study indicated that 90 percent of LGBTQ teenagers reported experiencing verbal or physical harassment during the past year compared to 62 percent of non-LGBTQ adolescents (Harris Interactive, 2005). Additionally, queer students were found to be three times as likely as non-LGBTQ students to feel unsafe at school (Johnson, 2007). The primary objective of this study was to emphasize the importance of recognizing the queer youth population in schools and placing some accountability on school personnel and policy-makers in order to keep this population safe. This study found that schools and school personnel are not adequately making efforts to stop homophobic bullying in high schools and therefore, the majority of queer students feel unsafe in their school environments. These findings coincide with the literature review signifying that the problem of homophobic bullying can be generalized to the United States and is not solely centralized in Sacramento. This final chapter discusses the limitations of this study, conclusions drawn from the research and from survey participants, and recommendations for future research and for further development of this topic.

Limitations

This research is limited in sample size and scope (each participant was a member of LGBTQ youth groups). The research conducted in this study utilized convenience and snowball samples of youth who identify as LGBTQ. Therefore, those who are questioning their sexual orientation, those who are not “out” as LGBTQ, and those who do not follow traditional gender expression norms who might experience homophobic bullying were not accounted for. More research is necessary to understand youth who are questioning their sexual orientation as they might not be able to rely on social support as they do not fit into one group. Those who might expand on this research may benefit from using a normative sample to demonstrate a more accurate view of all students, not only those who identify themselves as LGBTQ. Since it is difficult to obtain approval to conduct a study with current high school students at school, this research is based on past experiences of LGBTQ youth who are over 18 years of age. However, for an accurate view of the homophobic bullying episodes occurring in high schools and what schools are doing to address this issue, research should be done in schools with school personnel and with current students.

Additional studies might involve both students’ school experiences and students’ home experiences to demonstrate how adults in their life, the media, and family members influence their behaviors and experiences at school with bullying. The media often plays a significant role in the lives of young people. Therefore, it would be beneficial for researchers to expand the research on the media’s portrayal of LGBTQ characters and how youth internalize these norms and play them out at school. Other

areas of focus for future research might focus on gender norms and hegemonic masculinity and how it shapes homophobic and heterosexist ideologies in young people. Although it is common to locate literature centralizing on homophobic individuals, it may also be valuable to study the role of straight allies (heterosexual individuals with positive attitudes toward LGBTQ persons). This may be significant as heterosexual individuals have privilege in society and straight allies may be able to influence policy and curricula change in schools. Participants in this study were not asked about their race, ethnicity or gender identity. Future studies might include these additional categories to examine multiple oppressions an individual may face (racism, sexism, heterosexism, etc.). It may be beneficial to expand this study by sampling LGBTQ individuals who are a generation older and compare their past high school experiences of homophobic bullying with current youth in order to note any progress that has been made over the last decade.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This thesis found that some former students were not as receptive as anticipated to describe their experiences with homophobic bullying. Some participants chose not to provide details regarding their recommendations for what they believe high schools can do to provide a safer space for queer students. However, the hypothesis that high schools are not fully addressing the issue of homophobic bullying and are failing to provide a safe environment for all students was found to be fairly conclusive. It is possible that participants were reluctant to reveal personal experiences with bullying and were not answering questions in detail due to the setting where the surveys were

distributed. The researcher passed out surveys at the start of a youth group meeting at the Gay and Lesbian Center in Sacramento. At this session, group participants were anxious to socialize and to begin the group's meeting. Therefore, participants might not have been fully motivated to provide detailed answers in the researcher's survey due to a need to engage with peers. Similarly, participants completed their surveys around their peers and might have left out information due to fear, shame, or embarrassment from peers. In addition, participants were youth who were reporting on their past experiences of homophobic bullying and since they have had time away from these experiences, this might have distanced themselves from their negative experiences.

By placing attention on the discrimination and harassment queer youth face, we can develop policies, curricula, and practices that emphasize acceptance, appreciation of diversity, and awareness about LGBTQ issues rather than punishment for individual acts of bullying. As explained by the research participants in this study, there is a clear need for teachers to educate their students in the classroom about homophobic bullying and other LGBTQ issues. Often times, students who lack knowledge about homosexuality react with fear of the unknown when presented with an open or perceived LGBTQ student. By their very presence, queer students challenge gender norms and heteronormativity, which is often threatening to other students, and often times, to teachers and school staff members. Therefore, providing all-inclusive sexual education courses and discussions would expose accurate information about all forms of sexuality, reducing the fear that often surrounds homosexuality.

School curricula must include courses that study all forms of gender and sexuality. A curriculum which fails to acknowledge the diversity of students continues the heterosexual dominance and automatically places those students who do not follow traditional norms in an ostracized category. Excluding homosexuality from the sexuality curriculum leads to the harassment of queer students and removes responsibility from heterosexual oppressors as it reinforces the norm. Similarly, textbook industries should be informed to include the accomplishments, contributions, and roles of LGBTQ individuals in history textbooks.

Protecting queer youth in schools must equate to making changes at the macro level by implementing policies which directly or indirectly exclude sexual minorities. It is vital to use policies and legislation as tools for cultural change, instead of combating isolated incidents of bullying. Schools must establish clear policies which address the use of homophobic epithets and heterosexist language by students and by school personnel. It is significant to note that only a few (8.3%) participants in this study reported that their high schools had a comprehensive policy which included homophobic bullying or homophobic epithets. All schools should implement safe school policies providing safety measures for all students, which implicitly includes protection for queer students by addressing sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. In order to protect transgender students, it is significant to include “gender identity” and “gender expression” to protect the rights of this population and to raise awareness about transgender issues. A first step of changing the language in policies might be what leads to active changes such as creating unisex bathrooms for transgender students.

As one participant in this study explained, “All schools should incorporate a safe place for its queer students.” There are numerous GSA’s (Gay-Straight Alliance) housed at campuses around California, but not at all high schools. One participant in this study noted that his teacher demonstrated that her classroom is a safe space for all students by placing a rainbow flag on her desk. This small gesture may seem insignificant to some, but may be the symbol which allows a student to feel safe to “come out” to that teacher, or may be what stops a student from using homophobic language in that classroom. Stopping homophobic or biased-based language in classrooms may be addressed by teachers simply intervening each time they hear a slur and use the opportunity to provide education and remind students of school policies.

In order to assist teachers and school staff members in enforcing anti-bullying policies, resources, information, trainings, and support from administration must be provided. As participants indicated, mandatory trainings and education for school personnel is necessary to ensure that teachers and other staff members are aware of queer issues, risks of queer students, and to make certain that they have a clear understanding of what homophobic bullying looks and sounds like. This study demonstrated that of the presented categories (teachers, other school staff, and peers), queer students felt that “other school staff” was the group that had a predominately negative attitude towards homosexuality. This indicates that it is necessary to include school staff (i.e. teacher aides, yard duty, cafeteria monitors, etc.) in all trainings where cultural competence and diversity and queer issues are discussed. This researcher

recommends the implementation of a new policy which would mandate all high schools to provide trainings for all school personnel to educate staff about queer issues.

Lastly, efforts must be made to combat the social stigma attached to identifying as LGBTQ and attention must be paid to assisting those who have been victims of bullying. Many queer youth are unable to “come out” to their family members or if they do, they are often not accepted, forced out of their homes, and disowned by their guardians. Therefore, providing free and/or low cost counseling services for queer youth who might not be “out” to their family or who do not have support from family, would be beneficial and would likely play a part in preventing queer youth suicides.

Summary

Although there is no simple solution to solve the problem of homophobic bullying in schools and heterosexism in the larger society, there are measures that social workers and other LGBTQ allies can take to reduce the impacts of homophobia and create safer spaces for queer youth. Homophobic bullying must be taken as a serious societal issue. As history has demonstrated, there have been improvements made in the fight to challenge social injustices. Social workers have a responsibility to advocate on the behalf of sexual minority (and other oppressed or marginalized) individuals and groups. We have the radical potential to make significant reforms if we secure ourselves with our code of ethics and focus on individual, community, federal, and ideological reform. I believe that in the future, social workers will play a major role in dismantling the demeaning stigmas of LGBTQ individuals and will make lasting change. With our help, queer youth can have a chance to live in a safe place where their peers and other

adults do not ostracize them, where they feel safe from bullying, and where they have allies fighting for and with them. It is my hope that when schools, and other societal institutions join in the fight to stop homophobic bullying and take a stand to create a safe space for LGBTQ, and all students to learn, change will occur. As one queer youth participant stated, “It’s time for a cultural make-over.”

APPENDIX A

Consent Form

What Can Schools Do To Stop Homophobic Bullying?

Homophobic bullying can involve verbal abuse and intimidation using homophobic language or physical aggression accompanied with homophobic language. Homophobic language does not have to be used in an abusive fashion; often it will be used casually or jokingly (i.e. “that’s so gay,” or “you’re so gay”) but can still be hurtful.

Purpose of Study:

The purpose of the study is to analyze what schools in Sacramento are doing or what they are not doing to stop/prevent homophobic bullying. The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information from 30 individuals who have experienced forms of homophobic bullying during their past high school years. Voluntary participants will be 18-22 year olds who are involved in programs at the Gay and Lesbian Center in Sacramento and other individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Participants will fill out a 5 minute, confidential survey.

Benefits:

By participating in this study, you will assist this researcher in raising awareness about the need for schools to make greater efforts at stopping and preventing homophobic bullying in order to provide a safer space for LGBTQ youth. The results of the study will be given to school boards and administrators. There will be no monetary compensation for participation in this study.

Confidentiality, Right to Withdraw:

Your answers and comments will remain completely confidential. Aside from your name and signature on this page, please do not write your name anywhere on the questionnaire to ensure your confidentiality. All information provided will remain confidential and the researcher will protect each participant by using information provided solely to benefit the research. As a voluntary participant, you have every right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

Risks/Discomforts:

Some questions are personal and involve sensitive issues regarding past experiences of homophobic bullying. You may skip any questions that cause discomfort. If needed, the Gay and Lesbian Center at 1927 L Street in Sacramento, (916) 442-0185 provides counseling services. If you require immediate assistance, you can also contact the Sacramento County’s Crisis Hotline at (916) 732-3637, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Consent to participate:

I have read this consent form and understand my rights as a participant in this research project. I consent and am willing to participate in this study and I have been informed of the purpose, benefits, and risks of participating in this study. If I should have any questions or additional comments, I may contact the social work researcher, Sabrina Fong, MSW II, at (916) 947-3981 or at sabrinasing82@yahoo.com. I may also contact this researcher's thesis advisor, David Nylund, PhD, LCSW, at (916) 743-7281 or at nknylund@csus.edu.

Printed name of participant

Signature of participant

Date

If you are interested in receiving the results of this study, please provide an email address or phone number below and the researcher will contact you once the study is completed.

_____ **E-mail Address or Phone Number**
 (optional)

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire

What Can Schools Do To Stop Homophobic Bullying?

Instructions: Please answer each question to the best of your ability. Your answers will remain completely confidential. Please do not write your name anywhere on this questionnaire. Your answers will help this researcher in stopping homophobic bullying in schools. You may add to or elaborate on any question and make additional comments if needed.

A Bit About You

1. Please state your age

2. Most recent level of education (i.e. 12th grade)

3. How do you self-identify? (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Heterosexual)

A Bit about the Last School You Attended

4. Did your school have anti-bullying policies in place?

- Yes
- No
- Unknown

5. Did your school have a system for recording reported incidents of homophobic bullying?

- Yes
- No
- Unknown

6. How would you describe the attitudes of your teachers towards homosexuality at the last school you attended?

- Very negative
- Negative
- Neutral
- Positive

Very positive
What about the attitudes of other school staff towards homosexuality?

- Very negative
 Negative
 Neutral
 Positive
 Very positive

What about the attitudes of your peers, not including your friends, towards homosexuality?

- Very negative
 Negative
 Neutral
 Positive
 Very positive

7. Did your school ever have assemblies or classroom discussions where bullying, specifically homophobic bullying, was discussed?

- Yes
 No
 Don't Remember

8. Do you think what your last attended school did to stop bullying was working?

- Yes
 Sort of
 No

Your Past Experiences with Homophobic Bullying

9. Have you ever witnessed incidents of homophobic bullying?

- Yes
 No

10. Overall, did you feel physically and emotionally safe at the last school you attended?

- Yes
 No

If no, please explain why.

11. If you have ever been a victim of homophobic bullying at the last school you attended, who did you tell?

- No one
 A friend
 An older peer
 A parent or guardian
 A sibling

- A teacher
- Other _____

12. If you have been bullied and you told someone, what did he/she do that was helpful?

What would you have liked them to do differently, if anything?

13. Have you ever reported your experiences of homophobic bullying to a teacher or staff member at school?

- Yes
- No

If yes, what did the staff person do in response?

- Something was done to stop the bullying
- Something was done, but it did not stop the bullying
- Something was done, but it made the bullying worse
- Nothing was done, but the bullying stopped anyway
- Nothing was done and the bullying carried on

14. What kind of homophobic bullying did you experience?

(you can mark more than one box)

- Called names
- Left out or excluded by peers
- Punched or pushed
- Nasty rumors spread about me
- Told to give up money or other belongings
- Were sent nasty texts or internet messages
- Forced to do something I did not want to do
- Teased about the way I looked
- Other _____

15. How often did you experience a form of homophobic bullying?

- Almost all of the time
- Very Often
- Often
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Almost Never

16. Where did the bullying happen?

(you can mark more than one box)

- In the classroom
- In the cafeteria
- On the way to or on the way home from school
- In the hallways
- On the playground/Field

Other _____

17. What did you do about being bullied?

(you can mark more than one box)

- Fought back
- Stuck up for myself without fighting
- Ignored bully
- I tried to stay away from known bullies
- I stayed away from school
- I dealt with it on my own
- I made new friends
- I did nothing
- Other _____

18. How did the bullying you experienced affect you as an individual?

19. What do you think schools can do to prevent or stop homophobic bullying?

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire and helping to put a
stop to homophobic bullying in schools!**

**(Please place this questionnaire in the manila envelope provided and place it in the
questionnaire box at the back door)**

APPENDIX C

Authorization Letter



1927 L Street
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11/03/09

Gail Mancarti
Board President

Connie Axelrod, M.S.W.
Board Vice-President

Ken Cook
Board Secretary

William "Bill" Otton, EdD.
Interim Executive Director

Stacey Powell
Chief Financial Officer

Bill Snyder
Business Officer

Luis E. Gomez
Center Manager

Jean Adams
Membership Coordinator

Josh Jacoby
Pride Chairman 2010

Janet A. Seaman, Ph.D.
Grants Program Coordinator

I, William Otton, authorize Sabrina Fong, MSWII Student, to utilize the Sacramento Gay and Lesbian Center's youth group members to participate in her study. We are happy to support Sabrina Fong in her thesis study. We look forward to applying her study findings to improve service delivery for LGBT youth in Sacramento.

If there is any question please contact me at 916-442-0185

William Otton
Interim Executive Director
P (916) 442-0185
F (916) 325-1840

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