

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

LGBTQ Policies in Education, Queer Students & Bullying

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Arts in Political Science

By

Cameron Brenner Chanchian

August, 2022

The graduate project by Cameron Brenner is approved:

Dr. Alexandra Macias

Date

Dr. Lawrence Becker

Date

Dr. Tyler Hughes, Chair

Date

California State University, Northridge

Acknowledgments

First, I would like to thank my husband Fulvio. He has been there for me through thick and thin and has been my emotional rock. Fulvio has been supporting me throughout my academic career. We have been married since 2017 and I have been incredibly lucky to have a husband like him. His love and care have helped me get through these tough times, especially during the passing of my grandfather and my uncle in quick succession. We met seven years ago at the Science and Industry Museum where our relationship flourished into the loving marriage that it is now. Fulvio's love has been a comfort for me in my life's many ups and downs. I am always grateful for what he has done for me and what he still does for me. I am blessed to have such a wonderful husband.

I would not have been able to succeed as I have in the master's program at CSUN without my family. My brother has been a constant support to me and a shoulder I could lean on. My parents have been extremely supportive of my studies and have done as much as they could to ensure my success. My mother and father are very important in my life, and she has helped me through graduate school by aiding me financially and emotionally. I am always grateful for the love and support of my mother and father. It is thanks to them that I have been able to earn a BA in Theatre and now a MA in Political Science

I would also like to thank my best friend Liam who has been there for me throughout my graduate experience. Since high school, he has been my best friend and has been a loyal friend and confidant. He stuck by my side no matter what happened in my life. When my life was

falling apart in my teenage years, he was there for me. He helped me piece myself back together. I would not have been able to make it through high school let alone my undergraduate years without his support. Liam has been there for me when I have needed him most even through my darker hours. His loyalty is something people would die for and for that I am eternally grateful. Liam is like a brother too and is part of my family.

It is thanks to my other best friend Cara, who has been extremely supportive of me and a great source of knowledge and wisdom. She has opened my eye to many things in the world around me and helped expand my understanding. She has been there for me when I was at my lows and help hold me high. I always value our long phone calls that last hours upon hours. She was there for me when my mother had a stroke near the end of my time as an undergrad.

This project has been a long and difficult process for me, and it is thanks to the love and support of my friends and family that I have been able to move successfully through this master's program. I particularly would like to thank my husband for his love and support during my time in graduate school. He has needed emotional support during the rough nature of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Table of Contents

Signature Page.....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Abstract.....	vi
I. Introduction.....	1
II. Literature Review.....	4
III. Methodology.....	10
IV. Data and Results.....	17
V. Discussion.....	21
VI. Conclusion.....	25
References.....	26

Abstract

LGBTQ Education Policies and Bullying

By

Cameron Brenner Chanchian

Master of Arts in Political Science

This paper explores the connection between LGBTQ education policies and bullying. LGBTQ education policies are designed to protect queer students from harm, take care of their needs, and promote their academic success. The FAIR Education policy attempts to help queer students succeed in school by expanding protections set forth by the Education Code in California. This paper analyzes data from the Center for Disease Controls' Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System to examine if California's school districts have seen a decrease in gay bullying from 2011- 2019. The current focus of education policies is on increasing the academic success of LGBTQ students by decreasing bullying. Although this paper did not directly test the effect of the FAIR Education Act on gay bullying, the findings of this work suggest that there has been a statistically significant decrease in gay bullying over time from 2011-2019.

I. Introduction

LGBTQ students face issues of discrimination in the form of bullying and harassment on school grounds by fellow students, faculty, and staff (Lugg and Adelman, 2015). School districts around the country have implemented policies to combat these issues. This adversity may result in lower education gains for queer students (Sears, 2005; Fisher et al., 2008; Russel et al., 2011; Hopson, Schiller, Lawson, 2014; Russell and Toomey, 2014; Russel et.al., 2016). LGBTQ Education policies that sought to aid LGBTQ students were not studied until the 1990s (Nichols, 1999). Many LGBTQ education policies that have been implemented deal with discrimination, bullying, and harassment as well as the expansion of school curricula to include LGBTQ figures (Sears, 2005; Russel et al., 2011; Langmuir, 2013; Leno, 2013; Wimberly, Wilkson, and Pearson, 2015; Russel et al., 2016; Moorhead 2018). It was not long ago that LGBTQ expression and identity were not societally accepted. This acceptance has been slow with many states still fighting against the right of LGBTQ individuals (Morris, 2009; Doan, 2015). To this day many regions of the world have not given LGBTQ individuals equal rights and continue to criminalize being LGBTQ (Human Rights Watch, 2022). In the United States, LGBTQ issues in education have come to the forefront of political discussion. As a result, the question of whether LGBTQ policies create a safer environment for students is one that is both timely and relevant This project will examine the Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Respectful Education Act (FAIR Act), which instituted LGBTQ education policies in the state of California to address issues of discrimination and bullying of LGBTQ students. Discrimination and bullying of LGBTQ students have been shown to affect the academic performance of queer students (Sears, 2005;

Fisher et al., 2008; Russel et al, 2011; Hopson, Schiller, Lawson, 2014) which makes it an important component of the analysis of education policy in general. Specifically, this work will examine whether the FAIR Education Act has affected the bullying of LGBTQ students in California.

The existing literature suggests that policies toward LGBTQ students have made an impact on school safety, making a safe school climate. “Inclusive policies that attend to sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) are associated with more supportive school environments for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth.” (Day et al., 2019, p. 1). Academic success is greatly impacted by school climate as schools that are perceived as safer have higher-performing students (Hopson, Schiller, Lawson, 2014). Education policies that prevent LGBTQ student victimization promote student success and create a safe school environment (Russel et al. 2011; Russel & Toomey, 2014.). This tells us that policies created to address issues of discrimination, bullying, and harassment of LGBTQ students can help create a safer school environment resulting in better academic performance from LGBTQ students (Sears, 2005; Fisher et al., 2008; Russel et al, 2011; Hopson, Schiller, Lawson, 2014). LGBTQ education policies, such as the FAIR Act, can be used to create a safer school environment for LGBTQ students which in turn has a positive influence on students’ academic performance (Russel et al, 2011; Hopson, Schiller, Lawson, 2014). I propose that the rate of bullying based on perceived sexual orientation has decreased in California after the passing and implementation of the FAIR Act from 2011-2019.

Data from the Center for Disease Control’s (CDC) Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), from 2011-2019, will be used to see if there has been a change in bullying

based on sexual orientation after the passage of the FAIR Act. The data suggests a relationship between the implementation of the FAIR Act and a decrease in gay bullying over time. It is my findings that there has been a significant decrease in gay bullying since the implementation of the FAIR Act from 2011-2019. This follows with what the literature has stated about LGBTQ education policies having a positive impact on decreasing LGBTQ-based bullying and harassment (Sears, 2005; Fisher et al., 2008; Russel et al, 2011; Hopson, Schiller, Lawson, 2014). Black, Fedewa, and Gonzalez (2012) conducted seventeen studies that provide evidence that students in schools with even just one LGBTQ safe school policy were perceived as safer and less sexually prejudiced environments than schools without any aspect of safe school policies.

The next section will examine the literature on LGBTQ education-based policies in schools and their impact on students. Following this section, an examination of data from the CDC's YRBSS will be used to test my hypothesis that the FAIR act has contributed to a decrease in LGBTQ bullying. These results will then be connected to the findings of the literature. The last section will summarize and conclude the findings and results of my paper in order to validate my hypothesis.

II. Literature Review

The goals of most schools are for students to have higher rates of attendance, achieve higher grades, and have higher graduation rates. Reaching this goal is more difficult for some groups of students. Students that are LGBTQ often face bullying and harassment in the education system, particularly in high school. LGBTQ students face greater levels of bullying and harassment, compared to their heterosexual peers, by fellow students as well as from teachers and administrators (Sears, 2005; Fisher et al., 2008; Kosciw, 2008-2009; Langmuir, 2013; Russel et.al, 2014; Lugg and Adelman, 2015; Russell et al., 2016; Biegel, 2019). Bullying in general impacts students' perception of school climate and in turn students' academic success (Russel et al., 2011). LGBTQ students have the highest rate of being name-called, harassment, and physical assault with transgender students having a greater risk of ill-treatment in the public school system. (Lugg and Adelman, 2015, p.54) LGBTQ students have higher rates of sexual assault in the public education system (Bochenek and Brown, 2001; Bontempe and D'Augelli, 2002; Murdock and Bolch, 2005; Fisher et al., 2008, Russel et al., 2011; Langmuir, 2013; Elizabeth and Melissa, 2021). Teachers and administrators can contribute to the bullying of LGBTQ students when they exhibit cluelessness, indifference, or overt hostility creating a hostile environment for queer students (Sears, 2005; Fisher et al., 2008; Kosciw, 2008-2009; Langmuir, 2013; Lugg and Adelman, 2015; Biegel, 2019).

Harassment and bullying brought by anti-gay prejudice negatively impact LGBTQ students and creates a dangerous environment for said students. LGBTQ school victimization is linked to mental health issues in young adults and a higher risk of STIs like HIV (Russel et al.,

2011). Sears (2005) found that bullying in schools hurts queer students' performance. In male LGBTQ students, higher levels of depression and suicidal ideation are linked to school victimization (Russel et al., 2011). Unsafe school climates increase the likelihood that LGBTQ students will partake in risky, harmful, and dangerous behaviors (Bochenek and Brown, 2001; Bontempe and D'Augelli, 2002; Murdock and Bolch, 2005; Fisher et al., 2008, Russel et al., 2011; Langmuir, 2013; Elizabeth and Melissa, 2021). Students that are in a safe supportive school environment have a higher chance of academic success (Fisher et al., 2008, p. 88). Wimberly, Wilkison, and Pearson (2015) found that GPAs were positively correlated with teacher support, peer support, and a sense of belonging in a school environment. To this point, LGBTQ students in highly supportive environments have higher GPAs than those in less supportive ones. At the same time, victimization and exclusion are negatively correlated with GPA scores for LGBTQ students (Wimberly, Wilkison, and Pearson 2015, p 124). Therefore, this tells us that LGBTQ students' experiences in school are correlated with their academic performance (Sears, 2005; Russel et al., 2011; Black, Fedewa, and Gonzalez, 2012; Langmuir, 2013; Wimberly, Wilkison, and Pearson, 2015; Russel et al., 2016).

An important goal for schools is to create safe learning environments for their students by creating a safe school climate. Multiple levels and areas define school climate. One such is anti-bullying and anti-discrimination policies. Addressing discrimination allows schools to promote high grades and high levels of student attendance (Russel et al., 2011). Reducing bullying in schools through the promotion of anti-bullying LGBTQ policies promotes a safer school climate (Hopson, Schiller, and Lawson, 2014). Anti-bullying LGBTQ policies don't have a direct impact on stopping students from bullying LGBTQ students, but it does create a safer school culture and

environment in classrooms (Russel et.al, 2014, Russell et al., 2016). Even a small reduction in LGBTQ school victimization results in significant long-term health gains (Russel et al., 2011; Russel et al, 2011). These policies are reported to make students feel safer and give LGBTQ students resources to deal with bullying (Russel et al., 2011; Langmuir, 2013; Russel et al., 2014; Russel & Tooley, 2014; Russel et al., 2016). Using policies that are directed at the prevention of LGBTQ student victimization and promoting a safe environment also promotes higher grades, better attendance, and participation in school (Russel et al., 2011; Langmuir, 2013; Russel & Tooley, 2014.)

In California, the FAIR Act was created to protect LGBTQ students within public education from discrimination and was passed on July 14th, 2011, when Governor Jerry Brown signed it into law. Section 2 of the FAIR Act amends the Education Code 51200 to broaden anti-discrimination provisions by prohibiting teachers or school districts from promoting discriminatory biases against LGBTQ individuals. (SB 48, 2011). The FAIR Act also protects the rights of transgender students by broadening protections for all students based on gender identity and gender (SB 48, 2011; Huss and Folsoi, 2017-2018). Section 4 of the Fair Act amends 60040 of the Education Code to mandate that schools must adopt instructional material that includes LGBTQ figures and contributions to society (SB 48, 2011). Schools in California are making changes to their structure and curriculum to help meet the goals set forth by the FAIR Education Act. The FAIR Education Act's objective is to address issues of discrimination and bullying that LGBTQ students face within the California school system. The FAIR Act's design was to create a safe school climate for LGBTQ children within the education system. The idea of policy creation to address issues of discrimination faced by LGBTQ students has been explored

by multiple experts in the field. Given the FAIR Act's connection to LGBTQ educational experience, this gives a unique opportunity to explore policies that address LGBTQ students.

The FAIR Act is an ideal act to analyze because it reflects the existing literature's focus on policies that would address LGBTQ student educational concerns. Hopson, Schiller, and Lawson (2014) made recommendations on how to create safer school climates by writing policies to protect LGBTQ students. According to Hopson, Schiller, and Lawson (2014), a safe school climate for LGBTQ students can be determined by five elements. The first element is the enforcement of clear anti-discrimination policies that include LGBTQ students. Schools that have comprehensive anti-bullying/anti-harassment policies report having less homophobic remarks as well as staff intervening when they hear anti-LGBTQ statements (Langmuir 2013). The second element is that students are informed about where they can get information about LGBTQ issues. Schools are the ideal setting for educating students about diversity due to the extent of time that students spend at school as well as the time spent with and influence of peers (Nichols, 1999). The third element is that schools' staff will intervene regularly when anti-LGBTQ harassment occurs. Safe school environments require the support of teachers and school staff, teachers that are hostile or indifferent create a negative school environment (Sears, 2005; Fisher et al., 2008; Kosciw, 2008-2009; Langmuir, 2013; Biegel, 2019). The fourth element states that there is a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) or other LGBTQ diversity club. Schools with GSAs have students reporting that they feel safer, have fewer absences, and partake in less risky behavior. (Fisher et al., 2008; Russle et al., 2011; Langmuir, 2013; Lugg and Madelain, 2015). The fifth and final element states that schools incorporate LGBTQ issues into the curriculum. The inclusion of queer literature and LGBTQ topics help create a warm and accepting school

climate which contributes to a positive outcome for queer students (Langmuir, 2013; Leno, 2013; Moorhead, 2018).

The FAIR Act addresses the five dimensions through the expansion of anti-bullying policies and the enforcement of school intervention in queer bullying. The FAIR Act allows for students to have more access in schools on LGBTQ issues. Through the FAIR Act, teachers are prohibited from discriminating against LGBTQ students and are given tools to help promote and protect queer students. Schools cannot promote or participate in activities that are discriminatory toward LGBTQ Students. Lastly, schools must promote the integration and inclusion of LGBTQ materials into their curriculum. Much of the FAIR Act's focus is the expansion of protections for LGBTQ students. It was designed to protect queer students from discrimination and bullying within the school system. The passage of the FAIR Act offers an opportunity to study the academic performance of LGBTQ students in the school with its implementation. This also allows opportunities to study if these policies have an influence on protecting LGBTQ students from discrimination, harassment, and bullying based on students' LGBTQ identity.

Based on the discussion in the literature, we would expect that the FAIR act would influence gay bullying in schools. These policies seek to promote students' academic success through the protection and promotion queer students and queer issues.

Hypothesis: There will be a decrease in LGBTQ-related bullying among students in California after the passage of the FAIR Act.

Schools with LGBTQ policies tend to have a friendlier school climate and overall better performance from queer students (Sears, 2005; Russel et al. 2011; Langmuir, 2013; Wimberly, Wilkson, and Pearson, 2015; Russel et al., 2016). LGBTQ education policies, such as anti-

bullying and harassment, make school a safer learning environment and have a positive influence on LGBTQ students' grades, attendance, participation, and mental health (Sears, 2005; Fisher et al., 2008; Russel et al., 2011; Hopson, Schiller, Lawson, 2014; Russell and Toomey, 2014; Russel et.al., 2016). Neglecting to put LGBTQ policies in place had been shown to result in negative academic performance for queer students resulting in lower GPA scores (Black, Fedewa, and Gonzalez, 2012). The FAIR Education Act's goal is to create a safer school climate for LGTBQ students through the creation of LGBTQ education policies by targeting similar elements to Hopson, Schiller, and Lawson (2014).

III. Methodology

The survey used in my analysis is the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) from the Center for Disease Control (CDC). The YRBSS is a national representative survey that examines the health-risk behaviors of middle and high school students, grades 7-12. I am using the subset of students from California available in the survey from 2011-2019. The students are surveyed from three cities in California: Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Francisco. I am interested in the YRBSS because it asks multiple questions about student experiences, such as bullying. In the data set, there were 19,360 responses from students. There were 16,746 Heterosexual and 2,614 LGBTQ respondents. There were 9,654 males and 9,529 females with 177 missing values. There were 1,424 white respondents and 17,261 non-white respondents with 675 missing values. 65 respondents were 12 or younger, 72 were 13, 3,057 were 14, 4,678 were 15, 4,475 were 16, 4,569 were 17, and 2,325 that were 18 or older with 118 that were missing values. Additionally, the YRBSS asks questions about students' sexual orientation, gender, race, and age. The survey's questions allow for the comparison of groups of students to see if other factors influence bullying. This enables the examination of whether there has been a decrease in gay bullying over time when controlling for multiple variables.

There are multiple variables that could influence gay bullying. One control variable chosen is self-identified sexuality. Sexuality is a contributing factor when it comes to discrimination, bullying, and harassment of LGBTQ students in school (Bochenek and Brown, 2001; Bontempe and D'Augelli, 2002; Murdock and Bolch, 2005; Fisher et al., 2008, Russel et al., 2011; Langmuir, 2013; Elizabeth and Melissa, 2021). Therefore, students who self-identify

as LGBTQ are more vulnerable to bullying based on sexual orientation (Berlan et al., 2010; Lugg and Adelman, 2015). *Sexual Minority* measures whether students self-identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Queer or if the student identifies as Heterosexual¹. The variable is dichotomous with students answering either Heterosexual or LGBTQ. According to Table 2, the modal response for sexuality is Heterosexual, comprising 91.4 percent of the data. Only 9.6 percent of respondents labeled themselves as LGBTQ. The data from the variables showed that LGBTQ students make up the minority of students in California’s schools, which is consistent with the national population. About 7.1 percent of adults in the US identify as LGBTQ (Gallop, 2022). The number of California students identifying as LGBTQ is close to the national average.

The dependent variable for the analysis is whether students experienced bullying directed at their sexual orientation (*gay bullying*).² *Gay bullying* is a dichotomous variable, with answers being either yes or no. The modal response for *gay bullying* is no, not being bullied. According to Table 1, 7.8% of the students indicated they were bullied because of their perceived sexuality. A large majority of students did not experience *gay bullying* across all years. When looking at the data on a yearly basis, there is a decrease in *gay bullying* over time. The FAIR Act was created in 2011. Therefore, 2011 is used as a baseline for the comparison against the years 2013, 2015, 2017, and 2019. In 2011, 9.43 percent of the students responded they were bullied for

¹ Bisexual means an individual is sexually attracted to both men and women. Queer means an individual is unsure of their sexuality and or gender identity. Heterosexuality means that an individual is sexually attracted to someone of the opposite sex.

² The question from the YRBSS survey was “Qnbullygay: during the past 12 months, have you ever been the victim of teasing or name calling because someone thought you were gay, lesbian, or bisexual?”

being perceived as gay. In 2013, 8.98 percent experienced *gay bullying*. In 2015, 8.02 percent experience gay bullying. In 2017, 6.71 percent experienced *gay bullying*. Finally, in 2019, 7.72 percent of respondents experienced *gay bullying*. Between 2011 to 2019 there is a modest decrease in bullying of 1.71% among California students. This shows that *gay bullying* decreased over the time points of the dataset. This follows my expectation of the time it would take for the full implementation of the FAIR Act to start taking effect.

<u>Table 1: Gay Bullying Over Time</u>			
Year -2011			
Gay Bullying	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
No	1,575	90.57	90.57
Yes	164	9.43	100
Total	1,739	100	
Year -2013			
Gay Bullying	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
No	1,429	91.02	91.02
Yes	141	9.98	100
Total	1,570	100	
Year -2015			
Gay Bullying	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
No	5,437	91.98	91.98
Yes	474	8.02	100
Total	5,911	100	
Year -2017			
Gay Bullying	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
No	5,329	93.29	93.29
Yes	342	6.71	100
Total	5,712	100	
Year -2019			
Gay Bullying	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
No	4,086	92.28	92.28
Yes	342	7.72	100
Total	4,428	100	

NOTE: This data comes from the CDC YRBSS

Bullying does not exist within a vacuum, so there might be other variables that need to be controlled while analyzing *gay bullying*. One of the other control variables is gender. Girls are on average less likely to be bullied than boys (Juvonen and Graham, 2001). Boys are more likely to discriminate, bully, or harass other boys who are effeminate or deviate from perceived masculine traits and or behaviors (Juvonen and Graham, 2001; Berlan et al., 2010). Males who experience insecurity over issues of gender identity are more likely to attack effeminate boys as children may believe that attacking others that are rejected by social groups will go unpunished by mainstream peers (Juvonen and Graham, 2001). Heterosexual and gay males were at an increased risk of victimization by other heterosexual males (Berlan et al., 2010). Therefore, boys are more likely to experience gay bullying than girls (Juvonen and Graham 2001, Berlan, et al., 2010 Evan et al., 2019). *Gender* is dichotomous with responses being either male or female. According to Table 2, 50.32 percent of the respondents are labeled as female while 49.64 percent are labeled as male. About half of the respondents are either male or female, with only a marginal difference in size between the two groups. The percentage of females and males is close to the national average of 51.1 percent female and 48.9 percent male (US Census, 2020).

There are other variables that could influence *gay bullying*. Another control variable chosen is race. Latinx, Asian, and Black students are more vulnerable to bullying due to their race or immigration status and are frequent targets of race-based discrimination and bullying (Peguero 2008, 2009, 2019; Galan et al., 2021). An example would be that Latinx students experiencing higher levels of depression and suicidal ideation “... highlight that social status insecurity and self-reported relational aggression are more positively Latinx adolescents.”

(Peguero, 2019, p. 160). Students that experience identity-based bullying due to race are more likely to report bullying based on sexual orientation and gender (Galan et al., 2021). Counter to this point is that Black and Latinx students experienced less bullying based on sexual orientation than white students suggesting that sexual orientation may not play as large of a role in bullying of non-white students (Webb et al., 2021). **Race** measures the racial identification of students. **Race** is a dichotomous variable with students being labeled white or non-white. Non-white is composed of multiple racial groups such as Black, Latinx, Asian, Native American, and Pacific Islander. According to Table 2, the modal response for race is non-white comprising 92.38 percent. Only 7.62 percent of respondents are white. The data from the variable shows that most of the entries are coming from non-white students. Most Californians are non-white with California having 34.7 percent of the population being white (US Census, 2020). The number of non-white students in the data set is larger than the population averages. The data reflects the size of California's non-white population in schools. The data is not proportionate to the state average. The data comes from the state's largest urban centers. This difference cannot be accounted for but should be noted.

The last control variable that is measured is age. With the increase of age comes a decrease in bullying as younger students are more likely to be bullied than older students (Juvonen and Graham, 2001). Younger students have higher rates of bullying based on sexual orientation than older students as students that come out younger suffer from more bullying and harassment with 6th through 10th grade suffering from moderate or frequent bullying (Juvonen and Graham, 2001; Henrickson 2008, Berlan et al., 2010; Wang, 2018). **Age** measures the approximate age of the students. There are seven responses to the question of students' ages: 12

or younger, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18 or older. The modal response for age is 15 years old, and the mean response for age is between fifteen and sixteen. 0.34 percent responded 12 or younger, 0.37 percent responded 13, 15.89 percent responded 14, 24.31 percent responded 15, 23.26 percent responded 16, 23.74 percent responded 17, and lastly, 12.08 percent responded 18 or older. The data tells us that most of the students fell within the age range of fifteen to sixteen years old.

The summary statistics described above highlight several key points. First, most students do not experience bullying based on perceived sexuality from 2011- 2019. There is a drop in **gay bullying** from 2011-2019. The data for sexuality falls in line with the national averages with LGBTQ students being in the minority which decreases the likeliness that students, in general, will be victims of gay bullying. The percentage of females to males in the data set is about equal which falls in line with the national average of males to females. There are significantly more non-white students in the data set than there are white students. The data on race falls outside the state average. This is important as the data reflects the population of larger urban centers in California. This difference cannot be accounted for in my analysis. Lastly, most of the students are in an age range that makes them vulnerable to gay bullying.

IV. Data and Results

I estimate a simple logistic regression predicting whether a student experienced gay bullying. The dependent variable is analyzed using the following equation:

$$Pr Pr (M = 1) = \text{logit}^{-1}(\eta + \alpha O + \beta A + \gamma C)$$

where the probability of students experiencing gay bullying is a function of over-time dynamics O and a vector of the control variables of sexual minority, gender, race, and age. The over-time dynamics, O , are a series of dichotomous variables capturing different years in the data. The excluded category is 2011, so each variable in this vector compares ***Gay Bullying*** between the listed year and 2011.

Table 2: Logit Regression Predicted Whether Students Were Victims of Gay Bullying, 2011-2017	
2013	0.037 (0.129)
2015	-0.108 (0.102)
2017	-0.332* (0.017)
2019	-0.25* (0.104)
Sexual Minority	1.828* (0.070)
Female	-0.458* (0.059)
Non-White	-0.325* (0.093)
Age	-0.15* (0.022)
Constant	-1.364* (0.1572)
N	18,584
Wald Chi-squared	659.74
* indicates p<0.05	

NOTE: This data comes from the CDC YRBSS

In 2017 and 2019, the coefficient is negative and statistically significant with -0.332 for 2017 and -0.25 for 2019. This tells us students in 2017 and 2019 encountered less bullying than students in 2011. 2013 and 2015 did not show statistically significant differences from 2011 with 2013 being 0.037 and 2015 being -0.108, which means there is no significant difference in **gay bullying** across those years. What is seen in my analysis is that over time there is a statistically

significant decrease in gay bullying with -1.364, even when controlling for the other variables in the model. This difference is especially strong in 2017 and 2019, several years after the passage of the FAIR Act. Therefore, if the FAIR Act is affecting gay bullying in California schools, the policy took several years to be effective. However, it should be noted this model does not directly test the effect of the FAIR Education Act on gay bullying in schools. The analysis could simply be capturing the decrease in *Gay Bullying* over time. Regardless, the data indicate *Gay Bullying* decreased at the same time the FAIR Education Act was implemented. This suggests that the FAIR Act had an effect, but I cannot claim a clear causal relationship. 2011 is used as a baseline in my analysis, as the FAIR Education Act was not enacted until 2011. There is seen a delay from 2013-2015 before there is a significant decrease in gay bullying. This aligns with the literature that states that the FAIR Act would take time to gain effectiveness, as the implementation was slow and time-consuming (Leno, 2013).

Through the examination of the control variables in the model, there are several key findings. For example, *gender* influences a student's experience with gay bullying. The coefficient is negative and statistically significant at -0.458, this means that males are more likely to experience gay bullying than females. This relationship fits the expectations described in the previous section. *Sexual minority* status also influences students' experiences with gay bullying. The coefficient is positive and statistically significant at 1.828. Students that are in the *sexual minority* are more likely to experience gay bullying. Again, this relationship is in line with the extant literature. *Race* also influences gay bullying. The coefficient is negative and statistically significant at -0.325. Non-white students are less likely to have experience gay bullying than white students. In the data set white students are a small minority of the respondents with non-

white students being a significantly large group. Given these proportions, it is not clear if this finding can be generalized beyond California. The disparity in the number of students between white and non-white students did not impact the outcome of the model. The last observation from the data is that *age* plays a significant role if a student experiences gay bullying. The coefficient is negative and statistically significant at -0.15; younger students are more likely to experience gay bullying than older students, which is also in line with the extant literature.

Overall, there is a decrease in gay bullying over time while controlling for a number of factors. This aligned with my hypotheses: For students in the state of California, there was a decrease in gay bullying from 2011-2019. The years 2013 and 2015 did not see a statistically significant decrease in gay bullying, but 2017 and 2019 did see a statistically significant decrease in gay bullying. Over time, the model does show a statistically significant decrease in bullying, but the decrease is not observed until several years after the passage of the FAIR Act. The data suggests there is a relationship between the enactment of the FAIR Act and a decrease in gay bullying. There are also important observations about the control variables; men are more likely than women to be victims of gay bullying, LGBTQ students are more likely to be victims of gay bullying, white students are more likely to be victims of gay bullying, and younger students are more likely to be victims of gay bullying. In conclusion, for students in the state of California, there is a decrease in gay bullying after the passage of the FAIR Act in 2011.

V. Discussion

The key findings of my research paper are that there has been a statistically significant decrease in bullying based on perceived sexuality from 2011-2019. From Table 2 the years 2013 and 2015 were not statistically significant while 2017 and 2019 were. Cumulatively the years were statistically significant. The key research question is: can the FAIR Education Act influence gay bullying? The findings were that school districts in California have seen a decrease in gay bullying over time, which falls in line with the implementation of the FAIR Education Act. The analysis does not test if the FAIR Education Act had an impact on gay bullying, but the data suggests that there is a relationship between the decrease in gay bullying from 2011-2019 and the implementation of the FAIR Education Act. The rationale of this method is to examine data on LGBTQ students and bullying from the CDC's YRBSS. The quantitative research methodology allows for the exploration of the hypothesis: In the state of California, there has been a decrease in gay bullying from 2011-2019. The analysis was able to validate the hypothesis. There are other important findings, such as LGBTQ students are more likely to experience gay bullying than their heterosexual peers. Females are also less likely to be targeted for gay bullying than males. White students are more likely to experience gay bullying than non-white students. Lastly, younger students are more likely to experience gay bullying than older students. Even when accounting for the control variables there is a statistically significant decrease in gay bullying from 2011-2019.

The result of the analysis on gay bullying falls in line with the literature. The literature touches upon males experiencing more gay bullying than females, this was also the finding of the

analysis. Males have a higher vulnerability to being victims of gay bullying than females, the data shows that gender has a noticeable effect on gay bullying (Russel et al., 2011). LGBTQ students are also more prone to gay bullying than their heterosexual peers this finding from the analysis matches findings in previous research (Lugg and Adelman, 2015). Other research has found a relationship between LGBTQ policies and queer students feeling safer in schools (Fisher et al., 2008; Hopson, Schiller, Lawson, 2014; Russel et.al, 2014; Russell et al., 2016). Anti-bullying policies that aim to help and protect LGBTQ students create change in schools allowing LGBTQ students to feel safe (Hopson, Schiller, Lawson, 2014; Russel et al., 2014; Russell et al., 2016). Younger students are more likely to experience gay bullying than older students which falls in line with the literature (Juvonen and Graham, 2001; Henrickson, 2008; Berlan et al., 2010; Wang, 2018). The analysis shows that students in California have seen a decrease in bullying over time which falls in line with the FAIR Act implementation. Feeling safe is an important aspect of a student's success at school (Fisher et al., 2008). Victimization at school for being LGBTQ has long-term negative consequences for students and can lead to problems later in adulthood. (Bochenek and Brown, 2001; Bontempe and D'Augelli, 2002; Murdock and Bolch, 2005; Fisher et al., 2008; Russel et al., 2011; Langmuir, 2013; Elizabeth and Melissa, 2021). Enforcement of clear anti-discrimination policies that include LGBTQ students has been shown to have a positive impact on student learning outcomes (Sears, 2005; Hopson, Schiller, Lawson, 2014; Russel et al., 2012; Russel et.al., 2016; Day et al., 2019)

The result falls in line with what was expected by previous research and scholarly knowledge. California students' demographic matches much of the national average students regarding sexuality and gender. The unexpected result was that there were significantly more

non-white students when compared to state and national averages. The percentage of white students in the school district is smaller than the state or national statistics which raises further questions about the data. The data is collected from large urban centers in California. The reasoning behind this might be due to a growing number of non-white families in California (US Census, 2020). White students might also be enrolling in private schools which were not recorded by the survey (Lewis-McCoy, 2014). When looking at the data from the California Department of Education, White students are 21.7 percent of the school population, with Latinx being 55.3 percent, Black being 5.2 percent, and Asian being 9.5 percent (California Department of Education, 2022).

There are several limitations that the analysis faces. An important limitation of the analysis is that it only looks at a small set of data that was run by the CDC. The data does not cover every school district in California. There are millions more students in California than what is recorded in the data set. Running a comprehensive test of that size would go beyond the abilities and scope of this project. This limitation places constraints on the scope of the analysis and the impact. The data set only looks at three cities within California, but there are many other cities with their own school districts that are not recorded in the data. A very important limitation was that the analysis did not test the FAIR Education Act's influence on gay bullying. It would be very difficult to test whether there was a direct effect of the FAIR Education Act decreasing bullying. The data does suggest a relationship between the FAIR Education Act and a decrease in gay bullying. There could be other factors that have decreased gay bullying in California not solely the FAIR Education Act.

Future research could be done on investigating if there is a link between student success rates and the implementation of LGBTQ policies. There could also be a comparison of LGBTQ student performance in schools that have LGBTQ policies and those that do not have any. This might be able to further link LGBTQ policies to academic success. Prior research points to five areas in which schools can address LGBTQ policies and issues; it could be investigated how many schools have made the effort to address all five areas brought up by Hopson, Schiller, and Lawson (2014) and compare the data those that have and those that have not. An important aspect of the school environment is student assessment of safety.

My paper finds that there has been a statistically significant decrease in gay bullying from 2011-2019. This analysis does not test whether there is a link between the FAIR Education Act and a decrease in bullying. There seems to be a relationship between the FAIR Education Act and a decrease in bullying. Queer students are more often targeted by gay bullying, but it has decreased over time. Schools within the state of California are having fewer issues with students being bullied over the perception of their sexuality. Schools are becoming safer environments for students with more hospitable climates. The analysis done connects with other research on the topic of LGBTQ policies in education. Males are more likely to be targeted for gay bullying than females which aligns with the findings of the literature. The literature displays that LGBTQ policies have a positive influence on LGBTQ students' academic success. There is the counterintuitive finding that white students are more likely to face gay bullying than their heterosexual peers. Non-white students were less likely to face gay bullying. There are multiple limitations facing the analysis such as the size and scope of the data. Future research can be done on student success rates and types of LGBTQ inclusive policies that schools have implemented.

VI. Conclusion

The impact of LGBTQ-based policies is known to help create safer spaces for students; policies like the FAIR Education Act aim to address LGBTQ issues of discrimination, harassment, and bullying. A question remains if anti-discrimination and anti-bullying policies influence bullying based on sexual orientation. Through a quantitative analysis of the YRBSS from the CDC, there is a statistically significant decrease in bullying based on perceived sexual orientation in California. Even when controlling for other variables, such as sexual orientation, gender, race, and age, the hypothesis is valid, for students in the state of California, there is a decrease in bullying based on sexual orientation from 2011-2019. While this paper does not test or prove a link between the FAIR Education Act and a decrease in bullying from 2011-2019, it suggests that the FAIR Act had an effect on gay bullying. Through the examination of the literature, there is evidence that policies directed at LGBTQ students improve school climate. Inclusive policies like the FAIR Education Act have a positive influence on schools creating a safer climate for students. LGBTQ-focused policies help address issues of inequality and safety in a school which in turn further the academic achievements of students. Anti-LGBTQ discrimination, harassment, and bullying are serious issues throughout the nation. Schools are the ideal place to create safe spaces for queer students. Schools can educate students about LGBTQ issues and protect students from discrimination. Being more inclusive by addressing LGBTQ issues creates a better school for all students. Schools must focus on the protection of LGBTQ students to help them succeed academically.

References

- Berlan ED, Corliss HL, Field AE, Goodman E, Austin SB. Sexual Orientation and Bullying among Adolescents in the Growing up Today Study. *J Adolesc Health*. 2010 Apr;46(4):366-71. Doi: 10.1016/j.jadohealth.2009.10.015. Epub 2010 Jan 29. PMID: 20307826; PMCID: PMC2844864.”
- Biegel, Stuart. 2018. *The Right to Be Out: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in America’s Public Schools, Second Edition*. University of Minnesota Press.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctv5zftvs> (September 6, 2021).
- Black, Whitney W., Alicia L. Fedewa, and Kirsten A. Gonzalez. 2012. “Effects of ‘Safe School’ Programs and Policies on the Social Climate for Sexual-Minority Youth: A Review of the Literature.” *Journal of LGBT Youth* 9(4): 321–39.
- Bochenek, Michael, and A. Widney Brown. 2001. *Hatred in the Hallways: Violence and Discrimination against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Students in U.S. Schools*. New York: Human Rights Watch.
- Bontempo, Daniel E, and Anthony R D’Augelli. 2002. “Effects of At-School Victimization and Sexual Orientation on Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual Youths’ Health Risk Behavior.” *Journal of Adolescent Health* 30(5): 364–74.
- Bureau, U. S. C. (2021, October 8). California Remained Most Populous State but Growth Slowed Last Decade. Census.Gov. Retrieved July 5, 2022, from
<https://www.census.gov/library/stories/state-by-state/california-population-change-between-census->

[Decade.Html#:~:Text=Race%20and%20ethnicity%20\(White%20alone,Or%20More%20Races%2010.2%25\).”](#)

Day, Jack K., Salvatore Ioverno, and Stephen T. Russell. 2019. “Safe and Supportive Schools for LGBT Youth: Addressing Educational Inequities through Inclusive Policies and Practices.”

Journal of School Psychology 74: 29–43.

De Pedro, K.T., Shim-Pelayo, H. & Bishop, C. Exploring Physical, Nonphysical, and Discrimination-Based Victimization among Transgender Youth in California Public Schools. *Int Journal of Bullying Prevention* 1, 218–226 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1007/S42380-019-00016-8>.”

Doan, Petra L., ed. 2015. *Planning and LGBTQ Communities: The Need for Inclusive Queer Spaces*. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Drydakis, Nick. 2019. “School-Age Bullying, Workplace Bullying and Job Satisfaction: Experiences of LGB People in Britain.” *The Manchester School* 87(4): 455–88.

Fingertip facts on education in California. Fingertip Facts on Education in California - Accessing Educational Data (CA Dept of Education). (n.d.). Retrieved August 2, 2022, from <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/ad/ceffingertipfacts.asp>

Flores, Gabriel. “Toward a More Inclusive Multicultural Education: Methods for Including LGBT Themes in K-12 Classroom.” : 12.

Holliday, Michelle. 2000. *The Use of Anti-Bullying Policies to Protect LGBT Youth: Teacher and Administrator Perspectives on Policy Implementation*. <http://archives.pdx.edu/ds/psu/17474> (September 2, 2021).

- Hopson, L. M., K. S. Schiller, and H. A. Lawson. 2014. "Exploring Linkages between School Climate, Behavioral Norms, Social Supports, and Academic Success." *Social Work Research* 38(4): 197–209.
- Huss, Damon, and Tascha Folsoi. "A Brief Introduction to the FAIR Education Act for Social Studies Educators." : 7.
- Juvonen, Jaana, and Sandra Graham, eds. 2001. *Peer Harassment in School: The Plight of the Vulnerable and Victimized*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Khan, Edited Mudasar, Kelly McLaughlin, Peter Mezey, and Daniel Robertson. "CHALLENGES FACING LGBTQ YOUTH." : 63.
- Kosciw, Joseph G., Emily A. Greytak, and Elizabeth M. Diaz. 2009. "Who, What, Where, When, and Why: Demographic and Ecological Factors Contributing to Hostile School Climate for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 38(7): 976–88.
- Leno, Senator Mark. 2013. "California's FAIR Education Act: Addressing the Bullying Epidemic by Ending the Exclusion of LGBT People and Historical Events in Textbooks and Classrooms." *QED: A Journal of GLBTQ Worldmaking* 0(1): 105–10.
- Lewis-McCoy, R. L. 2014. *Inequality in the Promised Land: Race, Resources, and Suburban Schooling*. Redwood City: Stanford University Press.
- Lugg, Catherine A., and Madelaine Adelman. 2015. "Sociolegal Contexts of LGBTQ Issues in Education." In *LGBTQ Issues in Education: Advancing a Research Agenda*, ed. George L. Wimberly. American Educational Research Association, 43–73.
- <http://ebooks.aera.net/LGBTQCH3> (September 6, 2021).

- Martha Langmuir. 2013. "Improving School Climate for LGBT Youth: How You Can Make Change Now!" *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking*: 37.
- McEwing, Evan et al. 2018. "Incidences of School-Based Anti-Gay and Gender-Related Bullying: Differences across Levels of Education." 15: 12.
- Morris, B. J. (2009). *History of lesbian, gay, bisexual and Transgender Social Movements*. American Psychological Association. Retrieved August 4, 2022, from <https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/history>
- Moorhead, Laura. 2018. "LGBTQ+ Visibility in the K–12 Curriculum." *Phi Delta Kappan* 100(2): 22–26.
- Murdock, Tamera B., and Megan B. Bolch. 2005. "Risk and Protective Factors for Poor School Adjustment in Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) High School Youth: Variable and Person-Centered Analyses." *Psychology in the Schools* 42(2): 159–72.
- Nichols, Sharon L. 1999. "Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Youth: Understanding Diversity and Promoting Tolerance in Schools." *The Elementary School Journal* 99(5): 505–19.
- OUTLAWED: 'The Love That Dare Not Speak Its Name'. Maps of Anti-LGBT Laws Country by Country | Human Rights Watch. (n.d.). Retrieved June 24, 2022, from Http://Internap.Hrw.Org/Features/Features/Lgbt_laws/.
- Payne, Elizabethe, and Melissa Smith. 2021. "LGBTQ Kids, School Safety, and Missing the Big Picture: How the Dominant Bullying Discourse Prevents School Professionals from Thinking about Systemic Marginalization or ... Why We Need to Rethink LGBTQ Bullying." : 37.
- Peguero, Anthony A. 2019. "Introduction to the Special Issue on Significance of Race/Ethnicity in Bullying." *International Journal of Bullying Prevention* 1(3): 159–60.

- Poteat, V. Paul et al. 2013. "Gay-Straight Alliances Are Associated With Student Health: A Multischool Comparison of LGBTQ and Heterosexual Youth." *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 23(2): 319–30.
- Quinn, Therese, and Erica R Meiners. 2021. "From Anti-Bullying Laws and Gay Marriages to Queer Worlds and Just Futures." : 29.
- Robinson, Joseph P., and Dorothy L. Espelage. 2011. "Inequities in Educational and Psychological Outcomes Between LGBTQ and Straight Students in Middle and High School." *Educational Researcher* 40(7): 315–30.
- Russell, Stephen T. et al. 2011. "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Adolescent School Victimization: Implications for Young Adult Health and Adjustment." *Journal of School Health* 81(5): 223–30.
- Russell, Stephen T., Jack K. Day, Salvatore Ioverno, and Russell B. Toomey. 2016. "Are School Policies Focused on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Associated with Less Bullying? Teachers' Perspectives." *Journal of School Psychology* 54: 29–38.
- Russell, Stephen T., Russell B. Toomey, Caitlin Ryan, and Rafael M. Diaz. 2014. "Being out at School: The Implications for School Victimization and Young Adult Adjustment." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 84(6): 635–43.
- Russo, Ronald G. 2006. "The Extent of Public Education Nondiscrimination Policy Protections for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Students: A National Study." *Urban Education* 41(2): 115–50.
- Schneider, Anne, and Helen Ingram. 1993. "Social Construction of Target Populations: Implications for Politics and Policy." *American Political Science Review* 87(2): 334–47.

- Sears, James. 2013. *Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Issues in Education*. 0 ed. Routledge.
<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9781136614170> (September 3, 2021).
- Wang, Chien-Chuan et al. 2018. “Effects of Traditional and Cyber Homophobic Bullying in Childhood on Depression, Anxiety, and Physical Pain in Emerging Adulthood and the Moderating Effects of Social Support among Gay and Bisexual Men in Taiwan.” *Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment* Volume 14: 1309–17.
- Webb, Lindsey, Laura K. Clary, Renee M. Johnson, and Tamar Mendelson. 2021. “Electronic and School Bullying Victimization by Race/Ethnicity and Sexual Minority Status in a Nationally Representative Adolescent Sample.” *Journal of Adolescent Health* 68(2): 378–84.
- Wimberly, George L. 2015. “Use of Large-Scale Data Sets and LGBTQ Education.” In *LGBTQ Issues in Education: Advancing a Research Agenda*, ed. George L. Wimberly. American Educational Research Association, 175–217. <http://ebooks.aera.net/LGBTQCH10> (September 6, 2021).
- Wimberly, George L., and Juan Battle. 2015. “Challenges to Doing Research on LGBTQ Issues in Education and Important Research Needs.” In *LGBTQ Issues in Education: Advancing a Research Agenda*, ed. George L. Wimberly. American Educational Research Association, 219–35. <http://ebooks.aera.net/LGBTQCH11> (September 6, 2021).
- Wimberly, George L., Lindsey Wilkinson, and Jennifer Pearson. 2015. “LGBTQ Student Achievement and Educational Attainment.” In *LGBTQ Issues in Education: Advancing a Research Agenda*, ed. George L. Wimberly. American Educational Research Association, 121–39. <http://ebooks.aera.net/LGBTQCH7> (September 6, 2021).