CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

TRANSCENDING TOLERANCE: A FOUR-WEEK PROGRAM
PROMOTING RESPECT AND EMPATHY
FOR LGBTQ MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

A graduate project in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Science in Counseling, School Counseling

By
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May 2015
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DEDICATION

This graduate project is dedicated to my life partner, Dar, my one true love, my biggest supporter, my best friend, my “watermelon.” Without you, there was no possible way I could have completed this project and graduate program. You and I have gone through so much throughout the years and I am inspired by you every single day. When I think of happiness, I think of you. You love me unconditionally, and know me better than anyone else. You are, and always have been, my one and only soulmate. I love you.

To “The Mama”, my Daddy, Grammy and Grampy, my late Nana, and my late Aunt Lisa: All of you have encouraged and praised me ever since I was a little girl. You always told me that I could be whomever and whatever I wanted to be and that no matter what, you would support my dreams. I have always held your words of love and support inside my heart and whenever I felt like I couldn’t walk another inch toward my academic finish line, your love helped to push me one step further. I finally crossed it.

To my best friend, Sunny: Even though you and I haven’t been able to be together as often as we’d like over the last couple of years, you will always be the sister I never had. You were persistent with your tough love throughout my academic career, making sure that I never gave up. Well, I didn’t give up! Thank you for being a source of unconditional love and support.

To my four-legged family members, Cassius, Katniss, Ezio, Katie, Bella, Missy, Ophie, Rachel, Prince, Gigi, Gigolo, Echo, Juno, and Leeloo: Your warm hugs, sloppy kisses, fuzzy (and scaly) faces, wagging tails, silly meows, barks and purrs, have helped me to remember that life is fun and bright. You have taught me to keep metaphorically chasing after sticks, no matter how far, and to keep climbing trees, no matter how high.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my gratitude to the following individuals who have served as supporters throughout my time in the CSUN school counseling program, all of whom I credit for giving me the tools I need to be the best professional school counselor I can be.

To Dr. Shyrea Minton, my committee chair, and all-around mentor from the beginning to the very end of my time in this program: I started at the perfect time—when you did! My passion for guiding and demonstrating empathy to students who identify as belonging to a marginalized population intensified once I took your EPC 643 diversity course. You have been an exceptional professor and mentor toward me, and you are an inspiration. Thank you for keeping my spirits up when I thought I was going to fall, and for giving me a sense of optimism throughout it all.

Dr. Tovah Sands, being part of your program and in your classes helped me to understand why you are so compassionate and enthusiastic about the counseling profession. Your empathy, knowledge, and guidance will always stay with me. Thank you for allowing me a place within this wonderful program.

Dr. Bruce Burnam, without you and your EPC 602 course, I don’t think I would have ever finished my project on time. You truly know your “stuff” and I am inspired by your energy, kindness, and passion for your profession. Thank you for helping me begin this journey as well as tying up the loose ends.

Lastly, I want to thank my cohort. You will all be missed and I appreciate all the love, laughs, and support that you provided to me. I have made some wonderful friends from this program. Let’s change the world, one student at a time.
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ABSTRACT

TRANSCENDING TOLERANCE: A FOUR-WEEK PROGRAM
PROMOTING RESPECT AND EMPATHY
FOR LGBTQ MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

By
Erin R. McMichael

Master of Science in Counseling,
School Counseling

The purpose of this project was to develop a program that will foster a sense of empathy and respect toward students at the middle school level who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) by providing middle school counselors with an instructional guide complete with activities designed to address the harmful effects of heterosexism and anti-gay rhetoric. The LGBTQ adolescent population is at a higher risk for academic and psychological struggles compared to heterosexual students due to LGBTQ students being discriminated against and bullied by those who are intolerant or unaccepting of their minority sexual and/or gender identity. This four-week program will be administered by a Professional School Counselor who will lead 7th and 8th grade students in activities that promote an attitude of acceptance, understanding, and transcending tolerance.
Chapter I: INTRODUCTION

Significant and positive progress toward securing equal treatment and civil rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) American adults has been made within the last decade in the United States (Barabak, 2012). State battles over same-sex marriage rights continue to demonstrate legal support for this minority population, as there are currently 34 states and the District of Columbia (at the date of this copy) that allow adults identifying as LGBT citizens to marry the partner of their choice (Cable News Network [CNN], 2014). Additionally, the Defense of Marriage Act was recently struck down by the federal Supreme Court, which declared that “gay couples married in states where it is legal must receive the same federal health, tax, Social Security and other benefits that heterosexual couples receive” (Barnes, 2013, para. 3). However, many LGBT children, teens and young adults are continually being bullied and are more often the victims of depression, suicide and suicidal ideation compared to non-LGBT youth (Dotinga, 2013).

The recently-enacted laws that protect the rights of LGBT adults are positive examples of the country’s progress on tolerance toward LGBT people, yet there is an epidemic of American LGBT youth experiencing intolerant and aggressive behaviors performed by their non-LGBT peers. This anti-gay directed aggression has been correlated with high rates of anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation by LGBT youth--specifically middle school students--in a study conducted by Poteat and Espelage (2007). Too many examples of bullying, depression, self-injury, and bullying-related suicides from lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) children of all ages are attributed to an apparent deficit in acceptance and respect for the “other” (Birkett, Espelage & Koenig, 2009). The term “tolerance” is a hot-button issue in the media today
and researchers suggest that schools should focus on tolerance, bullying-reduction, diversity awareness, and multicultural education in order to increase positive peer relations and decrease harmful bullying-related outcomes (Espelage, Bosworth & Simon, 2000; Nichols, 1999). While some researchers assert that bullying peaks within middle school/junior high and declines with age as students transition to high school (Seals & Young, 2003; Smith, Madsen & Moody, 1999), others argue that high school students get bullied more often, but that the impact weighs more heavily on middle school students (Gruber & Fineran, 2007).

**Statement of Problem**

While it is beneficial for LGBTQ students to attend schools that have programs in place that confront anti-gay attitudes and bullying, more often than not, the focus of these programs specifically promote “tolerance:” a term that can send a confusing message based on the negative nature derived from some of its definitions (Chesir-Teran & Hughes, 2009; Nieto, 1994; Seligman, 2012). The focus on the term “tolerance” is controversial because while some definitions are negative, some are actually positive (Tolerance, n.d. [a]; Tolerance, n.d. [b]). Tolerance, n.d. [a]) defines tolerance as “willingness to accept feelings, habits, or beliefs that are different from your own” (Tolerance, n.d. [a], para. 1). There are other definitions of tolerance that are not as positive and the term tolerance is defined as passive acceptance rather than respectful affirmation. For example, Tolerance (n.d. [a]) clearly distinguishes the term “tolerance” in two very different ways: “acceptance” and “ability to bear.” In the latter description of “tolerance,” it is defined as “the ability to bear something unpleasant or annoying, or to keep going despite difficulties” (Tolerance, n.d. [a], para. 2).
The specific definition or version of the term “tolerance” that a particular school employs can make the difference between effective and ineffective outcomes in diversity acceptance, particularly for LGBTQ youth who are often the targets of intolerance and bullying. According to Von Bergen, Von Bergen, Stubblefield, and Bandow (2012), one version of tolerance denotes respect for all points of view, while another is defined as simply putting up with the presence or belief-system of the “other.” While there are non-profit organizations that provide diversity affirming lesson plans and programs online (e.g., Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, Advocates for Youth), there is a dearth of research in which educators and researchers suggest that schools implement programs that promote anything beyond a mere tolerance approach.

**Purpose of Project**

The definition and message of tolerating LGBTQ students is unclear and could easily imply that others should “bear with” this population on a school campus. Even if a school has the intention to promote acceptance, implementing a tolerance-based program could send students the wrong message. In order to successfully implement a program that promotes standards of affirming, accepting, and respecting LGBTQ students, schools must have dedicated counselors, teachers, parents, and peer-mentors to advocate for policies and programs that promote a school environment beyond mere tolerance. It is neglectful to ignore the bullying of LGBTQ students, which often leads these students to struggle with depression, anxiety, self-harm and suicide (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009; Chesir-Teran & Hughes, 2009). It is in the best interest of the school (and for the benefit of the students) to employ programs and policies that promote acceptance and respect for LGBT youth.
By clearly emphasizing that diversity should be celebrated and not merely tolerated, schools can pave the way to success toward decreasing LGBTQ-directed bullying and intolerance. The purpose of this project is to create a school-wide program for older middle school students that allows for school counselors to educate them about the core values and importance of multicultural and diversity affirmation, as outlined in Nieto (1994). The activities-based program would demonstrate a “transcending tolerance” paradigm and be implemented over a four week period at the middle school level because of the detrimental impact that bullying has on this age group (Gruber & Fineran, 2007).

Even though the citizens of the United States hold a majority view toward protecting LGBT rights (Lundry, 2013), these rights protect LGBT adults, not LGBT youth. Indirectly, children are learning tolerance from these new precedents which helps to pave the way for a more tolerant society overall. Schools must implement policies, programs, and curricula that promote acceptance and respect for diversity in order to protect and allow LGBTQ students to grow up safely and to thrive.

**Terminology**

*Culturally Competent School*: a school that ensures that students, regardless of their cultural background, achieve to high academic standards; a school that is one that is successful in both meeting the challenges and seizing the opportunities associated with multiculturalism and diversity (Simcox, Nuijens, & Lee, 2006).

*Diversity affirmation*: the many differences that students represent are embraced and accepted as legitimate vehicles for learning (Nieto, 1994).
**Heterosexism/Heteronormativity:** Prejudice against individuals and groups who display non-heterosexual behaviors or identities, combined with the majority power to impose such prejudice. Usually used to the advantage of the group in power. Any attitude, action, or practice – backed by institutional power – that subordinates people because of their sexual orientation (Green & Peterson, 2004).

**Homophobia:** The fear and hatred of or discomfort with people who love and are sexually attracted to members of the same sex (Homophobia, 2015).

**LGBT/Q:** An acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender” (LGBT, 2015). At times, a Q will be added for Queer and/or Questioning (Questioning, n.d.).

**Multiculturalism:** the co-existence of diverse cultures, where culture includes racial, religious, or cultural groups and is manifested in customary behaviours, cultural assumptions and values, patterns of thinking, and communicative styles (Multiculturalism, 2013).

**Multicultural Education:** a life-long learning process designed to empower all students to become knowledgeable, caring, and active participants in their communities. Education that is multicultural is inclusive and respectful of all ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds and engages staff, families, students and community (Multicultural Education, 2015).

**School Climate:** the quality and character of school life. It may be based on patterns of student, parent, and school personnel experiences within the school and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures (School Climate, 2015).
**Tolerance:** 1. a fair, objective, and permissive attitude toward those whose opinions, beliefs, practices, racial or ethnic origins, etc., differ from one's own; freedom from bigotry (Tolerance, n.d.[b]), 2. Willingness to accept feelings, habits, or beliefs that are different from your own, even if you disagree with them (Tolerance, n.d.[a]), 3. The ability to bear something unpleasant or annoying, or to keep going despite difficulties (Tolerance, n.d.[a]).

**Summary**

The following chapter focuses on research and articles that support the need for schools to implement programs and policies that promote an environment of affirmation, respect, acceptance and admiration for diversity—specifically toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth. The more pressing need for diversity programs to reach beyond the notion of tolerance is discussed, as tolerance can be interpreted as confusing and somewhat negative. The chapter begins with an outline of the current school climate in the United States (U.S.) and the effects that intolerance has on LGBTQ students. It also supports the positive impact “beyond tolerance” programs can promote for an entire school body.
Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will focus on the school climate for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning adolescents and the pressing need for school interventions. In addition, the harm in implementing programs focused on tolerance—a term with negative connotations—and instead promote a message of respect, affirmation, and equity for the school population with a focus on the well-being and safety of LGBTQ students will be examined (Nieto, 1992). Schools reflect societal norms and most school climates are heterosexist in nature, ignoring the presence and needs of the LGBTQ population, based on the numerous lawsuits against school districts alone (Brown, 2015; CNN, 2010; D’Marko, 2015). In particular, the need for diversity affirmation programs at the middle school level will be discussed.

Each section of the literature review will be closely tied to activities that are included in the Transcending Tolerance four-week program to be implemented at the middle school level. Each activity has been adapted by current LGBTQ-affirmation and inclusion programs tailored to the specific needs of the middle school population. There are many programs in place for students at the high school level. However, researchers argue a pressing need for earlier intervention, for example, during middle school, to prevent negative student health-related outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and even suicidal ideation or commitment (Harrison, 2003; Remafedi, 1992).

Heterosexism & Heteronormativity

When discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals is discussed, typically the term used to explain why this occurs is “homophobia,” the fear
and hatred of or discomfort with people who love and are sexually attracted to members of the same sex (Homophobia, 2015).

Chesir-Teran and Hughes (2009) content that acts of anti-gay discrimination are typically overt and consciously-made like name-calling, physical attacks, and denying privileges. However, there is a less popular phenomenon affecting the LGBTQ community, called “heterosexism” or “heteronormativity” (DePalma & Atkinson, 2009; Griebling, 2012; Griffin, 1998). Heterosexist or heteronormative attitudes or actions that occur are less obvious and much more subtle; it is the invalidation of the existence and importance of gay, lesbian and bisexual people by not addressing their needs. Green and Peterson (2004) define heterosexism is defined as:

Prejudice against individuals and groups who display non-heterosexual behaviors or identities, combined with the majority power to impose such prejudice. Usually used to the advantage of the group in power. Any attitude, action, or practice – backed by institutional power – that subordinates people because of their sexual orientation (p. 8).

Griebling (2012) explains heterosexism as being a societal acceptance of only two genders—male and female—and that each can only be attracted to the opposite sex. In addition, heterosexism supports the notion that all men should be masculine and strong, while all women should be feminine and vulnerable. Anything other than this is considered abnormal and those who deviate from this norm are subject to ridicule, marginalization and even physical violence. Mainstream media strengthens the heterosexism phenomena by focusing almost exclusively on heterosexuality by characterizing opposite-sex relationships as most desirable and in leading roles, while
depicting gay and lesbian characters as humorous sidekicks devoid of their sexuality (Griebling, 2012; Griffin, 1998). When heterosexuality is given an almost exclusive use of the world stage, homosexuality is in essence “dismissed” or ignored because there is nowhere for LGBTQ individuals to have a voice or presence (Griffin, 1998).

**School Climate for LGBTQ Students**

The National School Climate Center defines school climate as referring to: The quality and character of school life. . . based on patterns of students’, parents’ and school personnel’s experience of school life and reflects norms, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures (School Climate, 2015, para. 3).

Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) students are at a very high risk (compared to their heterosexual peers) for developing markedly negative psycho-social and emotional afflictions because of the discriminatory and violent behaviors aimed at them by their non-LGBTQ peers, stemming from both homophobic and heterosexist attitudes and behaviors. The problems range in nature and extremity from poor academic performance to committing suicide (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009; Chesir-Teran & Hughes, 2009); sexual minority students were reported as being four times more likely to attempt suicide and five times more likely to miss school because of feeling unsafe (Gruber & Fineran, 2007). According to Harrison (2003), other afflictions and problem behaviors such as depression and anxiety, drug and alcohol abuse, eating disorders and body dissatisfaction, and a high risk of contracting sexual transmitted diseases including HIV, can often coincide with one another.
Harrison (2003) asserts that LGBTQ students who choose to hide their sexual orientation are not exempt from psycho-social and developmental problems. This researcher discusses that “closeted” students can become hypervigilant about the way they dress, walk, talk, and act, so as not to give off any hint that they are not straight. Harrison argues that this hypervigilance and closeting of such an important part of one’s identity can hinder normal sexual and friendship development; closeted LGBTQ adolescents are prone to developing dangerous sexual habits and behaviors. Closeted males are prone to such behaviors as going to parks to meet strangers for sex, using the Internet, and public bathrooms for “inappropriate casual sex contact” (2003, p. 108). Closeted females are prone to getting pregnant on purpose to show that they are heterosexual. These behaviors can hinder a closeted LGBTQ adolescent’s ability to make healthy non-sexual friendships, and healthy emotional connections with appropriate sexual partners in their future (Harrison, 2003).

Birkett, Espelage and Koenig (2009) posit that the school environment is of paramount significance especially for LGBQ children (transgender students were not discussed). In particular, they argue in favor of the need for accepting school environments at the middle school level. In middle school, children are just coming into an age of sexual identity and questioning. The study supports that the negative outcomes for LGBQ students suffering from discrimination could be prevented and psychological functioning improved. In the study, when children were in a positive, accepting school environment, their use of drugs/alcohol, depression, truancy, and suicidality was remarkably low, regardless of their sexual orientation. Conversely, LGBQ students who were in negative school environments reported using drugs and alcohol, feeling
depressed, suicidal, and were truant more often than their heterosexual, non-questioning peers (2009). In addition to the overall effects from anti-LGBTQ bullying, Poteat and Espelage (2007) noted that there are some differences between how LGBTQ students react to homophobic and bullying behaviors based on gender. LGBTQ male students are reported to have a higher likelihood of suffering from depression, high levels of anxiety, personal distress, and a lower sense of school belonging. Female LGBTQ students tend to suffer from social withdrawal more than males (2007). The implications for the gender breakdown were not discussed, but they could serve as a tool for school personnel to differentiate their counseling methods between LGBTQ girls, boys, and those who do not identify with one gender or the other.

**Heterosexism at School and Community Resistance**

The argument for heterosexism being prevalent in schools is made by the various examples of school districts being sued (Brown, 2015; CNN, 2010; D’Marko, 2015). It is apparent that heterosexism in school is receiving considerable attention by the sheer number of lawsuits focused on schools discriminating against LGBTQ students by pushing heterosexist norms onto their student population. According to Brown (2015), the mother of a transgender teenager in Michigan sued her child’s school district because of the incessant bullying her child suffered as a result of him identifying as transgender. The teen who identifies as a boy but who was born biologically female claimed that he was forced to use the girl’s bathroom, use his given female-name, and was not protected against the constant bullying he faced while at school (2015).

Another case involved a teenage girl, who identified as lesbian, sued her school district for being denied entrance to her school prom because she wanted to bring a same-
sex date and her date wanted to wear a tuxedo instead of a dress; the school consequently canceled prom when she tried challenging the district on their stance (CNN, 2010). In Florida, D’Marko (2015) indicated that the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) took up a case on behalf of a middle school student who wanted to form a gay-straight alliance club on campus but was denied by the school district with claims that the club was not “an extension of the school’s curriculum.” The few examples of the many lawsuits of this nature contends that heterosexism in schools posits a negative influence over the students, mostly those who fell victim to the discrimination. While a number of the court cases ruled in favor of the plaintiffs (Brown, 2015; CNN, 2015; D’Marko, 2015), heterosexism in the schools is still quite active and continues to be a detriment to LGBTQ student health and wellness.

**Defining Tolerance**

LGBTQ students should be able to attend school, feel safe on their own campus and thrive. Unfortunately, Chesir-Teran and Hughes (2009) postulate that there is evidence that supports that this only happens if the school climate is deemed “tolerant” of their identity. But “tolerance” is a term that can only be truly understood within context (Thompson, 2000; Tran, 2005), and due to its various definitions, it can come across as more negative than positive. Seligman (2012) argues that one should be tolerant of another person or idea is asking one to accept what one rejects, and that the very term “tolerance” contains in its linguistic roots the verb “to suffer;” that asking someone to be tolerant is “[calling] us to live in cognitive dissonance” (p. 1291). The term connotes that whatever object or idea must be tolerated is, by nature, objectionable or wrong--otherwise
there would be no need to tolerate it. Nieto (1994) describes tolerance as “enduring” rather than “embracing” (p. 3).

Von Bergen et al. (2012) described tolerance as an agreement that everyone is entitled to their own beliefs and opinions, but that nobody has to agree with them. Tolerance is also deemed as “putting up with” people who are found unpleasant or disagreeable, and “to be willing to endure and to quietly suffer the discomfort of their presence” (2012, p. 112). Both perspectives on the connotations of tolerance as presented by Seligman (2012) and Von Bergen et al. (2012) are roughly the same when applied to the attitude of tolerance toward LGBTQ people. The message is that demonstrating tolerance for LGBTQ people and/or their lifestyle is alluding that they are objectionable or wrong; a population that others must “suffer” or “bear with” (Seligman, 2012, p. 1291). Because of its many negative definitions, there is no logical use for it when trying to show respect, affirmation, and acceptance (Nieto, 1992). It would be more justifiable to adopt a movement or ideal that leaves the word “tolerance” out altogether; to remove the stigma and guesswork from its true definition and to use a more positive and straightforward vernacular toward embracing the LGBTQ identity.

**Schools Promoting Tolerance**

Regardless of the negative connotations in the word “tolerance,” the schools that promote it are at least heading in a favorable direction—toward acceptance and affirmation, not away from it. The tolerance climate of a school relates to the prevalence of negative incidents for LGBTQ students. Chesir-Teran and Hughes (2009) found that schools that have anti-discrimination policies in place significantly contributed to the amount of victimization that occurred toward LGBTQ students. For schools that
employed anti-discrimination in their policies, lower incidents of overt anti-gay
discrimination were reported. If a school did not have any LGBTQ protections in place, it
was more likely that anti-gay harassment and victimization occurred. With whom one
attends school also has a significant effect (Chesir-Teran & Hughes, 2009). In a study by
Heinze and Horn (2009), the number of heterosexual students that interacted with
LGBTQ students positively correlated with more favorable attitudes toward gay, lesbian,
bisexual, and transgender individuals and they were less tolerant of discrimination.
Therefore, the more often heterosexual students had contact with or had LGBTQ friends,
the less likely they were to enact behaviors of violence, prejudice and discrimination
toward that particular population at school (Heinze & Horn, 2009).

Not every school implements a comprehensive tolerance program or policy, but at
the very least, some schools are trying to improve their climate by taking small steps in
what appears to be the right direction. Nichols (1999) demonstrates the importance of
LGBTQ students to have a safe space at school where they can express themselves
openly without fear of recourse or victimization. A “diversity room” staffed by school
personnel specially trained in diversity issues would be an answer to the pressing
problem of bisexual, gay and lesbian youth feeling isolated and unsafe. A diversity room
could help lower the rates of LGBTQ student truancy, drop-out, and improve self-esteem
(Nichols, 1999). Dunne and Papaz (2012) demonstrated a successful iteration of tolerance
within an elementary school by requiring students to participate in a culture club. While
the study did not exclusively focus on gay and lesbian students, it did promote acceptance
and tolerance toward people different from oneself.
Even teachers in their classrooms are taking steps to help change the tolerance climate. Avery, Sullivan, and Wood (1997) indicate that some teachers take chances in bringing tolerance and intolerance awareness to state-based curriculum; they take risks by introducing controversial discussions to their classroom despite the fact that most teachers must stay on a very specific curriculum pathway. These researchers focused on a high school civics classroom brought a tolerance debate into the classroom. Avery et al. argued that tolerance is something that must be learned because people are generally intolerant by nature. Most schools that teach civics curriculum remain focused on teaching linear, fact-based accounts from history and they often shy away from anything remotely controversial (e.g., discussing intolerance toward the Ku Klux Klan). But the researchers contend that students cannot be made aware of their true measure of tolerance unless they are challenged to answer hypothetical questions about groups they strongly dislike (e.g., If one hate the Ku Klux Klan, is he or she for or against their right to hold a political rally?). It is only then that students who think that they are tolerant may come to realize that they are, in reality, rather intolerant (Avery et al., 1997).

Levels of Multiculturalism at School

Nieto (1994) argued that in the realm of multiculturalism within schools, tolerance is limiting and unsupportive. Von Bergen et al. (2012) claim that the definition of tolerance has recently been changed and it is no longer sufficient within the teachings of respect for others and civility. Tolerance “does not go far enough—it is a half measure” (p. 113). These researchers stated that it is expected (by society) that we treat people equally, but it is acceptable to disagree with other people’s conduct or opinions (Von Bergen et al., 2012).
Moving beyond a discourse on tolerance opens a path toward acceptance, respect and admiration for diversity and “otherness.” Oftentimes diversity awareness programs are synonymous with multicultural education (Hollingsworth, Didelot, & Smith, 2003; Nieto, 1994). It must be noted, however, that there is a difference between multiculturalism and multicultural education. Multiculturalism is concentrated on inclusiveness and diversity celebration within the overall school climate. Nieto (1994) asserts that multicultural education focuses on including various points of view within curriculum based on many different cultures, not just the Anglo-Saxon point of view that most American schools have used for decades (i.e., monocultural education described below). Multiculturalism as an overall school climate is seen as virtuous because it requires inclusiveness, social justice, and mutual respect. It helps both professionals and students acquire self-awareness, cultural knowledge and skills (Fowers & Davidov, 2006). Nieto (1994) postulated that an ideal multiculturalism-embracing school would adapt multicultural curricula and social activities that respect, admire and critique many different cultures. Nieto introduced a five-level modeling system to describe varying levels of multiculturalism and multicultural curriculum within hypothetical schools; it begins with the least tolerant environment and ends outlining a model of the ideal school culture that mandates diversity affirmation and respect within both the school climate and curriculum.

The first level within Nieto’s (1994) five-level modeling system is described as “monocultural education.” The theorist portends that monocultural education is very common within American schools so that only the predominant White European-American culture is present and taught; this is the least ideal school environment. In a
monocultural school the student population is ethnically and culturally diverse, yet the administration is homogenous in its cultural representation being mostly Caucasian and male. The holidays celebrated and recognized by this type of school are traditionally European-American: Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, Independence Day, and Halloween. Within the classroom, students learn prominently about contributions by European-American visionaries and political figures; lessons about the Civil War briefly mention slavery suffered by African-Americans but there is no lesson about African-American history when the Civil War ends. Teachers in the monocultural school are predominantly European-American female and are proud to promote a “color-blind” perspective, which, in their minds, teaches equality and fairness by seeing all students as the same. Lastly, monocultural schools often abide by a student tracking system that places students on a particular “ability grouping” (Nieto, 1994, p. 2) path that administration sees as the most helpful way to promote student success. A monocultural school would be the most dangerous climate for an LGBTQ student because of the utter lack of acknowledgement of their existence. This type of school would have absolutely no resources for this student population and would very likely be at the highest risk for negative psycho-social outcomes (Nieto, 1994).

The second level within Nieto’s (1994) five-level modeling system is described as a “tolerance” school. This type of school environment accepts that there will be differences in culture but tries to assimilate the cultures into a melting pot type of climate. Tracking does not take place at a tolerance school, and teachers integrate curricula and adopt a team-teaching model. The curriculum is European-American centric, just like the monocultural school and even though there are some teachings of African-American
history, it is taught as an individually-based story rather than putting historical events into the correct context. For example, Nieto uses the Rosa Parks story by explaining that within a tolerance school, Rosa Parks is portrayed as an African-American lady who was too tired to walk to the back of the bus rather than her standing up for her rights as an American citizen. By de-contextualizing her story, she is seen to fit in with more mainstream American history of the “individual rather than collective struggle” (Nieto, 1994, p. 3). This widely ignores the facts of the beginnings of the civil rights movement. Students at a tolerance school are at the very least encouraged to study a foreign language, but if they enter the school already fluent in a language other than English, instead of integrating them into the schools as bi- or multilingual, they are forced into an English as a second language (ESL), or English language learners (ELL) curriculum. Racist remarks and name-calling at the tolerance school is against the rules and students who partake of such behaviors are punished. Teachers at a tolerance school are encouraged to attend workshops that address how to handle discrimination in their classes. Overall, teachers and administration at tolerance schools are poorly prepared to “deal with the growing diversity of the student body” (Nieto, 1994, p. 4) even though they want to learn more about it. They are taught that multicultural education is about being “sensitive to their students,” not about actually incorporating multicultural lesson plans, activities, and discussions within their curriculum. The intentions at the tolerance school are good, but the administration and teachers are just uneducated and uninformed on the true meaning of multiculturalism and multicultural education (Nieto, 1994). LGBTQ students may feel a sense of confusion attending a tolerance school because of Nieto’s discourse on the ambiguity of what tolerance really means. Again, just as a
monocultural school ignores the existence of LGBTQ students, a tolerance school appears to do nothing to embrace their identity as in need of special resources; assimilation seems to be the goal at this type of school. Asking LGBTQ students to assimilate is essentially telling them to act straight or hide and important part of their identity.

The third level within the Nieto (1994) five-level modeling system is labeled as “acceptance.” The acceptance school recognizes differences and “their importance is neither denied nor belittled” (p. 5). Upon entering an acceptance school, one sees signs in different languages the represent the school population. The school principal is neither Caucasian nor male; she refers to the school as multicultural and provides professional development meetings “for [all] teachers that focus on diversity” (p. 5). Holidays other than traditional European-American ones are recognized and displayed such as Kwanzaa and Chanukah. The literature-based curriculum includes contributions by international authors from around the world and foreign language courses have expanded their choices of languages. Tracking has been mostly eliminated but still exists for the highest achieving students. Students whose primary spoken language is not English are tested and if their results indicate that their native language serves their needs best, they are placed in a bilingual education program. The bilingual program is separated from the other students at the school and while initially helpful for the students within the program, once the three-year limit is expired they are mainstreamed into traditional classrooms; this can be problematic as these students have not been available to socialize with the other cultures at their school and may feel uncomfortable and ostracized as a result. Students who engage in racist remarks or discrimination against other students are
more severely disciplined than those from the other two school models. The principal holds student and parent meetings when these situations arise and lessons are taught to the family about the danger of racism and name-calling. The acceptance school might also host one day dedicated to diversity awareness and a multicultural fair on another day, instead of promoting these ideals on a day-to-day basis. The acceptance school does not accept the tolerance school idea of assimilation and the “melting pot,” but rather refers to itself as a combination--“salad bowl”--of cultures. The acceptance model appears to be safer for LGBTQ students but there is still no mention of their particular identity, so they may still feel invisible. At the very least, the school adopting the “salad bowl” community mentality serves as a more positive model of accepting cultures and identities different from one another instead of assimilating into the majority culture (Nieto, 1994).

Nieto’s (1994) fourth level is considered as a school of “respect.” A school with respect views diversity in a very favorable light. This type of school has faculty and staff that truly represent the culturally and ethnically diverse community in which it is set. The main office displays flyers and materials in languages other than English. Student awards and accomplishments on the bulletin boards are represented by students and student organizations of various cultural backgrounds (e.g., Spanish Spelling Bee, W.E.B. DuBois Club of African-American History). Teachers and counselors are given paid time off to attend professional development workshops at the local universities and the curriculum often changes to keep up with current educational and multicultural trends. The school curriculum is not limited to culturally diverse authored literature and historical figures, but rather, themes like “coming of age, immigration, change and
continuity, and individual and collective responsibility” (Nieto, 1994, p. 5) are implemented. Issues that are considered taboo and too controversial to talk about at monocultural schools are freely discussed at schools of respect. Slavery within the Black community pre- and post-Civil War in the United States is a topic safely talked about within the classroom. Other repressed groups in addition to those of the Jewish faith are talked about when teachers instruct students on World War II and the Holocaust and includes gays and lesbians, dissenters, Gypsies, and other non-desirables as coined by the Nazi regime. There is no tracking whatsoever at the school of respect and all students are held to the same high standards that teachers expect from them. Incidents of name-calling and ethnic-based harassment have been greatly reduced since implementing this model of respect, and it is thought to be from underrepresented students feeling less angry because they no longer feel invisible (Nieto, 1994). For LGBTQ students, the school that models respect is Nieto’s first mention of gays and lesbians within the modeling system. This is the level where LGBTQ students could start to feel visible and a lot safer than schools modeling the previous levels.

Lastly, the fifth level that Nieto (1994) models in a hypothetical school is one of “affirmation, solidarity, and critique,” and is the most highly regarded. A school based from these ideals is one that merely builds upon the fourth level of respect but welcomes the struggles that go along with being in a culturally diverse environment. Within a multicultural curriculum, values such as “equity” and “social justice” are discussed and Nieto recognizes the very personal and sensitive nature of these topics; conflict will naturally arise when the “basic values of different groups are. . . diametrically opposed” (p. 5). This level represents an understanding that culture is ever-changing, not static or
fixed, and that is why “critique” is part of this model. Nieto argues that for students to truly evolve within a culturally diverse environment, they must be able to look within themselves at their own cultures and critique them. Without an understanding of their own culture’s shortcomings, a blind allegiance to their cultural background occurs and there is no growth; Nieto refers to this as staying in a “romantic” or “exotic” stage.

Diversity within this school model is both celebrated and critiqued in order for students to grasp a more objective understanding of the struggles that culturally-based groups often have. The motto of this school is on a banner in front of the school that proclaims “LEARN, REFLECT, QUESTION, AND WORK TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE” (Nieto, 1994, p. 6). The school building itself contains much more than classrooms. Within the campus grounds, there is a garden that students and faculty tend to and harvest; there is a large dance studio that serves students who wish to practice “traditional dance from the Philippines, European ballet, and modern American dance” (p. 6). The cafeteria serves up cuisine from all over the world, not just American fare. Within the classrooms, the walls are decorated with many different displays and artifacts from every part of the world. The desks are not set up as a traditional monocultural classroom of rows facing the teacher, but rather some classrooms have small tables for groups, while others have no desks at all to facilitate movement. There is no use of the term “foreign language” and all students are required to take at least a second language; the school refers to itself as multilingual. It is perhaps the curriculum that shows the most contrast to the monocultural school. Teachers are very focused on teaching critical thinking and original thought; they teach students to look at all angles of a story. The very meaning of “America” is thought of and talked about at this school of affirmation,
solidarity, and critique (Nieto, 1994). LGBTQ students would likely thrive in a school environment that represents affirmation, solidarity and critique, because students in this model are critical thinkers that challenge their biases and irrational belief systems.

The Nieto (1994) outlining of the levels of diversity affirmation and multiculturalism within the schools is just one piece that speaks to the types of school climates that exist in America, but nonetheless is relevant. Hollingsworth et al. (2003) argue that current curricula in modern schools are not adequately preparing children for real-world situations that contend with discrimination, prejudice, and violence based on ethnicity, identity and culture. Children are dealing with these types of fearful situations more-so today because they are interacting with more diverse populations than ever before. Children from the past and some children today that live in more homogeneous societies were able to escape tolerance education because the notion of empathy toward the “other” was not something they ever had to face (Von Bergen et al., 2012). A school that models diversity affirmation would teach students not to fear other cultures because they would be educated about them and live side-by-side in solidarity and respect (Nieto, 1994).

Transcending Tolerance School Programs

It may take quite a long time for schools to reach a level of diversity affirmation, solidarity and respect, but the very least a school can do is implement programs to foster these ideals. Many schools across America are currently doing exactly that. Hollingsworth et al. (2003) introduces the framework for a school-wide program called *REACH Beyond Tolerance* which helps to address these problems and promotes the positive aspects of being different and encourages intergroup contact and socializing. The
core concepts of a program like *REACH* are based in empathy, responsibility, attitude, cultural knowledge and assertions of beliefs (Hollingsworth et al., 2003).

To demonstrate the concept of responsibility, Hollingsworth et al. (2003) suggest that teachers involve very young children in rule making and conflict resolution; to help their students understand their own cultural worldviews and biases so that they can understand that how they see the world is not how others may see the world. Another suggestion is for teachers to use stories that illustrate consequences of actions in order to help students understand how to discuss controversial issues responsibly (Hollingsworth et al., 2003).

According to Hollingsworth et al. (2003), teaching empathy requires a way to convey something that children are already familiar with themselves, by letting them know “how it feels to be treated unfairly and to have one’s feelings hurt” (p. 144). Some ideas suggested for teachers on teaching empathic values include encouraging and respecting students to speak about their own stories of injustice or discrimination—to give them a safe space for this type of expression. If the lesson is not meaningful to the student, it is unlikely any learning will take place. Role-playing historical events can help teach empathy because a student actually “lives” as that person for a short while. Additionally, allowing guest speakers to come to the classroom to speak about their realities can help deteriorate stereotypes held by the students (2003). For example, if the students are engaged in an activity that involves a presentation by a Latino person talking about her love of being a lawyer, they might question their own stereotypes about the Latino population; if they listen to a person with a hearing disability tell her story on how
she became a cardiothoracic surgeon, they might question their prejudgments on people with physical disabilities.

On the subject of pre-held notions and attitudes, the REACH program emphasizes that attitude is everything when it comes to treating people with fairness, equality, and instilling a sense of hope in other people. When children respect others, they learn to respect themselves. Suggested activities to improve the attitude include team-building or collaborative work so that students learn how to cooperate positively with one another (Hollingsworth et al., 2003).

Within the REACH program, cultural knowledge must be learned about one’s own culture as well as others’ cultures. This is another way for students to be rid of stereotypes and prejudices about group members with whom they are unfamiliar or uncomfortable. Having students use family genograms, interviewing family members, or studying their own genealogy helps them to learn cultural history. Being sure to represent various cultures within lectures, textbooks and activities can help to bring about cultural knowledge and reduce stereotypes as well (Hollingsworth et al., 2003).

Lastly, according to Hollingsworth et al. (2003), having students assert their beliefs (i.e. “Hold Your Ground,” the “H” in “REACH”) should only be addressed after all the other key concepts have been taught. It is at this point that students have come to a more clear understanding of their own and others’ cultures. This helps breed confidence in a child’s own culture instead of being ashamed or ignorant to it. In order to communicate this concept, it is suggested that teachers use role-play or debate situations with open-ended answers and to “teach conflict resolution skills;” “teach assertive decision-making techniques” (Hollingsworth et al., 2003, p. 148). Additionally, it helps
the students when assertiveness is given as a training module and the students can practice asserting themselves when they feel insulted or discriminated against (Hollingsworth et al., 2003).

The REACH program is one in-depth example of a program that conveys going beyond tolerance. There are several programs put in place within American schools that promote respect and empathy specifically for LGBTQ students. When selecting a program to implement, what is most important is that it demonstrates diversity affirmation, not merely tolerance (Nieto, 1992; Nieto, 1994). The *Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network* (GLSEN) offers a multitude of resources to promote respect on school campuses; one such resource is curriculum-based that calls for LGBTQ inclusion within classroom instruction. Within one of the lesson plans is an instructional piece titled “Curriculum as Window & Mirror.” The idea is to show that curriculum can be both a mirror and a window: a mirror that reflects individuals and their experiences back at them, and a window that provides the opportunity to see and understand the perspectives of individuals with different identities. GLSEN (2014) also ties LGBTQ inclusiveness into the Common Core State Standards by suggesting themes during writing prompts that involve LGBTQ cases (e.g., instruct students to write an essay comparing and contrasting past interracial marriage bans with current same-sex marriage laws in the United States). Even mathematics can be inclusive by using LGBTQ-related statistics within word problems (e.g., assign students to analyze the demographic trends reflected in the 2010 Census by using a graph) (GLSEN, 2014).

GLSEN (2014) has an additional resource that promotes sensitivity to and awareness of the harm that using anti-gay language causes LGBTQ students. The
particular educator’s guide for speech awareness is called “ThinkB4YouSpeak: Educator’s Guide for Discussing and Addressing Anti-Gay Language among Teens.” The guide outlines the program and activities step-by-step and begins with the statistic that “9 out of 10 LGBT students hear the word ‘gay’ used in a negative way often or frequently in school” and “nearly 3 out of 4 . . . report hearing . . . homophobic remarks such as ‘dyke’ or ‘faggot’ often or frequently at school” (GLSEN, 2014, p. 4). One of the program’s activities fosters discussion among students by having educators show commercials that use the epithet “that’s so gay” by turning it around into a pejorative that would make more sense to students that do not understand the insulting nature of that expletive. Another activity called “Where Do I Stand?” gets students literally moving about the classroom by asking them questions about their feelings on the use of anti-gay language. If a student agrees or disagrees with a statement such as “I have personally used terms like ‘faggot’ and ‘dyke’ with my peers,” they physically take a step toward or away from the center of the room. The lesson is to see where students both literally and figuratively “stand” on the anti-gay language problem (GLSEN, 2014).

**Transcending Tolerance at the Middle School Level**

When the discussion of promoting respect for LGBTQ students at the schools is introduced, one must assume that students are already forming their own sexual identities and the opinions that go along with them. Some research suggests that there are fundamental biological differences between heterosexual and LGBTQ people (Bogaert, Friesen, & Klentrou, 2001). But this is not an argument on whether or not one is born with their sexual orientation, but rather an assertion that most students at least come into their sexual identity at a similar age to one another; it is this time when the “transcending
tolerance” discussion should start. Rather than waiting until high school when most students have likely already formed their opinions about sexual identities, school climate programs that promote respect should be introduced as early as they can while it is relevant and important to the students it affects (Harrison, 2003).

According to Harrison (2003), students in the United States enrolled in middle school (or junior high) are between the ages of 10 and 14 years. Proposing a “transcending tolerance” program at the middle school level makes sense because it is during these ages that adolescents start realizing their sexual attractions. In relation to the full onset of puberty, sexual attraction typically begins biologically at 12 years old for females and 14 years old for males (in Western culture); some sexual attractions begin as early as 10 years old (Harrison, 2003). The uncertainty of one’s sexual orientation declines with age, with the highest prevalence of adolescents being unsure between ages 12 and 14 (Remafedi, 1992).

Remafedi (1992) asserts the fact that students who are either unsure of their sexual orientation, or know that they are gay or bisexual but do not openly admit it makes it more difficult to pinpoint exactly who might need help. This researcher reported that only 1.4% of adolescents aged 12-20 self-identified as gay, bisexual, or unsure, but according to the Kinsey studies from the 1940s and 50s, Remafedi (1992) stated that the actual number must be closer to 10%. For these reasons and more, Harrison (2003) proposes a sexual and gender “anticipatory guidance” (p. 107) at these early adolescent ages rather than later. Additionally, students at the middle school age who identify as LGBTQ are in a “particularly stressful” stage in life and could use the guidance as they are realizing their same-sex sexual attractions or identity. Adolescents who identify as
LGBTQ already face stress from belonging to a stigmatized minority group. But even more stressful is the notion that they were not born to realize their minority status like other marginalized group members realize at an earlier age (e.g., ethnic minority-identified individuals); this is something that LGBTQ individuals grow to realize and they must contend with the unique stressors that go alongside “becoming” a member of a stigmatized minority group (Harrison, 2003).

Implementing a “transcending tolerance” program earlier than high school relates to adolescent coping ability. Compared to the effects on high school adolescents, Gruber and Fineran (2007) reported that middle school girls have a more difficult time coping with the effects of bullying and sexual harassment even though high school girls reported more instances of it. Supporting middle school students by promoting coping skills could diminish the impact of bullying and sexual harassment, but there needs to be a preventative measure put in place so the bullying does not initially occur. The impetus of coping should not be solely placed in the victim’s hands, as it is the responsibility of the perpetrators to prevent harassment and bullying.

The need for implementing a middle school-wide program advocating for a “transcending tolerance” position toward LGBTQ students strongly exists and there is much improvement to be made to current programs that only promote tolerance. Adopting a systemic and curricular change must occur in order for real and positive change to commence. In order to begin the conversation, a school can at the very least, implement or adapt from an existing program that transcends the notion of tolerance and speaks to the vulnerabilities of middle school students, both LGBTQ and heterosexual alike. However, a school should not just pick just any program or design one without
proper research-backed methodology. It is essential for a school program to be grounded in solid theoretical research in order to be effective, and when working with students to promote respect and empathy toward a population that might not elicit those feelings from certain students to begin with, challenging those attitudes and belief systems calls for a particular theoretical framework. For this particular program, the activities incorporated are based on the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) model.

CBT: “You Change your Thoughts, You Change your World”

The impetus behind the well-established theory that helps people gain a better understanding of their feelings in relation to their beliefs and behaviors can be summed up by the famous quote from Reverend Norman Vincent Peale (n.d.). It implies that our thoughts create our worldview, and if our thoughts change, it must also be true that a change in our worldview and response to the world would follow. Ametrano and Constantino (2013) summarized that a person’s perceptions about situations is directly related to one’s feelings about it and the behaviors that proceed; this is the main tenet of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Its proponents adhere to the notion that when there is a change in perception, changes in the related feelings and behaviors follow; it is seen as a triangular concept whereby when one point on the triangle is affected so too are the others (Ametrano & Constantino, 2013). CBT is a widely-used therapeutic approach by psychotherapists and counselors to help clients overcome personal crises or cope with feelings associated with phobias, anxiety, depression, trauma, and many other behavioral and psychological issues (Butler, Chapman, Forman, & Beck, 2006).

When implementing a school program that has a goal of fostering empathy and respect toward a stigmatized population, not all students are going to necessarily be ready
to challenge their belief systems if they are not aligned with empathy and respect. The CBT framework is well-grounded in research but has evolved over the years to adapt to modern needs (Friedberg, Hoyman, Behar, Tabbarah, Pacholec, Keller, & Thordarson, 2014). Friedberg et al. (2014) even refers to CBT as the “gold standard” (p. 5) for treating children in psychotherapy. The consensus is that the evolution of CBT is necessary to fit the cultural diversity of today. This is known as “third wave CBT” (p. 9) and in particular, one of the newer culturally-friendly approaches to CBT is referred to as acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT). When used with adolescents, “ACT . . . is a developmentally modified approach that increases psychological flexibility and decreases emotional avoidance in teenagers” (Friedberg et al., 2014, p. 9).

In a study conducted by Lillis and Hayes (2007), the ACT approach was implemented to “[reduce] racial and ethnic prejudice among college students” (p. 389). Among the study participants were 13 male and 9 female college undergraduates and the experiment took place within the students’ college course on the psychology of racial differences. One group took their course and were presented with a typical instructional lecture on the topic of reducing racial attitudes. The other group took their course but the ACT approach was applied in order to foster racial attitude reduction. Both groups were asked to fill out a questionnaire on their attitudes toward particular racial and ethnic groups five times throughout their semester within their psychology course. The authors found that the students who were in the course that implemented the ACT approach demonstrated a significant increase in their own bias awareness, acceptance and flexibility, thought control, and positive actions, compared to the group who received a typical lecture-based course (Lillis & Hayes, 2007).
Lillis and Hayes (2007) supported that the acceptance and commitment therapy approach helped students by understanding their own processes of judgment and evaluation and when that occurred, they attended less to their feelings about the racism-based target. As a result, “their behavior became more flexible” (p. 405). When students were lectured on the topic, they tuned out and did not display empathy or inner-awareness with regards to racial topics. The authors contended that the results of the study showed promise by helping to reduce prejudice and wish to continue this approach by adding a mindfulness aspect to it. A “transcending tolerance” program should, at its core, be based in a cognitive-behavioral therapy framework due to the goal of making students more aware of their own perceptions and belief systems. By approaching students with a program that aims to reduce prejudice, discrimination, and bullying toward LGBTQ students, implementing the ACT approach within the curriculum could be very effective (Lillis & Hayes, 2007).

Transcending Tolerance Program: A Psycho-Educational Approach

A program to increase empathy and respect that is based in a cognitive-behavior therapy approach would be best delivered as a classroom-based psycho-educational large group collaboration. In particular, for a transcending tolerance program, the psycho-educational approach would be best structured as an integration of group activities, discussion, and educational instruction by its facilitator, such as a school counselor. Furr (2000) contends that psycho-educational groups can include cognitive behavioral topics and each topic activity can be designed based on several categories: self-assessment, cognitive restructuring, role-playing, imagery, creative arts, body awareness and
homework. The activities included in a transcending tolerance program would be most effective by including the categories that Furr recommends.

Furr (2000) gives a modeled structure on how to effectively run a psycho-educational group. The structure is outlined by providing a statement of purpose, establishing goals, setting objectives, selection of content, designing exercises, and evaluation. A school that wishes to run a classroom-based psychoeducational group can follow these steps or implement a program that includes the steps. Additionally, Furr recommends that the class group have a specific focus and avoid being too broad. The program should have detailed instructions in order to be facilitated effectively. Lastly, the activities within the program should fit well within the scope of the group’s specific goals (Furr, 2000). Even though this program is to be implemented as a class-by-class activities-based curriculum, it can be defined as a school-wide program being used as a pilot to introduce the need to effect whole-school policy changes to protect LGBTQ students.

The School Counselor’s Role in Facilitating Cultural Competency

When deciding who to designate as the facilitator for a transcending tolerance program, the training and expertise of the Professional School Counselor makes the most sense, based on the following research by Simcox, Nuijens, and Lee (2006). As Nieto (1994) supposes in the five model school climate settings, if a school wants to implement a program that focuses on transcending tolerance for LGBTQ students, it would follow that they want to improve their overall school climate by trying to be more culturally competent (with an end goal of cultural proficiency [Lindsey & Terrell, 2009]); the school would have moved beyond the monocultural and/or tolerance-based educational
models if they were to implement the transcending tolerance program. Due to the Professional School Counselor’s training and student-centered compassionate and equitable approach, they are best-equipped to facilitate a program focused on fostering empathy and respect; this could potentially improve upon the school’s cultural competency (Simcox et al., 2006).

A culturally competent school climate is one that promotes academic achievement for all students, but one whose faculty and administration understand that the road to success is not the same for every student. Academic achievement or success can be dependent upon a student’s cultural background and identity. The administration, teachers, counselors, and staff of a culturally competent school will do everything in their power to provide culturally diverse students the access they need to the various resources required for academic achievement (Simcox et al., 2006).

Simcox et al. (2006) make the case that when choosing to promote a culturally competent school climate, the school counselor is well-trained in this area. The authors claim that due to the evolution of schools and their population being more diverse, school counselors are trained to focus on using a systemic approach when guiding students from diverse backgrounds; that school counselors understand the many influences in and around the student’s life that lead to success or challenges within their academic life. There are various levels that frame the culturally competent school, and a competent school counselor can speak to the needs of students from each level (Simcox et al., 2006).

Simcox et al. (2006) explain that level one focuses on student-centered interventions at both the individual and group level. School counselors can facilitate individual or group sessions with students, depending on their needs and cultural values.
If placed within a group, however, the researchers suggest that the school counselor should take care to place students together methodically. For one group, if the topic is on self-awareness, the counselor should keep the group culturally homogenous. For another group, focusing on cultural diversity and interpersonal relations, it would be best to make the group more culturally heterogeneous (Simcox et al., 2006).

Simcox et al. (2006) describe level two as focused on family empowerment, a very important part of some students’ cultural background. A school counselor would speak to families of all backgrounds and provide them with the guidance most appropriate to their needs. A school counselor could collaborate with teachers and administrators to assist families with an understanding of school practices, curriculum, assessment and placement, and help foster teacher-parent and administrator-parent relationships (Simcox et al., 2006).

Simcox et al. (2006) assert that level three within the culturally competent school speaks to the need for “collegial consultation” (p. 274) helping families of all backgrounds by dispelling cultural myths, and helping parents feel less intimidated by the language barrier between educator and student by offering to be there as a buffer or interpreter if possible (Simcox et al., 2006).

Simcox et al. (2006) state that level four addresses “brokered community resources,” and the school counselor can reach out to those resources, help to “increase community awareness, involve community stakeholders in school programming, become involved in community-based educational initiatives, and create a resource bank” (Simcox et al., 2006, p. 274).
The school counselor provides an essential role in helping to bridge the gaps in cultural divides. By advocating for them to facilitate a school-based program that provides middle school students the opportunity to look within themselves at their own culturally-biased attitudes and belief systems, the school would be promoting a more culturally competent school climate. The next chapter presents specific information related to the development of the Transcending Tolerance program, including a discussion related to project development, intended audience, desired qualifications needed for facilitators, equipment needed, formative evaluation of the program, and concludes with the project outline.
Chapter 3: PROJECT AUDIENCE AND IMPLEMENTATION FACTORS

Introduction

This project was intended to address the need for promoting safe and more empathic, respectful school climates toward LGBTQ students at the middle school level. Because of the alarming statistics indicating that LGBTQ students are at a markedly higher risk for being the victims of bullying, discrimination, violence, harassment and prejudice at school, programs need to be implemented that reach the entire school population. All students need to understand the importance of respecting identities and cultures different from their own. In order to begin this dialogue, programs that foster empathy and respect, not just tolerance, should be facilitated by school personnel for the student body. “Transcending Tolerance” is a four-week activities-based program that meets once per week for approximately 45-60 minutes each session. Some of the activities and worksheets within the program and facilitator’s guide are adapted from curriculum posted online from various nonprofit LGBTQ activism organizations such as, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), Advocates for Youth, Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gay (PFLAG) and the short film included in one activity is titled “Love is All You Need?”© 2015, directed by K. Rocco Shields, and produced by Genius Pictures ®.

This program may be implemented for all middle school students, but it is recommended that 7th and 8th grade students are given priority due to their being slightly older and presumably more mature to process and cope with the content of the program. Manning (2002) supports the overall notion that maturity develops rapidly in early adolescence (e.g., ages 10-14) but it is important to note that not all 7th and 8th grade
students (ages 12-14) are necessarily more mature than 6th grade students (ages 10-11).
The decision for whom this program is implemented rests with the authority of the school administration. Middle school counselors are to be the facilitators of this project and will meet with groups of students once per week and facilitate one activity as described in the facilitator’s manual. Each activity provides the opportunity for all students to engage in discussion and awareness of the current school climate for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning students; each activity is centered on the promotion of empathy, equity and respect toward the LGBTQ population. The method of selection for student participants will be at the discretion of the facilitator(s), but it is suggested that the activities take place during the 7th and 8th grade homeroom or advisory class times. Depending on how many school counselors are present at the school, it is advisable that this program be disseminated at the same time if more than one counselor is involved. For example, if a middle school has two counselors, both counselors should implement the program at the same time, each selecting their own advisory classrooms to present in, separately. The reason being that if the program is implemented by one counselor during one time period and by another counselor a week/month/semester later, there might be some confusion within the school campus; the students who were first to receive the program will be talking about it with their friends who have not yet received it and that might provide an unfair disadvantage to the students who have not yet participated. It is one thing to participate in a program facilitated by trained professionals, and it is another to receive information second-hand from a student who may or may not describe the program objectively. By providing the program to students at roughly the same time, the
opportunity for a school-wide discourse and discussion can fairly occur maintaining that all intended participants received proper facilitation.

**Development of Project**

The inspiration for this project has been a long time in the making. It is a very personal reflection of the experiences I have been through and have witnessed throughout my adult life. I identify as being part of the LGBTQ population, but it was not until I was an adult in my mid-twenties that I started questioning my sexual orientation as a heterosexual female. Growing up I always thought I was heterosexual and only dated members of the opposite sex. Because of that, I identified as being part of a privileged identity group without any struggles from discrimination, bullying, harassment, or prejudice. I knew that gay, bisexual, and transgender people existed, and I grew up in a very gay-friendly city, but it was of no importance to me. Things drastically changed once I realized I was not heterosexual and had my first same-sex relationship as a young adult. Soon after, Proposition 8, a 2008 voting initiative to ban same-sex marriage, passed in California by a very slim margin (Archibold & Goodnough, 2008). Suddenly I understood how it felt to be discriminated against. I felt shock, anger, sadness, and helplessness. I was suddenly very passionate about fighting against this proposition that had just been passed and I peacefully demonstrated and rallied with thousands of people in Southern California, marching for a cause very near to my heart. After that time period, my attention was then sharply focused on various examples in the media—and in my personal life—of injustices enacted against people who do not identify as heterosexual. What was most influential to me (that brought out the most shock and anger) was the awareness of all the cases of children and teens committing suicide,
allegedly over their non-heterosexual orientation causing them pain. That pain was allegedly caused by their inability to cope with the teasing, bullying, discrimination, and rejection from their peers and/or family members unaccepting of their sexual orientation. I had already been an undergraduate studying psychology while my awareness was piqued about these statistics so I began reading and conducting research on the fundamentals and effects of discrimination and bullying due to one’s LGBTQ identity—specifically at the adolescent level. The University of Michigan’s Inter-University Consortium of Political and Social Research held a research paper competition that I entered, and I won second place for my project on the predictors of anti-gay language in adolescents. Soon after, I was selected to participate in a summer research laboratory at Yale University, collaborating with a doctoral candidate whose dissertation was focused on the negative effects of holding a stigmatized identity. While I was extremely involved in the research, I felt as though I needed to do something more to both help and understand LGBTQ students as well as getting the message across to all students that this type of behavior was harmful. Finally, when I joined the school counseling program at California State University, Northridge, I had access to seeing the school climates at the middle schools I interned for and how LGBTQ students were regarded and treated on school grounds. It was during this time when I was inspired to create a program—pulling from various existing resources—to be implemented at the middle school level to promote respect and empathy for LGBTQ students.

The program will last over the course of four-weeks during any semester, but will only require students and facilitators to meet once per week for the length of one class period (45-60 minutes). I wanted to space the activities out with a separation of one week
between activities in order to give students time to process what they have learned and discuss with their peers their thoughts and opinions on the program. The middle school counselors (facilitators) will consult and arrange with advisory or homeroom teachers which month and day of the week is best to go into their classrooms to engage the students in the activities. It is important that no week be skipped, so it is imperative that the program be scheduled during a month that does not have any extended periods of time off from school (e.g., December for winter break, April for spring break). The facilitators will lead the students in the activities for the entire four-week course of the program. There will be a parental permission slip sent home that must be signed before the start of the program in order for students to watch the short film as part of the program curriculum.

**Intended Audience**

The intended audience for this program is middle school counselors who can facilitate the activities for 7th and 8th grade students. This program is aimed toward promoting respect and empathy throughout the school body, but the focus is toward LGBTQ students since they are so often big targets of bullying and victimization (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009). The overall message of respect, empathy and equity for all stigmatized identities is meant to spread throughout the school grounds and home to families, so that its purpose can be interpreted and incorporated into everyday life, even when not at school.

**Personal Qualifications**

Preferred program facilitators must hold a valid, state-issued Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) credential in School Counseling. Possible facilitators interested in
implementing this program who are not school counselors may be eligible if they hold a valid state-issued Marriage and Family Therapy license (MFT), Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor license (LPCC), a state-accredited Master’s degree in Counseling, Social Work, Psychology, LGBTQ/Queer Studies, Equity and Diversity in Education (EDE), or equivalent degree majors. Additional possible facilitators may be graduate school counseling students who are being supervised by a credentialed school counselor; in this case, the supervising counselor must approve the graduate student based on a positive assessment of their capability to facilitate and observe the first activity.

Facilitators for this program must be educated in diversity issues, and the effects of prejudice and discrimination enacted against marginalized populations. If not, they should educate themselves as much as possible by reading credible resource materials (e.g., publications by the Human Rights Campaign, GLSEN, etc.) and feel comfortable presenting activities of this nature to students. If facilitators want a co-facilitator, they must hold the above-mentioned credential, degree, or license. Facilitators may ask for student assistants to serve as aids within the classrooms to pass out papers, activity materials, help with technology, etcetera. These students must be interviewed by the facilitator before the program begins and judged to be mature and capable for this role. If advisory teachers volunteer to help, please describe their role as being one to assist with classroom behavior management or to perform the tasks that were outlined for the student assistant. Student participants in this program should be in the 7th and 8th grade and deemed capable of being managed in the classroom by the facilitator and/or advisory teacher assigned to the classroom during each activity. If a student causes disruption and cannot be managed effectively, he or she should be removed from the activity and sent to
an alternative location where he or she can be under the supervision of a school administrator or faculty member.

**Environment and Equipment**

The ideal environment for this program and its accompanying activities is within a classroom. It was suggested that the students’ advisory or homerooms be used but any classroom will do so long as there is enough room for everyone involved. The meeting place may vary from activity to activity if necessary, but a classroom is always ideal.

Equipment needed for this program will be a whiteboard(chalkboard)/smartboard with writing utensils for the board, a correct number of copies of the handouts from the manual for each activity, cardstock paper, darker-colored markers, pencils and blank notebook paper (students are expected to supply pencils and paper, but facilitators should have extra just in case some students do not bring them), incentives for participation may be provided but are optional (e.g., pencils, stickers, erasers), and any type of computer with internet access and the ability to connect to a projector to present a short film onto a screen or wall with sound amplified through speakers. If there is a student in the class that is deaf or hard-of-hearing, a sign language interpreter is recommended if there is one available (for each activity). For activity two, while there is a closed-caption option available for the short film, unfortunately the quality is severely lacking and most of the language is interpreted incorrectly; this is another reason an interpreter is necessary.

Students with vision-impairment must be accommodated as instructed by their Individual Educational Plan (IEP) or if they do not have one, be accommodated in a manner consistent with the student’s request. Any students with IEP or 504 plans within the class that participate in the activities must be accommodated accordingly for the duration of
this program. For classrooms that are designated as English Language Learners (ELL) or English as a Second Language (ESL), the facilitator can choose to bring a translator or to speak the primary language of the class if he or she is fluent in the language. If there is no qualified facilitator available to implement the activities within a non-English speaking classroom, a designated school faculty member, or administrator must be trained appropriately by a qualified facilitator to implement this program to ELL/ESL students. Facilitators who present in Special Education, Resource or Special Day Classrooms must adhere to the rules and regulations as implemented by the Special Education teacher(s), para-professional(s), or Resource Specialist(s) in charge of the class. If some advisory periods are held in Physical Education or other non-classroom instructional areas, it is highly advised that the students be moved to a classroom with the available equipment and resources needed to implement the activities (at the very least for activity two, which requires a film presentation). It is not advised to combine advisory rooms for the sake of time efficiency. Due to the sensitive nature of the activities in this program, and the pre-pubescent/pubescent age of the students, a smaller environment will be less distracting and engage the students in a manner that is more effective and of a higher degree.

Formative Evaluation

In order to evaluate this project, three middle school counselors were presented with an evaluation request, the program facilitator’s guide, and an evaluation survey. Only one middle school counselor responded to the evaluation request. In order to gain more comprehensive feedback, this program could be evaluated by interested school counselors before implementing it at their own school. The evaluation request and survey are included in Appendix II.
The survey creation was based on a Likert-scale type of questioning, where the questions were designed as statements that required the evaluator to assign a number equivalent to their agreement with each statement. The numbers to choose from were from 1-4, with 1 = “strongly disagree,” 2 = “disagree,” 3 = “agree” and 4 = “strongly agree.” The evaluative statements within the survey were, “This program is helpful for 7th-8th graders,” “This program could easily be implemented at a middle school,” “The length of the program (four weeks) is appropriate for a middle school setting,” “The length of each week’s activity (40-60 minutes) is achievable,” “The sessions are well outlined and easy to follow,” “The materials needed to conduct all the sessions are useful and accessible to all counselors,” “I would feel comfortable facilitating this program,” “I would use this program at my school site,” and “I would recommend this program to other counselors.” The overall average rating from this survey for each evaluative statement equaled 3.78.

The survey concluded with an area for comments and the overall summary from the comments left were positive. The evaluator comments indicated that this project was very well thought-out and that it addresses a need that is often ignored at the middle school level. Before implementing such a program, the evaluator stated that a collaborative team would be needed in order to gain support from school staff and parents; that “unfortunately” there still exists both heterosexism and homophobia within that particular community. The evaluator stated that a coalition to help respond to community resistance would be “key” in order to be successful in implementing this program. Once approval was gained, the evaluator indicated that this project would run
quite smoothly because of the facilitator’s guide being clear, concise, and easy to understand.

Even though only one evaluator responded to this feedback request at this time, the need for a supportive team of faculty, students, staff, families, and community organization members to response to resistance against this program is reiterated. Whomever decides to implement this project would be wise to include at least one member on the collaborative team who is well-versed in the legal rights of students and education codes. In case organizing this program is met with any resistance, having state-level legal literature on-hand could be helpful to fight for the right to spread awareness, empathy and respect on school grounds.

**Project Outline**

The title of this program is called “Transcending Tolerance: Promoting Respect and Empathy for LGBTQ Middle School Students.” Please note that this program is intended for 7th and 8th grade middle school students, and participation is compulsory unless otherwise documented by parent or guardian. Only credentialed professional school counselors (or equivalent) are allowed to be facilitators. Co-facilitators and aides/assistants are allowed at the discretion of the facilitator but they must defer to the facilitator and follow all manual guidelines. The facilitator is responsible for establishing the ground rules upon the commencement of the program and will hold all students accountable. Each week’s activities should be conducted in an instruction-based classroom, during the students’ advisory hour, and all rooms must have access to a whiteboard (or equivalent), projector and screen, and computer with internet access. For deaf or hard-of-hearing students, interpreters should be provided if available. Visually-
impaired students will be accommodated by sitting in a designated area of the room most beneficial to him or her. Students with IEPs must be given proper accommodations according to their plans. ELL or ESL classrooms should be provided with an interpreter if the facilitator does not speak the native language. A permission slip must be provided to each student participant prior to implementation of the program that requires a parent or guardian signature to view the short film “Love is All You Need?” during week two of the program. Students without signed permission slips to participate in the program and view the film during week two must be placed in an alternative location supervised by faculty or administration. Students that disrupt the program at any time must be removed from the activity and assigned to an alternative location and provided with a brief guidance counseling session at the conclusion of the activity (or when convenient for the counselor-facilitator).

The first week is titled “Introducing the Program and Social Identities Lesson” with an activity titled “Who Am I?” The activity should last approximately 40-50 minutes in a classroom setting. The program begins by introducing the notions of respect and empathy for those different from one’s self, and the facilitator will establish and post the ground rules. The facilitator will make explicit and encourage participating students who wish to talk about their feelings regarding this program privately, should make an appointment or drop-in to their respective counselors. Then the facilitator will start with an activity that helps students gain a deeper understanding of what makes them who they are, based on a variety of identity factors such as sex, ethnicity, religion, age, etc. This is a preamble to the following week’s activity that introduces the students to sexual orientation. In particular, the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning
orientations will be focused on and conveyed as a particular part of one’s identity that is stigmatized and negatively targeted by certain people. The differences between sexual expression and gender expression will be discussed. This sets the stage for students to feel empathy and understanding. This week’s activity is adapted from an educational curriculum on the website of an organization called Advocates for Youth, a national organization that helps “young people make informed and responsible decisions about their reproductive and sexual health.” The activity can be found on this website: http://www.advocatesforyouth.org.

The second week is titled “Short Film Presentation and Discussion” with an activity titled “Love is All You Need?” The activity should last approximately 45-55 minutes in a classroom setting that includes the ability to show an internet-based short film. This week’s activity involves the presentation of a short film about a young teen girl in a world that is predominately gay and she is teased, bullied, and ultimately coerced into taking her own life because she is heterosexual. After a brief discussion of the film, students will complete a questionnaire that asks them about their ideas on their own sexual orientation followed by a discussion about their feelings and opinions on the questionnaire. This activity segues into the following week by introducing the concept of heterosexism. The concept of empathy toward LGBTQ people is demonstrated as well as the notion of respect toward devalued identities. The film is shown online via YouTube and will be stopped by the facilitator before the suicide scene at the end (this will be explicitly explained in the facilitator’s guide). The questionnaire is adapted and edited for age-appropriateness from the “Heterosexism Questionnaire” posted on the Parents, Family, and Friends of Lesbians and Gay organization (PFLAG) website (specifically
downloaded from the Westchester division). PFLAG is a national organization “committed to advancing equality and full societal affirmation of LGBTQ people through its threefold mission of support, education, and advocacy.” The activity can be found on this website: http://www.pflag.org.

The third week is titled “Defining and Discussing Heterosexism” with an activity titled “What is Hetero—Huh?!” The activity should last approximately 40-50 minutes in a classroom setting. This activity clarifies and expands on the meaning of heterosexism, its application to the everyday lives of both LGBTQ and heterosexual people, and the negative implications it carries. Students will divide into small groups and will be given a scenario that depicts an example of heterosexism in society and school. The groups are to brainstorm and discuss with each other how they believe the scenarios can be connected to heterosexism. Each group will present their ideas to the class; providing each presenting group with incentives (e.g., small prizes) is suggested but optional. The activity ends with the facilitator asking students to be aware of examples of heterosexism in and outside of the school and be prepared to discuss any findings in the final week. This activity is an original creation based off extant research on the definition and effects of heterosexism.

The fourth and final week of the program is titled “The Harmful Effects of Anti-Gay Language” with an activity called “Where Do I Stand?” The activity should last approximately 40-55 minutes in a classroom setting. The final week addresses anti-gay language being used as substitutions for ideas and people considered by the perpetrators as stupid, lame, or dumb. Students are asked a series of questions regarding where they stand on the usage of anti-gay language continuum and are literally asked to move about
the room and stand near signs placed throughout the classroom that signify the students’ feeling pertaining to each question. The activity is taken directly from the website of a national organization called the *Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network* (GLSEN). GLSEN wants “every student, in every school, to be valued and treated with respect, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.” The facilitator will then orchestrate a conclusion of the four-week program by soliciting feedback from students: their thoughts, feelings, and opinions on the program and the message that it promotes. It will end with a final thought originally created by Mahatma Gandhi, “Be the change you wish to see in the world,” both spoken and written on the classroom board. Students will be reminded and encouraged to make appointments with or drop-in to see their school counselors to further discuss their personal feelings and reflections on the program. A list of resources that service youth in crisis must be passed out to every student at the conclusion of the program. The activity can be found on this website: http://www.glsen.org.
Chapter 4: CONCLUSION

Summary of Project

The “Transcending Tolerance” program is intended to bring awareness about current school climates with regards to student attitude and behavior toward its gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning population. It is intended to educate students on the very real and negative effects of heterosexism, discrimination, and bullying on the physical and psychological well-being of the LGBTQ student. Even though some schools currently implement “tolerance”-based programs to address these issues (Avery, Sullivan & Wood, 1997), the overall goal of this program is to move beyond the discourse of the term tolerance and into an area of respect and empathy; there are too many negative connotations with the word that sends the wrong message to students (Nieto, 1992; Nieto, 1994; Seligman, 2012; Von Bergen et al., 2012). In addition, the middle school population is more vulnerable to and impacted by bullying than the high school population, regardless of the number of incidents (Gruber, 2007; Smith, Madsen, & Moody, 2006). Therefore, this program is intended to be implemented at the middle school level for 7th and 8th grade students, during the typical onset of puberty and sexual identity awareness. Middle school counselors will facilitate the Transcending Tolerance program over the consecutive course of four weeks (one activity per week) by leading discussions and activities with the students based on the overarching themes of respect and empathy for LGBTQ students.

Recommendations for Implementation

Promoting empathy and respect for all students regardless of identity or orientation should be seen as positive and obvious for everyone at the school site and
surrounding community. Unfortunately, there still exists controversy surrounding the rights and treatment of LGBTQ individuals (Brown, 2015; CNN, 2015; D’Marko, 2015). In order for a school to effectively implement the Transcending Tolerance program, a collaborative team should be created by supportive individuals and stakeholders that believe in the message that this program promotes. This collaborative team could consist of supportive school counselors, teachers, administrators, parents, and students. They should educate themselves on the merits of programs like Transcending Tolerance by doing their own research (as well as being informed about the negative consequences of not having this type of program in school). Therefore, if met with resistance by the community or school board to implement this program, this team of supporters can be proactive in laying out the positive outcomes this program has to provide its student body and community. The collaborative team should be well-versed in GLSEN’s “responses to resistance” from the facilitator’s manual in case they come across community members, parents, or school board members that are unsure of approving this program at their middle school. Once approved, the facilitators of this program must not forget that they will not only be speaking to the targeted students of the program (students who identify as heterosexual and who do not understand or support any minority sexual or gender identity) but also the students who identify as LGBTQ. In order for them to feel empowered and not left out of this program, it would be a good idea for school counselors to talk to any students who are openly LGBTQ and ask if they would be willing to offer their points of view to the intended student audience. Most students who identify as LGBTQ at this age are very likely not “out” yet and therefore, facilitators must be mindful of this and keep the activities inclusive of all students (there are notes in
the facilitator’s manual that help with including LGBTQ students in all the activities without creating feelings of exposure or embarrassment for these students specifically).

**Recommendations for Future Research**

It would be very beneficial for facilitators of Transcending Tolerance to collect data on the effectiveness of the implementation of this program. Distributing pre- and post-surveys assessing students attitudes toward LGBTQ related issues, previous knowledge before implementation and knowledge retained after the conclusion of the program. If data is carefully collected and measured, it would result in knowing whether or not promoting respect and empathy toward LGBTQ students was positively regarded. If the results are positive, then data should be further collected on the overall school climate and attitude of the student body, somewhat longitudinally, weeks and months after the program was implemented. If school counselors are able to show positive correlations between the implementation of the Transcending Tolerance program and improved student behavior, it would not only be beneficial for the sake of the program, but helpful for other schools that wish to implement this program who are having difficulties with their respective school boards or community.

**Conclusion**

Significant progress has been made for LGBTQ rights, and in record time in relation to other civil rights movements over the last century in America (Barabak, 2012). But gay, bisexual, and transgender students are still being reported as committing suicide today, allegedly due to being bullied over their sexual and gender identities (Dotinga, 2013; San Diego Gay & Lesbian News, 2015). The likelihood of everyone accepting LGBTQ individuals as “normal” and for bullying, discrimination, and rejection to
completely disappear is not realistic. What is realistic is for people to start taking responsibility for their own community’s well-being and for schools to be open to adopting policies and programs that promote positive regard for diversity, and in particular, for LGBTQ students who are many times more likely to take their own lives than other student populations (Chesir-Teran & Hughes, 2009). No matter the controversy surrounding this issue, if the focus is on respecting one another and being able to “walk in their shoes,” there is hardly any way to argue against the positive merits of that idealism. It is not an “agenda” being pushed onto anybody; it is a way for schools across America to let students know that it is not okay to harm others because they might be different from what they understand in their own worldview. It is the responsibility of school personnel to act in the best interest of the students while at school, and not in the care of their parents. By acting as agents of change, school counselors and personnel are demonstrating and modeling to the student body that affirming diversity is awesome, not scary or weird. We would be performing a service to the students by enacting a Transcending Tolerance program because in the end, everyone benefits from respect and empathy.
References


Dear School Counselor,

This is a Facilitator’s Guide for the implementation of a four-week program called “Transcending Tolerance: Promoting Respect and Empathy.” This program is intended to foster a school climate of respect, empathy and understanding toward your middle school’s gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) students. You are intended to be the facilitator and will heretofore be known as “Facilitator.” This program is intended to be used for 7th and 8th grade middle school students. It is imperative that the facilitator read the following introduction and instructions thoroughly and carefully, and allow enough time to read each subsection with minimal distraction when possible.

**Introduction**

This project was intended to address the need for promoting safe and more empathic, respectful school climates toward LGBTQ students at the middle school level. Because of the alarming statistics indicating that LGBTQ students are at a markedly higher risk for being the victims of bullying, discrimination, violence, harassment and prejudice at school, programs need to be implemented that reach the entire school population (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009; Chesir-Teran & Hughes, 2009). All students need to understand the importance of respecting identities and cultures different from their own. In order to begin this dialogue, programs that foster empathy and respect, not just tolerance, should be facilitated by school personnel for the student body.

“Transcending Tolerance” is a four-week activities-based program that meets once per week for approximately 40-60 minutes each session. This program is intended for all middle school students, but it is recommended that 7th and 8th grade students are given priority due to their being slightly older and more mature to handle the message of the program. Middle school counselors are to be the facilitators of this project and will meet with groups of students once per week and facilitate one activity as described in the facilitator’s manual. Each activity provides the opportunity for all students to engage in discussion and awareness of the current school climate for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning students; each activity is centered on the promotion of empathy, equity and respect toward the LGBTQ population.

The method of selection for student participants will be at the discretion of the facilitator(s), but it is suggested that the activities take place during the 7th and 8th grade homeroom or advisory class times. Depending on how many school counselors are present at the school, it is advisable that this program be disseminated at the same time if more than one counselor is involved. For example, if a middle school has two counselors, both counselors should implement the program at the same time, each selecting their own advisory classrooms to present in, separately. The reason for this is because if the program is implemented by one counselor during one time period and by another counselor a week/month/semester later, there might be some confusion within the school campus; the students who were first to receive the program will be talking about it with their friends who have not yet received it and that might provide an unfair disadvantage.
to the students who have not yet participated. It is one thing to participate in a program facilitated by trained professionals, and it is another to be getting information second-hand from a student who may or may not describe the program objectively. By providing the program to students at roughly the same time, the opportunity for a school-wide discourse and discussion can fairly occur maintaining that all intended participants received proper facilitation.

**Purpose of Program**

The definition and message of tolerating LGBTQ students is unclear and could easily imply that others should “bear with” this population on a school campus; it would not matter how valiant the efforts were by those who implement school policies or programs promoting acceptance instead of tolerance. In order to ingratiate the idea of affirming, accepting, admiring, and/or respecting LGBTQ children and adolescents, schools must dedicate capable and driven teachers, counselors, parents, and peer-mentors to provide the school body with policies and programs that promote an environment beyond mere tolerance. It is too dangerous and risky to continue to ignore the bullying of LGBTQ students, which often leads these student to struggle with depression, anxiety, self-harm and suicide (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009; Chesir-Teran & Hughes, 2009). It is in the best interest of the school (and for the benefit of the students) to employ programs and policies that promote acceptance and respect for LGBT youth.

By clearly defining that diversity should be celebrated and not merely tolerated, schools can pave the way to success toward decreasing LGBTQ-directed bullying and intolerance. In order for this to happen, there should be school-wide programs put in place that teach students (as well as staff and parents) the core values of multicultural or diversity affirmation (Nieto, 1994). The activities-based program would teach a “transcending tolerance” paradigm and be implemented over a four week period at the middle school level because of the detrimental impact that bullying has on this age group (Gruber & Fineran, 2007).

Even though the citizens of the United States hold a majority view toward protecting LGBT rights (Lundry, 2013), these rights protect LGBT adults, not LGBT youth. Indirectly, children are learning tolerance from these new precedents which helps to pave the way for a more tolerant society overall. Schools must implement policies, programs, and curricula that promote acceptance and respect for diversity in order to protect and allow LGBTQ students to grow up safely and to thrive.

**Development of Project**

The inspiration for this project has been a long time in the making. It is a very personal reflection of the experiences I have been through and have witnessed throughout my adult life. When California passed Proposition 8—the banning of same-sex marriage throughout the state, my attention was sharply focused on everything that followed: the various examples in the media, and in my personal life, of injustices enacted against people who do not identify as heterosexual. What was most influential to me was the
awareness of all the cases of children committing suicide, allegedly over their non-heterosexual orientation causing them pain and suffering. That pain was allegedly caused by their inability to cope with the teasing, bullying, discrimination, and rejection from their peers and/or family members unaccepting of their sexual orientation. I had already been an undergraduate studying psychology while my awareness was piqued about these statistics so I had started reading and conducting research on the fundamentals and effects of discrimination and bullying due to one’s LGBTQ identity—specifically at the adolescent level. The University of Michigan’s Inter-University Consortium of Political and Social Research held a research paper competition that I entered, and I won second place for my project on the predictors of anti-gay language in adolescents. Soon after in 2010, I was selected to participate in a summer research laboratory at Yale University, collaborating with a doctoral candidate whose dissertation was focused on the negative effects of holding a stigmatized identity. While I was extremely involved in the research, I felt as though I needed to do something more to both help and understand LGBTQ students as well as getting the message across to all students that this type of behavior was harmful. Finally when I joined the school counseling program at California State University, Northridge, I had access to seeing the school climates at the middle schools during my school counseling internships and how LGBTQ students were regarded and treated on school grounds. It was during this time when I was inspired to create a program to be implemented at the middle school level to promote respect and empathy for LGBTQ students.

The program will last over the course of four-weeks during any semester (or quarter/trimester), but will only require students and facilitators to meet once per week for the length of one advisory or homeroom class period (45-60 minutes). The intention is to space out the activities one week apart in order to give students time to process what they have learned and discuss with their peers their thoughts, feelings and opinions on the program. The middle school counselors (facilitators) will consult and arrange with advisory or homeroom teachers which month and day of the week is best to go into their classrooms to engage the students in the activities. It is important that no week be skipped, so it is imperative that the program be scheduled during a month that does not have any extended periods of time off from school (e.g., December for winter break, April for spring break). The facilitators will lead the students in the activities for the entire four-week course of the program. There will be a parental permission slip that needs to be sent home and signed ahead of activity number two in order for students to watch the short film as part of the program curriculum.

**Intended Audience**

The intended audience for this program is middle school counselors that can facilitate the activities for 7th and 8th grade students. This program is aimed toward promoting respect and empathy throughout the school body, but the focus is on LGBTQ students since they are so often big targets of bullying and victimization (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009). The overall message of respect, empathy and equity (i.e.,
transcending tolerance) for all stigmatized identities is meant to spread throughout the school grounds and home to families, so that its purpose can be interpreted and incorporated into everyday life, even when not at school.

**Personal Qualifications**

Preferred program facilitators must hold a valid, state-issued Pupil Personnel Services credential in School Counseling. Possible facilitators interested in implementing this program who are not school counselors may be eligible if they hold a valid state-issued Marriage and Family Therapy license (MFT), Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor license (LPCC), a state-accredited Master’s degree in Counseling, Social Work, Psychology, LGBTQ/Queer Studies, Equity and Diversity in Education (EDE), or equivalent degree majors. However, facilitators for this program must be educated in diversity issues, and the effects of prejudice and discrimination enacted against marginalized populations. If not, they should educate themselves as much as possible by reading credible resource materials (e.g., publications by the Human Rights Campaign, GLSEN, etc.) and feel comfortable presenting activities of this nature to students.

If facilitators want a co-facilitator, they must hold the above-mentioned credential, degree, or license. Facilitators may ask for student assistants to serve as aids within the classrooms to pass out papers, activity materials, help with technology, etcetera. These students must be interviewed by the facilitator before the program begins and judged to be mature and capable for this role. If advisory teachers volunteer to help, please describe their role as being one to assist with classroom behavior management or to perform the tasks that were outlined for the student assistant. Student participants in this program should be in the 7th and 8th grade and deemed capable of being managed in the classroom by the facilitator and/or advisory teacher assigned to the classroom during each activity. If a student causes disruption and cannot be managed effectively, he or she should be removed from the activity and sent to an alternative location where he or she can be under the supervision of a school administrator or faculty member.

**Recommendations for Implementation**

Promoting empathy and respect for all students regardless of identity or orientation should be seen as positive and obvious for everyone at the school site and surrounding community. Unfortunately, there still exists controversy surrounding the rights and treatment of LGBTQ individuals (Brown, 2015; CNN, 2015; D’Marko, 2015). In order for a school to effectively implement the Transcending Tolerance program, a collaborative team should be created by supportive individuals and stakeholders that believe in the message that this program promotes. This collaborative team could consist of supportive school counselors, teachers, administrators, parents, and students. They should educate themselves on the merits of programs like Transcending Tolerance by doing their own research (as well as being informed about the negative consequences of not having this type of program in school) Therefore, if met with resistance by the community or school board to implement this program, this team of supporters can be
proactive in laying out the positive outcomes this program has to provide its student body and community. The collaborative team should be well-versed in GLSEN’s “responses to resistance” from the facilitator’s manual in case they come across community members, parents, or school board members that are unsure of approving this program at their middle school. Once approved, the facilitators of this program must not forget that they will not only be speaking to the targeted students of the program (students who identify as heterosexual and who do not understand or support any minority sexual or gender identity) but also the students who identify as LGBTQ. In order for them to feel empowered and not left out of this program, it would be a good idea for school counselors to talk to any students who are openly LGBTQ and ask if they would be willing to offer their points of view to the intended student audience. Most students who identify as LGBTQ at this age are very likely not “out” yet and therefore, facilitators must be mindful of this and keep the activities inclusive of all students (there are notes in the facilitator’s manual that help with including LGBTQ students in all the activities without feeling exposed or embarrassed). Please distribute film permission slip (included in this guide) to parents/guardians prior to the implementation of the program.

Environment and Equipment

The ideal environment for this program and its accompanying activities is within a classroom. It was suggested that the students’ advisory or homerooms be used but any classroom will do as long as there is enough room for everyone involved. The meeting place may vary from activity to activity if necessary, but a classroom is always ideal.

Equipment needed for this program will be a whiteboard/chalkboard/smartboard with writing utensils for the board, a correct number of copies of the handouts from the manual for each activity, cardstock paper, darker-colored markers, pencils and blank notebook paper (students are expected to supply pencils and paper, but bring extra just in case some students do not bring them), incentives for participation may be provided but are optional (e.g., pencils, stickers, erasers), and any type of computer with internet access and the ability to connect to a projector to present a short film onto a screen with sound amplified through speakers. If there is a student in the class that is deaf or hard-of-hearing, a sign language interpreter is recommended if there is one available (for each activity). For activity two, while there is a closed-caption option available for the short film, unfortunately the quality is severely lacking and most of the language is interpreted incorrectly; this is another reason an interpreter is necessary. Students with vision impairment must be accommodated as instructed by their Individual Educational Plan (IEP) or if they do not have one, be accommodated in a manner consistent with the student’s request. Any students with IEP or 504 plans within the class that participate in the activities must be accommodated accordingly for the duration of this program. For classrooms that are designated as English Language Learners (ELL) or English as a Second Language (ESL), the facilitator can choose to bring a translator or to speak the primary language of the class if he or she is fluent in the language. If there is no qualified
facilitator available to implement the activities within a non-English speaking classroom, a designated school faculty member, or administrator must be trained appropriately by a qualified facilitator to implement this program to ELL/ESL students. Facilitators that present in Special Education, Resource or Special Day Classrooms must adhere to the rules and regulations as implemented by the Special Education teacher(s), para-professional(s), or Resource Specialist in charge of the class. If some advisory periods are held in Physical Education or other non-classroom instructional areas, it is highly advised that the students be moved to a classroom with the available equipment and resources needed to implement the activities (at the very least for activity two, which requires a film presentation). It is not advised to combine advisory rooms for the sake of time efficiency. Due to the sensitive nature of the activities in this program, and the pre-pubescent/pubescent age of the students, a smaller environment will be less distracting and engage the students to a more effective and higher degree.

**Terminology**

*Diversity affirmation*: the many differences that students represent are embraced and accepted as legitimate vehicles for learning (Nieto, 1994).

*Heterosexism/Heteronormativity*: Prejudice against individuals and groups who display non-heterosexual behaviors or identities, combined with the majority power to impose such prejudice. Usually used to the advantage of the group in power. Any attitude, action, or practice – backed by institutional power – that subordinates people because of their sexual orientation (Green & Peterson, 2004).

*Homophobia*: The fear and hatred of or discomfort with people who love and are sexually attracted to members of the same sex (Homophobia, 2015).

*LGBT/Q*: An acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender” (LGBT, 2015). At times, a Q will be added for Queer and/or Questioning (Questioning, n.d.).

*Multiculturalism*: the co-existence of diverse cultures, where culture includes racial, religious, or cultural groups and is manifested in customary behaviours, cultural assumptions and values, patterns of thinking, and communicative styles (Multiculturalism, 2013).

*Multicultural Education*: a life-long learning process designed to empower all students to become knowledgeable, caring, and active participants in their communities. Education that is multicultural is inclusive and respectful of all ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds and engages staff, families, students and community (Multicultural Education, 2015).

*School Climate*: the quality and character of school life. It may be based on patterns of student, parent, and school personnel experiences within the school and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures (School Climate, 2015).
**Tolerance:** 1. a fair, objective, and permissive attitude toward those whose opinions, beliefs, practices, racial or ethnic origins, etc., differ from one's own; freedom from bigotry (Tolerance, n.d.), 2. willingness to accept behavior and beliefs that are different from your own, even if you disagree with or disapprove of them, and 3. the ability to bear something unpleasant or annoying, or to keep going despite difficulties (Tolerance, n.d.).
Dear Parents/Guardians,

As part of a classroom activity facilitated by _________________________, your child is going to be watching the short film titled *Love is All You Need?* (2011), directed by K. Rocco Shields, on _______________________. This short film is being shown because the themes of film focus on bullying, discrimination, violence, stereotyping, and prejudice against people based on their sexual orientation. It is being shown as part of a school counselor led program your child is participating in that promotes respect and empathy. The short film is not rated (NR) because it has not been commercially released to the public to be rated by the Motion Picture Association. The short film depicts pre-teen language and slang, anti-gay language, mild-to-moderate violence (e.g., name-calling, scenes of kicking and hitting), a depiction of some blood/bleeding (e.g., on the forehead), and mild displays of affection (e.g., light kisses). Because there is a scene that depicts suicide at the end, the short film will be stopped by the facilitator before it reaches this scene. Your child will not be shown the depiction of the suicide, however, it will be discussed afterward by the facilitator and engage your child in the discussion along with the rest of the class.

In order for your student to participate in this class activity, I need your written consent. Please detach the form below and have your student return it to me on or before ______________________. If you choose not to allow your student to participate, or if the permission slip is not returned, they will be given an alternate activity in another classroom. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Facilitator: ____________________________________________________
Phone: __________________________ E-mail: __________________________

Check one:

☐ I give my student, ______________________________________ (student’s name), permission to watch the short film *Love is All You Need?* in class.

☐ I DO NOT give my student, ______________________________________ (student’s name), permission to watch the short film *Love is All You Need?* in class.

Parent/Guardian PRINTED name __________________________ Daytime Phone Number __________________________

Parent/Guardian Signature __________________________ Date __________________________
HETEROSEXISM: FACT AND INFORMATION SHEET

Heterosexism is the assumption that all people are heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior and more desirable than being gay, bisexual, or any orientation other than “straight.” Heterosexism is also the stigmatization, denial and/or denigration of anything non-heterosexual. We live in a predominantly heterosexist society and that attitude is used to justify the mistreatment, discrimination and harassment of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning individuals. Many who are LGBTQ also internalize this attitude leading to denial of their true selves/identities, low self-esteem, self-hatred and other issues. There would seem to be a direct link between heterosexism and homophobia, the irrational fear or hatred of people who desire the same sex or gender (including bisexuals and transgender individuals).

Some manifestations of heterosexism are:

Oversexualization:

It is thought that LGBTQ people are only looked upon as mere sexual beings rather than complex people with lives apart from their sexuality or gender identity.

- Assuming that every same sex interaction is sexual, or potentially sexual.
- Assuming that LGBTQ people are interested in someone of the same sex regardless of sexual orientation.
- Interpreting everything that LGBTQ people do in terms of their sexuality.
- Avoiding touching or becoming close to LGBTQ people in fear they will take it the ‘wrong’ way.

Denying Significance - Personally:

- The opposite of ‘oversexualization,’ by assuming that sexual orientation is not significant.
- remarking, “It doesn’t matter to me that you’re gay.” Sexual identity is significant and should matter.
- Expecting LGBTQ people not to talk of their relationships as many heterosexual people do, assuming that sexual orientation should not be talked about.

Denying Significance - Politically:

- Criticizing LGBTQ people for making an issue of their sexuality. Remarking things such as, “I don’t care what they do in bed, but don’t tell me about it.”
- Not understanding that heterosexuality is politically enforced by giving legal rights for marriage, finance and other such things, while legally denying LGBTQ people the right to marriage, housing, jobs, child custody, etc.
Labeling LGBTQ Identity a Problem:
- Having the mindset that LGBTQ people want or need special treatment.
- Believing that being gay, bisexual or transgender can and should be cured.

Making Invisible:
- Assuming that everyone is heterosexual until told otherwise.
- Always asking women about “boyfriends” and men about “girlfriends.”
- Telling LGBTQ people they are over reacting when they get upset about the oppression that they feel.

Expecting to Be Taught:
- Putting the burden of responsibility for education and working for change on the LGBTQ person. Not helping or working for change concerning LGBTQ issues.
- Forcing LGBTQ people to take all of the initiative in coming out.
- Not making openings to come out by acknowledging in conversations the possibility of non-heterosexual relations.
- Becoming upset that LGBTQ people are not patient about educating you.

Myths and Misconceptions about LGBTQ Identity:
- Confusing bisexuality with non-monogamy; assuming that bisexuality means being involved simultaneously with both men and women.
- Assuming that bisexuality is fickle or promiscuous, that they cannot commit to a stable monogamous relationship.
- Musing that lesbians hate men.
- Assuming that gay, bisexual and questioning people want to convert to heterosexuality.
- Trying to help someone go “straight.”
- Thinking that a non-heterosexual orientation is a phase.
- Assuming lesbians and gay men’s sexual orientation is in reaction to a bad heterosexual experience.
- Thinking that you have the right over a LGBTQ person to judge the morality or “correctness” of any person’s sexual orientation, including heterosexuality.

Heterosexual Privileges
- As a heterosexual, I am privileged to be able to be free of fear and walk across campus holding my girlfriend's or boyfriend's hand.
- As a heterosexual, I am privileged that I can be a member of ROTC at school without fear of being "found out" and losing my scholarship as well as my career plans.
• As a heterosexual, I am privileged to join a fraternity or sorority without fear of being rejected based on my sexual identity.

• As a heterosexual, I am privileged to be able to talk freely about my "relationships" with roommates, friends, and family.

• As a heterosexual, I am privileged to play varsity sports at school without the fear of being removed from the team because of my sexual identity.

• As a heterosexual, I am privileged to walk into any bar or dance with my partner and dance without fear of being verbally or physically abused.

• As a heterosexual, I am privileged to interview for jobs and be able to discuss my plans for marriage without fear of being discriminated against.

• As a heterosexual, I am privileged to run for a student leadership position without students focusing only on my sexual identity.

• As a heterosexual, I am privileged to walk this campus without fear of physical or verbal harm based solely on my sexual identity.

• As a heterosexual, I am privileged that I am a member of the dominant culture and I MAY CHOOSE TO BE AN ALLY for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning individuals/students.

Adapted from the “Safe Zone” at James Madison University. Edited and updated by Erin R. McMichael (2015).
BEFORE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The following rules and guidelines are provided by GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network, a national organization “committed to advancing equality and full societal affirmation of LGBTQ people through its threefold mission of support, education, and advocacy.” For more information, please visit their website at: http://www.glsen.org.

Creating a Safe Space for Discussion
Talking about themes related to diversity requires maturity and compassion for others. While the activities in this guide are intended to increase empathy and broaden young people’s perspectives, certain discussions may cause prejudices and stereotypes to surface. In addition, some youth may express discomfort or have difficulty accepting others’ viewpoints. A useful way to encourage openness and positive behavior is to introduce working agreements or ground rules that communicate an expected standard of behavior. Encourage your students to collaboratively develop working agreements that ensure safety and respect. Suggest one or more of the following:

GROUND RULES (Please Post in Classroom)

• Respect Others: You will hear ideas that may be different or new to you, and opinions with which you may disagree. As you participate and interact, try to take in new information without judgment and to keep an open mind. Make sure that your words and body language reflect a respectful attitude toward others. Learn by listening to others.

• Speak From the “I”: Speak from your own personal experiences and try not to judge the experiences of others. Use I-statements such as “I feel…” or “In my experience…” Avoid “You should” or “You all think that …” statements and generalizations of any kind.

• Ask Questions: Much of the information we will cover will be new to many of you. Feel free to ask any questions that come up for you—either during the activity or privately afterwards—without fear that they are too “silly.” Make sure to phrase all questions in respectful and nonjudgmental ways.

• Respect Confidentiality: Please make sure that everything said in the room stays in the room. When sharing personal anecdotes, make sure to avoid using the real names of other people.

• Share “Air Time”: While you are encouraged to express your ideas and opinions, please do not monopolize the group’s time. Help create a safe space in which everyone can speak. No one, however, is obligated to speak. “Passing” is okay.
RESPONDING TO RESISTANCE

Though safety and respect for LGBT youth and people from all backgrounds should not be controversial, discussions related to sexual and gender diversity often ignite strong emotions and opposition. It is therefore recommended that, prior to introducing the campaign resources in this guide to young people, you enlist support and partnership among your colleagues. First, consider sharing your plans with your supervisors and educating them about the issues so that they are prepared to support you and respond appropriately to inquiries from family members, media and the broader community. In addition, build a coalition of educators, administrators, counselors and family members in your community who share a commitment to the goals of the campaign and are prepared to stand in a unified way against criticism and hostility. These brief talking points may be useful when dealing with resistance to talking about anti-LGBT bias or challenging questions from youth or adult members of the community. Consult glsen.org for further resources.

RESPONDING TO RESISTANCE: TALKING POINTS

• You’re teaching about sex/promoting a “lifestyle.”
  Talking about safety and respect for LGBT people should not be conflated with talking about sex or sexual relationships. This lesson is about ensuring that no student is subject to prejudiced remarks or harassment, which is a goal that I think we can all support.

• It’s against my values/religion.
  Everyone is entitled to their personal opinions and religious viewpoints, and at this school we provide a forum for everyone to express their perspectives, as long as they do so civilly. However, there are also school and community values, and those include respect for differences and the right of every student to receive an education free from harassment and discrimination. When we talk about LGBT issues at school, it is within the context of safety and equality, the same as when we discuss racism or gender bias. At this school we feel that such discussions benefit all children.

• “That’s so gay” just means stupid or weird.
  Just because a lot of people use “gay” to mean “stupid” doesn’t mean it’s acceptable. Language evolves. Gay once only meant happy. Then it became a term to describe homosexuals. Now it is used to mean stupid, and this will change again as people become aware of how insulting this use of the word is to LGBT people and those who care about them.
Responding to Resistance, Continued:

• This politically correct stuff is repressive and robs us of perfectly good expressions. The idea of “political correctness” has been twisted in recent times. When I ask you to refrain from using expressions like “that’s so gay,” I’m just trying to make you aware that it is hurtful to a lot of people. How do you think it would feel to hear “gay” used over and over again to describe something stupid when it also describes who you are? We have all been on the receiving end of an insult and felt its sting, so why wouldn’t you put a little effort into avoiding language that insults others, especially when there are so many alternatives?

• My gay friends don’t care if I say “that’s so gay.” There’s a difference between what’s okay to say when you are alone with your friends and what’s okay to say in public settings. When you’re in public, you’re expected to refrain from language that is insulting to others and encouraged to speak in ways that are respectful to all. While your friends may not mind “that’s so gay,” they don’t speak for all LGBT people, and there are many who feel uncomfortable with this language. Your friends may trust you enough to know that you mean no harm when you say “that’s so gay,” but others who are within earshot may not feel the same way. And many of these people may not feel comfortable asking you to stop, so it’s up to you to keep your own language in check.
Week 1: Introducing the Program and Social Identities Lesson
Activity Title – “Who Am I?” (40-50 minutes)
The program begins by introducing the notions of respect and empathy for those different from one’s self, and the facilitator will establish and post the ground rules. The facilitator will make explicit and encourage participating students who wish to talk about their feelings regarding this program privately, should make an appointment or drop-in to their respective counselors. Then the facilitator will start with an activity that helps students gain a deeper understanding of what makes them who they are, based on a variety of identity factors such as sex, ethnicity, religion, age, etc. This is a preamble to the following week’s activity that introduces the students to sexual orientation. In particular, the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning orientations will be focused on and conveyed as a particular part of one’s identity that is stigmatized and negatively targeted by certain people. The differences between sexual expression and gender expression will be discussed. This sets the stage for students to feel empathy and understanding. This week’s activity is adapted from an educational curriculum on the website of an organization called Advocates for Youth, a national organization that helps “young people make informed and responsible decisions about their reproductive and sexual health.”
Activity website: http://www.advocatesforyouth.org

Week 2: Short Film Presentation and Discussion
Activity Title – “Love is All You Need?” (45-55 minutes)
This activity involves the presentation of a short film about a young teen girl in a world that is predominately gay and she is teased, bullied, and ultimately coerced into taking her own life because she is heterosexual. After a brief discussion of the film, students will complete a questionnaire that asks them about their ideas on their own sexual orientation followed by a discussion about their feelings and opinions on the questionnaire. This activity segues into the following week by introducing the concept of heterosexism. The concept of empathy toward LGBTQ people is demonstrated as well as the notion of respect toward devalued identities. The film is shown online via YouTube and will be stopped by the facilitator before the suicide scene at the end (this will be explicitly explained in the facilitator’s guide). The questionnaire is adapted and edited for age-appropriateness from the “Heterosexism Questionnaire” posted on the Parents, Family, and Friends of Lesbians and Gay organization (PFLAG) website (specifically downloaded from the Westchester division). PFLAG is a national organization “committed to advancing equality and full societal affirmation of LGBTQ people through its threefold mission of support, education, and advocacy.”
Activity website: http://www.pflag.org
Week 3: Defining and Discussing Heterosexism

Activity Title – “What is Hetero—Huh?!?” (40-50 minutes)

This activity clarifies and expands on the meaning of heterosexism, its application to the everyday lives of both LGBTQ and heterosexual people, and the negative implications it carries (please refer to the “Heterosexism Fact and Information Sheet” included in this guide for more information on the subject). Students will divide into small groups and will be given a scenario that depicts an example of heterosexism in society and school. The groups are to brainstorm and discuss with each other how they believe the scenarios can be connected to heterosexism. Each group will present their ideas to the class and providing each presenting group with incentives (e.g., small prizes) is suggested but optional. The activity ends with the facilitator asking students to be aware of examples of heterosexism in and outside of the school and be prepared to discuss any findings in the final week. This activity is an original creation based off extant research on the definition and effects of heterosexism.

Week 4: The Harmful Effects of Anti-Gay Language and Program Conclusion

Activity Title – “Where Do I Stand?” (40-55 minutes)

The final week addresses anti-gay language being used as substitutions for ideas and people considered by the perpetrators as stupid, lame, or dumb. Students are asked a series of questions regarding where they stand on the usage of anti-gay language continuum and are literally asked to move about the room and stand near signs placed throughout the classroom that signify the students’ feeling pertaining to each question. The activity is taken directly from the website of a national organization called the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN). GLSEN wants “every student, in every school, to be valued and treated with respect, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.” The facilitator will then orchestrate a conclusion of the four-week program by soliciting feedback from students: their thoughts, feelings, and opinions on the program and the message that it promotes. It will end with a final thought originally created by Mahatma Gandhi, “Be the change you wish to see in the world,” both spoken and written on the classroom board. Students will be reminded and encouraged to make appointments with or drop-in to see their school counselors to further discuss their personal feelings and reflections on the program. A list of resources that service youths in crisis must be passed out to every student at the conclusion of the program.

Activity website: http://www.glsen.org
WEEK 1: “WHO AM I?”

**Purpose:** To introduce the notions of empathy and respect for diversity by getting participants thinking about their own identities and how discrimination and privilege affect their life. Activity is from the *Advocates for Youth* website within the “Lesson Plan from Creating Safe Space for GLBTQ Youth: A Toolkit.” Website: http://www.advocatesforyouth.org.

**Time:** 40 minutes

**Materials:** Handouts, *I Am* and *Social Group Membership Profile*, ground rules poster or you can make them into a handout.

**Procedure:**

- Introduce the “ground rules” and briefly explain the purpose of the “Transcending Tolerance” program based on this guide’s discussion and overview. Post the ground rules by using a sign in the class, or you may write them on the board. Let students know that they are encouraged to drop-in to see you or their counselor if they want to talk about any thoughts or feelings that come up as a result of this four-week program. Remind students at the beginning of every week.

- Begin by saying, "Everyone is a member of different social groups—groups of people who have something in common. Sometimes that can be something like the school you go to or the kind of TV shows you like. We all belong to larger social groups as well—groups that involve our gender identity, race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, abilities, religion, age, sexual orientation, etc. It's important when we are thinking about how to treat others that we think about where we belong in terms of social groups."

- Say that you will now pass out a sheet of paper that will help participants think about their social groups. Distribute the *I Am* handout. Briefly describe the different groups to which each person belongs. Ask participants to take a few minutes to write down, or if they don't feel comfortable, to think about where they are in terms of their social groups.

- With the entire group, spend a few minutes sharing how it felt to identify in these groups. Ask if participants spend much time thinking about the groups they are a part of. Say that one thing about social groups is that, sometimes, we don't realize what benefits or barriers go with our membership in some of these groups, especially membership in a group that is dominant in society. Distribute the *Social Group Membership Profile* handout. Go over the instructions at the top of the sheet. Ask participants to spend five minutes individually answering the questions on the handout.
• Ask participants to break up into groups of three to discuss their own sheets. Remember that some people may not feel comfortable revealing certain aspects of their social groups. Explain that each person can be as general or as specific as they would like in the discussion and also that everyone has the right to pass on discussing any point. Conclude with the Discussion Questions in the entire group.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What surprised you about this exercise? Why?
2. What benefits did you see that you enjoy just because you belong to some groups? What problems or barriers did you see that you face just because you belong to some groups?
3. What benefits did you see that others enjoy and you do not because of the groups that they belong to? What barriers did you see that others face and you do not because of the groups that they belong to?
4. How do you feel about that? Should things be more equal and fair? What can you do to make things more equal and fair for everyone?
I Am!

My Gender Is

My Race/Ethnicity Is

My Religion Is

My Talents Include

My Interests Include

My Age Is
My Sexual Orientation Is

Other Social Groups to Which I Belong Include

These are the social groups to which I belong!

Social Group Membership Profile

Use your answers on the I Am! handout to respond to the questions below.

Of all of the social groups to which you belong:

Which ones are you most comfortable with?

Which are you least comfortable with?

Which do you think most about?

Which do you think least about?

Which groups give you the most privileges?

Which groups limit your access, options, and/or rewards in society?

Which have the greatest effect, positively or negatively, on how others see you?
WEEK 2: “LOVE IS ALL YOU NEED?”

**Purpose:** To expand on the notions of empathy and respect by narrowing the focus toward LGBTQ people. The short film to be presented is titled, “Love is All You Need?” and is directed by K. Rocco Shields (2011). **Extremely important:** The film contains a graphic scene depicting suicide toward the end of the film; film must be stopped before it begins or you will be in violation of permission slip contract. The film must be stopped at or shortly before 15:35. For more information, please visit the website: http://www.loveisallyouneedthemovie.com. This activity also introduces students to the idea of “heterosexism” that will be continued during next week’s activities.

**Time:** 45-55 minutes

**Materials:** The short film can be accessed through the YouTube website by visiting https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ROXTFfkco (if your school blocks this website, please use a personal device that allows internet access or speak to your school administrator or technical personnel). You will need access to the classroom’s projection equipment, computer with internet access, speakers for sound amplification, “How Do You Know Who You <3?” handout, definitions handout, whiteboard and writing utensils. Students are to use their own pencils.

**Procedure:**

- **First collect permission slips for film viewing.** Student who did not bring permission slips allowing them to view the short film must be relocated to an alternative location under faculty or administration supervision.

- Briefly discuss previous week’s activity by soliciting questions and feedback. Before presenting the short film, warn students of its serious nature and that it may be overwhelming to some students. Let students know that if at any time during the film they feel the need to leave the room or stop watching, they may come to you and ask to leave the room with a restroom pass. Please have restroom passes within your reach and be prepared to quickly distribute any to students who come up to you and ask for one. It is important to check in with any students who utilize this option after they return and if deemed necessary, again after the class is over.

- Present short film “Love is All You Need?” **up until or shortly before the 15 minute and 35 second time mark.** The film must be stopped before the suicide depiction scene. Students will likely have a strong reaction to an abrupt stopping of the film, so be prepared to discuss the reasoning behind it. Give students a minute to process any feelings or thoughts they may be having after watching the film. You may discuss what the film’s ending depicted (the girl committing suicide) and elicit student’s thoughts in a constructive, respectful manner.

- Solicit feedback from students about what they thought of the film and its moral message, and/or theme. Remind students to stick to the ground rules.
• Ask the questions:
  
  o “What do you think sexual orientation means?”
  o “What does it mean to be gay, lesbian, bisexual, questioning, or transgender?” “Transgender” is slightly different from the other orientations and you may touch upon this if students seem confused. Please reference the terminology from the introduction in this guide and the definitions handout (there are many other definitions on the student handout that you may not directly be talking about during this program, but it’s a great reference for the students to own). Please do not make up your own definitions.
  o Hand out both the definitions sheet and questionnaire after students have given some of their own input. Tell students to read the definitions worksheet for homework and that you will be asking questions on the definitions for the next week’s activity.

• Ask students to complete the “How Do You Know Who You <3?” questionnaire. Because the questionnaire is worded in a way that is intended for heterosexually-identified students, make sure to let the students know that if they self-identify as anything other than heterosexual to complete the questions as though it is speaking to their own sexual orientation. For example, tell the students a variation of this statement: “This questionnaire is focused on heterosexuality on purpose. But if you identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, questioning, or anything else other than heterosexual, please replace the word “heterosexual” in your mind with your own orientation. Then answer the questions from your own perspective. We will discuss the meaning of this questionnaire after you’ve completed it. You will not be putting your names on it or be forced to reveal your sexual orientation to the class.”

• Facilitate a discussion about their opinions, feelings, and thoughts of the questionnaire and ask for volunteers to say their answers out loud to the class. Afterward, direct them to the second portion of the questionnaire “Time to Reflect” and reiterate that people who are not heterosexual are asked those types of questions by people who don’t understand sexual orientation. Validate their potential feelings of discomfort over the questions asked of them. This is not a discussion to politicize or moralize but rather, be sure to stay on topic and facilitate a critical discussion.

• Wrap up the discussion by encouraging them to think about the feelings and thoughts that today’s activities might have elicited from them.
**How Do You Know Who You <3?**

1. How did you first know you were “straight” (heterosexual)?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

2. How old were you when you first realized you were heterosexual?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

3. Is it possible that heterosexuality is just a phase that you will grow out of?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

4. If you’ve never had a relationship with someone of the same-sex, how do you know you wouldn’t prefer that?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

5. Why do heterosexuals go around holding hands or kissing in front of everyone?

   Can’t you just keep who you are to yourself in private?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Time to Reflect . . .

Now that you’ve answered those questions, what did you think about them? Did they seem weird or silly, or feel uncomfortable? But think . . .

if you replace the word “heterosexual” with “gay/lesbian/bisexual” in each question, you will see the types of questions that LGBT individuals get asked every day about their own sexual orientation.

What feelings or thoughts come to mind now?

THOUGHT QUESTIONS: If you have any questions about sexual orientation and identity, do you have someone that you feel comfortable asking? Who would that be?

What is one question about sexual orientation and identity you would ask?

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

This activity was adapted from the “Heterosexism Questionnaire” [http://www.pflagwestchester.org/Heterosexism_Questionnaire.pdf](http://www.pflagwestchester.org/Heterosexism_Questionnaire.pdf)
Terms Related to Sexual Orientation and Identity

**BISEXUAL:** A person who is has the ability to be romantically attracted to man and woman.

**COMING OUT:** When someone tells other people that they are gay or lesbian. When children tell other people that their parents are gay or lesbian.

**DYKE:** A slang term for “lesbian.” It is usually used as an insult. However, you may hear some lesbians use the word in a positive way to describe themselves.

**FAG OR FAGGOT:** A slang term for “gay.” It is usually used as an insult.

**GAY:** When a man loves a man or a woman loves a woman. Describes a man and a man or a woman and a woman, who love each other and want to be family to each other. This word is sometimes used just to refer to men. Women who are gay are also called “lesbians.”

**HETEROSEXUAL:** A person who is romantically attracted to a person of the other sex. In other words, a man who is attracted to women or a woman who is attracted to men.

**HOMOPHOBIA:** Putting down or thinking less of people because they are gay or lesbian or because you think they are gay and lesbian.

**HOMOSEXUAL:** Another word for “gay” or “lesbian” that has historically been used in medical or scientific references; it is currently being phased out of research and everyday language because it is viewed as a negative label.

**IN THE CLOSET:** An expression that means a gay or lesbian person is hiding a part of who he or she is and not telling anyone about being gay or lesbian because he or she is afraid to do so.

**LESBIAN:** A woman who has or wants to have romantic relationships with women.

**LGBT:** Initials that stand for “lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.” Also abbreviated as “GLB.” Sometimes you see LGBTQ, where the Q stands for questioning.

**QUEER:** A slang term for “gay” or “lesbian.” When it used as an insult, it is hurtful. More recently some people use it in a positive way to describe people who are lesbian or gay or who expand traditional gender roles.

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION:** Everyone has a sexual orientation. A person’s sexual orientation is based on whether they are attracted to someone of a different sex, the same sex, or both sexes.

**STRAIGHT:** Another word for “heterosexual.”

**TRANSGENDER:** A person who was born with the physical anatomy of a boy or a girl but deep inside they feel like a different gender. For example, a person who was born with the physical body of a man but deep inside feels like a woman and wants to live their life as a woman. Trans for short.

WEEK 3: “WHAT IS HETERO—HUH??!”

Purpose: To introduce the concept “heterosexism” and how it’s applied at school and in the community, as well as how it’s negatively affecting the LGBTQ population. Helps students to become aware of their own school climate and how they can foster an environment of empathy and respect by taking an active role in reducing heterosexism.

Time: 40-50 minutes

Materials: Students will need their own pencils and writing paper, facilitator will need a writing-board or smart-board with writing utensil, heterosexism fact sheet (for facilitator reference), heterosexism scenario handouts, incentive-based prizes are optional (e.g., pencils, erasers) for group presentations.

Procedure:

- Remind students about the short film from the first activity. Ask if any students have additional questions or comments about the film. Segue into asking students these questions:
  o You saw and heard the word heterosexual and hetero in the film and on your definitions handout last week. What do those words/terms mean?
  o What do you think the term “sexism” means?
  o Describe to them what heterosexism means, as depicted from the terms within the facilitator’s guide and outline. Give them some examples of where heterosexism occurs. Then ask them for any examples of heterosexism that they might know about or noticed.

- Split the class into groups of 3-5 and number each group. Give them each one scenario (from the handouts, distribute randomly and evenly) that depicts an example of heterosexism but without revealing the heterosexist aspect of each example right away (e.g., tv commercials only showing mother and father families; music/love songs are typically sung about the opposite sex; proms cater to boy and girl couples only and crown prom king and queen; locker rooms have no option for privacy and are split by girls and boys only; health classes only talk about heterosexual relationships).
  o Have each group brainstorm and prepare to present to the class. They must answer each question:
    ▪ Where they think heterosexism exists (or can exist) within their scenario?
    ▪ How it affects LGBTQ students?
    ▪ What ideas do they have to address the specific scenario at their school?

- Tell the students that they will be rewarded with a small prize at the end of their presentations (e.g., candy, pencils, or stickers). Call each group up to the front of the class one at a time and ask them to present their scenario and answer the questions. Involve yourself within the presentations to be sure they are using...
heterosexism in the correct contexts; correct them if necessary or ask the rest of the class to give their constructive input. End the activity by asking students to be aware of any heterosexism they see at their school, or outside of school (on TV, internet, etc) and be prepared to discuss it during the next week’s activity.
Heterosexism Scenario Activity

Scenario A: Imagine you are a high school senior. Your high school is selling tickets to the senior prom and when you go to buy a ticket in the student store, you see a bunch of photos from past proms on the walls and all of them are of boy-girl couples. In addition, the prom committee asks you which boy you want to nominate for prom king and which girl you want to nominate for prom queen. When you nominate your friend Brandon for prom king and your friend Maria, who is transgender, for prom queen, the committee members look at what you wrote and start laughing.

Questions to brainstorm together (Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper):

1. Is this scenario an example of heterosexism? Why or why not?
2. How would you feel if you were in this scenario? How do you think your friend Maria might feel if you told her what happened?
3. What could you do, as a high school senior, to address this situation?
Heterosexism Scenario Activity

Scenario B: Imagine you just got out of the P.E. locker rooms and are back into your regular clothes and waiting with all the boys and girls for the bell to ring. All of a sudden, you see and hear a group of 8th grade boys pointing at another 8th grade boy who is nearby, by himself, walking with his head down. You hear the group using the words “fag” and “homo,” as they point toward the boy and when they pass by you, you hear one of the boys say “I don’t want to change my clothes in front of him if he’s gay. That’s so gross, dude, what if he’s checking me out?”

Questions to brainstorm together (Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper):

1. Is this scenario an example of heterosexism? Why or why not?
2. How would you feel if you were in this scenario? How do you think that boy who the group was talking about felt if he had heard those boys?
3. What could you do, as a middle school student, to address this situation?
Heterosexism Scenario Activity

Scenario C: You are in 10th grade health class and the teacher is teaching sexual education. The teacher, Mr. Brown, teaches about male and female reproduction systems, how females and males are attracted to each other, types of birth control for men and for women, and then he leads a mandatory class activity where the girls have to pair up with the boys and pretend to be “husband and wife”, who then become “mom and dad.” You see your friend Naomi sitting in her chair, looking uncomfortable. Mr. Brown yells across the room “Naomi? Which boy in the room would you like as your husband?” and he starts to giggle, along with the rest of the class.

Questions to brainstorm together (Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper):

1. Is this scenario an example of heterosexism? Why or why not?
2. How would you feel if you were in this scenario? Why do you think Naomi looked uncomfortable? How do you think she felt when Mr. Brown asked her to find a husband? Why?
3. What could you do, as a high school student, to address this situation?
WEEK 4: “WHERE DO I STAND?”

Purpose: To raise awareness about the nature and extent of anti-LGBT slurs; to increase understanding about the impact of slurs on others; to motivate youth to reduce their use of hurtful expressions on others. Participants stand along a human continuum in response to statements assessing their attitudes and experiences regarding the use of “that’s so gay” and anti-LGBT slurs. This will also be the concluding activity and time to wrap-up any final thoughts by the students. This activity is from the GLSEN’s ThinkB4YouSpeak campaign. Website: http://www.glsen.org

Time: 45-55 minutes

Materials: chart paper, markers, and “TAKING A STAND” statements, Trevor Project hotline resource handout

Procedure:

• Prior to the activity, post signs at opposite ends of the room that say STRONGLY AGREE and STRONGLY DISAGREE.

• Begin the activity by telling participants that you are going to read a series of statements aloud that relate to some commonly used expressions and put-downs. Explain that they will respond to each statement by standing along an invisible continuum that ranges from STRONGLY AGREE to STRONGLY DISAGREE (point out the corresponding signs posted earlier). Tell participants that they can stand by either sign or anywhere in-between that reflect their opinion or experience. Emphasize that they should be silent while choosing a place to stand and refrain from cross-talk during this part of the activity.

• Read the first TAKING A STAND STATEMENT aloud and allow ample time for participants to “take a stand” at the appropriate place in the room. Once they have positioned themselves, ask them to silently look around and observe how their peers responded to the statement. Repeat this process with TAKING A STAND STATEMENTS or as many as time allows.
  o Option: Rather than having participants remain silent throughout the activity, briefly process each statement before moving on to the next one using some of the discussion questions in step below.

• Reconvene the group and lead a discussion with participants using some of the following questions:
  o Which statements were the easiest for you to respond to? The most difficult? Why?
  o Did the group’s overall response to any of the statements surprise you? If so, which ones and why?
Were you alone or in the minority in how you responded to any of the statements? If so, how did this make you feel?

Did you change your mind about any of the issues raised in this exercise as a result of your peers’ responses? If so, how did your opinion change?

After participating in this activity, what impact do you think expressions like “that’s so gay” and “no homo,” and terms like “faggot” and “dyke” have on others?

Do you think that what you have learned today will change your attitude or your behavior in any way?

What do you think it would take to limit or curb the use of expressions like “that’s so gay” among your peers?

Introduce participants to one or more of the ThinkB4YouSpeak ads (included after instructions). Use the discussion questions to process the ads.

Ask participants if the ads changed their feelings about any of the issues raised earlier in the activity. Discuss how these ads might be used in school or the community to reduce anti-LGBT slurs and work with students to put into action one or more of their ideas. After the activities, conclude the program by soliciting feedback from students on their feelings and thoughts of the program. Remind them to make an appointment with their counselor if they want to talk further about their feelings or questions about this program’s content. Pass out the trevor project hotline handout.

“That’s So Gay” Print Ads:

Please print out the ads for students to view and then have students answer these questions.

1. What was your immediate emotional response to these ads? Why?
2. What is a stereotype (an oversimplified generalization about a person or group of people without regard for individual differences)?
3. What stereotypes are exploited in these ads (jocks and cheerleaders are stupid; gamers are loners)? Is this implication fair or accurate?
4. What other mean stereotypes do you hear that are upsetting to you?
5. How does the use of “that’s so gay” relate to the use of stereotypes, as in these ads? (It is based on the assumption that being gay is bad, wrong, or undesirable)
6. How would you feel if a part of who you were was used as an insult?
7. When people say “that’s so gay,” why doesn’t it seem as mean as the statements in the ads?
8. Does the fact that certain expressions are used commonly make them acceptable?
9. How do you think you can make others aware that “that’s so gay” can be as hurtful as other stereotypical or insulting expressions?
TAking A Stand Statements

- I often hear the phrase “that’s so gay,” “you’re so gay,” “no homo” or the word “gay” in general used in a negative way among my peers.
- I often hear terms like “faggot” or “dyke” used among my peers.
- When I hear “that’s so gay,” it is usually aimed at an object rather than a person.
- When people say “that’s so gay” or “no homo,” they do not mean it as an insult against actual LGBT people.
- Regardless of how it is meant, expressions like “that’s so gay” and “no homo” are probably insulting or upsetting to LGBT people and those who care about them.
- I have never thought about how expressions like “that’s so gay” or “no homo” might make others feel.
- I have personally used expressions like “that’s so gay,” “you’re so gay” or “no homo” with my peers.
- I have personally used terms like “faggot” and “dyke” with my peers.
- When expressions like “that’s so gay” or “no homo” are aimed directly at me, it bothers me.
- Expressions like “that’s so gay” and “no homo” are okay as long as they are not used to directly attack an LGBT person.
- Expressions like “that’s so gay” and “no homo” are never okay to use.
- I would personally be willing to limit or curb my use of expressions like “that’s so gay” and “no homo.”
THAT’S SO
“JOCK
WHO CAN
COMPLETE
A PASS
BUT NOT A
SENTENCE.”

Think that’s mean? How do you think “that’s so gay” sounds? Hurtful. So, knock it off.

ThinkB4YouSpeak.com
THAT’S SO
“CHEER-LEADER
WHO LIKE, CAN’T LIKE,
SAY SMART STUFF.”

Think that’s mean? How do you think ‘that’s so gay’ sounds? Hurtful. So, knock it off.
ThinkB4YouSpeak.com
THAT’S SO
“GAMER GUY
WHO HAS
MORE
VIDEOGAMES
THAN
FRIENDS.”

Think that’s mean? How do you think “that’s so gay” sounds? Hurtful. So, knock it off.
ThinkB4YouSpeak.com
GET HELP NOW

"I'M THINKING ABOUT KILLING MYSELF."

We're here for you. Please call the Trevor Lifeline (866-488-7386) - it's free and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can also ask for help on TrevorChat or TrevorText.

"I NEED A SAFE, NON-JUDGMENTAL PLACE TO TALK."

Talk to us on the Trevor Lifeline (866-488-7386), over TrevorChat, or through TrevorText - Our trained volunteer counselors are ready to listen.

TrevorText - Available on Fridays (4:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. ET / 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. PT). Text the word “Trevor” to 1-202-304-1200. Standard text messaging rates apply.

TrevorChat - Available 7 days a week (3:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. ET / 12:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. PT).

WEBPAGE: http://www.thetrevorproject.org/pages/get-help-now
APPENDIX II: EVALUATIVE SUMMARY

April 11, 2015
Dear Evaluator:

My name is Erin McMichael and I am graduate student at California State University, Northridge. I am a candidate for the Masters of Science degree in Counseling in the Educational Psychology and Counseling (EPC) Department. I am working on my graduate project under the direction of my graduate project chair, Dr. Shyrea Minton. The purpose of this project is to promote respect and empathy toward LGBTQ students at the middle school level by giving all students the chance to participate in activities that foster an awareness of the discrimination, prejudice, and bullying experienced by individuals who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender. I am inviting you to participate in the evaluation of my graduate project by completing the attached survey. Please note that this project is not in its final revised stage at this time, so you are receiving an initial draft. If you could return the completed survey no later than April 16, 2015, that would be most helpful to keep to my timeline. Your feedback will be used to improve the project. If you have any further questions or concerns you may contact my graduate project chair at shyrea.minton@csun.edu and/or (818) 677-4976. Thank you for your time and participation.

Sincerely,
Erin McMichael
(818) 940-7318 and/or erin.mcmichael.52@my.csun.edu
Graduate Project Evaluation

After you have reviewed the graduate project that I have created, please provide feedback by answering the questions below. The result for this survey will be used to improve the project going forward. Your participation is voluntary and your responses will be kept confidential. I appreciate your honest opinion about this graduate project, and ask that you do not put your name on the sheet so that your responses remain anonymous. Thank you in advance for your participation.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

4        3         2    1

1. This program is helpful for 7th-8th grade students □
2. This program could easily be implemented at a middle school □
3. The length of the program (four weeks) is appropriate for a middle school setting □
4. The length of each week’s activity (45-60 min.) is achievable □
5. The sessions are well outlined and easy to follow □
6. The materials needed to conduct all the sessions are useful and accessible to all counselors □
7. I would feel comfortable facilitating this program □
8. I would use this program at my school site □
9. I would recommend this program to other counselors □

What comments do you have that would help me to improve this program?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
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