

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

CALIFORNIA GAY STRAIGHT ALLIANCE ADVISORS' PERCEPTIONS OF
SCHOOL CLIMATE TOWARDS LGBTQQ YOUTH

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By

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all the people who have stood by my side, aided me, and believed in me throughout this journey. It is dedicated to all the sexual and gender minority youth who have struggled, and those who continue to struggle, for a voice and a place. It is dedicated to all the support providers whose contributions, no matter how small, impact the lives of our youth. Remember that, while acts of kindness may go unmentioned, they do not go unnoticed, unappreciated, or unneeded. This thesis is dedicated to my dad, who was my loudest supporter, who lived vicariously through my accomplishments, and who, I know, continues to cheer me on from heaven. And to my mom; without you, I would not have the inner strength and determination which defines and drives me. You are my best friend and my number one confidant. For sake of sounding trite, thank you for being my mom; you are my northern star. And to Brad; you are an eternal treasure. Because of you, I am wealthy beyond comparison.

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ABSTRACT

CALIFORNIA GAY STRAIGHT ALLIANCE ADVISORS' PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL CLIMATE TOWARDS LGBTQQ YOUTH

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The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the perceptions that Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) advisors have of their school's climate towards lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQQ) youth within California schools. The current study considered five domain areas believed to contribute to school climate; namely Training, Advocacy, Staff, Students, and Bullying. Each area was rated and a composite score was obtained to determine an overall school climate score. Lack of training appeared to be largest contributing factor in inhibiting perceptions of a positive school climate for LGBTQQ youth. Schools' efforts to successfully advocate for LGBTQQ students were less than ideal, as was the presence of a supportive student body. A supportive staff and absence of bullying were the highest scoring areas; however, when combined with the other three domain areas, the overall score was too low to support the hypothesis that California GSA advisors report that their schools maintain a positive school climate for LGBTQQ youth.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The exact number of sexual and gender minority individuals in the United States (U.S.) is difficult to estimate. Most of the studies that exist currently to answer this question tend to focus on individuals identifying as “gay.” This can be problematic in that the definition of gay may vary from person to person. For some, it means the exclusive emotional and physical attraction to a member of the same sex. For others, it may be dependent on a lifestyle choice, meaning that they do not identify as gay because they choose not to lead an openly gay lifestyle, despite having sexual relations with members of the same sex. Denial and prejudice may also hinder accurate results, as people may be less likely to admit a homosexual orientation for fear of negative repercussions (Drescher, 2004). Finally, those who may tend towards a more fluid, dichotomous, or non-conforming sexual orientation or gender expression, such as bisexuals, transgender individuals, or those who only occasionally engage in same-sex acts, may not identify as gay on a survey. As a result, statistics pertaining to the percent of people identifying as “gay” range from as less than one percent of the population to as much as ten percent, with considerable variation between these two figures (Huffington Post, 2011).

What is known about sexual and gender minorities is that they represent a significant portion of the incidences of abuse, victimization, and homelessness in the U.S. and that these youth face alarming rates of bullying and discrimination within their schools. Gay, lesbian, or bisexual youth face greater rates of parental rejection and abuse as do their heterosexual counterparts and, as a result, make up as much as twenty percent

of homeless youth surveyed in metropolitan areas (Whitbeck, Chen, Hoyt, Tyler, & Johnson, 2004). At school, sexual and gender minority youth face significantly greater rates of verbal and physical harassment, academic failure, and psychological trauma than do their heterosexual counterparts (Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, & Bartkiewicz, 2010).

In response to sexual and gender based victimization, several federal court cases have been tried, which have established precedence for the protection of sexual and gender minorities' civil rights (Russo, 2006). In addition, California has implemented several assembly bills, such as the Safe Place to Learn Act, and Student Civil Rights Act, designed to prevent discrimination and provide a voice to these youth within California schools (Project Outlet, n.d.).

Statement of the Problem

The last few decades have shown a dramatic increase in legal victories and federal and state laws protecting sexual and gender minority individuals within the schools. These include *Nabozny v. Podlesny*, *Wagner v. Fayetteville Public Schools*, *Walker et. al. v. Merrimack School District*, an amendment to the Office of Civil Rights' Title XI guide for schools, the federal Personal Responsibility Education Program, California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000 and California's Safe Place to Learn Act (Equality California, nd ; Russo, 2006).

Despite these victories laws and policies are minimally or inconsistently applied, resources are limited, and social and community support is not always present. The most common causes of hesitancy of staff to intervene include fear of being perceived as homosexual, lack of desire to stray from structured lesson plans, not knowing how to combat religion-based homophobia, resistance from parents, lack of supportive laws and

policies, the pervasive heterosexism of cultural norms, and a lack of community resources (Watson, Varjas, Meyers, & Graybill, 2010; Mannheim & Alfano, 2010).

As a result, LGBTQQ youth continue to be identified as individuals at risk for bullying, psychological and physical abuse, and academic failure, within the school setting. A national survey of LGBTQQ youth found that 84 percent had been verbally harassed while at school; 40 percent had been pushed, shoved, or otherwise physically harassed; and 19 percent had been beaten, stabbed, or otherwise physically assaulted on school grounds (Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, & Bartkiewicz, 2010). Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students experience higher dropout rates and school failure, leave home more frequently, are victimized more often, use highly addictive substances more frequently, experience higher rates of psychopathology, and had more sexual partners than heterosexual adolescents (Cochran, Stewart, Ginzler, & Cauce, 2002; Walls, Kane, & Wisneski, 2009).

Yet sexual and gender minority students are not the only ones who suffer from sexual orientation or gender expression-based bullying. Any student may fall victim as a result of scapegoating, rumors, and others' perceptions regardless of their actual sexual orientation or manifestations of femininity or masculinity (Roffman, 2000). Homophobic teasing has been shown to result in higher levels of truancy, alcohol and marijuana use, depression and suicidality in all students, regardless of actual orientation (Birkett, Espelage, Koenig, 2009).

Purpose of the Study

This quantitative study is intended to gain an understanding of the perceptions that California-based Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) advisors have of their schools'

climate towards lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQQ) youth. Because GSA advisors work directly with staff and students, including LGBTQQ, and LGBTQQ-supportive, students on a frequent and regular basis, they are in the unique position to provide valuable insight into the LGBTQQ climate of their schools. Data exist that explores student perspectives on school climate for LGBTQQ youth; however, few studies could be located that considered school service providers' perspectives on the matter (GLSEN, 2010). There is a perspective that may aid in shedding light on school and faculty contributions; as well as exploring assets and hindrances to their ability to support and advocate for these youth. In particular, GSA advisors oversee and participate in all GSA student meetings, are frequently the contact person in events of sexual orientation or gender expression (SOGE) based incidences, attend any staff training and meetings, and work directly within the school setting. As such, they are most likely to be aware of their school's climate towards LBTQQ youth.

Hypothesis

This study intends to explore the school climate for LGBTQQ youth within California schools as perceived by the GSA faculty advisor. The hypothesis being explored is as follows: California GSA advisors report that their schools maintain a positive school climate for LGBTQQ youth.

Definition of Terms

GSA (Gay Straight Alliance): a school based, student lead club promoting equality for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender expression (Gay Straight Alliance Network, n.d.).

GSA Advisor: an adult faculty member who volunteers to support and supervise the student-based club (Gay Straight Alliance Network, n.d.).

Heterosexism: an ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any non-heterosexual form of behavior, identity, relationship, or community (Herek, 1990).

LGBTQQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer, and Questioning (Project Outlet, n.d.).

Lesbian: a woman attracted to women (Gender Equality Resource Center, n.d.).

Gay: a man attracted to men (Gender Equality Resource Center, n.d.).

Bisexual: A person who is attracted to two sexes or two genders, but not necessarily simultaneously or equally (Gender Equality Resource Center, n.d.).

Transgender: one whose gender identity differs from the social expectations for the physical sex they were born with (Gender Equality Resource Center, n.d.).

Queer: an umbrella term used by some individuals who does not strictly identify as heterosexual. Or a political statement and sexual orientation which advocates breaking binary thinking and seeing both sexual orientation and gender identity as potentially fluid (Gender Equality Resource Center, n.d.).

Questioning: one who is in the process of questioning one's own sexual orientation or gender expression.

SOGE: Sexual orientation and gender expression

Sexual Orientation: A person's romantic, emotional, or sexual attraction to another person (American Psychiatric Association, 2011).

Gender Expression: one's expression of culturally defined masculinity or femininity such as manner of dress, grooming, mannerisms, speech patterns and social interactions (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2010).

Organization of Thesis

Chapter Two explores the currently body of literature regarding LGBTQQ individuals within the school setting. Chapter Three describes the methodology behind this study, including the research design, participants involved, and procedures used. Chapter Four discusses the results of the study as they relate to the current hypothesis. Chapter Five is a discussion of the study, including limitations and implications for future work. Following that are the References section and several appendices which include a copy of the administered survey and a frequency distribution of survey item responses.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

Sexual and gender minority youth frequently find themselves to be the focus of verbal and physical bullying and discrimination within the school setting despite federal and state implemented protections. This victimization has been linked to increased rates of substance use and abuse, elevated school dropout rates, and elopement from home (Cochran, Stewart, Ginzler, & Cauce, 2002; Whitbeck, Chen, Hoyt, Tyler, & Johnson, 2004). In addition, LGBTQ youth and their advocates face obstacles thwarting their ability to create positive change. This literature review intends to explore the history, laws, and climate, and concerns surrounding LGBTQ youth within the school setting. In addition, it will describe the social factors impacting LGBTQ youth, such as heterosexism and victimization.

Heterosexism and School Policy for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning (LGBTQQ) Individuals

The controversy of sexual minority individuals within the school system has been ongoing for nearly a century. During the first half of the twentieth century the medical community maintained that homosexuality was a mental defect and sexual minority educators were seen as a danger to children by being corrupters and recruiters into a deviant lifestyle (Griffin & Ouellett, 2003). Laws prohibiting homosexual activity among consenting adults were common, as were morality clauses preventing teachers from disclosing, promoting, or in any way supporting homosexuality in or out of the classroom (Griffin & Ouellett, 2003).

During the later half of the twentieth century, the controversy continued as the medical community and professional organizations changed positions on the subject and began publicly supporting the rights of gay and lesbian individuals, rejecting the notion of homosexuality as pathological, and acknowledging the rights of sexual minority teachers' to self-disclosure and self-expression (Griffin & Ouellett, 2003). Pathology has since officially been removed from sexual minority labels with the publication of the seventh printing of the second edition of the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 1973). Currently, sexual identity is understood to exist along a range with completely heterosexual at one end and completely homosexual on the other, with most people falling along some point between those two extremes, thus LGBTQ youth represent natural variations of sexual orientation and gender expression (Just the Facts Coalition, 2008).

In response to this shift of medical perspective, many conservative political and religious groups began lobbying for restrictions on discussions of homosexuality within the classroom or a prohibition of positive representation of sexual minorities within the curriculum (Rienzo, Button, & Wald, 1997; Griffin & Ouellett, 2003). A strong push by conservatives at a federal level led to three federally funded abstinence-only educational programs (Russo, 2006). The 1981 Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA), Section 510 of the Social Security Act of 1996, and the Special Projects of Regional and National Significance (SPRANS) ban sexual orientation and gender expression from being included in the curriculum (Santelli, Ott, Lyon, Rogers, Summers, & Schleifer, 2006). These programs endorse impracticable choices that are out of reach for homosexual

couples who are legally prohibited to marry in most states and go against the majority of parents who favor comprehensive sexuality education for their children (Eisenberg, Bernat, Bearinger, & Resnick, 2008; Santelli, Ott, Lyon, Rogers, Summers, & Schleifer, 2006). There were three other major anti-homosexual campaigns of the last quarter of the twentieth century: actress Anita Bryant's *Save Our Children* campaign led to the rescinding of a Dade County, Florida gay rights ordinance; California's Proposition Six was a 1978 law attempting to fire any school staff member for positively promoting homosexuality, either privately or publicly; and in Oklahoma a law was in place from 1978 through 1985 outlawing homosexual advocacy or physical acts (Rienzo, Button, & Wald, 1997).

While the aforementioned policies focused on LGBTQQ individuals overall, the past three decades have seen a focus on school policies which impact the experiences and well-being of LGBTQQ youth within the school setting. A school's approach to sexual education and the implementation of policies to address a diverse student population impact all students and their ability to achieve academic success and emotional health.

Adolescence represents a time when individuals begin to question their position along the continuum and often experiment sexually as part of the normal developmental process (Just the Facts Coalition, 2008). Polarized policies, such as abstinence-only education greatly isolates LGBTQQ youth by either completely ignoring them or by addressing them only in relation to sexually transmitted diseases. Thus schools are sending the message that LGBTQQ youth are either dangerous, harmful, or completely insignificant (Fisher, 2009). This portrayal leads to greater risk of negative outcomes for these students, academically and socially, as well as considerable feelings of hostility

toward their educational experience years later (Fisher, 2009). Elia and Eliason (2010) describe abstinence-only education as being unethical, uncaring, and undemocratic in their biased and unitary focus and their omission of potentially life-saving information. The failings of abstinence-only education programs led to a health care reform entitled the Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP), which was created in 2010 to provide monies to states that provide comprehensive sex education including an option to address sexual orientation and gender expression within the curriculum (SIECUS, 2010).

To date, organizations and institutions continue to exist that claim to have the ability to “cure” homosexuality through the use of therapy or religious interventions (Just the Facts Coalition, 2008). Recently, there has been a push by conservatives, with considerable funds coming from religious institutions to endorse these rehabilitative services in the school setting; however, endorsement of such conversion therapies may violate the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution by indirectly promoting a religious point of view as well as the fourth amendment by promoting a negative school climate for sexual minority youth, thus denying equal treatment for all (Just the Facts Coalition, 2008).

In response, a partnership of major organizations, including the American Psychological Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, Interfaith Alliance Foundation, American Counseling Association, and American Federation of Teachers, distributed a booklet entitled “Just the Facts About Sexual Orientation and Youth: A Primer for Principals, Educators, and School Personnel” to every public school district in the United States; 14,700 in all. This booklet was designed to provide factual information to school staff and administration about sexual orientation development,

risks associated with attempts to change sexual orientation, environmental stressors for sexual minority youth, and pertinent laws for all school districts to be aware of when considering the promotion of sexual conversion therapy in the curriculum (Just the Facts Coalition, 2008).

Regardless of a school administration's personal views, schools have a legal and moral obligation to provide a positive school climate for all students. This includes acknowledging and accepting individual variations in sexual orientation and gender expression. In providing a positive climate for students, it is important to be aware of the negative effects of heterosexism on LGBTQ students. Cowan, Heiple, Marquez, Khatchadourian, and McNevin (2005) categorize heterosexism into two types; old fashioned or modern. Old fashioned heterosexism takes on the form of blatant prejudice and dislike of sexual minorities (Cowan, Heiple, Marquez, Khatchadourian, & McNevin, 2005). Modern heterosexism is much less obvious and can be seen in an individual's denial that sexual minorities continue to experience discrimination and prejudice, or in their refusal to accept equal rights for sexual minorities, such as on the basis of traditional values (Cowan, Heiple, Marquez, Khatchadourian, & McNevin, 2005). Both forms of heterosexism have been linked with the endorsement of hate crimes committed against sexual minorities and with denial that hate speech is damaging or offensive (Cowan, Heiple, Marquez, Khatchadourian, & McNevin, 2005).

Heterosexism has been shown to significantly contribute to emotional distress and the reduced likelihood of coming out in sexual minority individuals, even when the heterosexist act or comment was not directed at the person (Burn, Kadlec, & Rexer, 2005). This distress, along with a decreased likelihood of coming out is associated with a

lack of perceived social support while high levels of perceived social support are associated with strong ego identity and self-exploration, as well as a lower likelihood of self-concealment among sexual minority youth (Potoczniak, Aldea, & DeBlaere, 2007). Similarly, students who perceive that programs and policies are in place within their schools to protect LGBTQ youth perceive less tolerance of sexual orientation and gender expression-based harassment while greater tolerance of this harassment is associated with increased victimization (Chesir-Teran & Hughes, 2009). Distress over heterosexist encounters, such as having one's sexual orientation unwillingly revealed, or experiencing verbal or physical bullying, is greatest among individuals who are less open about their sexual orientation (Swim, Pearson, & Johnston, 2008). This implies that students who may be in the questioning phase of their sexual exploration and development may experience considerably more distress over daily heterosexist encounters.

During the 1980s and into the turn of the twenty-first century, researchers began to take notice of sexual minority youth as individuals at risk for social, emotional, and medical difficulties while schools were identified as hostile environments for these youth (Griffin & Ouellett, 2003). School policies have a major impact on school climate affecting these students. The way school policies address or ignore, support or undermine, sexual orientation or gender expression by staff and students can have a major impact on the students' sense of well being and inclusion. Heterosexist messages such as school-based anti-homosexual education and the endorsement of conversion therapy may add to already present levels of emotional trauma or discomfort in LGBTQ students. They may fall victims to bullying and harassment by peers and be unwilling to

request help from the school system they feel rejected by, thus increasing the risk for physical, mental and emotional trauma (Just the Facts Coalition, 2008).

LGBTQQ Individuals and the Law

Across the Nation

During the 1990s and into the turn of the twenty-first century, several major legal cases set precedence for LGBTQQ civil rights and school reform. *Walker et al. v. Merrimack School District*, 1996, was a case that challenged a school district's policy to negatively portray homosexuality through school curricula, materials, and counseling services (Russo, 2006). This case set precedence for ensuring that school policies are not negatively biased toward sexual minorities (Russo, 2006). This case was brought about after the Merrimack School District released the edict that only a negative portrayal of homosexuality would be allowed within the school district (Russo, 2006). This policy affected all aspects of school guidelines from curriculum to counseling services, seriously hindering staff's ability to support students equally. The case was dropped after a replacement of school board members resulted in a revocation of this policy (Russo, 2006).

In 1996, the case of *Nabozny v. Podlesny* resulted in a \$900,000 settlement to Jamie Nabozny after enduring nearly five years of bullying and harassment by peers that was completely discounted by school administration (Russo, 2006). During these five years, Nabozny suffered harassment and physical abuse that included being held down while two boys pretended to rape him in front of classmates; as well as another incident where he was tripped into a bathroom urinal and urinated on by peers. When Nabozny reported these incidences to the principal and vice-principal of his school he was laughed

at and ridiculed. On both occasions, administration insisted that the incidences were Nabozny's fault for being "so openly gay" (Russo, 2006; p. 121). This landmark case held school administration accountable for neglecting to address incidences of sexual orientation/gender expression based bullying within the school, setting precedence for future incidences (Russo, 2006).

A similar incident occurred in 1998 in the case of *Wagner v. Fayetteville Public Schools* (Russo, 2006). In this case, William Wagner suffered a broken nose and injuries to the kidney after being physically attacked by a group of students because he was a homosexual. The case resulted in a promise by the school district to include assault based on sexual orientation into the district's sexual harassment policy and to provide student and staff training on the subject (Russo, 2006). In addition to these changes in school policy, this incident led to homosexuality being explicitly included in the Office of Civil Rights' Title IX guide for schools, officially including sexual minorities into civil rights policies for the first time in U.S. history (Russo, 2006).

In 1999, a lawsuit was brought against the Salt Lake City Board of Education for terminating the East High Gay/Straight Alliance club, as well as 45 other non-curricular student clubs, on their school campuses (Russo, 2006). The school district was found to be in violation of the Equal Access Act, which stipulates that any non-curricular student group has the right to be present on any school campuses that receive federal funding (Russo, 2006).

Finally, the 2002 case of *Derek Henkle v. Ross Gregory et al.* resulted in a \$450,000 settlement after an openly gay student, Derek Henkle, was forced to transfer schools twice after being the victim of sexual orientation/gender expression-based

assault. Henkle, who had been in the gifted and talented academic program since the fourth grade, was transferred to a continuation school for difficult students after being harassed by peers who tied a rope around his neck and told him they were going to drag him behind their pick-up truck (Russo, 2006). On another occasion, he was physically assaulted and beat in the face by a student while two police officers looked on and took no action (Russo, 2006). Similar to the Nabozny case, he was blamed for these incidences because of his sexual orientation and gender expression. The school principal told Henkle that he was “acting too much like a fag” and he was again transferred (Russo, 2006; p. 122). Henkle eventually dropped out of high school as a result of his continued victimization and ultimately filed a lawsuit against his school district (Russo, 2006). This case led to changes in school policy across the nation by upholding the U.S. Constitutional right to freedom of expression and the recognition of sexual minorities’ rights to self-disclosure without harassment within the school setting (Russo, 2006).

California Law

Currently, the California Department of Education (CDE) has several laws that address LGBTQ students directly. Assembly Bill (AB) 537, California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000, adds sexual orientation and gender expression to the protected category list in California schools. With the inclusion of AB 537, the California Education Code specifically prohibits harassment or discrimination of students or staff on the basis of “disability, gender, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic that is contained in the definition of hate crimes set forth in Section 422.55 of the Penal Code”-California Education Code 220 (CDE, 2011). The State Superintendent of Public Education initiated a task force which developed a list

of 12 recommendations to best implement AB 537 and Code 220, most of which require funding and resources (CDE, 2011).

In 2008, as a result of poor follow through of AB 537 within the schools, another assembly bill was passed with the intention of guiding school districts toward AB 537 compliance. AB 394, the Safe Place to Learn Act, calls for the CDE to monitor schools' progress of legal steps towards fulfillment of the requirements of AB 537 (Equality California, n.d.). In addition, the CDE is required to have anti-discrimination resources and curricula information available for schools to access online, including handouts that describe school and state responsibilities (Equality California, n.d.).

Senate Bill (SB) 71, California Comprehensive Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS Prevention Education Act, enacted in 2003 was designed to educate students on ways to prevent sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy, as well as promote a positive sexual identity, including positive romantic relationships, healthy body image, and discussion and acceptance of sexual orientation (CDE, 2011). This law allows for abstinence to be discussed as a means of preventing HIV or AIDS but prohibits abstinence-only education within the state of California (CDE, 2011). This state bill is similar in content to the federal PREP reform program of 2010 but preceded it by seven years.

Finally, in 2011, SB 48, the Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Respectful (FAIR) Education Act was passed, mandating that sexual minorities be included in the curriculum in a fair and accurate way; this includes the addition of the LGBT civil rights movement and major contributions of sexual minorities to the social sciences (CDE,

2012; The Bay Area Reporter, 2011; SF Appeal, 2001). At the time of this writing, the bill had not yet taken effect but proponents are optimistic about its implementation.

School Climate for LGBTQ Youth

Despite these major legal victories for LGBTQ students, they continue to be the victims of school-based bullying and discrimination with horrific consequences. One of the most publicized recent events was the murder of Lawrence King on February 12, 2008, which took place in the classroom in front of a large group of students. The fifteen-year-old was shot in the back of the head by a classmate who had reportedly previously harassed King about his sexual orientation and gender expression (Time.com, 2008). September of 2010 was an especially horrific month when three students, independent of one another, committed suicide after years of being bullied and victimized due to their stated or perceived sexual orientation and gender expression. On September 9, fifteen-year-old Billy Lucas hung himself in his barn after being bullied for over a year at school due to his perceived sexual orientation despite his never having come out to peers (Fox59.com, 2010). On September 19, Seth Walsh, 13 years old, attempted suicide by hanging himself from a tree after being the victim of years of bullying and harassment; he died a week later as a result of his injuries (Time.com, 2010). On September 23, Asher Brown, thirteen years old, shot himself with a handgun after enduring over a year of bullying by peers because of his sexual orientation, religion, and fashion (The LGBT Hate Crimes Project, 2010). These, and other, recent tragedies highlight the need for school reform and improved climate for sexual minority youth.

In the process of supporting and advocating for LGBTQ students, school staff need to be aware that these youth face significant strain both inside and outside of the

school setting. LGBTQQ adolescents are often faced with parental rejection and abuse due to their sexual orientation and gender expression (Whitbeck, Chen, Hoyt, Tyler, & Johnson, 2004). One out of three gay and bisexual adolescent males report sexual abuse, compared to one in eight heterosexual adolescent males (Saewyc, Skay, Pettingell, Reis, Bearinger, Resnick, et al., 2006). In turn, these youth run away from home much more frequently than heterosexual youth. While exact numbers of homeless sexual minority youth are hard to pinpoint, one survey found about that twenty percent of homeless youth in metropolitan areas identified gay, lesbian, or bisexual (Whitbeck, Chen, Hoyt, Tyler, & Johnson, 2004). While on the streets, sexual minority adolescents continue to face greater challenges than their heterosexual counterparts with higher rates of survival sex, sexual and physical victimization, substance abuse, and psychopathology (Cochran, Stewart, Ginzler, & Cauce, 2002; Whitbeck, Chen, Hoyt, Tyler, & Johnson, 2004).

Transgendered youth experience a different socio-emotional developmental process than sexual minority youth and present higher risks for suicidality and life-threatening behaviors than lesbian, gay, or bisexual youth due to factors associated with gender identity, weight, higher rates of parental abuse (both psychological and physical), and concern over others' perceptions of their body (Grossman & D'Augelli, 2007). One study on transgendered youth found that 50 percent of the sample had considered suicide while 25 percent had actually attempted it (Grossman & D'Augelli, 2007). Issues such as abuse by a parent, sense of body dysmorphia (i.e., excessively negative body image), and concern over other people's perception of their physical appearance were associated with actual suicide attempts (Grossman & D'Augelli, 2007). With sexual minority youth

facing higher rates of social, emotional, and physical trauma across settings, schools are in a unique position to provide a welcoming and nurturing environment.

Despite LGBTQQ-protective laws and recommended strategies, the school campus is currently no place of solace for many LGBTQQ youth. Since 1999, an extensive annual high school study has been conducted by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) to evaluate the LGBTQQ school climate from the student perspective. In the most recent report, *The 2009 National School Climate Survey* (published in 2010), the results of the survey also include trends from all ten years they have been conducting the survey (Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, & Bartkiewicz, 2010). These results demonstrate the persistence of hostile school climates for LGBTQQ youth despite protective laws. Minority sexual orientation and gender expression statuses were shown to be greater risk factors than religion, gender alone, ethnicity, race, or disability (Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, & Bartkiewicz, 2010). Actual or perceived sexual orientation resulted in 84 percent of respondents being verbally harassed; 40 percent being physically harassed, such as being shoved or pushed; and nearly 19 percent being physically assaulted, such as beaten or stabbed while at school (Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, & Bartkiewicz, 2010). Students were also asked about school-based bullying due to gender expression. Over 63 percent reported being verbally harassed, 27 percent were physically harassed, and 12 percent were physically assaulted due to their actual or perceived gender expression (Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, & Bartkiewicz, 2010). A majority of students, 63 percent, chose not to report the attack because they expected no action to be taken by staff or they feared the report would exacerbate the situation (Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, &

Bartkiewicz, 2010). Of the students that did report the attack, one third stated that no action was taken by the school (Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, & Bartkiewicz, 2010).

This lack of security on school campuses leads to greater frequency of absences, lower academic success, and greater psycho-emotional difficulty. Of the GLSEN 2009 School Climate survey respondents, 29 percent reported missing classes, and 30 percent reported missing an entire school day in the last month due to negative LGBTQQ school climates; this is three and four times higher than the general student population, respectively (Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, & Bartkiewicz, 2010). This fear and discomfort is correlated with lower grade point averages among respondents; 2.7 for sexual orientation and gender expression (SOGE) respondents compared to the general student population average of 3.1 (Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, & Bartkiewicz, 2010). Ten percent of these students reported they did not intend to graduate high school or pursue a higher education compared to 6.6 percent of the general school population (Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, & Bartkiewicz, 2010). These negative results appear to be mollified by the presence of supportive staff members and the implementation of and to LGBTQQ-specific anti-harassment policies (Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, & Bartkiewicz, 2010).

GLSEN's 2007 national climate survey compared middle school climate to high school climate and found that a negative school climate appears to affect middle school students even more drastically than students in high school. These students have much less support from staff and significantly less school-provided resources than high school students. The survey revealed significantly higher SOGE-based derogatory remarks, verbal and physical harassment, and physical assault on middle school campuses, based on participant responses (GLSEN, 2009). For example, in this 2007 survey, 59 percent of

middle school students reported being physically harassed versus 43 percent of high school students and physical assault was reported by 39 percent of middle school respondents compared to 20 percent of high school respondents (GLSEN, 2009). Less than half of these respondents admitted to communicating incidences of harassment or victimization to staff or family members (GLSEN, 2009). As with the 2009 high school survey, among those that did report the incident to school staff, only a third reported any intervention by the staff member (GLSEN, 2009). Fifty percent of middle school students reported missing a full day of school in the last month because of fear to their safety and had GPAs about a half a grade lower than their heterosexual counterparts (GLSEN, 2009). Despite the evidence that supportive staff help mitigate negative school climates, nearly two-thirds of students reported hearing negative SOGE-based remarks made by staff, and only one fifth stated that staff responded to negative SOGE-based remarks by other students (GLSEN, 2009). Middle school students also have far fewer resources than their high school counterparts. For example, only four percent reported having Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) clubs on their campuses, compared to 43 percent of high school respondents (GLSEN, 2009). Middle school respondents also reported half as many SOGE inclusive textbooks, internet, and library resources (GLSEN, 2009).

School administration appears to be aware of the problem but unsure of how to bring about change. A national survey of school principals was conducted as a collaborative effort by GLSEN and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) in order to gain the principal's perspective on school-based bullying and the programs that aim to address it (GLSEN and Harris Interactive, 2008). This study found that principals believed a student's minority SOGE status was likely to result

in feelings of insecurity and decreased safety in school more so than minority religious or racial/ethnic group status; 33 percent versus 64 percent and 76 percent, respectively (GLSEN and Harris Interactive, 2008). Only 33 percent of secondary school principals felt gay, lesbian and bisexual students would feel safe on their campus while 24 percent felt transgendered students would reportedly feel safe (GLSEN and Harris Interactive, 2008). Almost every principal surveyed reported having some type of anti-bullying policy within their school, but only 44% had policies that specifically addressed LGBTQQ students (GLSEN and Harris Interactive, 2008). Well over 90 percent of the sample of secondary school principals reported having heard homophobic or sexist remarks (GLSEN and Harris Interactive, 2008). When incidences of bullying were brought to the attention of the principal, 94 percent spoke with the perpetrator and 90 percent spoke with the victim; however, over one-third believed that they were not made aware of a majority of the bullying incidences within their school (GLSEN and Harris Interactive, 2008). Finally, 69 percent felt that staff development on LGBTQQ anti-bullying and harassment would benefit their schools (GLSEN and Harris Interactive, 2008).

A negative school climate affects all students. One study found that homophobic teasing among middle school students resulted in higher levels of truancy, alcohol and marijuana use, depression, and suicidality in all students, regardless of actual orientation (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009). It was also found that students questioning their sexuality experienced more bullying, homophobic victimization, drug use, and depression, suicidality, and truancy than heterosexual or gay, lesbian, or bisexual (LGB) students (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009). The authors speculated that this increased

tendency towards negative outcomes may be due to a lack of acceptance into either heterosexual or LGB communities, a lack of established social support systems, or perhaps emotional under-development (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009).

Regardless of the reason for such negative outcomes among victimized youth, the fact remains that there is a resounding need for supportive staff and resources to help these students maximize success. Unfortunately, considerable variation exists in the extent and quality of teacher training, compliance, and confidence in addressing sexual or gender based bullying. Four common response patterns among student teachers have been identified in the literature (Zack, Mannheim, & Alfano, 2010). *Integrators* are those teachers who actively incorporate SOGE education into their curriculum with the emphasis on reducing homophobia and harassment (Zack, Mannheim, & Alfano, 2010). *Confronters* are teachers who will take advantage of teachable moments by interrupting a lesson plan when a derogatory comment is made (Zack, Mannheim, & Alfano, 2010). *Avoiders* will shy away from the conflict by either ignoring or pretending to have missed the negative remark (Zack, Mannheim, & Alfano, 2010). It is the *hesitators*, however, who make up the biggest group. These are teachers who acknowledge a need for advocacy and intervention yet feel thwarted by lack of training, skills, or confidence on how to proceed (Zack, Mannheim, & Alfano, 2010). The most common causes of hesitancy discussed by these teachers were fear of being perceived by students as homosexual, lacking the desire to stray from structured lesson plans, and not knowing how to combat religion-based homophobia (Zack, Mannheim, & Alfano, 2010). One respondent shared that SOGE-based discrimination regularly meets religious opposition

making intervention much more difficult than addressing other forms of discrimination, such as racism which lacks a sexual component (Zack, Mannheim, & Alfano, 2010).

Other research has found that, despite staff attempts at addressing SOGE-based bullying, victims are often portrayed as instigators or the intervention does little more than highlight the victim's minority status instead of seeking to elevate their status to one of equality with heterosexual peers. As cases like *Nabozny v. Podlesny* and *Derek Henkle v. Ross Gregory et al.* highlight, school administration is not above internalized heterosexism which often leaves little room for LGBTQQ student advocacy. Staff often views openly gay students as asking for trouble by being too deviant from traditional behavioral norms (Anagnostopoulos, Buchanan, Pereira, & Lichty, 2009). They also may feel that it is inappropriate to discuss sexuality of any kind within the classroom, thus the prospect of discussing SOGE-based harassment in class is also ruled out. These teachers often prohibit any sexual comments at all, missing opportunities to provide a voice to LGBTQQ youth, be identified as supportive of minority youth, or take the opportunity to educate and promote acceptance among heterosexual students (Anagnostopoulos, Buchanan, Pereira, & Lichty, 2009). By prohibiting an open dialog, they are unwittingly relegating LGBTQQ students deeper into the closet. Knotts (2009) points out that even well-meaning open dialog about sexual orientation and gender expression can inadvertently add to the reinforcement of heterosexism within the classroom by promoting a superficial tolerance of minority students without promoting an internal "buy-in."

School-Based Support for LGBTQQ Youth

In spite of new program options, such as PREP, there continues to be a dearth of

services provided to LGBTQ students across the country. A study using a representative sample of U.S. schools found that less than half provided counseling services for sexual minority youth, only 39 percent provided sexual orientation education to students, and a mere 29 percent provided sexual orientation education for staff (Rienzo, Button, Sheu, & Li, 2006).

While Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 protects against gender-based and sexually orientated discrimination at a federal level, few states have chosen to elaborate and define these protections in their own policies. In Russo's (2006) investigation of anti-discrimination policies across all 51 states found that 40 states lacked sufficient laws and policies to protect LGBTQ individuals and of the remaining 11, only three were found to have commendable education policies. The study utilized an eight point Anti-Homophobia Taxonomy (APT) based upon guidelines on law and policy found within Massachusetts's Safe Schools Program for Gay and Lesbian Students and the Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network's (GLSEN) *Steps Towards Ending Homophobia In Your Schools* (Russo, 2006). Based upon the matrix, scores of five and above are considered adequate. Massachusetts, which has long been a model state for LGBTQ advocacy, received the highest score (8); Connecticut, and Rhode Island came in second with five; and California tied with Minnesota and New Jersey with four points suggesting a respectable effort with room for improvement (Russo, 2006). Rienzo and colleagues' analysis of factors that influence a district's support services toward sexual minorities found that states that specifically include sexual minorities in their anti-discrimination laws have a greater percentage of school districts with LGBTQ supportive services than states without such terminology in their laws (Rienzo, Button,

Sheu, & Li, 2006). Conversely, states with a high percentage of fundamental religious groups, specifically evangelical Protestants, have less school support services for LGBTQQ students (Rienzo, Button, Sheu, & Li, 2006).

Roffman (2000) reminds us that schools are obligated to provide a “level playing field” that is free from harassment and hostility for students to effectively access the curriculum. She also reminds us that freedom from harassment is essential for all students, not just LGBTQQ youth because “(u)nlike other minority groups, virtually anyone may potentially be relegated to sexual minority status by virtue of perception, rumor, scapegoating, public name-calling, or the like” (Roffman, 2000, p. 130). By bringing awareness to staff and students that sexual orientation and gender expression are included within the “protected category” definition of civil rights law, and by highlighting that such individuals represent normal variations of human expression, schools can break down the foundations of such discrimination by promoting an atmosphere of tolerance and acceptance (Roffman, 2000).

There have been many contributions within the literature towards steps for improving advocacy efforts for LGBTQQ students, mainly echoing the same advice, yet varying in exact steps or wording. Graybill, Varjas, Meyers, and Watson (2009) highlight five elements for improving school climate and advocating for change. First, inclusive curriculums can positively represent LGBTQQ community members and accomplishments. The 2009 GLSEN School Climate Survey supports this method, reporting that fewer homophobic remarks were heard by respondents from schools who utilized inclusive curriculum programs (Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, & Bartkiewicz, 2010). The second element is professional development that educates staff on LGBTQQ issues.

Two examples of such training are the GLSEN Educator Training Program and Los Angeles Unified School District's Project 10 (GLSEN, 2007; Los Angeles Unified School District, n.d.). Next, administrative support of clubs or after school programs for LGBTQQ students sends a positive message school-wide. These clubs have been shown to improve overall GPA and school completion rates of LGBTQQ youth while enhancing their sense of security and acceptance (Walls, Kane, & Wisneski, 2009). Fourth, policies designed to prevent discrimination and harassment should specifically include sexual orientation and gender expression in its verbiage. Finally, increasing the visibility of this population, such as via media, posters, and flyers, on school campuses increases a sense of community and acceptance (Graybill, et. al, 2009).

The research of Rienzo, Button, and Wald (1997) has led to seven recommended strategies for improving school climate for LGBTQQ youth. Similar to Graybill and colleagues (2009), these strategies include policies that include sexual orientation and gender expression; the addition to support groups on school campuses; training for staff; comprehensive sexuality education and inclusive curriculum; and creating a proactive school environment by including LGBTQQ-friendly aspects to current school functions, such as school dances and sporting events (Rienzo, Button, & Wald, 1997). In addition to these five recommendations, they also endorse student counseling services and the addition of sexual minority staff to enhance support and serve as role models (Rienzo, Button, & Wald, 1997).

Fisher, Komosa-Hawkins, Saldana, Thomas, Hsiao, Rauld, and colleagues suggest utilizing the Response-to-Intervention (RTI) approach to improve school climate for LGBTQQ youth (Fisher, Komosa-Hawkins, Saldana, Thomas, Hsiao, Rauld, et al.,

2008). The RTI model is generally a three-tiered approach to providing services, either academically or socio-emotionally, in which the primary services (tier I) are provided to all students; secondary services (tier II) are provided to students at risk for future problems; and targeted (tier III) services are provided to students already experiencing significant difficulties (Merrell, Ruth, & Gimpel, 2006). With regard to LGBTQ youth, the suggested RTI approach includes tier I services such as staff and student education about sexual orientation and gender expression, inclusive curriculum across subjects, and school policies that explicitly address LGBTQ youth; tier II services would include campus-based clubs or groups for LGBTQ students and group counseling; tier III services would include individual counseling using a holistic approach to address all areas of concern as opposed to focusing only on sexual orientation or gender identity status (Fisher, Komosa-Hawkins, Saldana, Thomas, Hsiao, Rauld, et al., 2008).

Transgendered students may require additional interventions such as parental education programs to address abuse; student education on gradual body transformation to improve current body image confidence; individual intervention or counseling to address current body identity distress; and specific training for counselors and mental health providers of transgendered youth to become knowledgeable of the psychological difficulties and disorders commonly associated with transgendered youth (Grossman & D'Augelli, 2007).

Several authors provide specific recommendations to use within the classroom or within the counseling process to improve climate and outcomes for LGBTQ students. Within the general curriculum, initiating a discussion of LGBTQ individuals within the context of minority groups or civil rights and oppression emphasizes a social aspect

rather than a focus on sexuality or individual differences (Eichstedt, 1996). By introducing such elements early into the school year, a recurring dialog can be maintained throughout the school year bringing minority groups into the everyday curriculum and giving them a voice (Eichstedt, 1996). A frank discussion of heterosexism and the power inherent to heterosexual males in our society allows for greater understanding of the effects of multiple oppressions and various forms of oppression that exist (Eichstedt, 1996). Knotts (2009) suggests using a dual approach of addressing the common themes and educating students about policies and rules while at the same time working to make LGBTQQ acceptance an internal and core value among students.

LGBTQQ students are often left feeling responsible for the difficulties they face in school (Owens, 2001). By supporting these youth in a non-biased and holistic way, staff can empower these youth and help them to overcome risk factors and frequently negative environments (Owens, 2001). Counselors can help a student understand the difference between sexual orientation, sexual behavior, and sexual identity and provide accurate information on each; reduce internalized homophobia; build understanding that one does not choose one's sexual orientation; support the student's self-exploration and help them avoid rushing to self-label; and provide the student with tools for dealing with negativity by others (Owens, 2001).

Lemoire and Chen (2005) promote person-centered counseling techniques for LGBTQQ youth due to the conflict often encountered across domains (i.e. internal, familial, school, community). By incorporating the key aspects of "congruence, unconditional positive regard, and empathy" (p. 148) counselors counter the negative experiences of these youth; focus on a student's self-evaluation rather than others'

evaluations; encourage holistic exploration and growth; and remain client-directed (Lemoire & Chen, 2005).

Even staff members who are situated in positions to specifically support and advocate for LGBTQ youth encounter considerable resistance from internal and external factors. In a qualitative study of gay-straight alliance (GSA) advisors, three distinct systems were identified as potential barriers in their ability to advocate for LGBTQ students; specifically, socio-cultural, school-based, and individual factors coalesce in individual ways that make the GSA advisor more or less able to successfully serve as a student advocate (Watson, Varjas, Meyers, & Graybill, 2010).

Factors among the socio-cultural system that may hinder advisors include resistance from parents, lack of supportive laws and policies, the heterosexism of cultural norms, and a lack of community resources (Watson, Varjas, Meyers, & Graybill, 2010). Parents may voice dissatisfaction that a GSA club exists on their child's campus, while some state laws do not include LGBTQ-specific protections. School-based factors range from lack of administration, staff, and student support to non-supportive school policies to limited school resources to support student advocacy (Watson, Varjas, Meyers, & Graybill, 2010). One example is that many schools have opt-in policies for students to join school-based clubs. If a parent does not support their student joining a GSA, that student is blocked from a wealth of support and resources available to members. A more favorable school policy is an opt-out policy in which parent consent is needed to prevent a student from joining a club (Watson, Varjas, Meyers, & Graybill, 2010). Finally, several individual factors may negatively impact advocacy efforts. Negative consequences to the staff member due to student advocacy, advisor's sexual

identity, and lack of confidence in their knowledge of LGBTQ issues were seen to hinder advocacy efforts among respondents (Watson, Varjas, Meyers, & Graybill, 2010). GSA advisors report fear of losing their job if administration disagrees with their advocacy efforts or, if they are a sexual minority themselves, if they decide to come out at school. Some heterosexual advisors reported feeling unable to relate to issues of coming out or having limited training in the psychological components of student support; while some gay/lesbian and bisexual advisors expressed fear of parental complaints or lack of connection with students due to their sexual orientation (Watson, Varjas, Meyers, & Graybill, 2010). Thus, it is easy to see that unique individual experiences and environments have a major impact on the advisor's ability to successfully educate and advocate for LGBTQ students.

Conclusion

LGBTQ youth possess the legacy of a long history of political and legal controversy. While a number of significant legal victories have been won, setting precedence for the guarantee of civil rights, these youth continue to experience SOGE-based discrimination and victimization by both peers and staff within the school setting. External heterosexism and homophobia often lead to internalized feelings of guilt and rejection, with dire consequences for LGBTQ youth who have limited supports. LGBTQ youth experience higher rates of abuse, drug use, suicide attempts, elopement from home, and early withdrawal from school. Adult advocates within the school setting often feel thwarted in their attempts to initiate change and promote a positive climate for these students.

In the wake of recent California legislation designed to empower both LGBTQ students, and their support providers and school staff, this study positions itself to explore the state's current climate for LGBTQ youth from the GSA advisor's perspective. What do GSA advisors have to say about their school's climate; what assets are available to support them; do they perceive of factors that hinder their cause? Are anti-LGBTQ acts or interactions prevalent on their campuses; are gender and sexual minorities an invisible minority or a voice within the curriculum?

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

As the previous chapter illustrated, LGBTQ youth remain a population at risk for both physical and psychological victimization. They continue to face significantly greater rates of verbal harassment, physical attacks, and discrimination which result in greater negative outcomes for these students. Policies are not always in place to protect them and adult advocates often face obstacles impacting their ability to support them. In the wake of a series of major legislative victories, California finds itself in a position to instigate major positive change for these students within the school setting.

The current study was designed to explore California-based Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) advisors' perceptions of their schools' climates towards LGBTQ youth. GSA advisors are supportive faculty members who agree to oversee and advise these student-run clubs designed to support and empower lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth (GSA Network). As staff members interacting with, and advocating for, LGBTQ students on a regular basis, GSA advisors hold an invaluable position for shedding light on school climate. These advisors interact with staff and administration in a different, more equal, way than students do, gaining a more accurate view of staff perceptions toward LGBTQ issues. In addition, they see the effects of implemented laws on their school policies and the effects these policies have on LGBTQ students. Due to their position as an advisor to an LGBTQ-related club, these adults are likely to be more conscious of the school climate for LGBTQ youth than other staff members and more likely to offer valuable contributions to the

exploration of LGBTQQ school climate. This study was designed to use a survey to investigate California-based GSA advisors' perceptions of school climate for LGBTQQ youth within their schools.

Design

LGBTQQ school climate was explored via several key areas identified during the literature review process. The impact of bullying, derogatory comments, and student and staff behavior on school climate for LGBTQQ youth is highlighted throughout the literature, such as via the GLSEN School Climate Survey and Principal's Perspective Survey (Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, & Bartkiewicz, 2010; GLSEN and Harris Interactive, 2008). The need for effective training for staff and proactive student advocacy by schools are reiterated by authors such as Knotts (2009), Rienzo (1997), Roffman (2000), (Zack, Mannheim, & Alfano, 2010). Using such references as a guide, the current study was designed to explore school climate for LGBTQQ youth across the following domains with select survey questions falling under each category:

Training – This area explores whether a school or district contributes to a positive climate by for LGBTQQ youth by preparing and educating staff about laws and policies that affect these youth.

Advocacy – This area explores whether a school contributes to a positive climate for LGBTQQ youth by taking an active role in advocating for them. This includes having policies in place to protect LGBTQQ youth and including discussions of sexual orientation and variations of gender expression (i.e., cultural manifestations of masculine/feminine) within the sexual education and minority curricula.

Staff – This area considers whether a school’s staff members contribute to a positive climate by for LGBTQQ youth by being supportive of these youth, discussing SOGE in a positive way, and refraining for making derogatory remarks about LGBTQQ individuals.

Students – This area explores how a school’s student body contributes to a positive climate by for LGBTQQ youth by being open to dialogs about SOGE or LGBTQQ individuals, refraining from making derogatory remarks about LGBTQQ individuals, and advocating for LGBTQQ youth if and when SOGE-based bullying occurs.

Bullying – This area examines a school’s climate by for LGBTQQ youth by considering the frequency and intensity of SOGE-based bullying on school campuses.

Instrument

Survey questions included a mixture of Likert-style, multiple choice, and open text response options based upon the individual question. Questions focused on gaining a global understanding of the school climate for LGBTQQ youth and included questions regarding perceptions of staff and student advocacy and acceptance, district-provided training, incidences of harassment based upon sexual orientation or gender expression, inclusive curriculum, and assets and obstacles to improving school climate for LGBTQQ youth. The survey took approximately 20 minutes to complete. Respondents were not compensated for their participation in this study. A copy of the survey is found in Appendix A.

Procedures

The current survey-based research study was approved by the California State University Northridge Human Subjects Review Board prior to the onset of data collection. The format was 100% electronic; it was created via a web-based survey

software tool and all data collection was internet based. Participant Bill of Rights and Informed Consent agreements were pages one and two of the survey, respectively, and required selecting an approval box before proceeding.

Potential participants were obtained through the Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) Network's list of contacts. Approximately 871 California-based GSA clubs are registered through the GSA Network and the GSA faculty advisor of each club is included this list of contacts. The GSA Network agreed to distribute the current electronically-based survey link to all members via their bi-monthly e-news letter. In addition, they agreed to forward the link directly to their members one time only. The researcher was not provided with a list of contacts, nor were any member names, email addresses, or other identifying information provided to the researcher in an effort to maintain participant confidentiality. The link to the current survey was included in the GSA bi-monthly e-news letter from October 12, 2011 through February 29, 2012. In addition, a link to the survey was e-mailed directly to registered GSA Network members once on the week of February 6, 2012. The survey was closed March 1, 2012 and data analysis began.

Participant and school demographic information were collected, and were designed to ensure participant confidentiality. No identifying information was requested by participants and the researcher blocked geographical data and computer TCP/IP data from being collected from participants when designing the electronically-based survey. Participant information included age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, current position, years of experience, and years as a GSA advisor. School demographic information included school district, postal zip code, student population, type of school

(i.e., private, public, high school, middle school), socioeconomic status of school, and ethnic demography of the student body.

Data was analyzed through the Survey Gizmo and Excel software. Each of the five domain areas identified were scored and a composite score was obtained by combining each area using a common metric.

Participants

A total of 34 GSA advisors participated in this survey, all of which were from California. Participants ranged in age from 25 to 70 years ($M = 46.265$; $SD = 13.269$). Years as a GSA advisor ranged from 1 to 12 years ($M = 4.117$; $SD = 2.868$). The majority of participants were female (24 female; 9 male; 1 transgender) and Caucasian (31 Caucasian; 1 Asian; 1 Latino; 1 mixed Latin and Caucasian). With regards to sexual orientation, 15 (44.1%) identified as gay/lesbian, 13 (38.2%) identified as straight, 3 (8.8%) identified as bisexual, and 3 (8.8%) identified as fluid, or not conforming to typically dichotomous sexual boundaries such as gay, straight, or bisexual.

Summary

With GSA advisors being in a key position to recognize their school's climate for LGBTQ youth, a survey based study was designed to assess overall school climate for LGBTQ youth based upon five key areas: training, advocacy, staff, students, and bullying. The survey was electronically based and utilized a variety of Likert-style, multiple-choice, and open dialog based responses. The following section reveals the results of the current study.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Introduction

This study explores California-based GSA advisors' perceptions of school climate for LGBTQ youth within their schools. The hypothesis for this study is that California GSA advisors report that their schools maintain a positive school climate for LGBTQ youth. The study emphasized a global perspective of school climate by exploring several different contributing factors, namely; Training, Advocacy, Staff, Students, and Bullying.

Data was analyzed through the Survey Gizmo and Excel software. For ease of interpretation, Likert-style questions were analyzed based upon a low/moderate/high format with responses of 1, 2, or 3 generally receiving a rating of *low*, responses of 4 or 5 generally receiving a rating of *moderate*, and responses of 6 or 7 generally receiving a rating of *high*. The exceptions to this generality are items which follow the inverse rule whereby a low rating is likely to contribute to a positive school climate for LGBTQ youth. In these instances, a rating of 1=never is scored as 7 and classified as *high*. Conversely, items with a rating of 7 are scored as 1 and are classified as *low*. Specific items which follow the inverse rule are *Staff* items 3 through 6 and all *Bullying* items.

Two multiple choice items within the *Students* domain were assigned a number value based upon participant responses that complimented the Likert-scale questions. Specifically, each item had five choices of response. Each response was given a number value at 1.4 point increments such that the response least contusive to positive school climate received a value of 1.4, the next response was given a value of 2.8, and so on, with the fifth item obtaining a value of 7.

Items on each of the five domains are combined and mean scores from 1 to 3.0 receive a rating of *low*, mean scores from 3.1 to 5.0 receive a rating of *moderate*, and mean scores of 5.1 to 7 receive a rating of *high*. Likewise, these domain scores are combined to obtain an overall rating of school climate upon which to confirm the hypothesis that California GSA advisors report that their schools maintain a positive school climate for LGBTQ youth. Scores found to support the current study's hypothesis would fall in the *high* range while scores that fall in the *low* or *moderate* range do not support the hypothesis.

Capacity building items are then discussed. Capacity building refers to elements within a school that allow for, or support a welcome environment for LGBTQ youth. Staff and students who are open about their sexual orientation gender nonconformity are examples of such elements. School assets or the willingness of students to seek assistance with harassment are other examples.

See Appendix B for a complete frequency count for each item. In the current chapter, items are items into Low, Moderate, and High categories for ease of analysis.

Sample

The study was sent to approximately 871 California-based GSA advisors electronically via the GSA Network. Of the 871 potential respondents, 34 completed the survey; 24 identified as female, nine as male, and one as transgendered. With regards to sexual orientation, 15 identified as gay/lesbian, 13 identified as straight, 3 identified as bisexual, and 3 identified as fluid. The ethnic identities of respondents were: 31 Caucasian, one Asian, one Latino, and one mixed Latin and Caucasian. Participants

ranged in age from 25 to 70 years of age. Potential contributing factors to the low response rate are discussed in the Considerations section in chapter Three.

Results

School Climate as explored by Training

Training survey items explore whether a school or district contributes to a positive climate by for LGBTQQ youth by preparing and educating staff about laws and policies that affect these youth. Four survey items addressed this area.

Item 1: I feel my school does a good job in educating staff about LGBTQQ issues (Likert-style responses from 1=very poor to 7=excellent).

	Count	Values	Percent
low	20	1-3	58.8
moderate	10	4-5	29.4
high	4	6-7	11.8
Totals	34		100
Mean:	3.3	Std. Dev.:	1.65

Data from this chart shows that 20 out of 34 respondents (58.8%) reported that their school does a poor job of educating staff about LGBTQQ issues as indicated by ratings of 1, 2, or 3 out of 7 points. Another 10 participants (29.4%) rated their school as doing a moderate or fair job of educating staff about LGBTQQ issues as indicated by ratings of 4 or 5 out of 7 points. Finally, 4 participants (11.8%) indicated that their schools do a good job of educating staff as indicated by ratings of 6 out of 7 points; no respondent (0%) rated their schools with 7 out of 7 points on this item. The mean score for this item is 3.3 with a standard deviation of 1.65.

Item 2: My school/district does a good job in providing information to staff about new laws that affect LGBTQQ students (Such as: AB537-Student Safety & Violence Protection Act of 2000; AB394-Safe Place to Learn Act 2008; SB71-California Comprehensive Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS Prevention Education Act 2003; SB48-Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Respectful (FAIR) Education Act 2011) (Likert-style responses from 1=very poor to 7=excellent).

	Count	Values	Percent
low	22	1-3	64.8
moderate	7	4-5	20.6
high	5	6-7	14.7
Totals	34		100
Mean: 3.0		Std. Dev.: 1.75	

Data from this chart shows that 22 out of 34 respondents (64.8%) reported that their school does a poor job in providing information to staff about new laws that affect LGBTQQ students as indicated by ratings of 1, 2, or 3 out of 7 points. Another 7 participants (20.6%) rated their school as doing a moderate or fair job in providing such information to staff as indicated by ratings of 4 or 5 out of 7 points. Finally, 5 participants (14.7%) indicated that their schools do a good job as indicated by ratings of 6 or 7 out of 7 points on this survey item. The mean score for this item is 3.0 with a standard deviation of 1.75.

Item 3: My school/district offers professional development training to educate staff about LGBTQQ issues (Likert-style responses from 1=no training to 7=regular training & updates).

	Count	Values	Percent
low	26	1-3	76.5
moderate	4	4-5	11.7
high	4	6-7	11.7
Totals	34		100
Mean: 2.4		Std. Dev.: 1.78	

Data from this chart shows that 26 out of 34 participants (76.5%) reported that their schools have no to minimal training or LGBTQQ issues as indicated by ratings of 1, 2, or 3 out of 7 points. Another 4 participants (11.7%) reported that their schools have a moderate amount of training on LGBTQQ issues. The remaining 4 respondents (11.7%) indicated that their schools provide good amount of training as indicated by ratings of 6 or 7 on this survey item. The mean score was 2.4 with a standard deviation of 1.78.

Overall rating for the *Training* domain:

Item	Mean
Item 1-Educating Staff	3.3
Item 2-Info on Laws	3.0
Item 3-Professional Development	2.4
Training Mean: 2.9	Training Rating: Low

By combining the mean scores of the first three Likert-style questions, the *Training* domain average score was obtained. With an average score of 2.9, this domain is in the Low range, indicating that the perceptions of the GSA advisors within the current sample do not feel that their schools contribute to a positive school climate for LGBTQQ youth by preparing and educating staff about laws and policies affecting these youth. The *Training* domain results do not support the hypothesis that California GSA advisors report that their schools maintain a positive school climate for LGBTQQ youth.

School Climate as explored by Advocacy

Advocacy survey items explore whether a school contributes to a positive climate for LGBTQQ youth by taking an active role in advocating for them, which includes having policies in place to protect them and including sexual orientation and variations of gender expression (i.e., cultural manifestations of masculine/feminine) with the sexual education and minority curricula. Six survey items addressed this area.

Item 1: My school is proactive in advocating for LGBTQQ students (Likert-style responses from 1=never to 7=always).

	Count	Values	Percent
low	15	1-3	44.2
moderate	9	4-5	38.2
high	6	6-7	17.7
Totals	34		100
Mean:	4.0	Std. Dev.:	1.58

Data from this chart demonstrate that 15 out of 34 respondents (44.2%) feel their school is minimally proactive in advocating for LGBTQQ students as indicated by ratings of 1,

2, or 3 out of 7 points. Nine respondents (38.2%) reported that their school is moderately proactive. Finally, 6 participants (17.7%) indicated that their school is highly proactive as indicated by ratings of 6 or 7 out of 7 points. This item had a mean of 4.0 with a standard deviation of 1.58.

Item 2: My school does a good job in advocating for LGBTQQ youth (Likert-style responses from 1=never to 7=always).

	Count	Values	Percent
low	11	1-3	32.4
moderate	9	4-5	47.0
high	7	6-7	20.6
Totals	34		100
Mean: 4.1		Std. Dev.: 1.60	

Data from this chart illustrate that 11 out of 34 respondents (32.4%) reported that their schools do a poor job in advocating for LGBTQQ youth. Nine respondents (47.0%) reported that their school does a fair job, and 7 participants (20.6%) reported that their school does a good job in advocating for LGBTQQ youth. The mean score for this item was 4.1 with a standard deviation of 1.60.

Item 3: My school has policies in place that directly address LGBTQQ youth (multiple choice format).

Value	Count	Percent
yes	17	50.0

no	10	29.4
don't know	7	20.6
Totals:	34	100

The table above illustrates that only 17 out of 34 respondents (50%) reported that their schools do have polices in place at their schools that directly address LGBTQQ youth, while 10 participants (29.4%) reported that their schools do not have such policies in place. Interestingly, 7 participants (20.6%) indicated that they do not know whether or not their schools have said policies.

Item 4: (in response to item 3) These policies are consistently followed (Likert-style responses from 1=very inconsistent to 7=very consistent, with d/k, n/a).

	Count	Values	Percent
d/k, n/a	15	d/k, n/a	44.1
low	5	1-3	14.6
moderate	9	4-5	32.4
high	3	6-7	8.8
Totals	34		100
Mean:	4.2	Std. Dev.:	1.39

Data from the chart above shows that the largest majority of respondents (15 out of 34; 44.1%) either did not know if their school's LGBTQQ policies are consistently followed or this question was not applicable because they do not have policies for LGBTQQ youth. Five participants (14.6%) reported that their school's policies are inconsistently followed as indicated by ratings of 1, 2, or 3 out of 7 points. Nine respondents (32.4%)

reported that their schools are moderately consistent in following these policies; only 3 respondents (8.8%) reported that LGBTQQ policies at their schools are consistently following as indicated by scores of 6 or 7 out of 7 points. After eliminating the d/k, n/a responses, the mean score was 4.2 with a standard deviation of 1.39.

Item 5: I feel my school includes LGBTQQ individuals when discussing minority education/protected categories and vulnerable youth (Likert-style responses from 1=never to 7=always).

	Count	Values	Percent
low	21	1-3	63.7
moderate	5	4-5	15.2
high	7	6-7	21.2
Totals	33		100
Mean: 3.3		Std. Dev.: 1.80	

Data from the table above shows that 21 of the 33 participants who responded to this question (63.7%) reported that their schools include LGBTQQ individuals infrequently when discussing minority education, protected categories, and vulnerable youth infrequently as indicated by scores of 1, 2, or 3 out of 7 points. Another 5 respondents (15.2%) rated their schools as including LGBTQQ individuals a moderate amount of time as indicated by ratings of 4 or 5 out of 7 points. Seven participants (21.2%) reported LGBTQQ individuals to be frequently included as indicated by ratings of 6 and 7 out of 7 on this survey item. The mean score was 3.3 with a standard deviation of 1.8.

Item 6: Sexual orientation and gender expression are included in my school's sexual education curriculum (multiple choice format).

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	15	45.5	45.5
no	6	18.2	63.7
don't know	12	36.4	100
Totals:	33	100	

The table above shows that, of the 33 participants who responded to this item, less than half (15 respondents; 45.5%) shared that their schools do include SOGE within the sexual education curriculum. Six participants (18.2%) indicated that their schools do not include SOGE in their school's sexual education curriculum. The remaining 12 participants (36.4%) did not know if it was included.

Overall rating for the *Advocacy* domain:

Item	Mean
Item 1-Proactive	4.0
Item 2-Good Job	4.1
Item 4-Consistency	4.2
Item 5-Minority Education	3.3
Advocacy Mean: 3.9	Training Rating: Moderate

By combining the mean scores of the three Likert-style questions, items 1, 2, 4, and 5 the *Advocacy* domain average score was obtained. With an average score of 3.9, this domain is in the Moderate range, indicating that the GSA advisors within the current sample do

not feel their schools contribute significantly to a positive school climate for LGBTQ youth by taking an active role in advocating for them, consistently following policies in place to protect them, and including LGBTQ individuals and SOGE within the curriculum. In fact, only 50 percent of respondents reported that their schools have policies specifically addressing LGBTQ youth and less than that (45.5%) reported that sexual orientation and gender expression are including in their schools' sexual education curriculum. In sum, the *Advocacy* domain results do not support the hypothesis that California GSA advisors report that their schools maintain a positive school climate for LGBTQ youth.

School Climate as explored by Staff

Staff survey items explore whether a school's staff members contribute to a positive climate by for LGBTQ youth by being supportive of these youth, discussing SOGE in a positive way, and refraining for making derogatory remarks about LGBTQ individuals. Six survey items addressed this area. Items 3 through 6 follow the inverse rule discussed in Chapter 3 whereby the Likert-style scale was flipped for the purposes of analysis: a participant response of 1 (never) is scored as 7, indicating the highest degree of contribution towards a positive school climate for LGBTQ youth.

Item 1: I feel the school staff are generally supportive of LGBTQ youth (Likert-style responses from 1=never to 7=always).

	Count	Values	Percent
low	6	1-3	17.6

moderate	12	4-5	35.3
high	16	6-7	47.0
Totals	34		100
Mean: 5.0		Std. Dev.: 1.43	

Data from the chart above indicates that 6 out of 34 participants who responded to this survey item (17.6%) rated their fellow staff as being unsupportive, or minimally supportive, of LGBTQQ youth as indicated by scores of 1, 2, or 3 out of 7 points. Twelve respondents (35.3%) rated staff as being moderately supportive. Finally, 16 respondents (47.0%) reported their fellow staff members as being very supportive, as indicated by ratings of 6 or 7 out of 7 points for this survey item. The mean score was 5.0 with a standard deviation of 1.43.

Item 2: Most of the staff who teach sexual education present sexual orientation/gender expression in a positive way (Likert-style responses from 1=most are negative or refuse to teach it to 7=most are positive, with d/k option).

	Count	Values	Percent
unknown	13	d/k	39.4
low	6	1-3	18.3
moderate	8	4-5	24.3
high	6	6-7	18.2
Totals	33		100
Mean: 5.1		Std. Dev.: 2.01	

The table above shows that, of the 33 individuals who responded to this item, the largest majority (13 participants; 39.4%) did not know how positive sexual education teachers were when discussing SOGE. Six respondents (18.3%) reported that this material is presented in a fairly negative way as indicted by scores of 1, 2, or 3 out of 7 points. Eight participants (24.3%) rated staff as presenting the material in a moderately positive way with ratings of 4 or 5 out of 7. Only 6 respondents (18.2%) reported that this material is presented in a positive way as indicated by ratings of 6 out of 7; no respondent rated this survey item with 7 out of 7 points. Excluding the individuals who provided a d/k response, the mean for this item was 5.1 with a standard deviation of 2.01.

Item 3: In the past 12 months, I have heard a staff member make a negative comment about a student's (actual or perceived) sexual orientation (Likert-style responses from 1=never to 7=very frequently). *The inverse rule was applied to this item such that low ratings (1-3) contribute to a higher score towards a positive school climate for LGBTQQ youth.

	Count	Rating	Value	Percent
high*	27	1-3	7-5	84.4
moderate*	4	4-5	4-3	12.5
low*	1	6-7	2-1	3.1
Totals	32			100
Mean*:	6.1	Std. Dev.:	1.60	

Data from the chart above illustrates that 27 participants out of the 32 who responded to this survey item (84.4%) have heard other staff members make negative comments about

a student’s sexual orientation infrequently with ratings of 1, 2, or 3 out of 7 points. Four participants (12.5%) have heard staff make such comments moderately frequently; only 1 respondent (3.1%) indicated that they have heard such comments very frequently with a rating of 7 out of 7 points; no participant rated this item with 6 out of 7 points. By applying the inverse rule for analysis, the mean rating was 6.1 with a standard deviation of 1.60.

Item 4: In the past 12 months, I have heard a staff member make a negative comment about a student's (actual or perceived) gender expression (Likert-style responses from 1=never to 7=very frequently). *The inverse rule was applied to this item such that low ratings (1-3) contribute to a higher score towards a positive school climate for LGBTQ youth.

	Count	Rating	Value	Percent
high*	25	1-3	7-5	78.2
moderate*	6	4-5	4-3	18.8
low*	1	6-7	2-1	3.1
Totals	32			100
Mean*:	5.9	Std. Dev.:	1.60	

The table above illustrates that, 25 of the 32 respondents who completed this item (78.2%) have heard negative comments by staff about a student’s gender expression infrequently over the last twelve months as indicated by ratings of 1, 2, or 3 out of 7 points. Six participants (18.8%) have heard such comments moderately often over the last twelve months. Only 1 respondent (3.1%) reported hearing such comments by staff

frequently over the last twelve months as indicated by a rating of 6 out of 7 points; on respondent rated this item with 7 out of 7 points. By applying the inverse rule for analysis, the mean rating was 5.9 with a standard deviation of 1.60.

Item 5: In the past 12 months, I have heard a staff member make a negative comment about another staff member's (actual or perceived) sexual orientation (Likert-style responses from 1=never to 7=very frequently). *The inverse rule was applied to this item such that low ratings (1-3) contribute to a higher score towards a positive school climate for LGBTQQ youth.

	Count	Rating	Value	Percent
high*	29	1-3	7-5	90.6
moderate*	2	4-5	4-3	6.2
low*	1	6-7	2-1	3.1
Totals	32			100
Mean*:	5.9	Std. Dev.:	1.22	

The table above illustrates that, 29 of the 32 respondents who completed this item (90.6%) indicated that in the last 12 months, they had heard negative comments by staff about another staff member's actual or perceived sexual orientation infrequently, or not at all, as indicated by ratings of 1, 2, or 3 out of 7 points; a majority (84.4%) had never heard such comments over the last twelve months, as indicated by a rating of 1. Two respondents (6.2%) reported hearing such comments by staff moderately often over the last twelve months with ratings of 4 and 5 out of 7 points. One respondent (3.1%) reported hearing such comments frequently as indicated by a score of 6; no participant

rated this item with 7 out of 7 points. Applying the inverse rule, the mean rating was 5.9 with a standard deviation of 1.22.

Item 6: In the past 12 months, I have heard a staff member make a negative comment about another staff member's (actual or perceived) gender expression (Likert-style responses from 1=never to 7=very frequently). *The inverse rule was applied to this item such that low ratings (1-3) contribute to a higher score towards a positive school climate for LGBTQQ youth.

	Count	Rating	Value	Percent
high*	32	1-3	7-5	100.0
moderate*	0	4-5	4-3	0.0
low*	0	6-7	2-1	0.0
Totals	32			100
Mean*:	6.7	Std. Dev.:	1.01	

The table above illustrates that, 100% of respondents rated this item as occurring infrequently, with ratings of 1, 2, or 3 out of 7 points. Of note, out of the 32 respondents who completed this item, 90.6 percent rated 1 out of 7 for the above item, meaning that in the last 12 months, they had not heard any negative comments by staff about another staff member's actual or perceived gender expression. Applying the inverse rule, the mean rating was 6.7 with a standard deviation of 1.01.

Overall rating for the *Staff* domain:

Item	Mean
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Item 1-Supportive	5.0
Item 2-Pos. Sex. Ed.	5.1
Item 3-Stu. Sex. Orient.	6.1*
Item 4-Stu. Gender Ex.	5.9*
Item 5-Staff Sex. Orient.	5.9*
Item 6-Staff Gender Ex.	6.7*
Staff Mean: 5.8	Training Rating: High

By utilizing the inverse rule for items 3 through 6, then combining the mean scores of all six Likert-style questions, the *Staff* domain average score was obtained. With an average score of 5.8, this domain is in the High range, indicating that GSA advisors within the current sample perceived that their schools do contribute significantly to a positive school climate for LGBTQQ youth by being supportive to these youth, discussing SOGE in a positive way, and refraining from making derogatory remarks about LGBTQQ individuals. The *Staff* domain results do support the hypothesis that California GSA advisors report that their schools maintain a positive school climate for LGBTQQ youth.

School Climate as explored by Students

Students survey items explore whether a school’s student body contributes to a positive climate by for LGBTQQ youth by being open to dialogs about SOGE or LGBTQQ individuals, refraining from making derogatory remarks about LGBTQQ individuals, and advocating for LGBTQQ youth if and when SOGE-based bullying occurs. Four survey items addressed this area.

Item 1: My students are generally receptive to discussing LGBTQQ issues in a respectful way (Likert-style responses from 1=very disrespectful/disinterested to 7=very respectful/interested, with n/a option).

	Count	Values	Percent
not applicable	1	n/a	3.0
low	5	1-3	15.2
moderate	15	4-5	45.5
high	15	6-7	35.3
Totals	33		100
Mean: 4.9		Std. Dev.: 1.59	

Data from the chart above illustrates that 1 participant out of the 33 who responded to this item (3.0%) indicated that this item was not applicable to them. Another 5 respondents (15.2%) indicated that their students are fairly disrespectful or disinterested in discussing LGBTQQ issues in a respectful way. Fifteen participants (45.5%) indicated that their students are fairly neutral to discussing LGBTQQ issues. The remaining 15 participants (35.3%) indicated that their students are respectful and interested in discussing these issues. The mean score for this item is 4.9 with a standard deviation of 1.59.

Item 2: I hear anti-LGBTQQ slurs directed at specific students, teachers, or staff: (multiple-choice format). **For analysis purposes, each of the five responses was assigned a number value that complemented the scoring system used for the Likert-style questions, at increments of 1.4 points (7 points divided by 5 response choices). The higher the frequency of anti-LGBTQQ slurs, the lower the value towards supporting a

positive school climate. Low range=several times a day (1.4 points) and once a day (2.8 points). Moderate range=once a week (4.2 points). High range=once a month or less (5.6 points) and never (7 points).

Range	Value	Count	Percent
low	1.4 to 2.8	6	19.4
moderate	4.2	7	22.6
high	5.6 to 7	18	58.0
Totals:	31		100
Mean**:	5.0	Std. Dev.:	1.84

The table above indicates, that, of the 31 participants who responded to this item, the greatest percent (58.0%) responded that they hear LGBTQQ slurs directed at specific individuals once a month or less or never. Seven participants (22.6%) reported hearing such slurs once a week; 6 respondents (19.4%) indicated that they hear such slurs once a day or several times a day.

Item 3: I hear anti-LGBTQQ slurs at school not specifically directed at an individual (example: “that’s so gay” to mean something is “bad or lame;” or suggestions that athletic females are “butch” for not being “feminine enough”): (multiple choice format).

**For analysis purposes, each of the five responses was assigned a number value that complemented the scoring system used for the Likert-style questions, at increments of 1.4 points (7 points divided by 5 response choices). The higher the frequency of anti-LGBTQQ slurs, the lower the value towards supporting a positive school climate. Low

range=several times a day (1.4 points) and once a day (2.8 points). Moderate range=once a week (4.2 points). High range=once a month or less (5.6 points) and never (7 points).

Range	Value	Count	Percent
low	1.4 to 2.8	16	51.6
moderate	4.2	7	22.6
high	5.6 to 7	8	25.9
Totals:	31		100
Mean**:	3.4	Std. Dev.:	1.84

The above table shows that 51.6 percent of respondents (16 out of 31) reported that they hear anti-LGBTQQ slurs not specifically directed at an individual at school once a day or several times a day. Seven participants (22.6%) reported hearing such slurs once a week. Finally, 8 respondents (25.9%) reported hearing these slurs once a month or less, or never.

Item 4: (in response to items 2 and 3, above) Other students step in (Likert-style responses from 1 to 7, with n/a option):

	Count	Values	Percent
not applicable	1	n/a	3.2
low	19	1-3	61.3
moderate	10	4-5	32.3
high	1	6-7	3.2
Totals	31		100
Mean:	3.1	Std. Dev.:	1.26

The table above shows that 19 respondents (61.3%) indicated that, when hearing SOGE-based slurs, their students will step in only infrequently as indicated by ratings of 1, 2, or 3 for this item. Ten respondents (32.3%) reported that students will step in moderately often as indicated by ratings of 4 and 5. Only one respondent indicated that students step in frequently with a rating of 6; no participant rated this item with a 7 out of 7. One respondent indicated that this item was not applicable to their job position. The mean rating for this item is 3.1 with a standard deviation of 1.26.

Overall rating for the *Students* domain:

Item	Mean
Item 1-Discussions	4.9
Item 2-Slurs Towards Individuals	5.0
Item 3-Slurs Not Directed	3.4
Item 4-Step in	3.1
Students Mean: 4.1	Training Rating: Moderate

By combining the mean scores of the two Likert-style questions, items 1 and 4, and two multiple-choice questions, items 2 and 3, the *Students* domain average score was obtained. With an average score of 4.1, this domain is in the Moderate range, indicating that the GSA advisors within the current sample do not feel that students at their schools contribute significantly to a positive school climate for LGBTQ youth by remaining open to dialog about SOGE or LGBTQ individuals, refraining from making derogatory remarks, and advocating for LGBTQ peers. The *Students* domain results do not support

the hypothesis that California GSA advisors report that their schools maintain a positive school climate for LGBTQ youth.

School Climate as explored by Bullying

Bullying survey items explore a school's climate by for LGBTQ youth by considering the frequency and intensity of SOGE-based bullying on school campuses. Eleven survey items addressed this area. Items 1 through 5 address verbal harassment due to sexual orientation or gender expression and have been combined for ease of analysis. Items 6 through 10 address physical attacks based on sexual orientation or gender expression and have also been combined. All items were based on a Likert-style scale from 1 (never) to 7 (very frequently). All Bullying items follow the inverse rule discussed in Chapter 3 whereby the Likert-style scale was flipped for the purposes of analysis: a participant response of 1 (never) is scored as 7, indicating the highest degree of contribution towards a positive school climate for LGBTQ youth.

Item 1: In the past 12 months, I have witnessed a student being verbally harassed because of their (actual or perceived) sexual orientation.

Item 2: In the past 12 months, I have been made aware of (but did not witness) a student being verbally harassed because of their (actual or perceived) sexual orientation.

Item 3: In the past 12 months, I have witnessed a student being verbally harassed because of their (actual or perceived) gender expression.

Item 4: In the past 12 months, I have been made aware of (but did not witness) a student being verbally harassed because of their (actual or perceived) gender expression.

Item 5: In the past 12 months, I have been approached for help/guidance by a student who has been verbally harassed at school because of their (actual or perceived) sexual orientation/gender expression.

Results below are listed as percentages of total responses for each item. *The mean of all five items were calculated using the inverse rule and the mean of means and standard deviation for all five items were calculated.

	Rating	Value	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Combined
high*	1-3	7-5	50.0	54.8	68.8	71.0	71.0	63.1
moderate*	4-5	4-3	37.6	25.8	25.0	22.6	12.9	24.8
low*	6-7	2-1	12.6	19.4	6.2	6.5	16.1	12.2
		Mean*:	4.7	4.7	5.4	5.6	5.1	4.7
		Std. Dev.:	1.91	2.09	1.82	1.74	2.12	1.91

The chart above demonstrates that 63.1 percent of respondents reported that over the past twelve months they have had infrequent incidences of being made aware of verbal harassment of a student due to actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender expression by any of the following means: witnessing it first hand, being made aware of it by others, or by being approach by a student for help. Another 24.8 percent of participants reported being made aware of such verbal harassment moderately often. Finally, 12.2 percent reported a high frequency of such incidences being brought to their attention. Using the inverse rule, the mean rating for these items combined was 4.7 with a standard deviation of 1.91.

Item 6: In the past 12 months, I have witnessed a student being physically attacked because of their (actual or perceived) sexual orientation.

Item 7: In the past 12 months, I have been made aware of (but did not witness) a student being physically attacked because of their (actual or perceived) sexual orientation.

Item 8: In the past 12 months, I have witnessed a student being physically attacked because of their (actual or perceived) gender expression.

Item 9: In the past 12 months, I have been made aware of (but did not witness) a student being physically attacked because of their (actual or perceived) gender expression.

Item 10: In the past 12 months, I have been approached for help/guidance by a student who has been physically attacked at school because of their (actual or perceived) sexual orientation/gender expression.

Results below are listed as percentages of total responses for each item. *The mean of all five items were calculated using the inverse rule and the mean of means and standard deviation for all five items were calculated.

	Rating	Value	Item 6	Item 7	Item 8	Item 9	Item 10	Combined
high*	1-3	7-5	100.0	90.3	100.0	93.6	93.5	95.5
moderate*	4-5	4-3	0.0	9.7	0.0	6.5	6.4	4.5
low*	6-7	2-1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Mean*:	6.8	6.5	6.9	6.6	6.6	6.7
		Std. Dev.:	.70	1.13	.35	1.04	.94	.70

The chart above demonstrates that 95.5 percent of respondents reported that over the past twelve months they have had infrequent incidences of being made aware of a physical

attack of a student due to actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender expression by any of the following means: witnessing it first hand, being made aware of it by others, or by being approach by a student for help. The remaining 4.5 percent of participants reported being made aware of such physical attacks moderately often. None of the participants reported a high frequency of such attacks being brought to their attention. Using the inverse rule, the mean rating for these combined items was 6.7 with a standard deviation of .70.

Item 11: In the past 12 months, I have seen sexual orientation or gender expression based graffiti on school campus (Likert-style responses from 1=never to 7=very frequently).

*The inverse rule was applied to this item such that low ratings (1-3) contribute to a higher score towards a positive school climate for LGBTQQ youth.

	Count	Rating	Value	Percent
high*	26	1-3	7-5	81.3
moderate*	4	4-5	4-3	12.6
low*	2	6-7	2-1	6.3
Totals	32			100
Mean*:	5.8	Std. Dev.:	1.54	

The table above illustrates that 26 out of 32 respondents (81.3%) reported having seen SOGE-based graffiti on their campuses infrequently, as indicated by scores of 1, 2, or 3 out of 7 points on this item. Another 4 respondents (12.6%) reported seeing such graffiti a moderate amount of time as indicated by scores of 4 or 5 out of 7 points. Finally, 2 respondents (6.3%) indicated they have seen such graffiti frequently as indicated by a

score of 6 out of 7 points; no respondent rated this item with 7 out of 7 points. Applying the inverse rule, the mean rating was 5.8 with a standard deviation of 1.54.

Overall rating for the *Bullying* domain:

Item/s	Mean
Items 1-5 Combined-Verb Harass	4.7*
Items 6-10 Combined-Phys Att	6.7*
Item 11-Graffiti	5.8*
Bullying Mean: 5.7 Bullying Rating: High	

By utilizing the inverse rule for items 3 through 6, then combining the mean scores of all six Likert-style questions, the *Staff* domain average score was obtained. With an average score of 5.8, this domain is in the High range, indicating that GSA advisors within the current sample do feel that their schools contribute significantly to a positive school climate for LGBTQQ youth by being supportive to these youth, discussing SOGE in a positive way, and refraining from making derogatory remarks about LGBTQQ individuals. The *Staff* domain results do support the hypothesis that California GSA advisors report that their schools maintain a positive school climate for LGBTQQ youth.

Overall School Climate Rating

The Overall School Climate Rating is a composite of all five domain areas. By combining the five key areas assessed, an overall rating was obtained using the same rating criteria. Namely, a *Low* school climate rating falls between 1 and 3.0. A *Moderate*

rating falls between 3.1 and 5.0. A *High* school climate rating, and one that would support the current hypothesis falls between 5.1 and 7.

Domains	Mean	Rating
Training	2.9	low
Advocacy	3.9	moderate
Staff	5.8	high
Students	4.1	moderate
Bullying	5.7	high
Overall Mean: 4.48	Std. Dev.: 1.11	Overall Rating: moderate

The table above summarizes the results of each of the five domain areas and provides an Overall School Climate rating. Based upon participant responses, Training falls in the *low* range with a mean of 2.9. The Advocacy and Students domains are in the *moderate* range with means of 3.9 and 4.1, respectively. The domains of Staff and Bullying are the only areas which fell in the *high* range. The total Overall School Climate mean of 4.48 is in the *moderate* range. Based upon the current study, the hypothesis that California GSA advisors report that their schools maintain a positive school climate for LGBTQ youth can not be supported. The following paragraphs discuss capacity building factors to school climate for LGBTQ youth that were addressed within the study and may be useful for future analysis, research, policy building, and program planning.

Capacity Building

Capacity Building refers to factors that allow for the expansion of a voice and presence of LGBTQ youth. These may include the willingness of LGBTQ

individuals (i.e., students and staff) to be open about their sexual orientation or gender expression within the school setting and to seek help when needed. Visible assets or hindrances on school campus can also impact this area.

Item 1: I know of students at my school who openly identify as LGBTQQ (multiple choice response of yes or no):

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	32	97.0	97.0
no	1	3.0	100
Totals:	33	100	

The data from this chart conclude that 32 out of 33 respondents know of students at their school who openly identify as LGBTQQ. Only one respondent (3%) indicated that they did not know of students at their school who openly identify.

Item 2: I know of teachers or staff at my school who openly identify as LGBTQQ (multiple-choice, multi-response format):

Value	Count	Percent
no, I do not know of any teachers or staff who openly identify	11	33.3
out to select colleagues	14	42.4
to all colleagues	14	42.4
to select students	6	18.2
to all students	17	51.5

The data from this chart conclude that 11 out of 33 respondents (33.3%) do not know of any staff members who openly identify as LGBTQQ. Fourteen respondents (42.4%) know of staff members who are out to select colleagues, while the same percentage know of staff who are out to all colleagues. Six participants (18.2%) know of staff members who openly identify as LGBTQQ to select students. Finally, 17 participants, or 51.5 percent, know of staff members who are out to all students.

Item 3: When an incidence of sexual orientation and gender expression harassment occurs, I think students report the incident (Likert-style responses from 1 to 7).

	Count	Values	Percent
low	26	1-3	83.9
moderate	5	4-5	16.2
high	0	6-7	0.0
Totals	31		100
Mean: 2.4		Std. Dev.: 1.04	

The chart above demonstrates that 26 out of 31 respondents (83.9%) feel that students report incidences of SOGE-based harassment infrequently with scores of 1, 2, and 3 out of 7 points. The remaining 5 out of 31 respondents (16.2%) feel that these incidences are reported moderately often, with scores of 4 and 5 out of 7 points. Zero participants (0%) feel that these incidences of harassment are reported frequently, as indicated by scores of 6 or 7 out of 7.

Item 4: (in response to *Training* domain item 3: My school/district offers professional development training to educate staff about LGBTQQ issues).

Areas of training I felt were lacking regarding LGBTQQ issues (multi-choice, multi-response format).

Value	Count	Percent
N/A	16	47.1
Value	Count	Percent out of 18 respondents
intervention strategies	15	83.3
advocacy strategies	12	66.7
empowerment	11	61.1
resources	10	55.6
school policy	9	50.0
laws	8	44.4
risk factors	6	33.3
definitions	5	27.8
negative effects of harassment and discrimination	5	27.8
other	0	0

This item utilized a multiple-choice, multiple-response option with an open dialog box for individuals who checked the “other” box. The 16 respondents that indicated on the *Training* domain item 3 that their schools/districts do not provide training selected N/A for this item. Of the remaining 18 respondents who indicated that their schools or districts had provided staff training on LGBTQQ issues, 15 (83.3%), felt that intervention strategies were lacking in this training. Advocacy strategies, empowerment, and resources, were the next most frequent areas of weakness with 12 (66.7%), 11 (61.1%),

and 10 (55.6) respondents endorsing these. School policy was an area of weakness according to 9 participants (50.0%); eight respondents (44.4%) indicated laws, 6 (33.3%) indicated risk factors; definitions and negative effects of harassment and discrimination were noted by 5 respondents (27.8%). None of the participants utilized the “other” option box.

Item 5: The following asset/s on my campus support/s my work with LGBTQQ student advocacy (open dialog box).

Category	Count	Percent
Clubs, groups, or associations (including GSAs)	15	50.0
Staff	12	40.0
Administration	12	40.0
Community	2	6.6
Other	6	20.0

Thirty respondents contributed to this item. Individual responses were coded based on common themes. School-based and outside clubs, such as GSA, Anti-Bully Club, and the Queer Youth Task Force, received the greatest amount of endorsements with 15 participants (50%) indicating these clubs in their responses. The second most frequently mentioned themes were the support of staff members and administration; both of which were indicated by 12 respondents (12%). Two participants (6.6%) indicated a supportive community as an asset. Six participants (20%) also indicated support from miscellaneous sources, such as Leadership and Social Issues classes, library materials,

and a Positive Behavior Support Team. For a list of complete responses, please refer to Appendix C.

Item 6: The following factor/s on my campus negatively impact/s my work with LGBTQQ student advocacy:

Category	Count	Percent
Staff	10	33.3
Limited Resources/Time/Funds	7	23.3
Students	7	23.3
Community	5	16.7
Religious Groups	3	10.0

Thirty participants contributed to this item. Ten of them (33.3%) indicated that other staff members negatively impact their advocacy work with LGBTQQ youth. Staff were noted to ignore teachable moments, allow personal beliefs to hinder advocacy, and lack consistency when intervening in LGBTQQ-related incidences. Limited resources, such as time and money, were indicated by 7 participants (23.3%). Responses under this category included limited time due to curriculum demands, large class sizes, and time required to organize and advocate. Seven participants (23.3%) also indicated that students were factors in their ability to advocate. Students were noted to use derogatory comments, demonstrate bigotry, or exercise religious points of view to “witness to” GSA members. LGBTQQ youth or LGBTQQ-supportive youth were also indicated as hindrances to progress by being complacent or disinterested in attending club meetings. The community was noted to impede advocacy by 5 participants (16.7%). A

conservative community, lack of local role models, and ingrained cultural norms or gender discrimination were noted. Interestingly, one participant indicated that the LGBTQQ-supportive community contributes to her inability to advocate for students by failing to prepare them for “life out in the big, bad world.” Three participants (10%) listed local religious groups as factors impacting their student advocacy. One participant added that a large portion of the staff, including the principal of her school belong to a church which “advocates violence against the LGBTQ community because it is an ‘abomination.’” For a complete list of responses, please refer to Appendix D.

Item 7: Something my school could do to improve the climate for LGBTQQ students & staff is (open dialog box).

Category	Count	Percent
Training	17	58.7
Promote Awareness	12	41.4
Policy and Consistency	4	13.8
Curriculum	3	10.3

Twenty-nine participants responded to this survey item. Seventeen people (58.7%) indicated that training would be valuable to improve the school climate for LGBTQQ individuals. Specific types of training included interventions, review of policies, legal responsibilities, LGBTQQ issues, and resources. Twelve respondents (41.4%) indicated that their schools would improve their LGBTQQ climate by promoting awareness, such as increasing the visibility of LGBTQQ individuals and events, classroom dialogs, assemblies and events to “promote oneness,” and introducing GSA during freshman

orientation. Four participants (13.8%) indicated the need for policy development and a consistency of implementation of that policy, such as disciplinary action against discriminatory slurs. Inclusive curriculum was indicated by 3 participants (10.3%), including the suggestion for including a set curriculum for each grade. Refer to Appendix E for a complete list of responses.

Item 8: Any other thoughts (open dialog box).

This final item was provided to allow respondents to address any concerns not directly addressed through the survey. Four participants provided noteworthy comments, which are included here. A complete list of responses is included in Appendix F.

1. Bring speakers
2. There should be certain requirements that make these issues part of sex education and/or history courses.
3.I am the only openly LGBT person on a staff of over 200 people(.) Our staff members still aren't comfortable.
4. I think GSA's in a more accepting school, like the one I teach at, should be connected with a school in less accepting schools to offer support and perhaps link up via SKYPE etc. Students at my school are not very active in GSA, because they tend to feel less threatened by peers and could benefit hearing what it is like to be threatened, harassed and/or abused at school. I think connections should be between schools in different districts, not the same district.

These statements speak to the lack of capacity building assets on school campuses. Guest speakers to share experiences, openly LGBTQ staff, open communication among and

between schools all contribute to the development of a communal voice and sense of belonging for LGBTQQ youth.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion and Conclusion

Summary

Schools face many challenges to improving school climate for LGBTQ youth. Factors such as parental and staff resistance, heterosexism as the cultural norm, and lack of comprehensive policies contribute to perpetuate a hostile and unaccepting environment for these students. As a result, sexual and gender minority youth are a population at risk for bullying and victimization, substance abuse, academic failure, psychological illness, and suicidality. With such high stakes surrounding SOGE-based bullying, schools have an obligation to improve school climate and protect and advocate for these students.

The current study sought to understand California-based Gay Straight Alliance advisors perceptions of school climate for LGBTQ youth. The study considered five domain areas and a composite of those domains in addressing the hypothesis that California GSA advisors report that their schools maintain a positive school climate for LGBTQ youth. All domains and the composite were analyzed and rated as either low, moderate, or high in their support or promotion of a positive school climate for LGBTQ youth. An overall rating in the high range would support the current hypothesis. The five domains addressed were Training, Advocacy, Staff, Students, and Bullying. The results revealed that, while Staff and Bullying domains rated high for the promotion of a positive school climate, the domains of Advocacy and Students rated as moderate and the Training domain rated in the low range. The combined rating of all five areas fell within the moderate range, thus failing to support the current study's hypothesis.

Limitations

Creswell (2008) reported that leading educational journals often report fifty percent response rates or greater, depending upon various factors, such as instrument quality, respondent interest, and follow-up procedures (p. 402). The current study faced several limitations which greatly hindered the overall response rate. The GSA Network reported on their website that approximately 871 GSA clubs are currently registered through their organization (GSA Network); based upon this number, the current study achieved only a 4% response rate. With such a limited sample, it is not possible to state with confidence that these results would generalize to the population of California-based GSA advisors.

One factor that affected data collection was the fact that the researcher did not have direct access to participants. In consideration of participant confidentiality, the GSA Network served as a middle man between the researcher and potential participants by including the survey in the bi-monthly newsletter, and eventually, by sending the survey link directly to registered GSA advisors. As a result, the researcher cannot be certain how many individuals actually received the link. For example, e-mail addresses may have been incorrect, addressees may no longer be GSA advisors, or addressees may not have had computer access during the time of data collection.

In addition to this, potential participants may have chosen not to participate due to various factors. Personal interest in the current study may have been lacking; time constraints may have restricted some individuals; and it is also feasible that the electronic format of the current study may have deterred others. A majority of GSA advisors are teachers who have been approached by students and asked to take on this role. As

anyone who has ever worked in a school can attest, teachers' schedules abound with ever-increasing workloads. In addition to maintaining the classroom and teaching to a set list of standards, teachers have to complete professional development hours, contribute to after-school or extra-curricular activities (such as GSAs), and keep in contact with parents of ever-increasing classes (Barth, 2001). And with recent California budget cuts to education, these demands are only expected to increase. With such a full plate, teachers may be reluctant to set aside 20 minutes to complete a survey that is not perceived to have immediate and personal benefit.

Another factor impeding data collection, which compounds with the time constraints of California teachers, is that this survey was electronically based and accessible only by receiving an e-mail. While electronic formats are preferred methods for many individuals, others may not feel as comfortable exchanging data in cyberspace. In addition, the actual list of addresses was never made accessible to the researcher so appropriate follow up was not possible. The GSA agreed to send the survey one time only in an effort to respect their members' privacy and avoid perceived harassment.

Another limitation to the current study is that it was comprised of mainly Likert-style questions, allowing for limited expansion of ideas or additional feedback from respondents. GSA advisors were only able to provide information on specific questions as laid out in the survey. Yet respondents may have felt additional areas were of greater importance, but lacked the means of sharing this information.

Finally, GSA advisors perspectives may differ from those of other individuals, such as LGBTQQ students, principals and administration, and fellow staff with regards to

LGBTQQ issues. Keeping these limitations in mind, the obtained survey responses were analyzed and their results will be discussed in the next section.

Discussion

The current study highlights the overall lack of information being provided to staff about LGBTQQ issues. Policies are often absent or unknown, and when they are present, they are often inconsistently followed. Staff are provided with little to no training on laws, school policies, and common issues concerning LGBTQQ individuals. When training is provided, an overwhelming majority of participants report that the areas of intervention, advocacy, and empowerment were lacking from the presentation.

From the GSA advisors' perspective, their schools appeared to be only moderately successful in advocating for LGBTQQ youth in an efficient and consistent manner. While staff seem to have to have good intentions in supporting LGBTQQ youth, students are still heard to say derogatory comments about others' sexual identity or gender expression on a fairly regular basis and disciplinary action is inconsistently applied.

Staff remain unsure of their options for student advocacy, feel a lack of overall support from other staff and administration, and are less than willing to self-disclose. As a result, LGBTQQ students may perpetuate a state of victimization by failing to report incidences of harassment to staff and seek assistance.

Based upon the current literature review and study, it appears that, while California schools are moving in the right direction in improving school climate for LGBTQQ youth, there is still a considerable way to go before one can say that California schools maintain a positive climate for LGBTQQ youth.

Conclusion

With the recent passing of the FAIR Education Act, California schools will be required to include sexual and gender minority individuals into the curriculum. This law, coupled with the surge of recent LGBT-based deaths among California youth, will undoubtedly require California schools to take stock of their current policies and address the glaring holes to their current practices. This study will hopefully assist school administrators to improve their current practices, develop policies, and educate staff on ways to protect all students, including LGBTQ youth. In addition, by making school staff aware of the current weaknesses in their schools' LGBTQ advocacy, they will be better able to self-correct these errors in spite of a lack of written policy.

Regardless of personal beliefs and biases, school staff have an obligation to advocate for all students, including LGBTQ youth. A zero-tolerance policy on bullying, an at least cursory knowledge of intervention and advocacy strategies, and a willingness to encourage open dialog within the classroom are key steps in improving school climate for all students. The current study highlights the lack of training currently being provided to school staff on SOGE issues. The argument can easily be made that by providing comprehensive training to staff, the other areas necessary for positive school climate would be improved. With knowledge obtained from the training, school and staff would possess a greater understanding of the issues associated with SOGE, be more proactive in advocating for LGBTQ students, promote a more welcoming environment, and transfer this awareness to their students. Without adequate training, staff are unsure of what can and should be done to support LGBTQ students, what their role should be in this process, and the implications a non-supportive environment has on the entire

student population. Current and new legislation provides an impetus of change for the acceptance and support of LGBTQ youth in California schools, and a digression from heterosexist policies and practices.

Future Research

This study lacked a large enough sample size to suggest generalization to the population. Future research on this topic should attempt to obtain a greater response rate, thereby allowing for greater depth of analysis. Analysis by region, school district, and socio-economic status were not possible given the current study's limited sample size and would be valuable additions to the current body of research. State by state comparison would also be helpful in developing policies, curriculum, and action plans to improve school climate for LGBTQ youth. A comparison between California GSA advisors and California students may be possible, using the GLSEN annual school climate surveys, which would allow for a greater snapshot of California school climate. Finally, future researchers may consider pairing quantitative studies, such as the current one, with qualitative data to facilitate a greater depth of knowledge with which to work from in designing plans of action to improve school climate for LGBTQ youth, by identifying areas of weakness, precipitating factors, and assets to be built upon.

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APPENDIX A

Sample Survey

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE CALIFORNIA GSA ADVISORS' PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL CLIMATE TOWARDS LGBTQ YOUTH STUDY INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Introduction

The California Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) Advisors' Perceptions of School Climate Towards Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning (LGBTQQ) Youth Study, funded and conducted by Tracy Spitz as part of the requirements for the Master of Science degree in School Psychology, is designed to gain an understanding of the perceptions that Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) advisors have of their school's climate towards lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQQ) youth within California schools. The study utilizes a survey questionnaire distributed to California-based GSA advisors whose GSA clubs are registered with GSA Network.

Description of Research

The research will add to the limited literature we have about the perceptions of school climate from staff and service provider perspectives. Perceived strengths and weaknesses of current LGBTQ intervention and advocacy practices within schools and how effective schools are at providing a positive environment for LGBTQ students will be considered. We are hopeful that this information will be of assistance to administrators, teachers, school psychologists, school counselors, GSA advisors, parents, and students. It is also our hope that this knowledge can guide future research toward continued improvement in anti-discrimination, harassment, and bullying strategies that affect school climate.

Subject Information & Risks

Each participant will be provided with an electronic version multiple-choice format questionnaire to be completed online. The questions focus on the participant's perceptions of LGBTQ specific topics and questions. The questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Participant name, school name, and other identifying information will be withheld to ensure privacy and confidentiality. The risks from participating in this study include emotional discomfort or anxiety over the subject matter and boredom as a result of time associated with completing the survey. In an effort to minimize risks, the survey has been kept brief using a multiple-choice format to facilitate a swift response. No monetary compensation will be provided for participation in this study.

Confidentiality & Final Disposition of Data

Any information that is collected in this study that can be identified specifically with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your written permission

or if required by law. The cumulative results of this study will be published, but the names or identity of subjects will not be made known. All data/documentation collected as part of this project will be kept on file by the researcher at the conclusion of the study.

Benefit of Participation

While no direct benefit to the individual participant is to be expected, the study may present great benefit to the educational community overall by adding to the limited knowledge base we have on the strengths and weaknesses of current practices in promoting a positive school climate for LGBTQ youth. This knowledge can guide future research into continued improvement in anti-discrimination, harassment, and bullying strategies that affect school climate.

Concerns

If you wish to voice a concern about the research, you may direct your question(s) to Research and Sponsored Projects, 18111 Nordhoff Street, California State University, Northridge, Northridge, CA 91330-8232, and by phone at 818-677-2901.

If you have specific questions about the study you may contact Dr. Wilda Laija-Rodriguez, faculty advisor, 18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA 91330-8265, by phone at 818-677-2599, or by e-mail at Wilda.Laija-Rodriguez@csun.edu.

Voluntary Participation

You should understand that approval for you to participate in this study is completely voluntary, and you may decline to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy. Likewise, the researcher may cancel this study at any time.

- I have read the above and understand the conditions outlined for participation in the described study. Please print this page if you wish to keep a copy of this consent to participate.

EXPERIMENTAL SUBJECTS BILL OF RIGHTS

The rights below are the rights of every person who is asked to be in a research study. As an experimental subject I have the following rights:

- 1) To be told what the study is trying to find out,**
- 2) To be told what will happen to me and whether any of the procedures, drugs, or devices is different from what would be used in standard practice,**
- 3) To be told about the frequent and/or important risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that will happen to me for research purposes,**
- 4) To be told if I can expect any benefit from participating, and, if so, what the benefit might be,**
- 5) To be told the other choices I have and how they may be better or worse than being in the study,**
- 6) To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study,**
- 7) To be told what sort of medical treatment (if needed) is available if any complications arise,**
- 8) To refuse to participate at all or to change my mind about participation after the study is started. This decision will not affect my right to receive the care I would receive if I were not in the study.**
- 9) To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.**
- 10) To be free of pressure when considering whether I wish to agree to be in the study.**

If I have other questions I should ask the researcher, or contact Research and Sponsored Projects, California State University, Northridge, 18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA 91330-8232, or phone (818) 677-2901.

Please check here that you have read and understand your rights. Please print this page if you wish to keep a copy of your Subject Bill of Rights.

PARTICIPANT INFO

1. My gender:

- Male
- Female
- Transgender
- Questioning
- Decline to Answer
- Other:

2. My sexual orientation is:

- Gay/Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Straight/Heterosexual
- Fluid
- Questioning
- Decline to Answer
- Other:

3. My race/ethnicity (check all that apply):

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black/African-American
- Filipino
- Latino/Hispanic
- Middle Eastern
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White/Caucasian
- Other:

4. My age is:

POSITION & SCHOOL

5. Name of District AND School Zip Code (for analyzing data by region):

Name of District:

School Zip Code:

6. Number of years I have been a GSA advisor:

7. In addition to being a GSA advisor, my current position within the school is:

8. Number of years I have been teaching (or in current occupation if not a teacher):

9. Number of years at current school:

10. (if teacher) I currently teach the following subject/s (please include grade):

SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHIC

11. Current school student population (approx number of students):

12. I am a GSA advisor for the following type of school (please check all that apply):

- public
- private
- charter
- preschool/early education
- elementary
- middle school
- high school
- continuation or independent learning center
- special education center
- adult

13. Socioeconomic status of my school (please check all that apply):

- Low
- Middle
- High
- Other:

14. Please indicate the ethnic demography of your student body by % (Total must equal 100%):

<input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	American Indian or Alaska Native
<input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	Asian
<input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	Black/African-American
<input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	Filipino
<input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	Latino/Hispanic
<input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	Middle Eastern, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
<input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	White/Caucasian
<input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	Other

0 out of 100 Total

PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL

15. I feel knowledgeable about LGBTQQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, & questioning) concerns (1=none/very little, 7=extensive knowledge):

n/a 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

None/Very Little Extremely Knowledgeable

16. I feel my school does a good job in educating staff about LGBTQQ issues:

n/a 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

17. My school/district does a good job providing information to staff about new laws that affect LGBTQQ students (Such as: AB537-Student Safety & Violence Protection Act of 2000; AB394-Safe Place to Learn Act 2008; SB71-California Comprehensive Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS Prevention Education Act 2003; SB48-Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Respectful (FAIR) Education Act 2011:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

18. I feel my school does a good job in advocating for LGBTQQ youth:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

PERCEPTIONS

19. I feel my school is a safe place for LGBTQQ students, teachers, and staff:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

20. LGBTQQ School Policies

My school has policies in place that directly address LGBTQQ youth:

- yes
- no
- don't know

These policies are consistently followed:

d/k, n/a 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

21. My school is proactive in advocating for LGBTQQ students:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

22. I feel the school staff are generally supportive of LGBTQQ youth

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

23. Professional Development

My school/district offers professional development training to educate staff about LGBTQQ youth issues (1=no training, 7=regular training & updates):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
No Training Regular Training & Updates

I have participated in school/district provided LGBTQQ training:

- yes
- no
- n/a

If applicable, I learned a lot from the provided LGBTQQ training:

n/a 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

Areas of training I felt were most beneficial regarding LGBTQQ issues (check all that apply):

- n/a
- definitions
- advocacy strategies
- risk factors
- intervention strategies
- resources
- empowerment
- school policy
- laws
- negative effects of harassment and discrimination
- other:

Areas of training I felt were lacking regarding LGBTQQ issues (check all that apply):

- n/a
- definitions
- advocacy strategies
- risk factors
- intervention strategies
- resources
- empowerment
- school policy
- laws
- negative effects of harassment and discrimination

- other:

RESOURCES

24. I know of students at my school who openly identify as LGBTQQ:

- yes
- no

25. I know of teachers or staff at my school who openly identify as LGBTQQ (please check all that apply):

- no, I do not know of any teachers or staff who openly identify
- out to select colleagues
- to all colleagues
- to select students
- to all students

26. I have had students approach me for information and/or support about sexual orientation/gender expression:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Never Very Frequently

27. I have had staff approach me for information and/or support about sexual orientation/gender expression:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Never Very Frequently

28. I feel prepared to provide information and/or support for LGBTQQ staff and/or students:

n/a 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

CLASSROOM

29. I incorporate sexual orientation and gender expression into my curriculum (1=never, 7=frequently):

n/a 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Never Frequently

30. Other teachers on my campus incorporate sexual orientation and gender expression into their curriculum (1=never, 7=frequently):

don't know 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Never Frequently

31. I have paused a lesson plan to dialog about LGBTQQ concerns (1=never, 7=consistently):

n/a 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Never Consistently

32. Other teachers on my campus are likely to pause a lesson plan to dialog about LGBTQQ concerns (1=never, 7=consistently):

don't know 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Never Consistently

33. I have had guest speakers to my class (or taken my class to an assembly) with LGBTQQ speakers/topics:

- yes
- no
- n/a

34. My students are generally receptive to discussing LGBTQQ issues in a respectful way (1=very disrespectful/disinterested, 7=very respectful/interested):

n/a 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Very Disrespectful / Disinterested Very Respectful / Interested

CURRICULUM

35. Sexual orientation/gender expression are included in my school's sexual education curriculum:

- yes
- no
- don't know

36. Most of the staff who teach sexual education present sexual orientation/gender expression in a positive way (1=most are negative or refuse to teach it, 7=most are positive):

don't know 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Most Neg or Refuse Most Are Positive

37. I feel my school includes LGBTQQ individuals when discussing minority education/protected categories and vulnerable youth:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

STAFF re STUDENT

38. In the past 12 months, I have heard a staff member make a negative comment about a student's (actual or perceived)...

Sexual Orientation:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Never Very Frequently

I responded by (check all that apply):

- n/a
- doing/saying nothing
- confronting the person immediately
- pulling the person aside later to discuss
- notifying principal/administrator
- another staff member intervened
- Other:

Gender expression:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Never Very Frequently

I responded by (check all that apply):

- n/a
- doing/saying nothing
- confronting the person immediately
- pulling the person aside later to discuss
- notifying principal/administrator
- another staff member intervened
- Other:

STAFF re STAFF

39. In the past 12 months, I have heard a staff member make a negative comment about another staff member's (actual or perceived)...

Sexual Orientation:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Never Very Frequently

I responded by (check all that apply):

- n/a
- doing/saying nothing
- confronting the person immediately
- pulling the person aside later to discuss
- notifying principal/administrator
- another staff member intervened
- Other:

Gender expression:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Never Very Frequently

I responded by (check all that apply):

- n/a
- doing/saying nothing
- confronting the person immediately
- pulling the person aside later to discuss
- notifying principal/administrator
- another staff member intervened
- Other:

WITNESS VERBAL HARASS

40. In the past 12 months, I have witnessed a student being verbally harassed because of their (actual or perceived)...

Sexual orientation:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Never Very Frequently

I responded by (check all that apply):

- n/a
- doing/saying nothing
- confronting the harasser immediately
- pulling the harasser aside later to discuss
- sending harasser to office for reprimand
- counseling the harassee or referring them to the counselor
- another staff member intervened
- other:

Gender expression:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Never Very Frequently

I responded by (check all that apply):

- n/a
- doing/saying nothing
- confronting the harasser immediately
- pulling the harasser aside later to discuss
- sending harasser to office for reprimand
- counseling the harassee or referring them to the counselor
- another staff member intervened
- other:

WITNESS PHY ATT

41. In the past 12 months, I have witnessed a student being physically attacked because of their (actual or perceived)...

Sexual orientation:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Never Very Frequently

I responded by (check all that apply):

- n/a
- doing/saying nothing
- confronting the harasser immediately
- pulling the harasser aside later to discuss
- sending harasser to office for reprimand
- counseling the harassee or referring them to the counselor
- another staff member intervened
- other:

Gender expression:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Never Very Frequently

I responded by (check all that apply):

- n/a
- doing/saying nothing
- confronting the harasser immediately
- pulling the harasser aside later to discuss
- sending harasser to office for reprimand
- counseling the harassee or referring them to the counselor
- another staff member intervened
- other:

GRAFFITI

42. In the past 12 months, I have seen sexual orientation or gender expression based graffiti on school campus (1=never, 7=very frequently):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Never Very Frequently

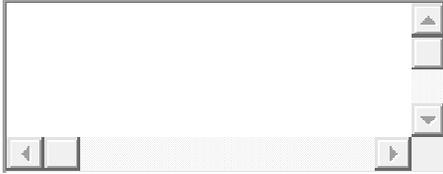
VERB HARASS

43. In the past 12 months, I have been made aware of (but did not witness) a student being verbally harassed because of their (actual or perceived)...

Sexual orientation:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Never Very Frequently

The typical school response is:



Gender expression:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Never Very Frequently

The typical school response is:



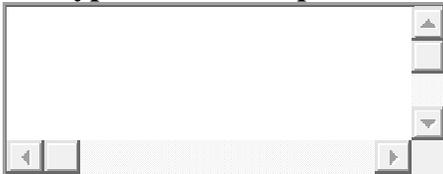
PHYS ATT

44. In the past 12 months, I have been made aware of (but did not witness) a student being physically attacked because of their (actual or perceived)...

Sexual orientation:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Never Very Frequently

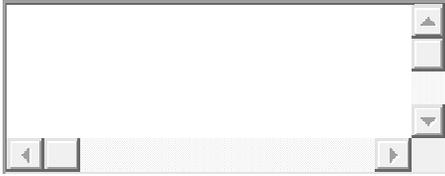
The typical school response is:



Gender expression:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Never Very Frequently

The typical school response is:



ANTI-LGBTQQ

45. In the past 12 months, I have been approached for help/guidance by a student who has been verbally harassed at school because of their (actual or perceived) sexual orientation/gender expression (1=never, 7=very frequently):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Never Very Frequently

46. In the past 12 months, I have been approached for help/guidance by a student who has been physically assaulted at school because of their (actual or perceived) sexual orientation/gender expression (1=never, 7=very frequently):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Never Very Frequently

47. I hear anti-LGBTQQ slurs directed at specific students, teachers, or staff:

- several times a day
- once a day
- once a week
- once a month or less
- never

48. I hear anti-LGBTQQ slurs at school not specifically directed at an individual (example: "that's so gay" to mean something is "bad or lame"; suggestions that athletic females are "butch" for not being feminine enough):

- several times a day
- once a day
- once a week
- once a month or less
- never

49. When I hear anti-LGBTQQ slurs of any kind...

I, or other staff who are present, step in:

n/a 1-never 2 3 4 5 6 7-always
Never Always

Other students step in:

n/a 1-never 2 3 4 5 6 7-always
Never Always

ACTION

50. When a student is harassed due to their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender expression...

The disciplinary measures typically administered are (check all that apply):

- don't know
- warning
- detention
- suspension
- workshop
- phone call/letter home
- other (be specific):

I believe the disciplinary action is adequate:

- yes
- no
- don't know

I believe it is consistently administered:

- yes
- no
- don't know

STUDENT REPORTS

51. When an incidence of sexual orientation and gender expression harassment occurs, I think students report the incident (1=never, 7=always):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Never Always

SUPPORT

52. With regards to intervening in LGBTQQ harassment, I feel supported by (1=not at all, 7=extremely supported)...

My school administration:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not At All Extremely

The school parents:

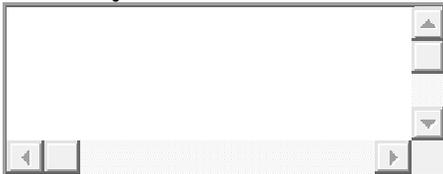
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not At All Extremely

My fellow staff:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not At All Extremely

ASSETS FACTORS

53. The following asset/s on my campus support/s my work with LGBTQQ student advocacy:

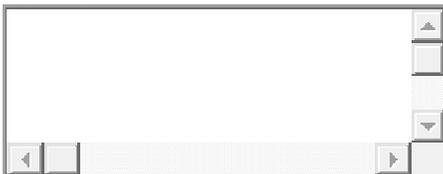


54. The following factor/s on my campus negatively impact/s my work with LGBTQQ student advocacy:

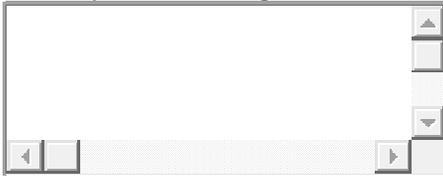


FINAL THOUGHTS

55. Something my school could do to improve the climate for LGBTQQ students & staff is:



56. Any other thoughts:



APPENDIX B

Frequency Charts for Survey Items

Training Domain Items

Item 1: I feel my school does a good job in educating staff about LGBTQQ issues

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1-very poor	5	14.7	14.7
2	9	26.5	41.2
3	6	17.6	58.8
4	3	8.8	67.6
5	7	20.6	88.2
6	4	11.8	100
7-excellent	0	0	
Totals:	34	100	

Item 2: My school/district does a good job in providing information to staff about new laws that affect LGBTQQ students:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1-very poor	7	20.6	20.6
2	11	32.4	53
3	4	11.8	64.8
4	5	14.7	79.5
5	2	5.9	85.4
6	4	11.8	97.1
7-excellent	1	2.9	100
Totals:	34	100	

Item 3: My school/district offers professional development training to educate staff about LGBTQQ issues:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1-no training	16	47.1	47.1
2	8	23.5	70.6
3	2	5.9	76.5
4	3	8.8	85.3
5	1	2.9	88.2
6	3	8.8	97.1
7-reg training/updates	1	2.9	100
Totals:	34	100	

Advocacy Domain Items

Item 1: My school is proactive in advocating for LGBTQQ students:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	2	5.9	5.9
2	4	11.8	17.7

3	9	26.5	44.2
4	5	14.7	58.9
5	8	23.5	82.4
6	4	11.8	94.1
7	2	5.9	100
Totals:	34	100	

Item 2: My school does a good job in advocating for LGBTQQ youth

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	2	5.9	5.9
2	5	14.7	20.6
3	4	11.8	32.4
4	8	23.5	55.9
5	8	23.5	79.4
6	5	14.7	94.1
7	2	5.9	100
Totals:	34	100	

Item 3: My school has policies in place that directly address LGBTQQ youth:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	17	50.0	50.0
no	10	29.4	79.4
don't know	7	20.6	100
Totals:	34	100	

Item 4: (in response to item 3) These policies are consistently followed:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
d/k, n/a	15	44.1	44.1
1	1	2.9	47
2	1	2.9	49.9
3	3	8.8	58.7
4	7	20.6	79.3
5	4	11.8	91.1
6	2	5.9	97.1
7	1	2.9	100
Totals:	34	100	

Item 5: I feel my school includes LGBTQQ individuals when discussing minority education/protected categories and vulnerable youth:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1-never	6	18.2	18.2
2	6	18.2	36.4
3	9	27.3	63.7
4	3	9.1	72.8
5	2	6.1	79.8

6	6	18.2	97.1
7-always	1	3	100
Totals:	33	100	

Item 6: Sexual orientation/gender expression are included in my school's sexual education curriculum:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	15	45.5	45.5
no	6	18.2	63.7
don't know	12	36.4	100
Totals:	33	100	

Staff Domain Items

Item 1: I feel the school staff are generally supportive of LGBTQQ youth:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1-never	1	2.9	2.9
2	1	2.9	5.8
3	4	11.8	17.6
4	4	11.8	29.4
5	8	23.5	52.9
6	13	38.2	91.1
7-always	3	8.8	100
Totals:	34	100	

Item 2: Most of the staff who teach sexual education present sexual orientation/gender expression in a positive way:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
d/k	13	39.4	39.4
1-neg. or refuse	2	6.1	45.5
2	2	6.1	51.6
3	2	6.1	57.7
4	3	9.1	66.8
5	5	15.2	82
6	6	18.2	100
7-very positive	0	0	0
Totals:	33	100	

Item 3: In the past 12 months, I have heard a staff member make a negative comment about a student's (actual or perceived) sexual orientation:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1-never	23	71.9	71.9
2	1	3.1	75
3	3	9.4	84.4
4	1	3.1	87.5
5	3	9.4	96.9

6	0	0	96.9
7-very frequently	1	3.1	100
Totals:	32	100	

Item 4: In the past 12 months, I have heard a staff member make a negative comment about a student's (actual or perceived) gender expression:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1-never	20	62.5	62.5
2	3	9.4	71.9
3	2	6.3	78.2
4	2	6.3	84.5
5	4	12.5	97
6	1	3.1	100
7-very frequently	0	0	
Totals:	32	100	

Item 5: In the past 12 months, I have heard a staff member make a negative comment about another staff member's (actual or perceived) sexual orientation:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1-never	27	84.4	84.4
2	1	3.1	87.5
3	1	3.1	90.6
4	1	3.1	93.7
5	1	3.1	96.8
6	1	3.1	100
7-very frequently	0	0	
Totals:	32	100	

Item 6: In the past 12 months, I have heard a staff member make a negative comment about another staff member's (actual or perceived) gender expression:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1-never	29	90.6	90.6
2	1	3.1	93.7
3	2	6.3	100
4	0	0	
5	0	0	
6	0	0	
7-very frequently	0	0	
Totals:	32	100	

Students Domain Items

Item 1: My students are generally receptive to discussing LGBTQQ issues in a respectful way:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
n/a	1	3.0	3.0

1-very dis.	2	6.1	9.1
2	2	6.1	15.2
3	1	3.0	18.2
4	3	9.1	27.3
5	12	36.4	63.7
6	8	24.2	87.9
7-very resp.	7	12.1	100
Totals:	33	100	

Item 2: I hear anti-LGBTQQ slurs directed at specific students, teachers, or staff:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
several times a day	4	12.9	12.9
once a day	2	6.5	19.4
once a week	7	22.6	42.0
once a month or less	9	29.0	71.0
never	9	29.0	100
Totals:	31	100	

Item 3: I hear anti-LGBTQQ slurs at school not specifically directed at an individual (example: “that’s so gay” to mean something is “bad or lame”; or suggestions that athletic females are “butch” for not being “feminine enough”):

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
several times a day	11	35.5	35.5
once a day	5	16.1	51.6
once a week	7	22.6	74.2
once a month or less	6	19.4	93.6
never	2	6.5	100
Totals:	31	100	

Item 4: (in response to items 2 and 3, above) Other students step in:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
n/a	1	3.2	3.2
1-never	2	6.5	9.7
2	9	29	38.7
3	8	25.8	64.5
4	6	19.4	83.9
5	4	12.9	96.8
6	1	3.2	100
7-always	0	0	
Totals:	31	100	

Bullying Domain Items

Item 1: In the past 12 months, I have witnessed a student being verbally harassed because of their (actual or perceived) sexual orientation:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
-------	-------	---------	--------------------

1=never	9	28.1	28.1
2	4	12.5	40.6
3	3	9.4	50
4	6	18.8	68.8
5	6	18.8	87.6
6	2	6.3	93.9
7=very frequently	2	6.3	100
Totals:	32	100	

Item 2: In the past 12 months, I have been made aware of (but did not witness) a student being verbally harassed because of their (actual or perceived) sexual orientation:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1=never	8	25.8	25.8
2	8	25.8	51.6
3	1	3.2	54.8
4	3	9.7	64.5
5	5	16.1	80.6
6	3	9.7	90.3
7=very frequently	3	9.7	100
Totals:	31	100	

Item 3: In the past 12 months, I have witnessed a student being verbally harassed because of their (actual or perceived) gender expression:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1=never	15	46.9	46.9
2	4	12.5	59.4
3	3	9.4	68.8
4	3	9.4	78.2
5	5	15.6	93.8
6	1	3.1	96.9
7=very frequently	1	3.1	100
Totals:	32	100	

Item 4: In the past 12 months, I have been made aware of (but did not witness) a student being verbally harassed because of their (actual or perceived) gender expression:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1=never	16	51.6	51.6
2	4	12.9	64.5
3	2	6.5	71.0
4	3	9.7	80.7
5	4	12.9	93.6
6	2	6.5	100
7=very frequently	0	0	
Totals:	31		

Item 5: In the past 12 months, I have been approached for help/guidance by a student who has been verbally harassed at school because of their (actual or perceived) sexual orientation/gender expression:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1=never	10	32.3	32.3
2	11	35.5	67.8
3	1	3.2	71.0
4	0	0	71.0
5	4	12.9	83.9
6	1	3.2	87.1
7=very frequently	4	12.9	100
Totals:	31	100	

Item 6: In the past 12 months, I have witnessed a student being physically attacked because of their (actual or perceived) sexual orientation (Likert-style responses from 1 to 7):

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1=never	29	90.6	90.6
2	2	6.3	96.9
3	1	3.1	100
4	0	0	
5	0	0	
6	0	0	
7=very frequently	0	0	
Totals:	32	100	

Item 7: In the past 12 months, I have been made aware of (but did not witness) a student being physically attacked because of their (actual or perceived) sexual orientation:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1=never	24	77.4	77.4
2	3	9.7	87.1
3	1	3.2	90.3
4	1	3.2	93.5
5	2	6.5	100
6	0	0	
7=very frequently	0	0	
Totals:	31		

Item 8: In the past 12 months, I have witnessed a student being physically attacked because of their (actual or perceived) gender expression:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1=never	31	96.9	96.6
2	1	3.1	100
3	0	0	
4	0	0	

5	0	0
6	0	0
7=very frequently	0	0
Totals:	32	100

Item 9: In the past 12 months, I have been made aware of (but did not witness) a student being physically attacked because of their (actual or perceived) gender expression:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1=never	26	83.9	83.9
2	2	6.5	90.4
3	1	3.2	93.6
4	2	6.5	100
5	0	0	
6	0	0	
7=very frequently	0	0	
Totals:	31	100	

Item 10: In the past 12 months, I have been approached for help/guidance by a student who has been physically assaulted at school because of their (actual or perceived) sexual orientation/gender expression:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1=never	24	77.4	77.4
2	4	12.9	90.3
3	1	3.2	93.5
4	1	3.2	96.7
5	1	3.2	100
6	0	0	
7=very frequently	0	0	
Totals:	31	100	

Item 11: In the past 12 months, I have seen sexual orientation or gender expression based graffiti on school campus:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1=never	16	50.0	50.0
2	7	21.9	71.9
3	3	9.4	81.3
4	2	6.3	87.6
5	2	6.3	93.9
6	2	6.3	100
7=very frequently	0	0	
Totals:	32	100	

Capacity Building Items

Item 1: I know of students at my school who openly identify as LGBTQQ:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
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yes	32	97.0	97.0
no	1	3.0	100
Totals:	33	100	

Item 2: I know of teachers or staff at my school who openly identify as LGBTQQ:

Value	Count	Percent
no, I do not know of any teachers or staff who openly identify	11	33.3
out to select colleagues	14	42.4
to all colleagues	14	42.4
to select students	6	18.2
to all students	17	51.5

Item 3: When an incidence of sexual orientation and gender expression harassment occurs, I think students report the incident:

Value	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1=never	4	12.9	12.9
2	18	58.1	71
3	4	12.9	83.9
4	3	9.7	93.6
5	2	6.5	100
6	0	0	
7=always	0	0	
Totals:	31	100	

Item 4: Areas of training I felt were lacking regarding LGBTQQ issues. (in response to *Training* domain item 3: My school/district offers professional development training to educate staff about LGBTQQ issues).

Value	Count	Percent
N/A	16	47.1
Value	Count	Percent out of 18 respondents
intervention strategies	15	83.3
advocacy strategies	12	66.7
empowerment	11	61.1
resources	10	55.6
school policy	9	50.0
laws	8	44.4
risk factors	6	33.3
definitions	5	27.8
negative effects of harassment and discrimination	5	27.8
other	0	0

APPENDIX C

Capacity Building Items-Assets

Survey Question:

The following asset/s on my campus support/s my work with LGBTQQ student advocacy:

Participant Responses:

- 1 ASB, Dance and the Arts
- 1 Administration; other GSAs
- 1 Fortunately we live in a fairly broad-minded community and acceptance is normal.
- 1 GSA
- 1 GSA club
- 1 GSA club, staff that care
- 1 Gay employee group.
- 1 I am an island
- 1 Library materials Admin. support Faculty support Student government support
- 1 N/A
- 1 Our club Peer Resource class anti bully club Leadership class library
- 1 Random teachers and the counselors
- 1 Spectrum, Social Issues classes, counselors
- 1 The GSA Club and numerous staff
- 1 We have a GSA and openly gay teachers.
- 1 Wellness Center
- 1 administration
- 1 counseling dept. GLSEN
- 1 moral support from administration
- 1 my direct boss my co-worker my students
- 1 principal coaches teachers GSA Club members
- 1 psychiatric social worker Assistant principal Dean
- 1 room for meetings and for students to be safe in
- 1 understanding community openly out safe
- 1 Counselors, school psychologist, outside service providers, deans, nurse, athletic trainer, health teacher
- 1 Administrative Staff Counseling Staff Librarian English Department Student Government Peer Counseling Program
- 1 Our principal is extremely supportive of our students. The atmosphere has improved since she took over. Through her guidance the ass't principals have followed suit.
- 1 -Positive Behavior Support Team -GSA student club -LAUSD Project 10 Advisor - LAUSD Office of Human Relations
- 1 I am an island...seriously, the only reason I haven't been fired for being openly gay and for advocating for kids is because I have an attorney on retainer
- 1 GSA network, Santa Cruz Diversity Center, Queer Youth Task Force, The Assistant Superintendent, The principal The Assistant Principal in charge of student services.

APPENDIX D

Capacity Building Items-Factors

Survey Question:

The following factor/s on my campus negatively impact/s my work with LGBTQ student advocacy:

Participant Responses:

- 1 Few positive role models in the area
- 1 Lack of funds Pressure of curriculum Lack of time for staff training
- 3 N/A, None
- 1 Nothing interferes at this time
- 1 Other staff members stepping in or using situations as teachable moments
- 1 Personal beliefs of some staff members
- 1 Restricted time for advising because I'm not a faculty member.
- 1 Student bigotry
- 1 Students still use derogatory terms and they are not always addressed by the faculty.
- 1 Students will not come out and attend club meetings
- 1 The fear of the school being perceived as supporting the "gays"
- 1 Two schools on the same campus
- 1 complacency, lack of proactive actions by staff (usually reactive instead)
- 1 conservative community
- 1 lack of time and training upper admin district office
- 1 not enough time to actually organize GSA
- 1 not sure
- 1 some students attitude
- 1 specific antagonistic religious groups
- 1 time, energy, class size increases
- 1 Because we do live in an accepting community I am not sure we adequately prepare our students (particularly the LGBTQ population) for life out in the big, bad world.
- 1 the lack of staff (including aide training), the lack of staff intervening when students are harassing other, the lack of educating students about LGBTQ issue, harassment, etc., the lack of a set and enforced policies to protect LGBTQ students and staff
- 1 Lack of funding Short lunch period Difficulty of fund raising Many LGBT students not interested!
- 1 I would like to see more out LGBT staff. Right now, I am the only out gay staff to all on campus.
- 1 some student members of the Christian Club who feel they must "witness" to the members of my GSA Club
- 1 Our ASB advisor is not on board. He will find subtle ways to infringe, delay, ignore our students.
- 1 There is a large conservative evangelical Christian staff contingent including the principal who attends a local mega church that advocates violence against the LGBTQ community because it is an "abomination"
- 1 Ingrained cultural norms or gender discrimination, rigid gender roles, religious beliefs, stereotypes

APPENDIX E

Capacity Building Items-Something My School Could Do

Survey Question:

Something my school could do to improve the climate for LGBTQ students & staff is:

Participant Responses:

- 1 Be more vocal/expressive in their support and acceptance.
- 1 Continue what we're doing
- 1 Force athletes to interact positively with the gay community.
- 1 Have more dialogue
- 1 Have more events that promote oneness
- 1 In-services for staff and Administration
- 1 Right now there is no staff development/training for LGBT issues.
- 1 Take stronger stand against name-calling.
- 1 actually following Seth's law
- 1 be consistent when they hear slurs.
- 1 discuss the issue, do more positive proactive LGBT activities, assemblies
- 1 educate
- 1 hire more campus supervisors
- 1 increased visibility
- 1 more awareness
- 1 more training for staff related to intervention or review of policies
- 1 require more staff development and inclusion of lgbtqq in curriculum
- 1 train more about specific issues around LGBTQ students be more open to GSA events
- 1 train staff on legal responsibilities
- 1 training at staff development
- 1 More direct instruction, more teacher training on how to handle slurs and hate speech, more inclusion of these topics in our instructional materials
- 1 Educate all staff and students about LGBTQ and the best ways to deal with discrimination and bullying
- 1 Have actual training and explain the legal issues as well as the educational ramifications that occur when kids skip school or feel threatened
- 1 Provide a summary of key points in the school district's policies regarding harassment and dealing with LGBTQ issues
- 1 -LAUSD Project 10 presentation -Trevor Project -GLIDE Gays and Lesbians Initiating in a Dialogue for Equality
- 1 Safe Space Training Introduce GSA during freshman orientation Encourage LGBT staff to "come-out"! Coordinate GSA activities with other local schools
- 1 provide regular trainings for all staff (not just teachers) to educate them about LGBTQ issues, resources, how to best support them in a classroom, how to integrate LGBTQ people into lesson plans, and how to intervene if they observe or are informed about harassment, have set educational curriculum for each grade,
- 1 Define what the office will do as far as discipline and what teachers need to do to stop harassment.

1 LGBT issues to be included in freshman orientation. Create a school climate committee to do research and arrange activities.

APPENDIX F

Capacity Building Items-Other Thoughts

Survey Question:

Any other thoughts:

Participant Responses:

1 Keep up the great work people! We can do this! We have the momentum and are making history!

1 Taking disciplinary action on students who violate harassment of LGBTQQ students

1 That's so gay didn't creep into vocabulary until people started coming out of the closet.

1 There are many parts of CA that are conservative pits, the high desert is one of them.

1 We have a fairly mellow campus.

1 bring speakers

2 no

2 none

1 nope.

1 thank you for listening to us in the Central Valley. We are here, but the closet is deep! :)

1 I think GSA's in a more accepting school, like the one I teach at, should be connected with a school in less accepting schools to offer support and perhaps link up via SKYPE etc. Students at my school are not very active in GSA, because they tend to feel less threatened by peers and could benefit hearing what it is like to be threatened, harassed and/or abused at school. I think connections should be between schools in different districts, not the same district. It would be kind of like a city in the U.S. having a "sister city" in another country to promote trade and friendship.

1 Things are SO much better here than when I first came to this campus 14 yrs ago. We have same-sex couples openly dating. Our club meets regularly, teachers bring up LGBT issues, harassment is really minimal. I think most of our students get through their day in good shape. But I am the only openly LGBT person on a staff of over 200 people? Our staff members still aren't comfortable.

1 The climate at our school feels heavily religious. It's hard to dialogue with people who raise "moral" grounds for suppressing LGBTQQ expression. I make it a civil rights issue.

1 This is an incredibly close minded community and this type of education is necessary but challenging. There should be certain requirements that make these issues part of sex education and/or history courses.

1 I hope one day we have to form support groups for straight-people-acceptance but I don't think that would ever be the case because the LGBTQQ population is automatically geared towards accepting others who are different.

1 Thanks for this survey!

1 Inter-school GSA/LGBT activities are difficult (almost impossible) because of liability/transportation issues.