

SELECTED FINDINGS ON

K-12

EDUCATION

**AND BULLYING OF
LGBTQ STUDENTS**

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Prevalence

- The 2009 Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network's National School Climate Survey of 7,261 middle and high school students found that nearly nine out of 10 LGBTQ students experienced harassment at school in the past year. Nearly two thirds felt unsafe because of their sexual orientation, and nearly a third had skipped at least one day of school in the past month because of safety concerns (Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, & Bartkiewicz, 2010).
- Among LGBTQ youth, 59 percent reported verbal abuse in high school due to sexual orientation; 24 percent were threatened with violence; 11 percent had objects thrown at them; 11 percent reported being physically assaulted; 2 percent were threatened with weapons; and 20 percent were threatened to be outed (D'Augelli, Pilkington, & Hershberger, 2002).
- LGBTQ adolescents were more likely to report being physically threatened, injured with a weapon, and fearful of attending school and having property stolen or damaged by peers: 33 percent had been threatened with a weapon at school and 50 percent reported property damage, as compared to 7 percent and 29 percent of other youth (Berlan et al, 2010; Garofalo, Wolf, Kessel, Palfrey, & DuRant, 1998; Robinson & Espelage, 2011).
- Among heterosexual and questioning students, boys reported higher victimization than girls, with levels of victimization being significantly higher for questioning boys than for gay, bisexual, or heterosexual boys. Questioning girls were victimized more than lesbian or bisexual girls, who in turn were victimized more than heterosexual girls (Poteat, Aragon, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009).
- A national survey of LGBTQ secondary school students found that female youth were less likely to report victimization than male youth, and that gay, bisexual, or questioning male youth were less likely to report victimization than transgender male youth. Older youth were less likely to report at-school victimization based on sexual orientation or gender expression and LGBTQ youth in rural communities and in communities with lower adult educational attainment faced more hostile school climates (Kosciw, Greytak, & Diaz, 2009).

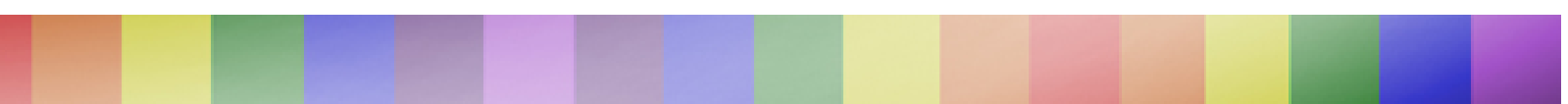
- In a recent study of 350 self-identified non-heterosexual and 94 “straight ally” participants ages 11–22, 54 students reported being cyberbullied in the past month because of their sexual identity or because of their identification with LGBTQ youth. Almost half of the participants who were cyberbullied reported feeling depressed as a result—38 percent were embarrassed, 28 percent were anxious about simply going to school, and 25 percent reported having suicidal thoughts (Blumenfeld & Cooper, 2010).

Consequences

- A study of 930 sixth-graders in the first year of middle school found that students who were bullied, victims, or both showed poorer school adjustment compared to their uninvolved peers, e.g., with regard to doing well on schoolwork, getting along with classmates, following rules, and doing their homework (Nansel, Haynie, & Simons-Morton, 2003).
- In a sample of youth bullied for their perceived or actual sexual orientation, 45 percent seriously considered suicide and 35 percent developed a plan for suicide in the year prior to the survey (CSSC & 4-H Center for Youth Development, 2004).
- A study by the California Safe Schools Coalition (CSSC) and the 4-H Center for Youth Development examined bullying based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, finding that bullied students, as compared with students who were not bullied, reported more grades at or below C (24 percent versus 17 percent) and more frequent absenteeism (27 percent versus 7 percent). Other studies have documented as many as 72 percent of bullied LGBTQ children being truant or playing sick to avoid at-school victimization (Birkett et al, 2009; Rivers, 2000).

Responses

- A study of 23 comprehensive anti-bullying programs aimed at middle and high school students found that none of the programs covered issues of sexual orientation, homophobia, sexual harassment, or sexual violence sufficiently, yet a large percentage of bullying among students involves the use of homophobic teasing or slurs, name-calling, or other victimization (Birkett, Espelage, & Stein, 2008).
- Although a majority of teachers are aware of homophobic bullying, most also report being either unable or unwilling to address the phenomenon (Meyer, 2008, 2009; Warwick, Aggleton, & Douglas, 2001).
- Adolescents attending schools with LGB support groups (e.g., Gay-Straight Alliances, or GSAs) have been found to report lower rates of victimization at school and suicide attempts (Goodnow, Szalacha, & Westheimer, 2006; Heck, Flentje, & Cochran, 2011).



- Most formalized legislation addressing bullying and peer aggression in schools continues to emphasize taking action with bullies to the exclusion of addressing the needs of victims or addressing the larger school climate (Furlong, Morrison, & Greif, 2003)

Additional findings reported in Chapter 6: Bullying and K-12 Students, LGBTQ Issues in Education: Advancing a Research Agenda.

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