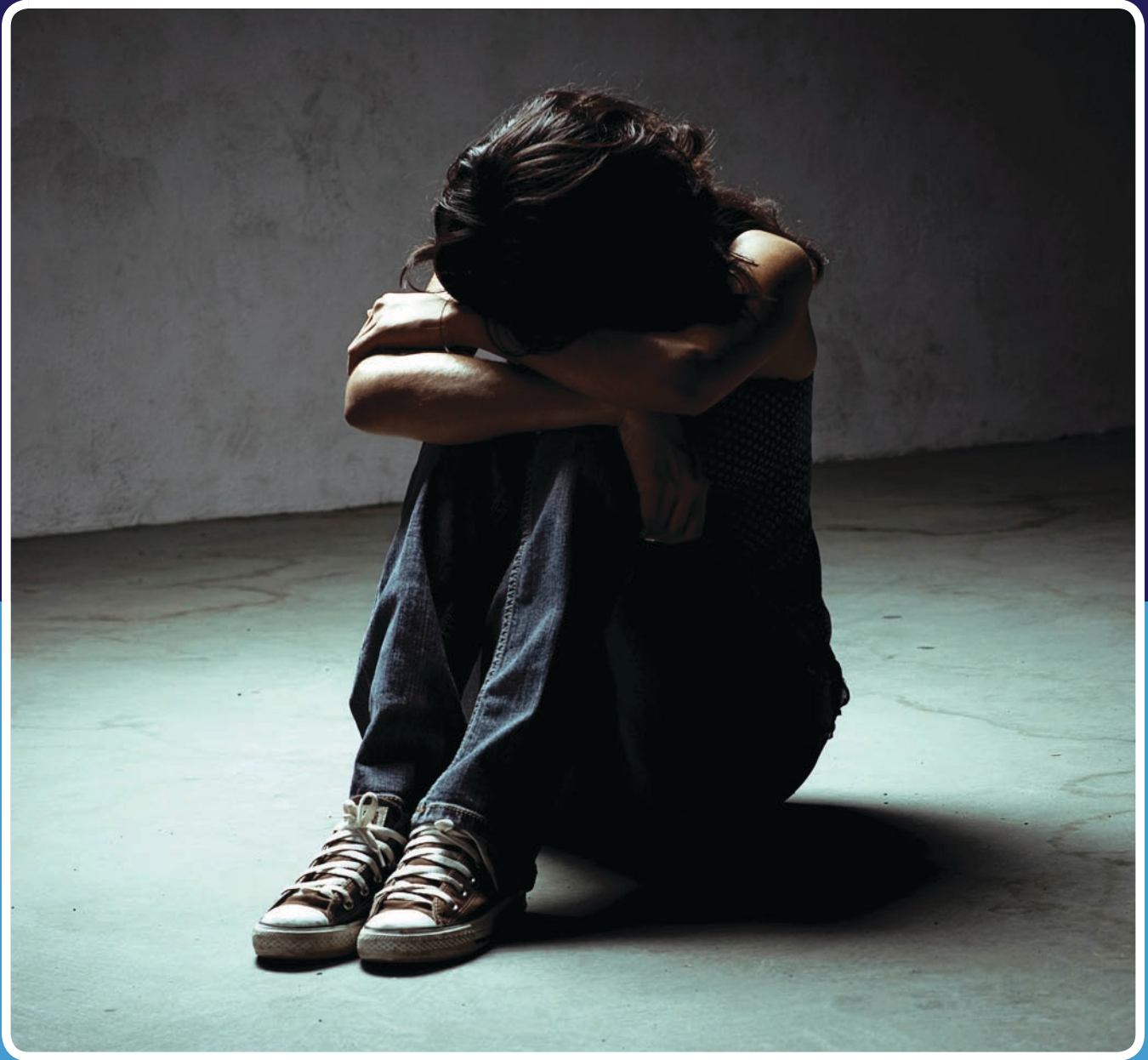# Youth Speak Up about Homophobia and Transphobia

The First National Climate Survey on Homophobia in Canadian Schools
Phase One Report

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Youth Speak Up about Homophobia and Transphobia

The First National Climate Survey on Homophobia in Canadian Schools

Phase One Report

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Egale Canada Human Rights Trust is a national organization advancing public education initiatives on equality and human rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-identified people and their families.

For more information on Egale, visit www.egale.ca

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Educators and researchers have long been aware that students experience homophobic incidents ranging from hearing "gay" used as a synonym for "stupid" or "worthless," to being insulted or assaulted because of their actual or perceived sexual or transgender identity.

This report discusses the results of a national survey of Canadian high school students undertaken in order to identify the forms and extent of their experiences of homophobic and transphobic incidents at school and

the efficacy of measures being taken by schools to combat these common form of bullying.

Phase One of the study involved surveying almost 1700 students from across Canada through two methods: individual online participation and in-school sessions conducted in four school boards. This report analyzes the data from individual online participation. The study has been funded by the Egale Canada Human Rights Trust, the University of Winnipeg (through their SSHRC grants, Work Study, and teaching release programs), and the "Sexual and Gender Diversity/Vulnerability and Resilience" national research team (funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research).

The lack of a solid Canadian evidence base has been a major impediment faced by educators who need to understand the situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) students in order to respond appropriately and to assure the school community that homophobic and transphobic bullying are neither rare nor harmless but major problems that schools needs to address. The information presented here has come from young people themselves through the many hundreds of students – LGBTQ, questioning, and straight – who took the time to make their voices heard by completing our survey. We reached them by advertising the survey widely through news releases and direct contact with organizations across the country that have LGBTQ youth memberships.

The survey itself was a fifty-four item questionnaire made available online and in print, and consisting mostly of multiple-choice questions of three kinds: demographic (e.g., age, province, gender identity, sexual identity), experiences (e.g, hearing gay used as an insult, being verbally harassed), and institutional responses (e.g., staff intervention, inclusive safe-school policies). Quantitative data were tested for statistical significance through bivariate analyses that compared the responses of various groups of students (e.g., LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ, LGB and transgender, current versus past).

Executive Summary

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KEY FINDINGS

Unsafe Spaces

- Three-quarters of LGBTQ students feel unsafe in at least one place at school, such as change rooms, washrooms, and hallways. Half of straight students agree that at least one part of their school is unsafe for LGBTQ students.

- Transgender students are especially likely to see at least one of these places as unsafe (87%).

- LGBTQ students see more places as unsafe for LGBTQ people than do straight students, and transgender students view even greater numbers of spaces as unsafe (4, 2, and 5 unsafe spaces, respectively).

Homophobic Comments

- Three-quarters of all participating students reported hearing expressions such as "that's so gay" every day in school.

- Half heard remarks like "faggot", "queer", "lezbo", and "dyke" daily. Over half of LGBTQ students, compared to a third of non-LGBTQ, reported hearing such remarks daily.

- LGBTQ students were significantly more likely than non-LGBTQ to notice comments about boys not acting masculine enough or girls not acting feminine enough every day.

- A third of transgender participants heard derogatory comments daily about boys not being masculine enough, compared to a quarter of LGB students. Transgender students were more than twice as likely as LGB students to report hearing comments about girls not being feminine enough.

- LGBTQ students were more likely than non-LGBTQ individuals to report that staff never intervened when homophobic comments were made.

- Half of transgender students reported that staff never intervened when homophobic comments were made, compared to 34.1% of LGB respondents.

- Current students were even more likely than past students to hear expressions such as "that's so gay" in school.

- Current students were also more likely than past students to hear homophobic comments from other students every day in school.

One sign of progress:

- Current students were significantly less likely than past students to report that school staff never intervened.

Victimization

- Six out of ten LGBTQ students reported being verbally harassed about their sexual orientation.

- Nine out of ten transgender students, six out of ten LGB students, and three out of ten straight students were verbally harassed because of their expression of gender.

- One in four LGB students had been physically harassed about their sexual orientation.

- Almost two in five transgender students, and one in five LGB students, reported being physically harassed due to their expression of gender.

- Two-thirds of LGBTQ students, and just under half of non-LGBTQ, have seen homophobic graffiti at school. One in seven LGBTQ students had been named in the graffiti.

- Over half of the LGBTQ students had rumours or lies spread about their sexual orientation at school, compared to one in ten non-LGBTQ.

- One third of LGBTQ participants reported having been harassed through text-messaging or on the internet.

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Impacts

- Three-quarters of LGBTQ students and 95% of transgender students felt unsafe at school, compared to one-fifth of straight students.

- Over a quarter of LGBTQ students and almost half of transgender students had skipped school because they felt unsafe, compared to fewer than a tenth of non-LGBTQ.

- Many LGBTQ students would not be comfortable talking to their teachers (four in ten), their principal (six in ten), or their coach (seven in ten) about LGBTQ issues.

- Only one in five LGBTQ students could talk to a parent very comfortably about LGBTQ issues. Three-quarters could talk to a close friend about these issues.

- Over half of LGBTQ students did not feel accepted at school, and almost half felt they could not be themselves at school, compared to one-fifth of straight students.

- Transgender students (over a third) were twice as likely as LGB students to strongly agree that they sometimes feel very depressed about their school and that they do not belong at their school, and four times as likely as straight students.

Institutional Responses

- Fewer than half of participants knew whether their school had a policy for reporting homophobic incidents.

- Of those participants who did know, only one-third believed there was such a policy.

LGBTQ students who believed their schools have anti-homophobia policies were much *more* likely than other LGBTQ students . . .

- to feel their school community was supportive (one half compared to fewer than one-fifth),

- to feel comfortable talking to a counselor (one half compared to fewer than one-third), and to feel comfortable talking to classmates (over a third compared to one-fifth),

- to believe their school was becoming less homophobic,

- to hear fewer homophobic comments and to say that staff intervene more often,

- to report homophobic incidents to staff and their parents, and

- to feel attached to their school.

LGBTQ students who believed their schools have anti-homophobia policies were much *less* likely than other LGBTQ students . . .

- to have had lies and rumours spread about them at school or on the Internet,

- to have had property stolen or intentionally damaged,

- to feel unsafe at school, and

- to have been verbally or physically harassed.

The results were similar for students who believed that their school districts had such policies.

Catholic Schools

- Of Catholic school students who said they knew whether their school or district had an anti-homophobia policy, only one in ten believed there was such a policy.

Students from Catholic schools were much more likely than students from non-Catholic schools to feel . . .

- that their school was not supportive of LGBTQ people,

- that their teachers were ineffective in addressing homophobic harassment, and

- that they could not talk to at least one adult in their school.

Unfortunately, while a few Catholic schools in integrated divisions have implemented the survey, no Catholic school boards have agreed to do so, and we regret that we will therefore not be able to report on the situation in Catholic school boards in Phase 2.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This survey has provided statistically-tested confirmation of what LGBTQ students and their allies have known for some time: that despite Canada's leadership on human rights for LGBTQ people, a great deal of verbal and physical homophobic and transphobic harassment goes on in Canadian schools, that LGBTQ students are more likely to be aware of it than are other students who are not its main targets, and that the institutional response to harassment has more often than not been inadequate.

The survey also shows, however, that the situation is much improved where schools and schools divisions have developed safe-schools policies and procedures that explicitly address homophobia and have informed students of their existence. In such schools, LGBTQ students are less likely to hear homophobic comments or to be targeted by verbal or physical harassment, they are more likely to report it to staff and parents when they are, and staff are more likely to intervene. In these schools, LGBTQ students feel safer, more accepted, and more attached to their school.

Developing inclusive safe schools policies and making them known to students is not a complete solution. However, this survey has identified significant differences between schools with and schools without inclusive policies.

We therefore strongly recommend the following:

1. That schools develop and implement anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia policies and make these policies well known to students, parents, administration, and all staff as a positive part of their commitment to making schools safe.

2. That schools strongly support the efforts of students to start Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs).

3. That in schools where students have not come forward, administration should ask teachers to offer to work with students to start a GSA. It is not safe to assume that LGBTQ students would prefer to go through high school isolated from their peers and teachers.

4. That school divisions develop anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia policies to provide leadership for schools. Although our analysis showed that students are less likely to know about division-level policies, it would be helpful for principals to know that their school-level efforts have strong divisional endorsement in the form of official policy at that level.

5. That provincial Ministries of Education advocate the inclusion of anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia measures in safe schools policies and programs, including those of Catholic schools, along with steps for the implementation of these policies, in order to provide institutional support and motivation to divisional and school staff.

6. That individuals and organizations with expertise in anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia education be consulted in the above developments.

What students have told us in the First National Climate Survey on Homophobia in Canadian Schools is that speaking up works, and that they want the adults in their lives to do their part, too. These students are weary of seeing teachers and principals look the other way. And they are grateful to the many dedicated school staff who have worked to make schools safer for *everyone* in their care – not everyone but them.

Executive Summary

Introduction
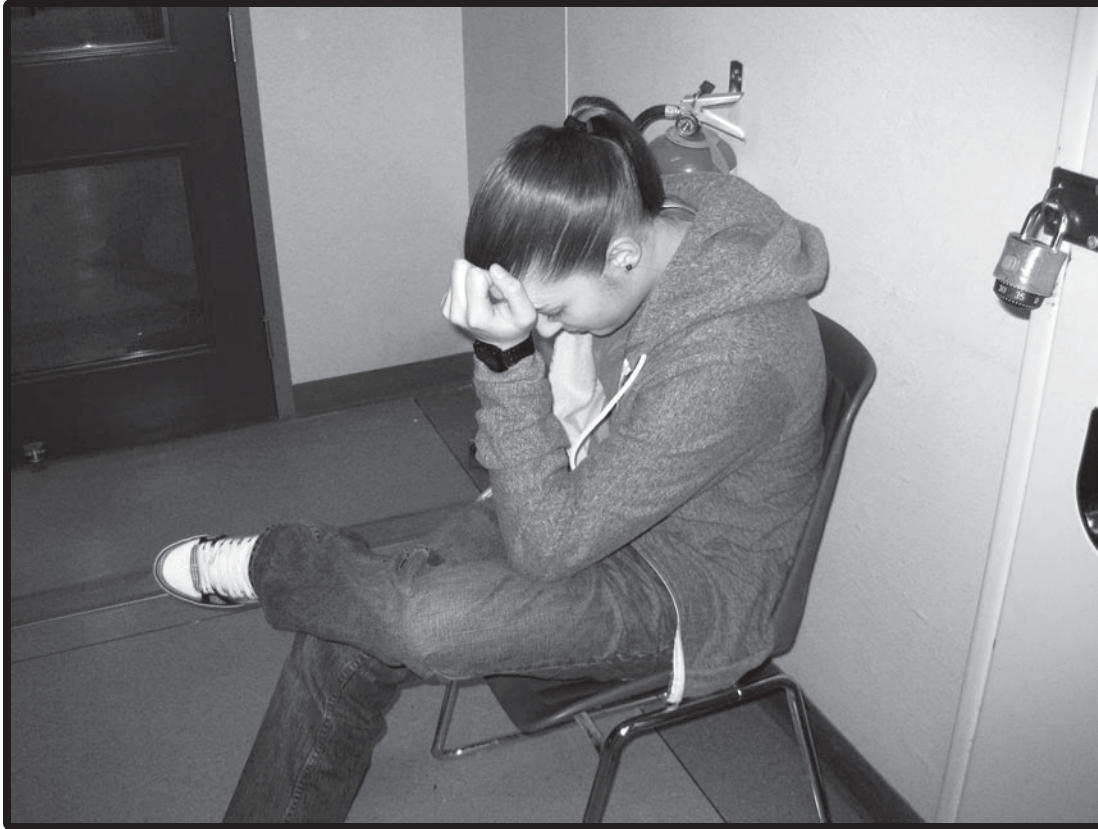
Educators and researchers have long been aware that students experience homophobic and transphobic incidents ranging from hearing "gay" used as a synonym for "stupid" or "worthless," to being insulted or assaulted because of their actual or perceived sexual or transgender identity.

This report discusses the results of a national survey of Canadian high school students undertaken in order to identify the forms and extent of their experiences of homophobic and transphobic incidents at school and the efficacy of measures being taken by schools to combat these common forms of bullying. Phase One of the study involved surveying almost 1700 students from across Canada through two methods employed between December 2007 and August 2008: individual online participation, and in-school sessions conducted in four school divisions (Vancouver, Blue Water, Rainy River, and Trillium Lakelands). This report analyzes the data from individual online participation. The study has been funded by Egale Canada Human Rights Trust, the University of Winnipeg SSHRC grants and Work Study programs,

and "Sexual and Gender Diversity/Vulnerability and Resilience," a national research team funded by Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).

Phase Two of the Climate Survey consists of school-sponsored participation in many school boards across the country from Greater Victoria, BC to Winnipeg, Manitoba, to Eastern School Division in Newfoundland and Labrador. We will report national and regional results for the combined Phase One and Phase Two in-school surveys in late 2009 and will also provide participating boards with private reports on their own results.

STUDY BACKGROUND

Human Rights Commissions across the country (a few in well publicized cases, such as the Jubran decision in which North Vancouver School Board was held responsible for failing to have taken proactive measures to combat homophobia,[1] and many more in private mediation) have found school boards remiss in failing to address homophobia and transphobia as major contributors to the misery of a great many children and youth, and have directed them to take proactive measures. However, the lack of a solid Canadian evidence base has been a major impediment faced by educators who need to understand what the problem is in order to respond appropriately and to assure the school community that homophobic and transphobic bullying is neither rare nor harmless but is a major problem that schools need to address.

It is not an exaggeration to say that people working either as researchers or activists or both in the area of school-based homophobia believe that the homophobic experiences suffered by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) students in Canadian schools are leading to underperformance, unhappiness, assault, and even death, and that research such as this, which is designed to identify problems and work towards solutions, is desperately needed. The associated issues of school climate for children of LGBTQ parents and for heterosexual or "straight" students who find themselves targeted by homophobia and transphobia also need to be researched and better understood.

1   *School District No. 44 v. Jubran*, 2005; Dafnos, 2007.

Although we could assume that the experiences of Canadian students would be similar to those in the US and the UK, we recognize that adults only see the tip of the iceberg of school culture, that there are differences among the countries, and that it is reasonable for Canadian educators to want to see Canadian results with which to ground their responses. While most of the information in this report will come as no surprise to members of the LGBTQ community and educators already involved in anti-homophobia efforts, the study provides a systematically produced knowledge base that draws on the experiences of as many youth as possible in the interests of providing educators across the country with the information they need to make evidence-based policy and programming decisions.

The information here has come from the young people themselves through the many hundreds of students—LGBTQ, questioning, and straight—who took the time to make their voices heard by completing our survey. LGBTQ youth have demonstrated remarkable resilience in extremely difficult circumstances. In the absence of social acceptance and systemic integration into the life of their schools, many LGBTQ youth have developed their own support groups and lobbied their teachers and principals for official status as Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs). Other LGBTQ students, though, live very isolated lives in schools across the country, and participation in this study was in some cases their first experience of communicating with the adult world about what they have experienced. Their participation enabled us to develop a report that takes into account the needs of people who are not able to confide in teachers, complain to principals, or ask their parents to intervene on their behalf. We wish to express our deepest respect and thanks for all who came forward to help with this important project. We hope that you will recognize your contributions and your voices in this report.

PROJECT TEAM

The impetus for this study was the commitment to safe schools by Egale Canada's Education Committee, a group of educators from across Canada who drafted the questionnaire that was later revised for use in this study and who continue to serve as the project advisory committee. Catherine Taylor, Ph.D., University of Winnipeg (Associate Professor of Education) is the Principal Investigator for the study. Tracey Peter, Ph.D., University of

Manitoba (Assistant Professor of Sociology) joined the project team as Co-Investigator with responsibility for statistical analysis. A number of dedicated research assistants work on the project including Kevin Schachter, who developed and maintains the survey's websites and has provided invaluable insights on the implementation of the project; Stacey Beldom, who assisted with the process of contacting school boards and developing applications to their research committees, Zoë Gross, who contacted youth organizations throughout the country, TL McMinn, who coded responses to open-ended questions; and Sarah Paquin, who is the senior research assistant for Phase 2 of the project.

WORKING DEFINITIONS

The survey used the language of "homophobic bullying" because the terms "homophobia" and "bullying" are familiar to educators. In so doing, however, we were well aware that the forms of homophobic bullying reported by students in previous studies include not only direct physical or verbal harassment that targets students because of their sexual or transgender identity, but a whole range of experiences that also include social and cultural exclusion, lack of support from adults, and daily exposure to hearing words for one's identity such as "gay" and "fag" used as synonyms for "stupid" or "useless." Anyone who is LGBTQ or is assumed to be LGBTQ can be the target of homophobia.

Sexual identity is understandably on the minds of adolescents as they go through the process of sexual development, and the key terms of our questionnaire – terms like "gay" and "lesbian" – are often found in their daily vocabulary. However, the terms are not necessarily clearly understood even by students who are themselves questioning their sexual or gender identity. We therefore provided the following definitions in the questionnaire itself to help students provide accurate responses:

LGBTQ – an acronym for "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Two-Spirit, Queer and Questioning" people.

Bisexual - A person who is attracted physically and emotionally to both males and females.

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Gay - A person who is physically and emotionally attracted to someone of the same sex. Gay can include both males and females, or refer to males only.

Lesbian - A female who is attracted physically and emotionally to other females.

Queer - Historically, a negative term for homosexuality, but more recently reclaimed by the LGBT movement to refer to itself. Increasingly, the word "queer" is popularly used by LGBT youth as a positive way to refer to themselves.

Questioning - A person who is unsure of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Straight/Heterosexual - A person who is sexually and emotionally attracted to someone of the "opposite" sex.

Transgender - A person whose gender identity, outward appearance, expression and/or anatomy does not fit into conventional expectations of male or female. Often used as an umbrella term to represent a wide range of non-conforming gender identities and behaviours.

Transsexual - A person who experiences intense personal and emotional discomfort with their assigned birth gender. Some transsexuals may undergo treatments (i.e. sex reassignment surgery and/or hormone therapy) to physically alter their body and gender expression to correspond with what they feel their true gender is.

Two-Spirit - Some Aboriginal people identify themselves as Two-Spirit rather than as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Historically, in many Aboriginal cultures two-spirit persons were respected leaders and medicine people. Two-spirit persons were often accorded special status based upon their unique abilities to understand both male and female perspectives.

Gender Expression – The way a person publicly shows one's gender identity through clothing, speech, body language, wearing of make-up and/or accessories and other forms of displaying masculinity or femininity.

Gender Identity - A person's internal sense or feeling of being male or female. Gender expression relates to how a person presents their sense of gender to the larger society. Gender identity and gender expression are often closely linked with the term transgender.

Perceived Sexual Orientation - When someone wrongly assumes that you are lesbian, gay, or bisexual without knowing what your true sexual orientation really is (heterosexual).

Sexual Identity/Orientation - A person's deep-seated feelings of emotional and sexual attraction to another person. This may be with people of the same gender (lesbian or gay), the other gender (heterosexual/straight) or either gender (bisexual).

While our study includes many questions that allow us to identify transgender-specific experiences of bullying, we did not use the term "transphobia" in the questionnaire because it is not yet in common usage in educational circles; we anticipate, however, that one of the outcomes of the present study may be that transphobia does become more widely recognized and understood as a problem targeting Canadian students.

We did not use the term "homosexual" or "homosexuality" in the survey because of their historical usage in law and medicine as extremely pejorative terms denoting immorality and mental illness. Most LGBTQ people do not identify with those terms and have deliberately stopped using them (just as, for example, Black people generally avoid "Negro").

Introduction

DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY

Survey Instrument

Phase One of the Climate Survey on homophobia and transphobia among youth consisted of a Canada-wide Internet questionnaire, which took respondents an estimated 20-30 minutes to complete. Seven of the 54 questions were open-ended, inviting students to explain their experiences and perspectives. A few questions asked students to supply basic information such as their school division. The others were forced-choice responses in "check all that apply" and "check the best match" formats. In general, the survey asked participants a series of self-report questions on their school climate with a particular focus on experiences of hostility, indifference, acceptance, and support. We also asked students to identify their ethnic, gender/transgender, religious, and sexual identity so that we could analyze their perceptions of life at school in light of their identities. The entire survey can be seen online at www.climatesurvey.ca.

The survey questionnaire was designed in consultation with educators familiar with anti-homophobia education issues and researchers who had conducted similar needs assessments. We reviewed questionnaires developed for other studies, notably a series of biennial Climate Surveys of homophobia in U.S. schools.[2] Once we had drafted our questionnaire, we had it reviewed by several sociologists with expertise in survey research. It was then pre-tested for clarity/unambiguity, neutrality, relevance, and completeness by administering it to LGBTQ youth involved in a community centre support group. We then refined the questionnaire based on their feedback.

Sampling

We do not know how many students are LGBTQ, though studies over the last twenty years consistently estimate the number at between 2.5 and 11 per cent of students.[3] A Canadian study, the 2007 McCreary Centre report *Not Yet Equal*, based on 30,000 students from grades 7 to 12 in randomly

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2   Koskiw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008; Koskiw & Diaz, 2006; Koskiw, 2004.
3   Hillier, Warr, & Haste, 1996; Lindsay & Rosental, 1997; Remafedi, Resnick, Blum & Harris, 1992; Russell, Seif, & Truong, 2001; Saewyc et al., 2007.

selected schools in B.C., found that 89% of male participants and 82% of fe-male participants identified as "completely heterosexual."[4] However, youth who are "same-sex attracted" often identify as heterosexual in research, even if they have sexual contact with a same-sex partner (55% in one U.S. study[5]), and research participants often under-report information such as being a member of a sexual minority out of concerns about confidentiality even in anonymous surveys such as ours.[6]

Because most LGBTQ youth are forced by social prejudice to conceal their identities, it was not feasible to design a true random-sampling selection process that would capture the experience of all LGBTQ students.[7] Instead of looking to generate results that would be generalizable to the whole population of LGBTQ students in Canada, we undertook to reach as many students as possible. As is common with surveys on LGBTQ and other vul-nerable as well as "hard to reach" populations, non-probability sampling was employed.

To this end, our main method of reaching respondents was through social networks. We compiled a list of every organization in the country known to have LGBTQ youth group components and provided them with informa-tion about the survey. In addition, a link to the survey was posted on the Egale Canada website and Facebook site in order to encourage participa-tion from individuals who may not be associated with any LGBTQ youth groups. Some participants learned of the survey through media coverage in major venues such as CBC Radio, the *Toronto Star*, and the *Winnipeg Free Press*. Others were informed of the survey by educators whose boards had approved the survey but not implemented it in their schools. Finally, al-though not specifically asked of respondents, it is expected that a num-ber of participants heard about the survey through snowball sampling (i.e. were told by a friend or acquaintance about the questionnaire).[8]

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4   Saewyc et al., 2007.
5   Massachusetts Department of Education, 2002.
6   Black, Gates, Sanders, & Taylor, 2000.
7   Elze, 2003.
8   In addition to the publicly available survey, a total of 911 student questionnaires (both online and paper copies) were conducted during class time in four school boards across Canada: (1) Vancouver School District (No. 39) in British Colum-bia; (2) Blue Water District School Board in Ontario; (3) Trillium Lakelands Dis-trict School Board in Ontario; and (4) Rainy River District School Board in On-

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Ethical Considerations

Attention to ethical issues is an ongoing and vital dimension of any research process. These considerations begin with an Ethics Protocol Package, which was prepared for, and approved by, the Senate Committee on Ethics in Human Research and Scholarship (SCEHRS) at the University of Winnipeg. In particular, respondents were asked to read the instructions at the beginning of the questionnaire and seek parental consent if they were under 18 before starting the questionnaire. If community-based groups or agencies hosted survey sessions, a staff member or volunteer was instructed to explain the purpose of the survey and the consent procedure in a group meeting or in individual meetings at a time sufficiently in advance of the session to allow potential participants to seek parental consent (i.e. normally one week).

We fully support the principle that parents have a right to know what researchers are asking their adolescent children to do, and the survey instructions therefore asked students under 18 years of age to get permission from their parents before beginning. We treated LGBTQ adolescents who lack a supportive parent or guardian as mature minors able to provide their own consent for purposes of the study so as not to put them at the emotional, physical, and familial risks documented in scholarly studies of the reaction of parents to disclosure of LGBTQ identity.[9] The Ethics Committee agreed that it would violate core principles of scholarly research to ask people to

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tario. While the inclusion of these surveys would have increased the sample size considerably, we elected to exclude these in-school surveys for several reasons. First, the sampling frames employed for the in-school surveys were fundamentally different (i.e. probability vs non-probability sampling). Second, phase two of the Climate Survey is currently being conducted with additional school districts across Canada. It was decided that the phase one in-school participants would be better suited for inclusion in the next stage. Finally, although statistical power would have been more robust with a larger sample, we found that there was enough variability among key variables (i.e. LGBTQ versus non-LGBTQ participants). Moreover, adding the in-school surveys did not substantially increase the sub-samples where variability was a concern (i.e. among transgender respondents). In this regard, various selected bivariate relationships using statistical tests of significance yielded similar results when the in-school questionnaires were included and when online participants only were included.

9   Grossman, D'Augelli, Howell, & Hubbard, 2005; Harrison, 2003; Morrison & L'Heareux, 2001; Morrow, 2004; Rivers & D'Augelli, 2001; Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2008; Taylor, 2008.

put themselves in harm's way in order to participate, or else deny them the benefits of participating in the research.[10]

Given the known high frequency of hostile reactions by family and acquaintances to disclosures of LGBTQ identity, we have been acutely aware of the importance of fulfilling research ethics principles of rigorously maintaining confidentiality and never reporting information that could identify individuals. However, because LGBTQ youth generally need to be extremely careful about revealing their LGBTQ identity in order to avoid discrimination, harassment, and violence, it was assumed that requiring signed consent would drastically reduce the number of respondents to our questionnaire. In order to respect respondents' legitimate safety concerns, the survey was completely anonymous, as is common practice among surveys addressing LGBTQ issues.[11]

Description of the Participants

In total, 763 individuals participated in the survey outside school-sponsored settings. Once data were cleaned a total useable sample of 687 was retained.[12] A brief description of the final sample is outlined below.

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10   As explained earlier, this report covers the individual participant phase of the study only. Consent requirements for school-sponsored survey sessions varied from self-consent for all students to parental consent for anyone under 18 or 19, depending on board policy. This phase of the study is still underway and will be reported on in late 2009.

11   Marin & Hunter, 2000; Martin & Meezan, 2003.

12   A total of 76 participants were removed from the overall sample for a variety of reasons. Some individuals did not complete the majority of the questionnaire and, therefore, were excluded. The vast majority, however, were removed for randomly selected responses, which was determined through a variety of data or "validity" checks where illogical responses could be identified (for example, through the dichotomous variables of ethnic identity where respondents selected 'yes' to all seven categories). It is important to point out that there were several homophobic remarks made by some participants. These comments were recorded, but respondents were not excluded from the survey based on derogatory remarks alone. Nevertheless, there was a positive correlation between homophobic comments and random, illogical, and inconsistent responses. Once these individuals were removed from the survey, the percentage of hateful comments reduced considerably. Even though a relatively large number of respondents were "cleaned out" of the data (nearly 10%), such a percentage is not unreasonably high, especially in the case of Internet-based research (Zhang, 2000).

- Nearly three-quarters (73%) identified in some way as LGBTQ.

- A large percentage (45.4%) of respondents were from Ontario, followed by the Prairies (29.8%), British Columbia (17.5%), and the Maritimes (4.6%). Participants are under-represented in Quebec (2.2%) and the Territories (0.6%).

- Over a half (54%) of participants indicated living in a small city or suburban setting, followed by 37.8% in urban areas, and 8.2% who were from rural environments, First Nation reserves, or Armed Forces bases.

- The average age of respondents was 20 years (standard deviation of 8 years) with a median age of 18 years.

- Two-thirds (67.7%) reported being currently in high school, while 32.3% indicated being out of school or attending a post-secondary institution. (Participants no longer attending high school were instructed to interpret questions as referring to their last year of school.)

- Current and past students from a total of 45 school districts participated in the questionnaire.

Limitations

The LGBTQ youth population includes youth who are questioning their sexual or gender identity, youth who identify as LGBTQ but who have not disclosed their identity to anyone in their lives or only to one or two trusted people, and youth who identify as LGBTQ and are fairly open about their identity. Of these three groups, the first two are hard to reach and are likely underrepresented in this sample. Our late 2009 report on in-school sessions will include a more representative sample of questioning, closeted, and open LGBTQ youth. Youth who are "out" were easiest to reach because they were most likely to be involved in an LGBTQ youth group that we contacted. We methodically contacted all such groups in English or French (as appropriate) and made follow-up contacts in areas of the country that had low participation, including Quebec and the Maritime provinces. The

survey was made available in English and French, but despite these efforts, participation was low in these areas.

Analyses for the Report

After the data collection process was complete, bivariate analyses were prepared. Specifically, cross-tabulations with chi-square (χ2) estimations were programmed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Where appropriate, difference of means (t-test) and ANOVA tests of significance were calculated, depending on the classification or "level of measurement" of the variables/questions (i.e. whether they are dichotomous, ordered, or continuous).

Chi-square and p-values are provided as footnotes in the following section.[13] We also include extracts from the open-ended responses where these help to contextualize the statistical results.   Finally, we make frequent comparisons to the results of the B.C. study, *Not Yet Safe*[14] and to the most recent U.S. School Climate Survey.[15]

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13   Chi-square (χ2) is a statistical technique designed to test for significant relationships between two variables. In general, the higher the value of the chi-square, the more likely a significant relationship will occur. The criteria for significant relationships are determined by p-values which are calculations of the probability that the relationship between the variables could be mere coincidence. P-values (or 'p') are usually set at .05 or lower, meaning that there is at most a 5% chance that the relationship is just coincidence. Put another way, if chi-squares have p-values of .05 or less (e.g., p=.000), the relationship between the two variables in question is statistically significant (i.e. there is a meaningful relationship between them). For example, if more LGBTQ than non-LGBTQ students see school hallways as unsafe, and the p value is .03, there is a 97% chance that this relationship will again be significant if drawn from another independent sample.
14   Saewyc et al., 2007.
15   Koskiw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008

Results

Results are reported first for student experiences and then for institutional responses. All of the data in our study came from student responses. In analyzing the results we were interested in comparing the responses of different groups of students:

- LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ. This comparison shows differences in how students perceive the school climate depending on their sexual/gender identity, with LGBTQ people generally seeing the climate as more homophobic and transphobic than their non-LGBTQ peers.

- LGB and transgender. Separating out LGB and transgender students helps to identify aspects of transgender experience that have received relatively little attention in anti-homophobia research. Transgender people's confrontations with social prejudice are only now being recognized as different in some ways from those of other LGBTQ people.

- Current students and past students. One third of our participants had already finished or left secondary school in recent years. This comparison helps to identify possible trends in the school climate.

Student Experiences

In his landmark study, *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954), Gordon Allport offers a grim breakdown of ways that prejudice can be expressed: antilocution (name calling and stereotyping), avoidance (omission, exclusion), discrimination (denial of opportunity, refusal of service), physical attack (threat of physical violence, murder), and extermination (mass genocide). Our questionnaire dealt with each of these except the last, and sadly, a few participants wrote in homophobic and transphobic comments advocating even that.
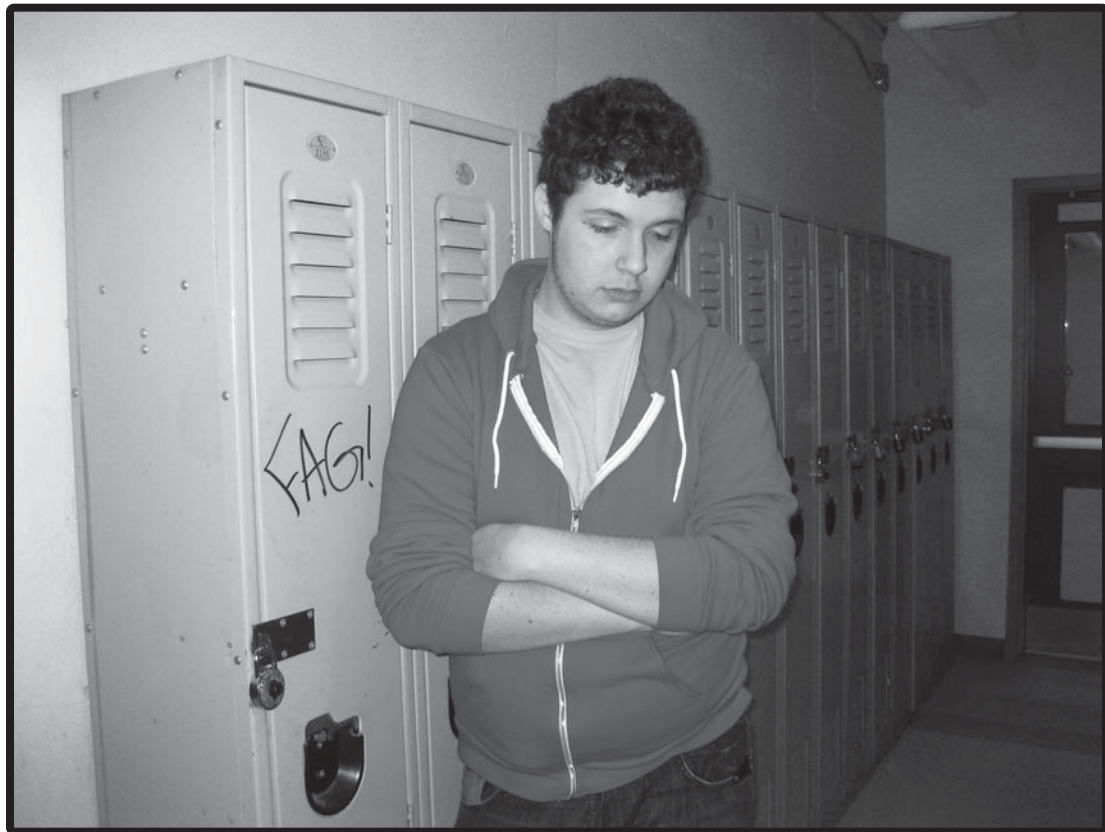
ENVIRONMENT

We asked students to tell us about their experiences of encountering various forms of prejudice in their lives at school. In this section, we report what they told us about the school environment (unsafe spaces, homophobic and transphobic comments, teacher interventions), about direct victimization (verbal and physical harassment, harassment by graffiti, rumour, and

cyberbullying), and the impacts of these experiences (feeling unsafe, skipping school, having someone to talk to, school attachment).

Unsafe Spaces

KEY FINDINGS

Who you are affects how safe school seems for LGBTQ people:

- Three-quarters of LGBTQ students (73%) feel unsafe in at least one place at school. Half of straight students (49%) agree that at least one school space is unsafe for LGBTQ students.

- Transgender students are especially likely to see at least one of these places as unsafe (87%).

- LGBTQ students see more places as unsafe for LGBTQ people than do straight students, and transgender students see most of all (3.95, 2.03, and 5.08 unsafe spaces, respectively).

Prejudice is more keenly felt in some places than others, depending on such factors as opportunity, exposure, the presence of potential witnesses, and the type of activity associated with the place, such as showering and contact sports. But even such innocuous seeming places as school corridors are so dangerous for LGBTQ students that hallways appear in the titles of both Human Rights Watch's *Hatred in the Hallways: Violence and Discrimination Against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Students in U.S. Schools*[1] and GLSEN's *Hostile Hallways: Bullying, Teasing, and Sexual Harassment in School.*[2]

We asked students whether there were any spaces in their school that were unsafe for LGBTQ students. Our findings are consistent with the findings of the GLSEN study which found that hallways (64%), classrooms (56%) and physical education areas (43%) were particularly common sites of homophobic harassment.

1   Bochenek & Brown, 2001.
2   Lipson, 2001.

People directly affected by an issue are, of course, more likely to be aware of safety issues that concern them than people who are not, and this greater awareness was reflected in the responses: LGBTQ participants consistently identified more spaces as unsafe for LGBTQ students than did non-LGBTQ participants. They were significantly more likely to identify LGBTQ students as being unsafe in hallways, the cafeteria, classrooms, the library, stairwells/ under stairs, the gymnasium, the physical education change room, the schoolyard, washrooms, school buses, and travelling to and from school.[3] However, many non-LGBTQ participants also recognized these places as being unsafe for LGBTQ students.

As illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, of these spaces or areas, LGBTQ participants identified the physical education change room as being the least safe (53.2%), followed by washrooms (45.8%), and hallways (45.4%). Slightly over half as many non-LGBTQ participants identified these spaces as unsafe for LGBTQ students (30.6%, 25.1%, and 26.8%, respectively).

Figure 1: Unsafe Areas for LGBTQ Students by LGBTQ/Non-LGBTQ
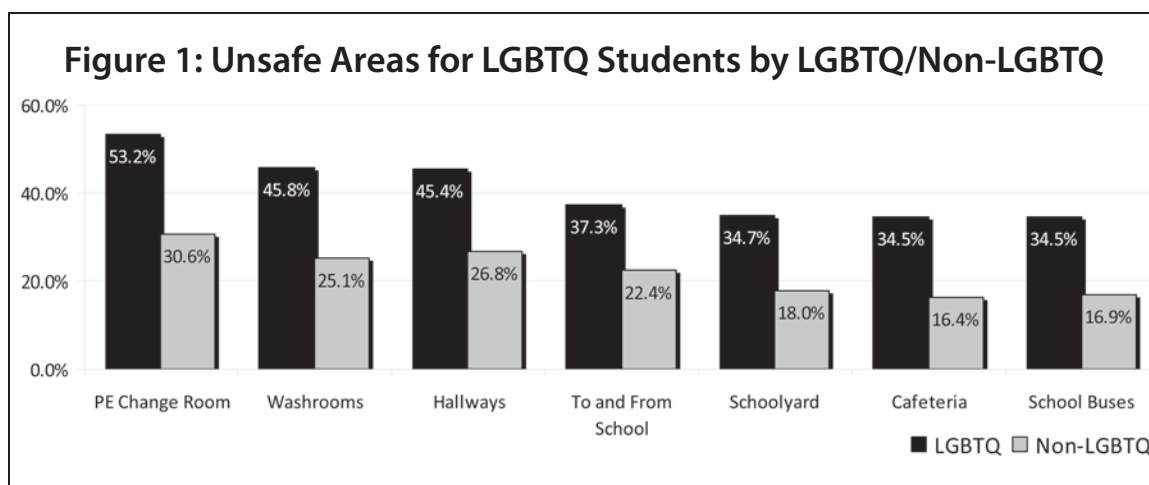
Transgender students reported feeling unsafe at an even greater rate than did LGB students (see Figure 3). Areas that were particularly unsafe for transgender students included the hallways, physical education change rooms,

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3   Hallways (χ^2=19.2; p=.000), cafeteria (χ^2=21; p=.000), classrooms (χ^2=15.3; p=.000), library (χ^2=7.3; p=.007), stairwells/under stairs (χ^2=20.4; p=.000), gymnasium (χ^2=29.7; p=.000), physical education change room (χ^2=27.5; p=.000), schoolyard (χ^2=17.6; p=.000), washrooms (χ^2=23.7; p=.000), school buses (χ^2=19.7; p=.000), travelling to and from school (χ^2=10.5; p=.014).

Student Experiences

and washrooms,[4] where roughly two-thirds of transgender students re-
ported that they feel they are not safe.

Figure 2: Unsafe Areas for LGBTQ Students by LGBTQ/Non-LGBTQ

Figure 3: Unsafe Areas by LGB/Transgender
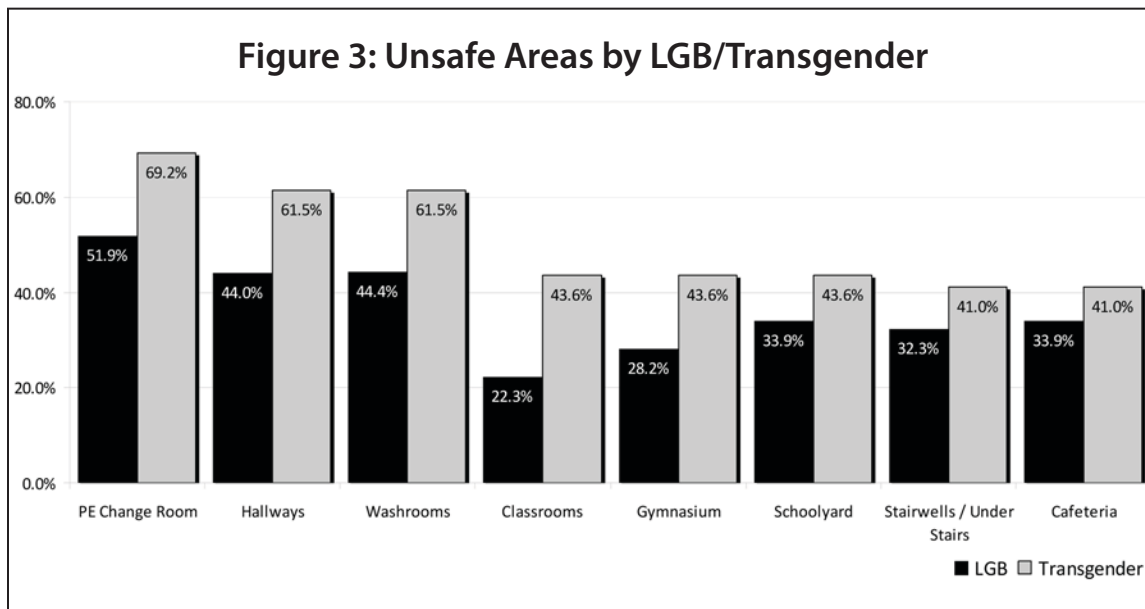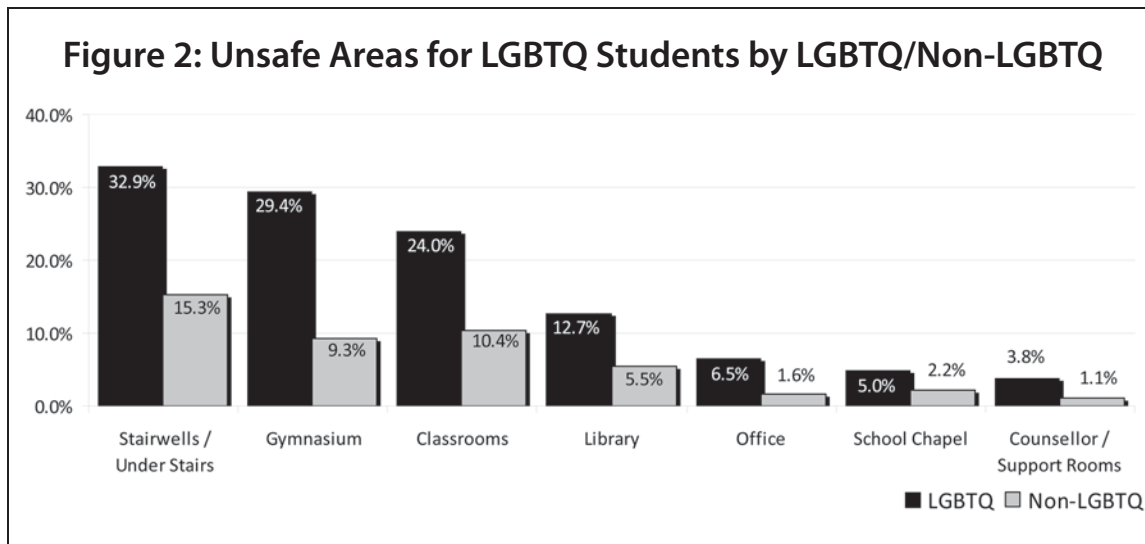
Data were analyzed so that overall numbers of places seen as unsafe could
be established. Again, sexual and transgender identity makes a difference
to how students see the environment for LGBTQ students:

- Combined LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ participants identified an average
  of 3.49 unsafe areas at school.

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4   Hallways, 61.5%; physical education change room, 69.2%; washrooms, 61.5%.

- Two-thirds (66%) of combined participants reported at least one place at school that was unsafe for LGBTQ students. Not surprisingly, this number was higher for LGBTQ participants (73%) than for non-LGBTQ (49.2%).

- LGBTQ participants identified an average of 4.03 areas, compared to 2.03 by non-LGBTQ.[5]

- 87.2% of transgender participants reported at least one unsafe location, compared to 71.8% of LGB respondents.

- Straight, LGB, and transgender participants identified 2.03, 3.95, and 5.08 unsafe spaces, respectively.[6]

Finally, former students (LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ combined) were more likely to report a higher average of unsafe areas (4.24), than current students (3.14).[7] While moving from 4 unsafe spaces to 3 does not mean that schools are now safe for LGBTQ students, it may indicate that they are somewhat safer than they used to be.

5    $t=-6.97$; $p=.000$.
6    $f=21.9$; $p=.000$.
7    $t=-3.5$; $p=.001$.

Student Experiences

Homophobic Comments

KEY FINDINGS

Who you are affects how likely you are to notice homophobic comments and negative comments about gender, but even straight students hear such comments often:

- Three-quarters (76.7%) of all participating students reported hearing expressions such as "that's so gay" every day in school.

- Half (49.4%) heard remarks like "faggot", "queer", "lezbo", and "dyke" daily. Over half (55.1%) of LGBTQ students, compared to a third (34.1%) of non-LGBTQ reported hearing such remarks daily.

- LGBTQ students were significantly more likely than non-LGBTQ to notice comments about boys not acting masculine enough daily, (25.3% versus 15.9%) or girls not acting feminine enough (17.8% versus 7.2%).

- A third (33.3%) of transgender participants heard derogatory comments daily about boys not being masculine enough, compared to a quarter (24.6%) of LGB students. Transgender students were more than twice as likely as LGB students to report hearing comments about girls not being feminine enough (35.9% versus 16.3%).

- LGBTQ students were more likely than non-LGBTQ to report that staff never intervened when homophobic comments were made (35.2% versus 25.9%).

- Half (47.4%) of transgender students reported that staff never intervened when homophobic comments were made, compared to 34.1% of LGB respondents.

- Current students were even more likely than past students to hear expressions like "that's so gay" in school (80.5% versus 68.5%). Current students were also more likely than past students to hear homophobic comments from other students every day (62.9% versus 51.6%).

One sign of progress:
- Current students were significantly less likely than past students to report that staff never intervened (29.5% versus 40.7%).

Student Experiences

> *My best friend is gay. And he's afraid to come out to MANY people. Including his family. Because he hears "that's so gay" and "this is gay, and that is gay" all the time. He's afraid of what will happen.*

LGBTQ students do not need to be directly targeted by homophobic or transphobic language to be exposed to it; they hear it in their everyday experience of adolescent discourse. School Climate Surveys on homophobia conducted in the US and the UK have found that the vast majority of LGBTQ youth report hearing homophobic comments such as "fag," "dyke," and "that's so gay" in their school not just "sometimes," but "frequently" or "often"; for example, this was reported by 73.6% of LGBTQ students in GLSEN's 2007 sample of 6209 students,[8] and 72% in Stonewall UK's in-school sample of 1145 British students.[9] In some of these usages, such as "fag" and "dyke," the intended meaning is clearly an accusation, in jest or in fact, that the targeted person is LGBTQ; in others, such as "that's so gay" ("*t'es gai*" in French), the meaning is closer to "that's stupid" or "that's worthless." Whatever the intention, however, the result is that LGBTQ students are hearing terms for who they are used as insults, and they get the message that "gay" is the last thing one wants to be in school culture.

We did not ask students to specify what kinds of comments they heard or made, but some sense of the range of comments to which students are exposed in high school discourse is suggested by the unsolicited comments made by some participants. They ranged from evocations of genocide ("I like Hitler," "Jews are gay"); to assertions that LGBTQ people are "dirty," "disgusting," "yucky," or "gross"; to remarks that LGBTQ people were not welcome ("no fags allowed," "i dont like them thay sould leave us"); to defences of homophobia on grounds that "homos deserve it relley." In addition, there were many assertions of religious and natural grounds for homophobia ("the Bible clearly says homosexuality is a sin and will be punished," "I was taught its Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve"), "most poeple just don't like gay people," "people dont like queers"), often accompanied by denials of

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8   Koskiw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008.
9   Hunt & Jensen, 2007.

homophobia. Finally, there were many vulgar characterizations of sex acts between men.

The Climate Survey did ask respondents how often they heard expressions such as "that's so gay" or remarks like "faggot", "queer", "lezbo", or "dyke", etc. used in a negative manner at school. Results show that homophobic comments are extremely prevalent in school environments. For instance, over three-quarters (76.7%) of students reported hearing expressions such as "that's so gay" frequently (i.e. daily) in school. In addition, half (49.4%) recalled hearing remarks like "faggot", "queer", "lezbo", and "dyke" frequently in school (See Figure 4).

Figure 4: Frequency of Homophobic Comments
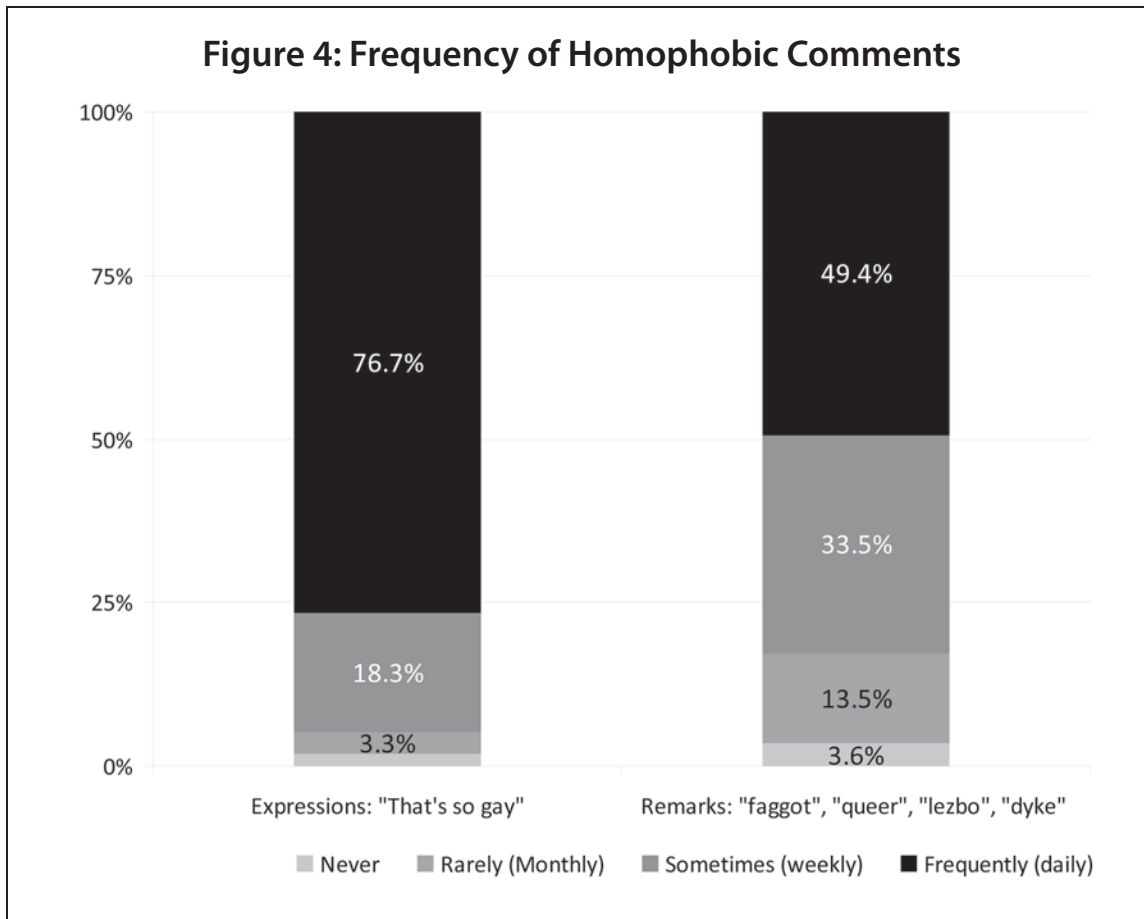
As illustrated in Figure 5, the use of homophobic language was significantly higher among students than among teachers and other staff. For example, 59.2% of respondents indicated that they heard homophobic comments frequently from other students, while 1.8% reported hearing such remarks frequently from teachers and other staff. (This finding is lower than

in some other studies where 9.9% of students reported hearing homophobic language from teachers and other staff.[10])

Figure 5: Homophobic Comments by Students/Teachers and Staff

Homophobic Language Used by Students	Homophobic Language Used by Teachers and Staff
59.2%	5.8%
29.5%	23.4%
8.6%	69.0%

Legend: Never — Rarely (Monthly) — Sometimes (weekly) — Frequently (daily)
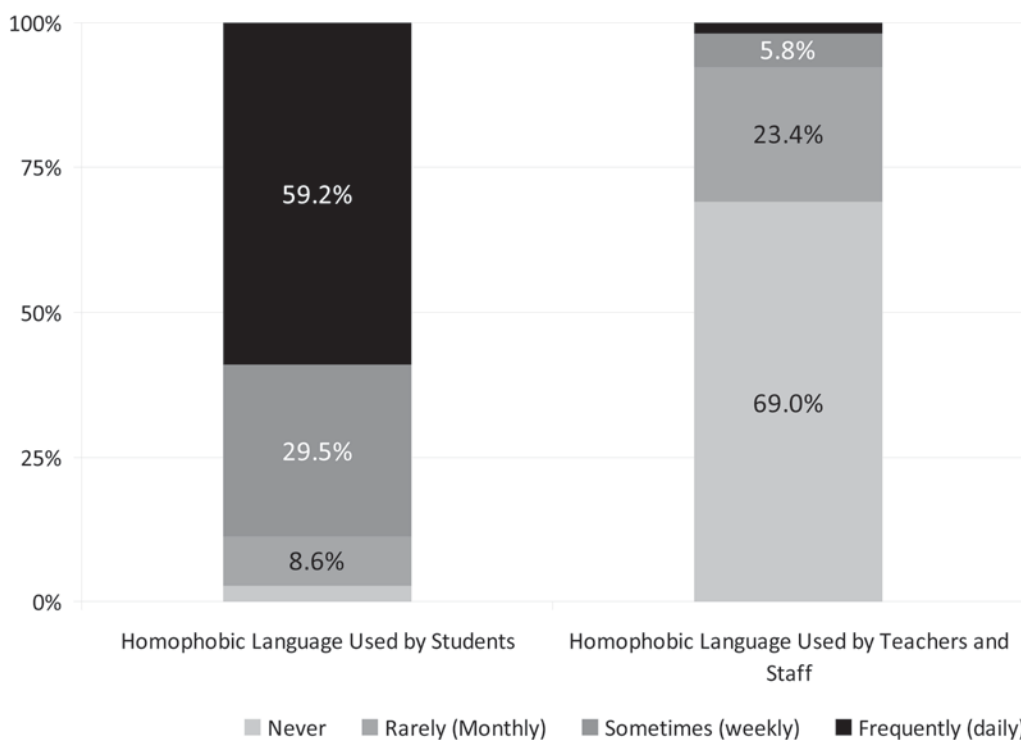
However, a minority of students did report hearing such remarks from educators:

> *. . . even the teachers are horribly homophobic. They may think they are developed and accepting but they're not. They make homophobic remarks and whenever kids are picking on me right in front of there eyes they do nothing they actually join in on what the kids are doing.*

> *Teachers can be just as bad as the kids.*

When the data were compared by LGBTQ versus non-LGBTQ students, several statistically significant results appear (see Figure 6). For example, 55.1% of LGBTQ students, compared to 34.1% of non-LGBTQ participants reported hearing remarks such as "faggot", "queer", "lezbo", and "dyke" on a frequent

10   E.g., Phoenix et al., 2006.

Student Experiences

basis.[11] Further, compared to non-LGBTQ students, LGBTQ respondents in-dicated hearing homophobic comments significantly more from other stu-dents.[12] As with the "safe spaces" findings, these differences likely stem from non-LGBTQ students taking less notice of homophobic comments because they do not feel personally affected by them.

Figure 6: Homophobic Comments by LGBTQ/Non-LGBTQ
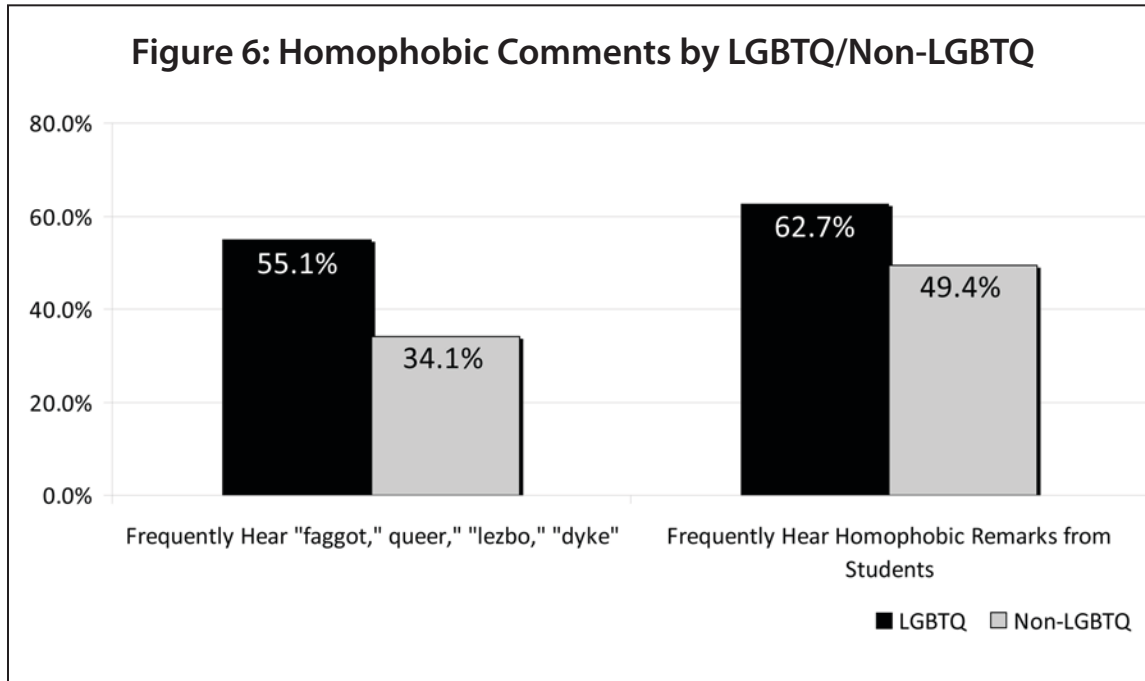
Disappointingly, the use of homophobic comments was more prominent among current students than among past students (see Figure 7). For in-stance, 80.5% of current students, compared to 68.5% of former students, reported hearing expressions like "that's so gay" in school.[13] Current stu-dents were also more likely than past students to hear homophobic com-ments from other students frequently or daily (i.e. 62.9% versus 51.6%).[14]

Not surprisingly, LGBTQ students were more likely than non-LGBTQ stu-dents to find homophobic comments upsetting (see Figure 8). For example, 25.7% of LGBTQ respondents found homophobic comments to be extreme-ly upsetting, compared to 18.8% of non-LGBTQ participants.[15] However, the vast majority (89.9%) of all respondents found homophobic comments to

11   χ^2=23.9; p=.000.
12   χ^2=10.2; p=.017.
13   χ^2=17.4; p=.001.
14   χ^2=13.2; p=.004.
15   χ^2=14.7; p=.002.

be upsetting on some level. This supports the position held by many educators that homophobic comments poison the school climate for everyone because they are an assault on human dignity. Further, 62.7% of LGBTQ students found homophobic comments to be either extremely or very upsetting, but 50.3% of non-LGBTQ also felt the same way.

Figure 7: Homophobic Comments by Past/Current Students
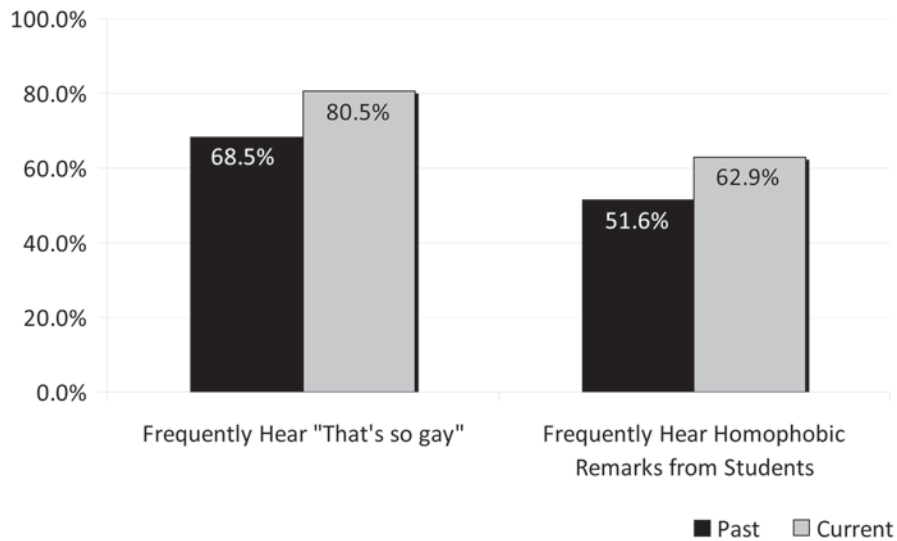
Figure 8: Feeling Upset by Homophobic Comments by LGBTQ/Non-LGBTQ

Student Experiences
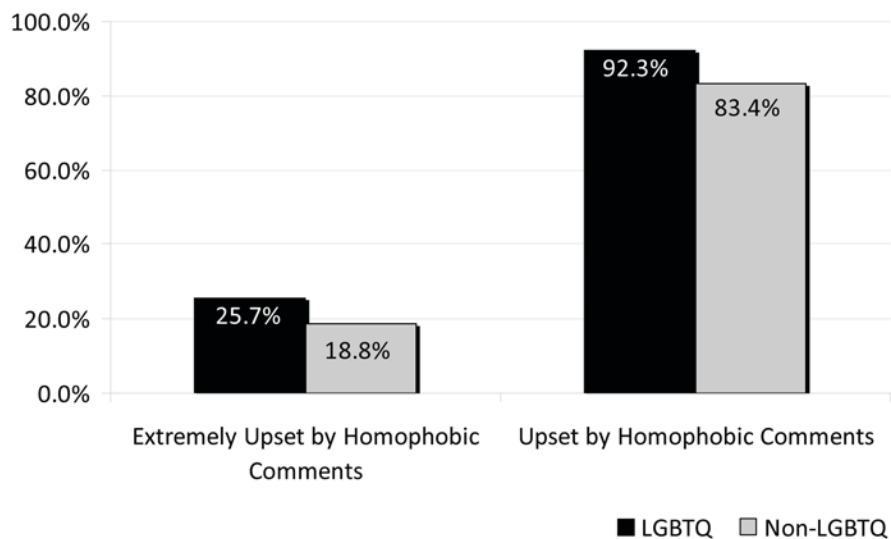
Moreover, when LGB participants were compared to transgender respondents, results reveal that the latter were even more likely to find homophobic comments extremely upsetting. As illustrated in Figure 9, transgender students (41%) found such comments to be extremely upsetting, compared to one quarter (24.4%) of LGB participants, a finding that could be attributable to transgender students' relative visibility as LGBTQ and their heightened attention to comments relevant to their safety as a consequence.

Figure 9: Feeling Upset by Homophobic Comments by LGB/Transgender
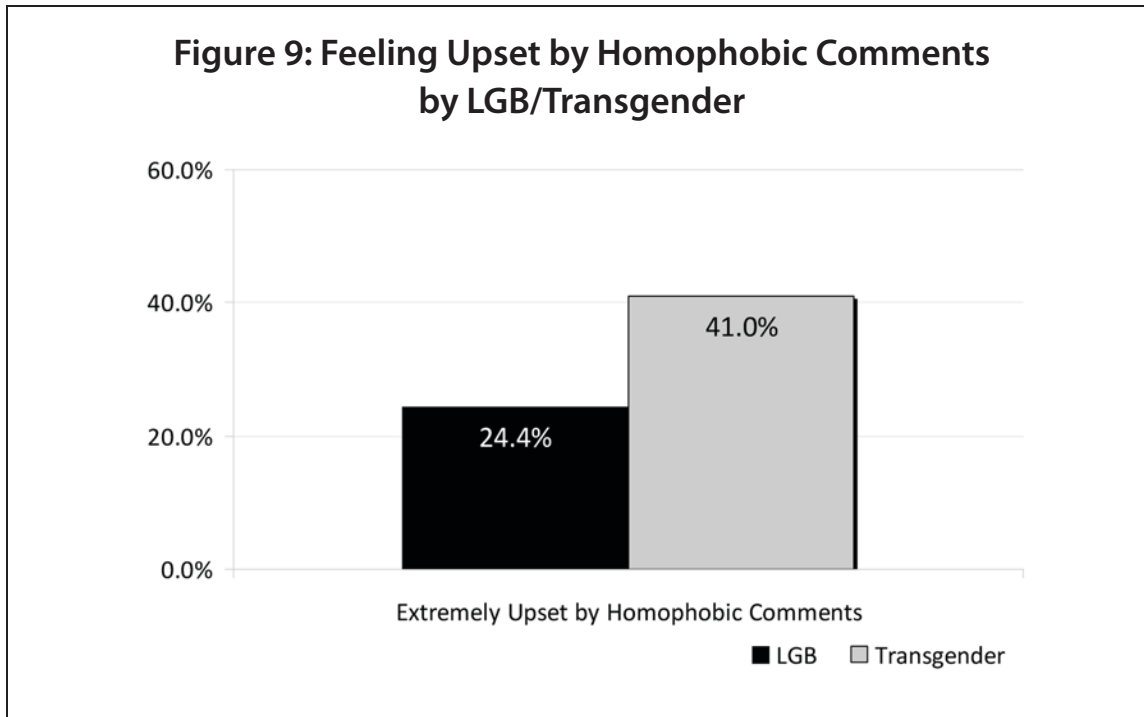
> *the teachers know it's going on, but they rarely pipe up and protect me or others. i guess they figure it's a lost cause. it takes a lot of energy to defend yourself all the time.*

Student Experiences

Intervention in Homophobic Comments

Most educators believe it is their obligation to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for LGBTQ students.[16] Even those teachers who see LGBTQ lives as immoral or sinful, would agree that they do not want any child to be insulted and made to feel afraid to go to school. However, studies have found that a great many teachers are disinclined to intervene when they hear homophobic comments,[17] even though they agree that such language should not be tolerated.[18] In GLSEN's 2007 US Climate Survey, fewer than a fifth of students (17.6%) said that teachers and other staff intervened always or most of the time when they heard homophobic comments, and only 16.6% said staff intervened when they heard negative comments about gender expression. In contrast, 57.6% of students said staff intervened always or most of the time when they heard racist comments, and 42.3% when they heard sexist comments. Similarly, over a third (38.6%) said that staff never intervened when they heard homophobic comments, and 42.6% when they heard comments about gender expression (10.2% for racist comments, 14.8% for sexist comments).[19]

A series of questions in the Canadian Climate Survey attempted to gauge the frequency of intervention by staff and students when homophobic comments were made. As shown in Figure 10, even though LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ responses were similar regarding whether or not a teacher or staff member was present when homophobic comments were made, the "not me" effect comes into play again in participants' views of whether staff intervened: LGBTQ students were more likely than non-LGBTQ to report that staff never intervened if such comments were made (35.2% versus 25.9%).[20]

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16   Harris Interactive and GLSEN, 2005.
17   Fraynd & Capper, 2003.
18   Sykes, 2004.
19   Koskiw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008.
20    $\chi^2=11.4$; p=.010.

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**Figure 10: Teacher and Staff Presence /
Non-Intervention by LGBTQ/Non-LGBTQ**
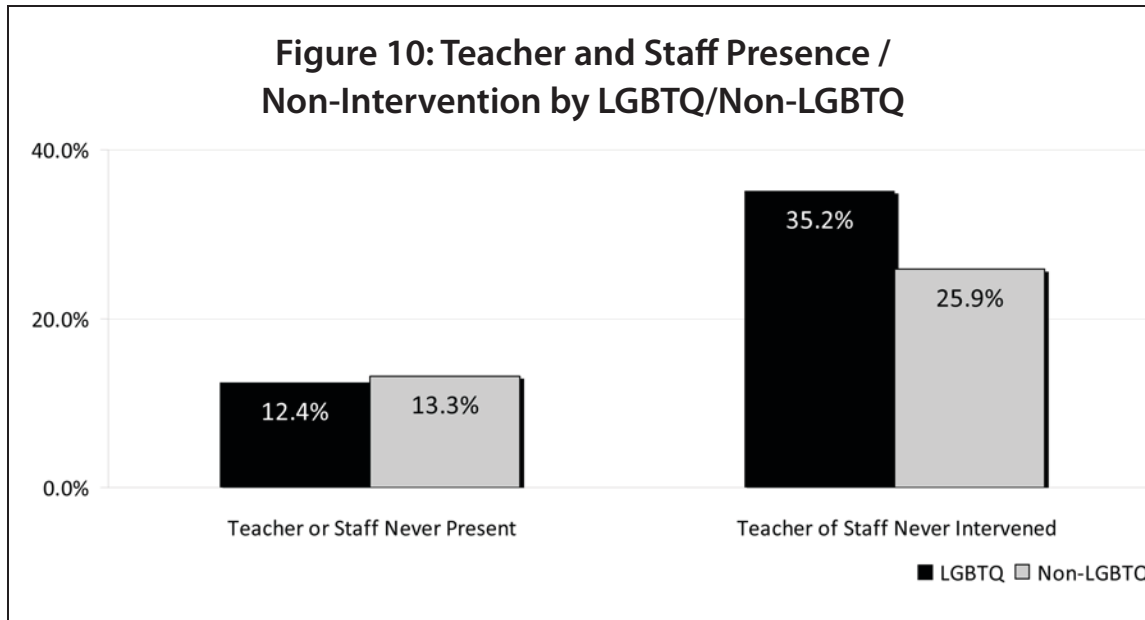
There were also significant differences in terms of level of intervention when data were analyzed according to LGB students and transgender participants. Figure 11, for example, shows that nearly half (47.4%) of transgender students reported that a teacher or staff member never intervened when a homophobic comment was made, compared to 34.1% of LGB respondents.[21] Transgender individuals were also more likely to indicate that other students would never intervene, compared to LGB participants (61.5% versus 51.7%).[22]

It is also important to note that former students were significantly more likely to report non-intervention by staff, compared to current students[23] (see Figure 12). Finally, there were no significant differences in regards to frequency of intervention among other students when data were compared between LGBTQ/non-LGBTQ participants, LGB/transgender respondents, or current or former students.

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21   χ^2=15.7; p=.015.
22   This difference was not statistically significant (χ^2=5.8; p=.451).
23   χ^2=9.9; p=.020.

Figure 11: Non-Intervention by Teachers and Staff / Students by LGB/Transgender

Teachers/Staff Never Intervened: LGB 34.1%, Transgender 47.4%
Students Never Intervened: LGB 51.7%, Transgender 61.5%

Legend: ■ LGB □ Transgender
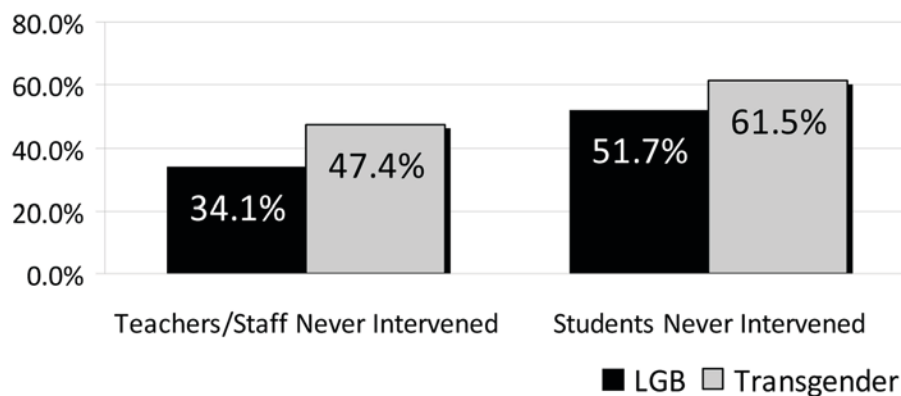
Figure 12: Teacher and Staff Non-Intervention by Past/Current Students

Teachers/Staff Never Intervened: Past Students 40.7%, Current Students 29.5%

Legend: ■ Past Students □ Current Students

Student Experiences
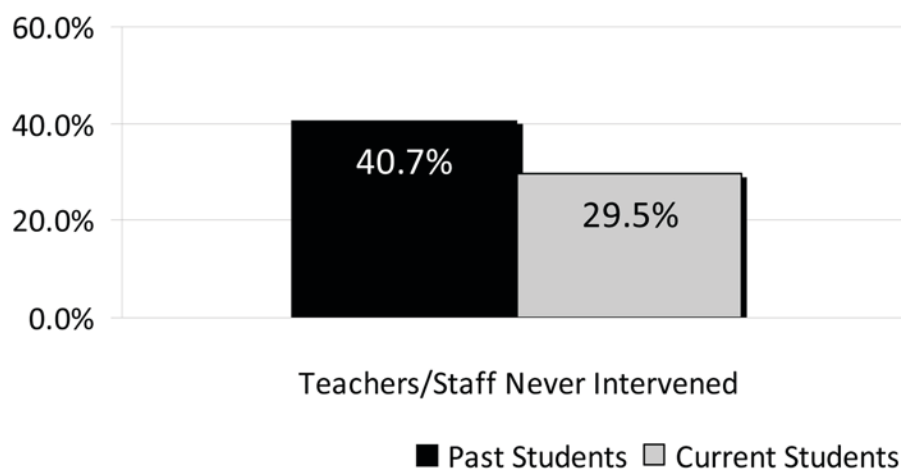
The toll on the spirits of LGBTQ students from having their teachers ignore such comments is clear in the words of this participant:

Most of the teachers hear derogatory comments such as using 'gay' as a synonym for 'stupid' along with the students everyday in class, but I rarely if ever see any teachers react like they are supposed to since they are supposed to be 'role-models.' That's just a crock of bullshit. I know some very nice teachers as people who I would never imagine to be against something like being gay, until I hear them just ignore those mean com-

ments or sometimes even have a laugh about something someone has said. It is disheartening and disgusting.

Transphobic Comments

The connection between homophobia and sexism has been explored by many researchers who examine such problems as the use of cross-gender accusations to insult other people, such as when students accuse a boy of being feminine or a girl of being masculine. The targets of such accusations are very often not LGBTQ, given that the language is used for such minor departures from gender norms as girls not wearing makeup or boys liking art class.

In addition to homophobic comments, the survey asked questions about negative comments made about gender. As illustrated in Figure 13, LGBTQ students were significantly more likely to report hearing comments about boys not acting masculine enough, compared to non-LGBTQ participants (25.3% versus 15.9% heard such remarks frequently)[24] or girls not acting feminine enough (17.8% versus 7.2% heard such remarks frequently).[25]

Figure 13: Inappropriate Gender Remarks by LGBTQ/Non-LGBTQ

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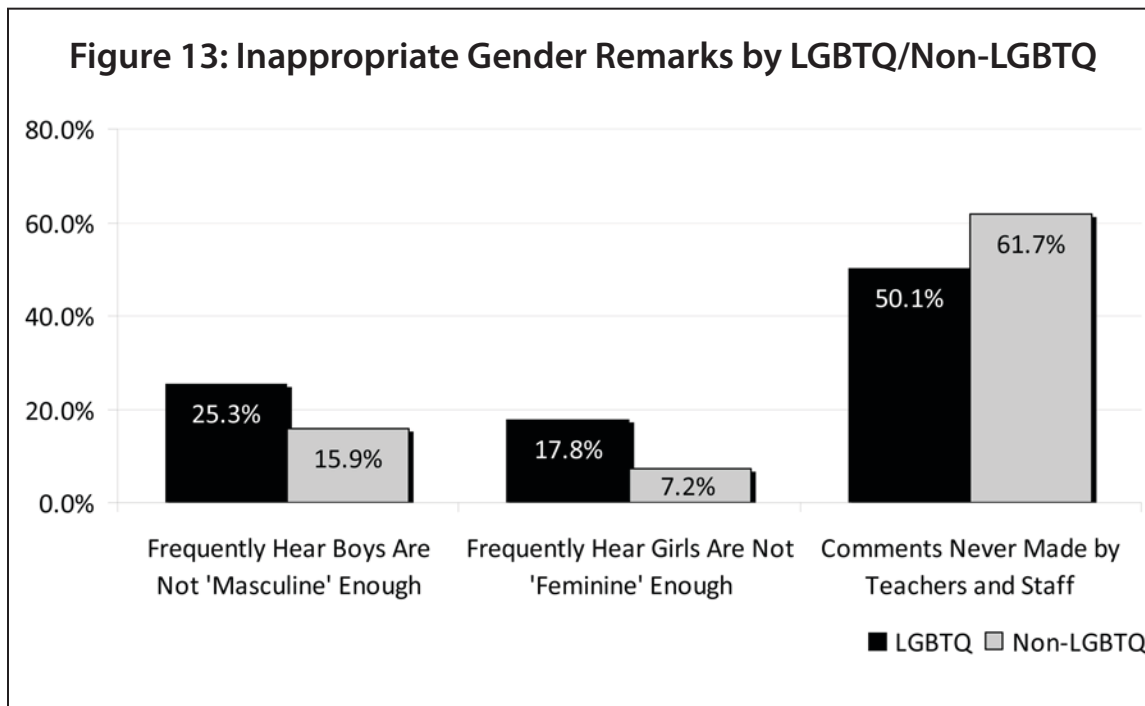
24   χ^2=12.1; p=.007.
25   χ^2=14.6; p=.002

While there was no statistically significant relationship between LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ participants in terms of hearing such remarks from students, there was a notable difference between these groupings and whether the comments came from teachers or staff. More specifically, 61.7% of non-LGBTQ students reported that they never heard derogatory comments made in reference to gender, compared to 50.1% of LGBTQ respondents.[26] (In other words, a third of non-LGBTQ students and half of LGBTQ students heard such comments from teachers at least once in a while.) Results also differed significantly when LGB participants were compared to transgender individuals (see Figure 14). For instance, a third (33.3%) of transgender respondents reported hearing derogatory comments on a frequent or daily basis about boys not being masculine enough, compared to a quarter (24.6%) of LGB students.[27] Transgender students were more than twice as likely to report hearing comments about girls not being feminine enough (35.9% versus 16.3%).[28]

Figure 14: Inappropriate Gender Remarks by LGB/Transgender

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26   χ^2=10.5; p=.014.
27   χ^2=21.2; p=.002.
28   χ^2=25.9; p=.000.

Student Experiences
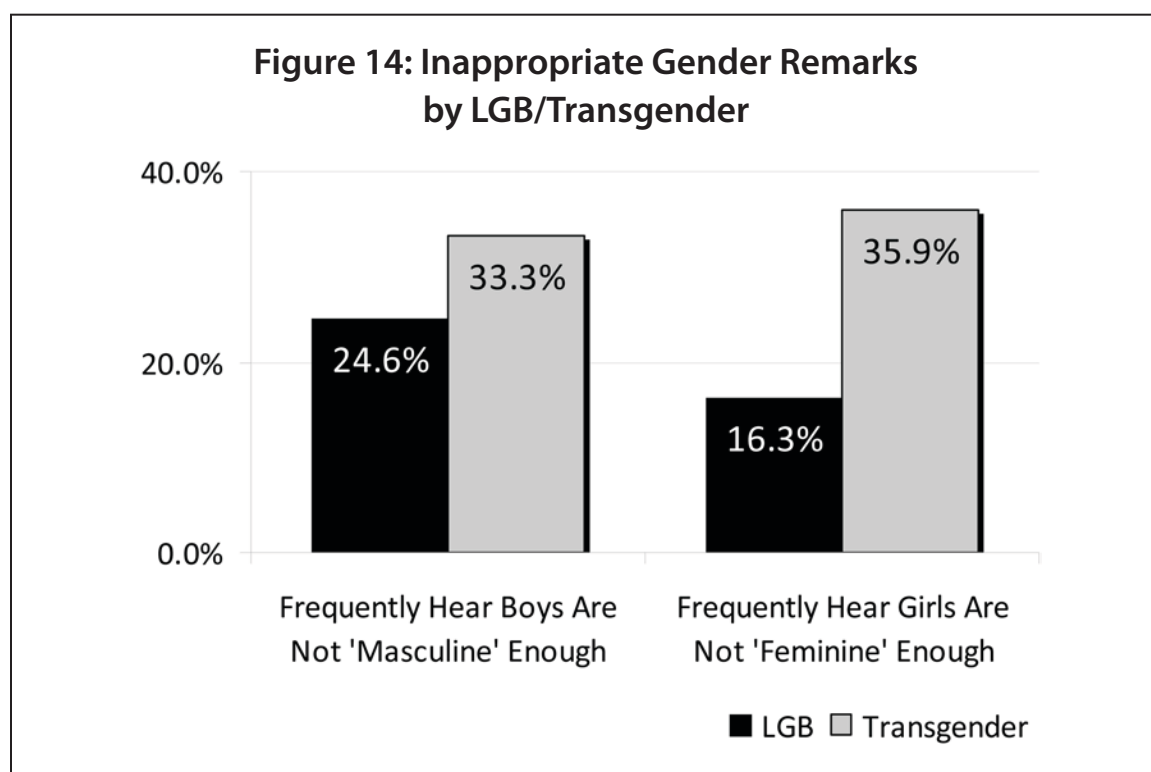
Being insulted in this way can be upsetting to any student, straight or LG-BTQ. It is, however, all the more hurtful for transgender students to hear negative comments about masculinity and femininity, and this is reflected in their being much more likely to notice how frequently such comments are made in their presence. As is discussed in the following sections, transgender students seem to be at higher risk of being directly targeted as well.

VICTIMIZATION

KEY FINDINGS
Who you are affects how much direct harassment you experience:

- Six out of ten LGBTQ students reported being verbally harassed about their sexual orientation.

- Eight out of ten transgender participants and one in three LGB respondents reported being verbally harassed about their gender.

- Nine out of ten transgender students and six out of ten LGB students were verbally harassed because of their expression of gender.

- A third of straight students were verbally harassed about their expression of gender.

- One in four LGB students had been physically harassed about their sexual orientation.

- Almost two in five transgender students and one in five LGB reported being physically harassed due to their expression of gender.

- Two-thirds of LGBTQ students and just under half of non-LGBTQ have seen homophobic graffiti at school. One in seven LGBTQ students had been named in the graffiti.

- Over half the LGBTQ students had rumours or lies spread about their sexual orientation at school, compared to one in ten non-LGBTQ.

- One third of LGBTQ participants reported harassment thought text-messaging or on the internet.

> *Some people already think I'm a lesbian because I stand up and fight against homophobia so I'm already being called names and yelled at while walking down the hallway.*

Many studies have found that LGBTQ students who are targeted by some form of homophobic harassment tend to have lower grades, lower progress to post-secondary education, higher rates of skipping school because of fear, and higher rates of suicidal ideation than non-LGBTQ students.[29] We asked students a series of questions on their experiences of direct verbal and physical harassment and harassment by graffiti, rumour, and cyberbullying.

Verbal Harassment at School

The 2007 McCreary Study found that 61% of gay students and 66% of lesbian students between grades 7 and 12 reported having been verbally harassed, compared to 29% and 37% of heterosexual boys and girls, respectively,[30] and 86.2% of LGBTQ students in the 2007 US Climate Survey reported being homophobically harassed and 66.5% harassed because of their gender expression.[31]

LGBTQ participants in our survey reported similar levels of direct verbal harassment, much higher on all counts than was reported by non-LGBTQ students:

- ten times as much harassment about their sexual orientation (59% LGBTQ compared to 6.8% for non-LGBTQ students)

- four times as much about their perceived sexual orientation (56.6% versus 14.1%)

- one and a half times as much about their gender (40.1% versus 27.1%)

Student Experiences

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29   Garcia, Adams, Friedman, & East, 2002; GLSEN, 2003; Illingworth & Murphy, 2004; Lugg, 2003; Massachusetts Department of Education, 2002.
30   Saewyc et al., 2007.
31   Koskiw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008.

- twice as much about their masculinity or femininity (62.7% versus 31.8%).[32]

(See Figure 15).

Figure 15: Verbal Harassment by LGBTQ/Non-LGBTQ
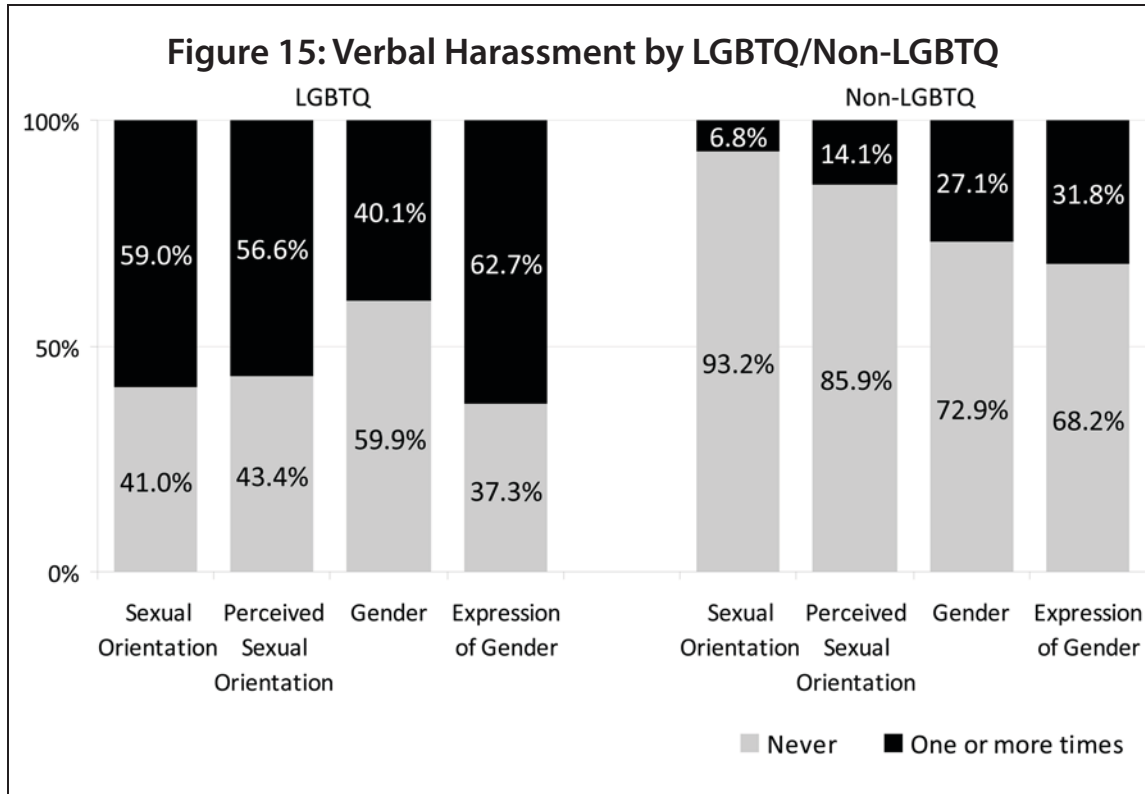
However, these figures also show that large numbers of non-LGBTQ students see themselves as being harassed with negative comments about their gender and gender expression. This suggests that the message needs to get out that it is hurtful to harass anyone about their gender, whether they are straight or LGBTQ.

As shown in Figure 16, the level of harassment was even higher for transgender students, especially in regards to gender and expressions of gender. With the former, 82.1% of transgender participants reported being verbally harassed on some level about their gender, compared to 36.4% of LGB respondents. Moreover, 89.7% of transgender students were verbally ha-

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32   Sexual orientation (χ^2=143.3; p=.000); perceived sexual orientation (χ^2=96.2; p=.000); gender (χ^2=12; p=.007); masculinity or femininity (χ^2=52.1; p=.000).

rassed on some level because of their expression of gender, compared to 60.4% of LGB students.[33]

Figure 16: Verbal Harassment by LGB/Transgender
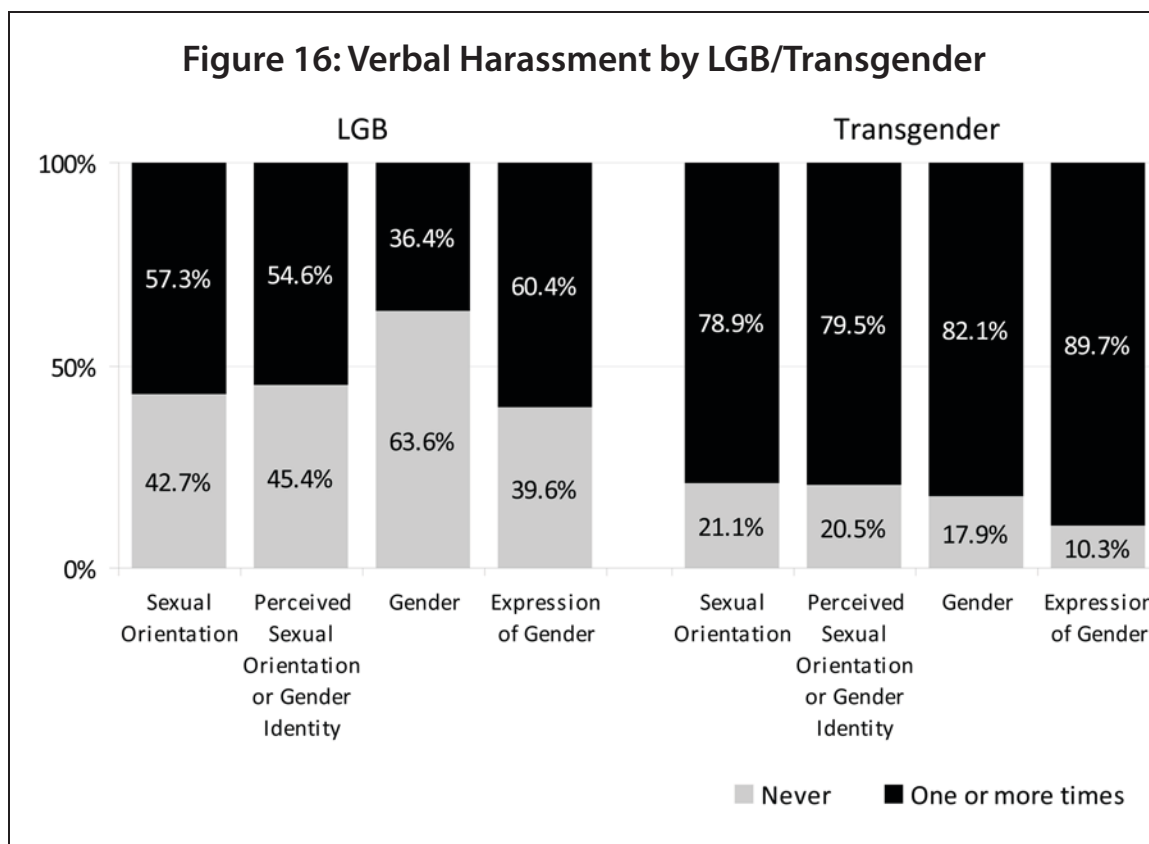
Societal gender norms of masculine boys and feminine girls are rigidly enforced in adolescent culture, as Bochenek and Brown (2001) explained in one of the first in-depth examinations of school-based homophobia that reported on interviews with 140 youth and 130 adults:

> *It quickly became obvious from our research that the abuse of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth is predicated on the belief that girls and boys must strictly adhere to rigid rules of conduct, dress, and appearances based on their sex. For boys, that means they must be athletic, strong, sexist, and hide their emotions. For girls, that means they must be attentive to and flirtatious with boys and must accept a subordinate status to boys. Regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity,*

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33   Harassed on some level (χ^2=76.3; p=.000); because of gender expression (χ^2=70.5; p=.000).

youth who violate these rules are punished by their peers and too often by adults.

Boys who reported the most harassment were those who were least stereotypically masculine. Transgender youth are the most vulnerable to both violence by peers and harassment from adults. (p. 49)

While the numbers of youth who actually identify as transgender is comparatively small, they are a highly identifiable target of homophobic harassment.

Physical Harassment at School

The 2007 US Climate Survey reports 44.1% of students having been physically harassed (pushed or shoved) because they were LGBTQ and 30.4% because of their gender expression; 22.1% had been more severely assaulted (punched, kicked, injured with a weapon) because they were LGBTQ and 14.2% because of their gender expression.[34] The McCreary study found similarly elevated rates of physical assault against non-heterosexual students.[35]

LGBTQ students in our study were also more likely to report being physically harassed at school due to their sexual orientation, perceived sexual orientation, gender, and expression of gender. For example, as illustrated in Figure 17, 25.2% of LGBTQ students indicated being physically harassed due to their sexual orientation, compared to 7.9% of non-LGBTQ participants.[36]

As with verbal harassment, transgender respondents reported even higher levels of physical violence, especially with respect to their gender as well as expressions of gender (see Figure 18). For instance, 38.5% of transgender individuals reported being physically harassed due to their expression of gender, compared to 22.2% of LGB participants.[37]

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34   Koskiw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008.
35   Saewyc et al., 2007.
36   χ^2=33.7; p=.000.
37   χ^2=31; p=.000.

Figure 17: Physical Harassment by LGBTQ/Non-LGBTQ

LGBTQ

Category	Never	One or more times
Sexual Orientation	74.8%	25.2%
Perceived Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity	75.3%	24.7%
Gender	84.2%	15.8%
Expression of Gender	76.5%	23.5%

Non-LGBTQ

Category	Never	One or more times
Sexual Orientation	92.1%	7.9%
Perceived Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity	89.8%	10.2%
Gender	89.3%	10.7%
Expression of Gender	88.8%	11.2%

Figure 18: Physical Harassment by LGB/Transgender

LGB

Category	Never	One or more times
Sexual Orientation	75.3%	24.7%
Perceived Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity	76.1%	23.9%
Gender	85.1%	14.9%
Expression of Gender	77.8%	22.2%

Transgender

Category	Never	One or more times
Sexual Orientation	69.2%	30.8%
Perceived Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity	66.7%	33.3%
Gender	73.7%	26.3%
Expression of Gender	61.5%	38.5%

Student Experiences

44

Harassment by Graffiti, Rumour, and Cyberbullying

Other forms of homophobic harassment employ the vehicles of graffiti, rumour, and technologies such as Facebook or text messaging. Stonewall UK's 2006 Climate survey found that 65% of the gay and lesbian youth in their UK study experience homophobic bullying of some kind, and of these, 76% experience malicious gossip and 41% experience cyberbullying.[38] Our questions explored a number of these kinds of incidents.

Figure 19: Homophobic Incidents by LGBTQ/Non-LGBTQ
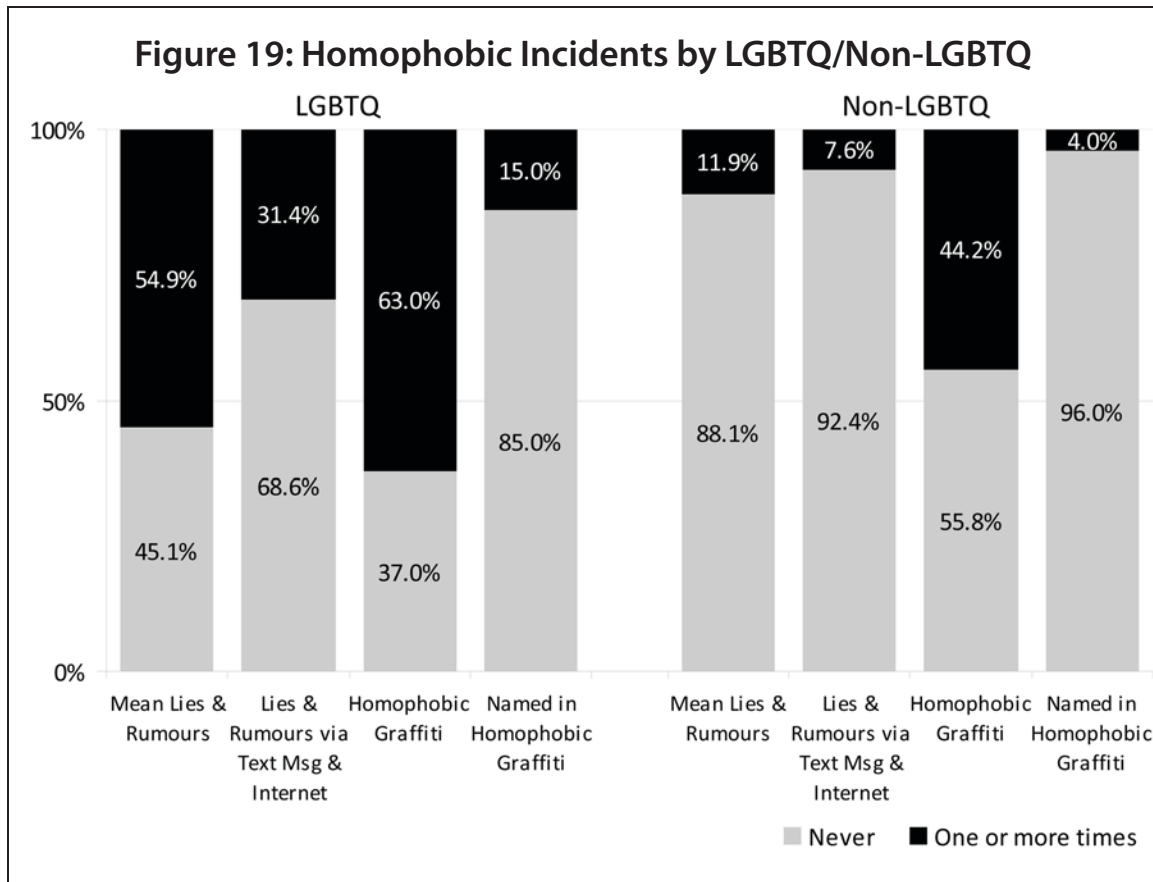
As shown in Figure 19, a large number of LGBTQ (63%) and non-LGBTQ students (44.2%) have seen or experienced the effects of homophobic graffiti at school; however, a smaller number reported being directly named in the graffiti (15% of LGBTQ students and 4% of non-LGBTQ participants stated yes to at least one incident).

Students were also asked if, in the past year, they have had mean rumours or lies about them spread at school either because of their sexual orientation/perceived sexual orientation or for having a LGBTQ family member/friend. Over half the LGBTQ students stated yes to at least one incident (54.9%), compared to one in ten non-LGBTQ (11.9%). Students were asked a similar question about personal harassment on the Internet or via text messaging. Again, LGBTQ participants reported a higher number of incidents (31.4%) than non-LGBTQ individuals (7.6%).[39]

Figure 20: Homophobic Incidents by LGB/Transgender
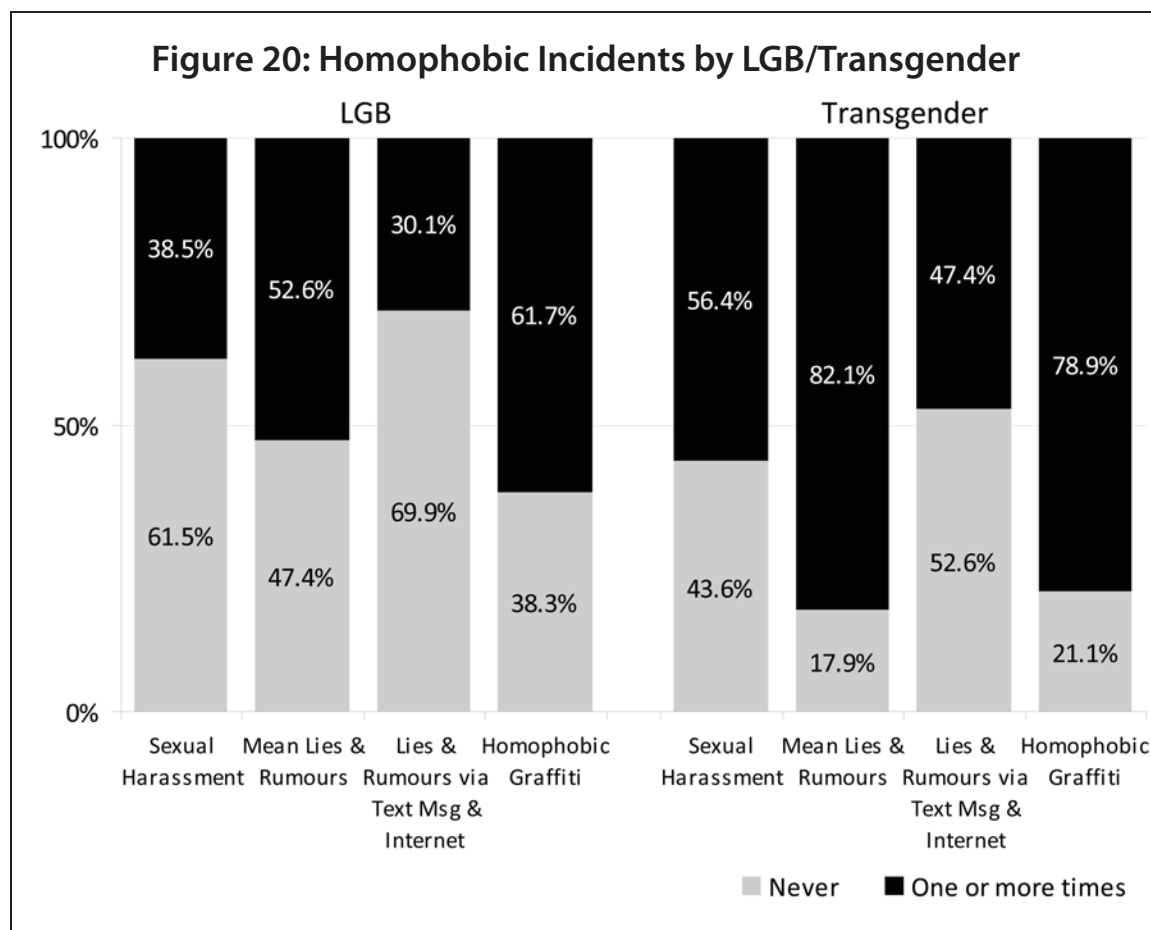
Transgender participants were significantly more likely, compared to LGB students, to see or experience homophobic graffiti at school (78.9% versus 61.7%). Transgender respondents also reported being the direct target of homophobic graffiti more often than LGB participants (26.3% versus 14%). In addition, as shown in Figure 20, over four out of five transgender students (82.1%) stated yes to experiencing one or more situations where

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39   Rumours or lies (χ^2=98.9; p=.000); internet (χ^2=41.1; p=.000).

other students spread mean lies or rumours about them at school because of their sexual orientation/perceived sexual orientation or for having a LGBTQ family member/friend.[40]

IMPACTS

KEY FINDINGS

- Three-quarters of LGBTQ students and 95% of transgender students felt unsafe at school, compared to one-fifth of straight students.

- Over a quarter of LGBTQ students and almost half of transgender students had skipped school because they felt unsafe, compared to less than a tenth of non-LGBTQ.

- Many LGBTQ students would not be comfortable talking to their teachers (four in ten), their principal (six in ten), or their coach (seven in ten) about LGBTQ issues.

- Only one in five LGBTQ students could talk to a parent very comfortably about LGBTQ issues. Three-quarters could talk to a close friend.

- Over half of LGBTQ students did not feel accepted at school, and almost half felt they could not be themselves, compared to one-fifth of straight students.

- Transgender students (35.9%) were twice as likely as LGB students to strongly agree that they sometimes feel very depressed about their school that they do not belong there, and four times as likely as straight students.

Feelings of Safety

A great many students feel unsafe at school for a variety of reasons, not just LGBTQ students.[41] Educators know that they are responsible for protecting the students entrusted to their care, and their concern is evi-

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40   See grafitti (χ^2=33.9; p=.000); target of graffiti (χ^2=26; p=.000); rumours or lies (χ^2=117.6; p=.000).

41   Harris Interactive & GLSEN, 2005.

> ### *School is not a safe place for anyone like me.*

dent in the many anti-bullying programs, crisis-response protocols, and human rights curricula that have been developed in recent years. Yet we know that it is often difficult for teachers and other school staff to know who is experiencing school as an unsafe place, and why.

Studies that compare LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ feelings of safety at school consistently find that the former are more likely to experience fear at school. The McCreary Centre study, for example, found that 82% of lesbian girls versus 60% of heterosexual girls sometimes feel unsafe, and 70% of gay boys versus 58% of heterosexual boys.[42]

A main objective of the survey was to gauge students' feelings of safety at school. More specifically, participants were asked if they ever felt unsafe at school due to the following: sexual orientation; perceived sexual orientation; gender identity; expression of gender identity; racial or ethnic identity; religious or perceived religious identity; or their family status (i.e. having one or more LGBTQ parents).

Student Experiences

Figure 21: Feelings of Safety by LGBTQ/Non-LGBTQ

Category	LGBTQ	Non-LGBTQ
Sexual Orientation	52.4%	1.1%
Percieved Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity	33.1%	4.4%
Gender Identity	13.3%	1.6%
Expression of Gender Identity	29.8%	3.8%
Overall Count	73.0%	20.2%

42   Saewyc et al., 2007.
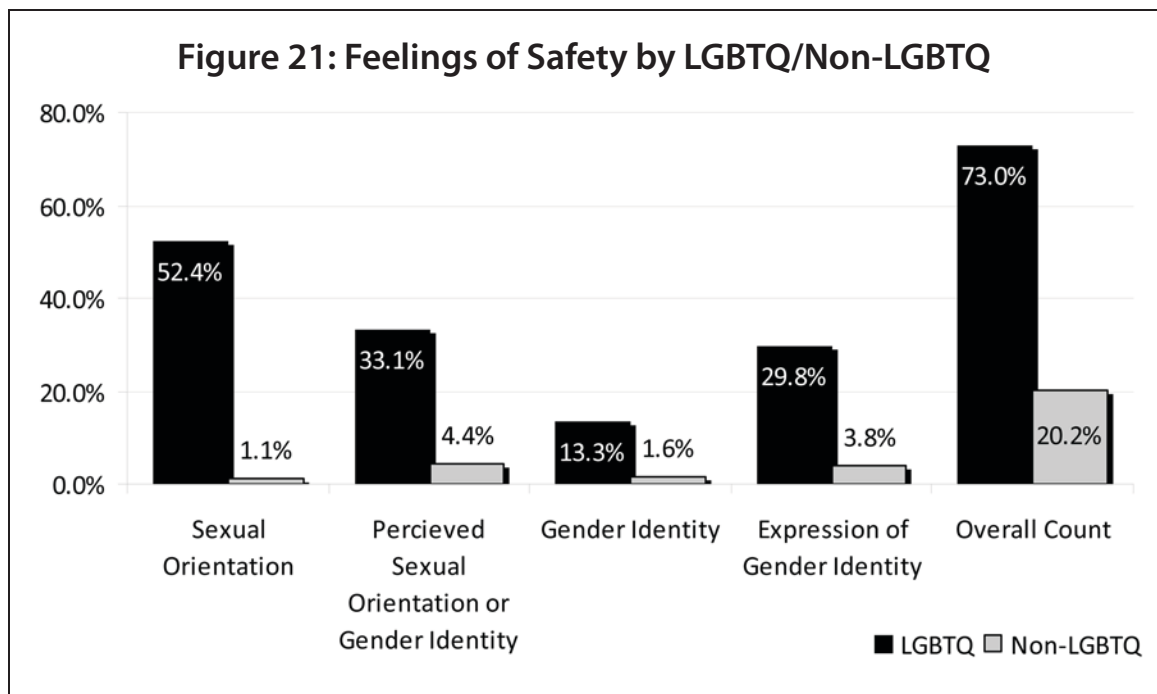
As illustrated in Figure 21, there were significant differences when participants were grouped by LGBTQ versus non-LGBTQ status.

Not surprisingly, the largest gap was by sexual orientation where 52.4% of LGBTQ participants reported feeling unsafe, compared to only 1.1% of non-LGBTQ respondents. Moreover, when all grounds of feeling unsafe are taken into account ("race," religion, etc.) three-quarters (73.0%) of LGBTQ participants felt unsafe in some manner at school, compared to one-fifth (20.2%) of non-LGBTQ respondents.[43]

Many students described an atmosphere of hostility that made them afraid to be identified as LGBTQ:

> *… it isn't safe. I've been bashed four times all told outside of school in the last few years, why bring it on and complicate classes? It makes no sense. Pick your battles--ya know?*

> *I am not out because if I was I would probably get beat up emotionally, physically, and verbally. Because of these beatings my life would be hell and there would be no safe place for me to go. Everybody would hate me, call me names, beat me up maybe even to the point of hospilization. I may even end up gay bashed and dead.*

> *I am afraid of all of the harassment that I may have to endure from both supposed friends and other people within the school. I'd rather not tell anyone other than close people out of high school until I have graduated or moved on to University and have made some good friends. I don't feel that I could completely trust anyone in my school to not tell someone or make jokes about it.*

> *Frankly, coming out at school scares the living shit out of me.*

When we compared data by two groups, LGB and transgender, results revealed even higher percentages of feeling unsafe in school for transgender students than for LGB students (see Figure 22). Almost all (94.9%) of transgender students indicated feeling unsafe in some way at school.[44]

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43   Sexual orientation (χ^2=148.6; p=.000); in some manner (χ^2=153.6; p=.000).
44   χ^2=162; p=.000.

Figure 22: Feelings of Safety by LGB/Transgender

Figure 23: Feelings of Safety by Current LGBTQ/Past LGBTQ Students
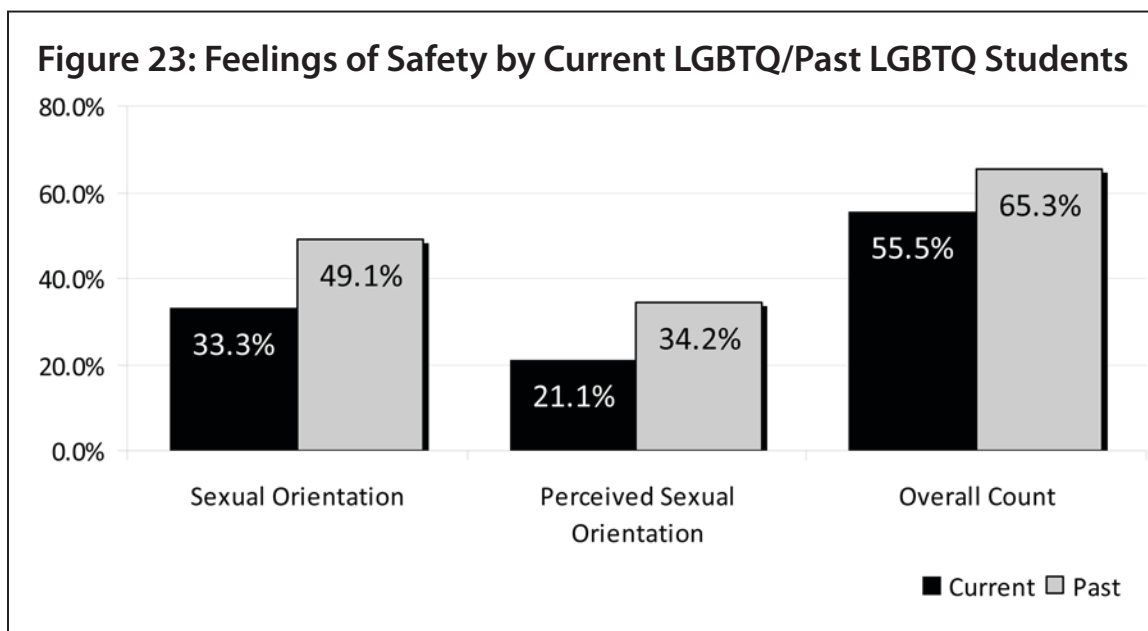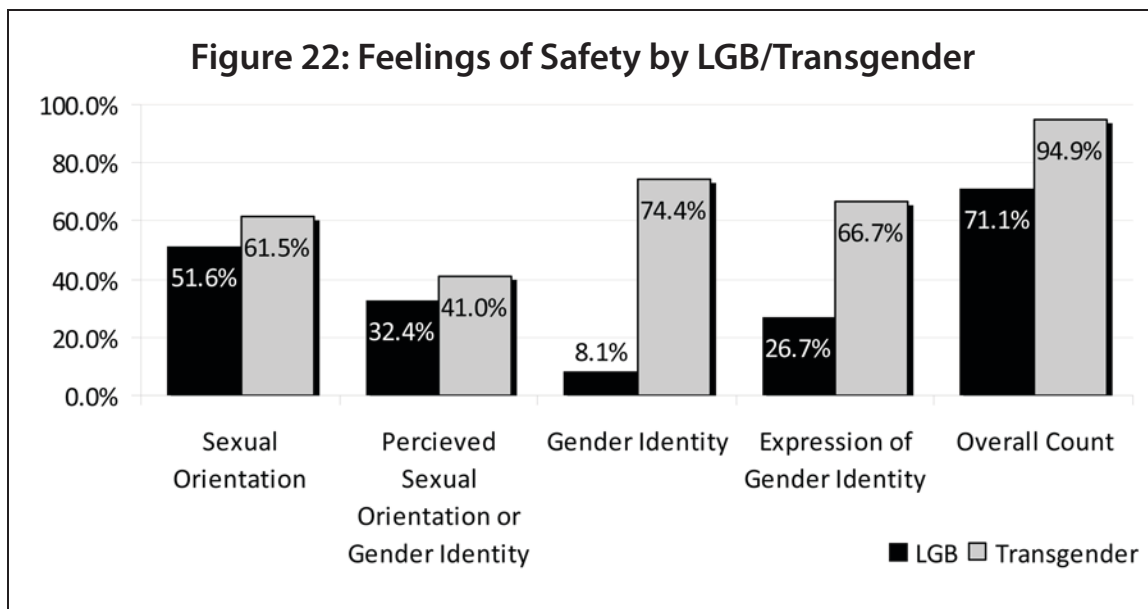
Finally, current and past students were compared to determine if there were any significant differences in their feelings of safety at school. As shown in Figure 23, one half (49.1%) of past students reported feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, compared to a third (33.3%) of current students. In addition, 65.3% of past students were more likely to indicate feeling unsafe on a count of all items, compared to 55.5% of current students.[45] The numbers of students currently feeling unsafe is very high, but it does seem at least to be moving in the right direction.

45   Because of sexual orientation (χ^2=15.8; p=.000); in some manner (χ^2=6; p=.014).

Student Experiences

Skipping School

Two questions asked participants whether or not they ever skipped school because they felt unsafe either at school or on their way to school. Results show that 28.5% of LGBTQ students, compared to 8.4% of non-LGBTQ, reported skipping because they felt unsafe at school. A similar significant relationship was found between LGBTQ status and missing school because they felt unsafe on the way to school (see Figure 24).[46] Transgender students were even more likely to skip school because they felt unsafe (45.9%, compared to 27.1% for LGB participants).[47]

Figure 24: Skipping School Due to Feeling Unsafe by LGBTQ/Non-LGBTQ
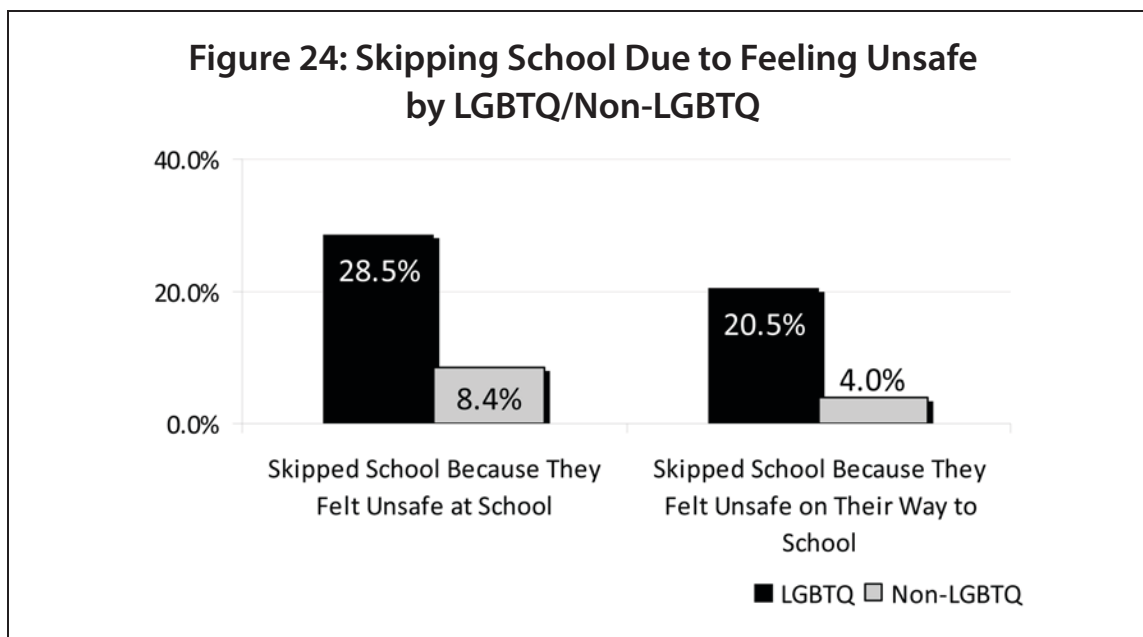
These results are, of course, important not only because of what they have to say about the degree of fear being experienced by LGBTQ youth but because of the potential impact of skipping school on academic performance. Similarly elevated levels of skipping were reported in the McCreary Centre study.[48] The latest US Climate Survey found that 31.7% of LGBT students had skipped a class because they felt unsafe, compared to 5.5% of all students, and 32.7% had skipped at least a day, compared to 4.5% of all students.[49]

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46   Unsafe at school (χ^2=29.6; p=.000); unsafe on way to school (χ^2=26.3; p=.000).
47   χ^2=36.5; p=.000.
48   Saewyc et al., 2007.
49   Koskiw et al., 2008.

Level of Comfort in Talking about LGBTQ Issues

Growing up can be a challenging and often anxiety-ridden process even when youth can turn to various people in their lives for support, guidance, and understanding, and even when their core sense of self is not the subject of widespread social prejudice. Youth who might be experiencing harassment at school based on their ethnic or religious minority status can normally turn to their parents for support; LGBTQ youth generally cannot.[50]

Participants were asked a series of questions about how comfortable they would be talking about LGBTQ issues with the following people: teachers, the principal, counsellors, school coaches, classmates, parent(s)/guardian(s), other relatives, and a close friend. As illustrated in Figure 25, two out of five (20.4%) LGBTQ students reported being very uncomfortable talking about LGBTQ issues with teachers, while another 23.5% stated being somewhat uncomfortable. This was a significant difference compared to non-LGBTQ students (12.5% were very uncomfortable talking about LGBTQ issues while another 17.6% were somewhat uncomfortable).[51]

Figure 25: Comfort Level Talking to Teachers about LGBTQ Issues by LGBTQ/Non-LGBTQ
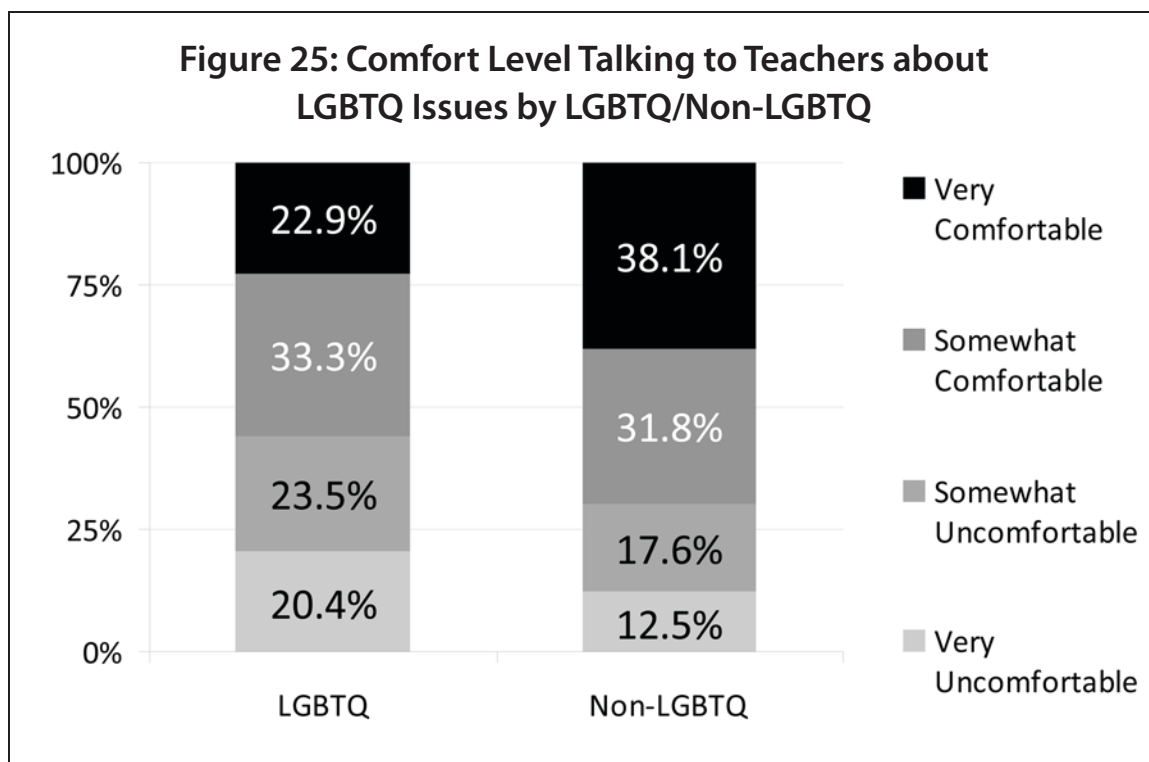
50   Harrison, 2003.
51   χ^2=17.7; p=.001.

School coaches were a group that LGBTQ students felt particularly uncomfortable speaking to (45.3% were very uncomfortable while another 26.3% were somewhat uncomfortable). The school principal was also someone who LGBTQ respondents felt either very uncomfortable (37.9%) or somewhat uncomfortable (23.8%) speaking to about LGBTQ issues. Conversely, LGBTQ respondents reported being the most comfortable speaking to counsellors (33.1% very comfortable and 29% somewhat comfortable), followed by classmates (22.4% very comfortable and 32.8% somewhat comfortable).

Even more transgender students reported feeling very uncomfortable speaking to school coaches, compared to LGB participants (64.1% versus 43.6%, respectively). Notably higher levels of discomfort were recorded among transgender students for talking to teachers (25.6% versus 20% for LGB individuals) as well as with classmates (25.6% versus 18.1% for LGB respondents) (see Figure 26).

Figure 26: Comfort Level Talking to School Coaches, Teachers, and Classmates about LGBTQ Issues by LGB/Transgender
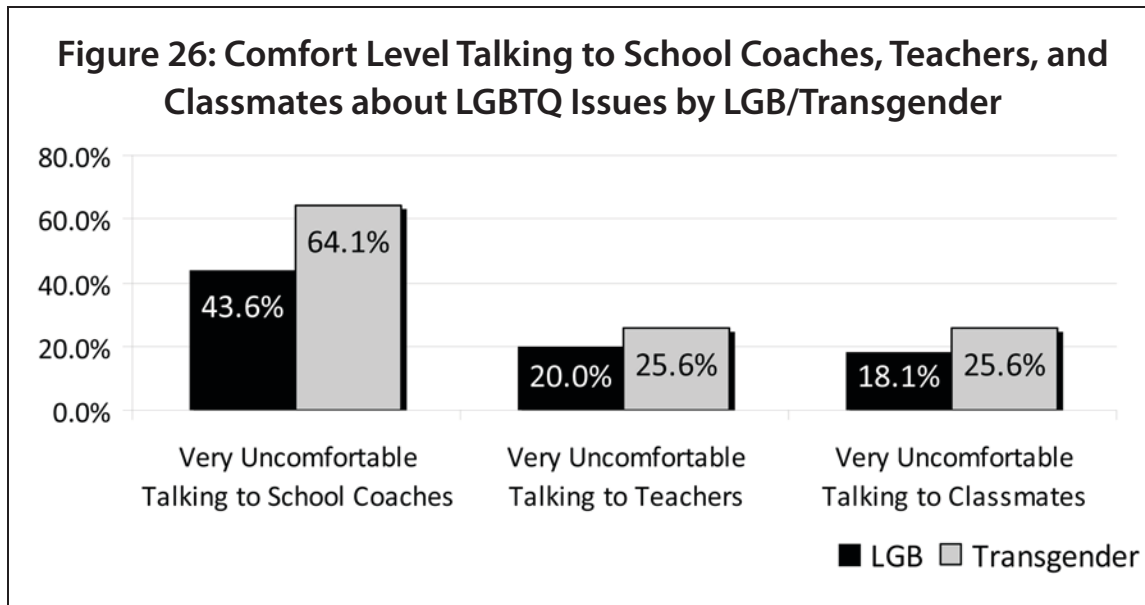
We asked how comfortably participants could talk to their parents in order to get a sense of whether they might be able to get help at home in coping with negative experiences at school. Unfortunately, only one in five (20.5%) of LGBTQ respondents reported feeling very comfortable speaking about LGBTQ issues with their parents, compared to almost half (47.7%) of non-

LGBTQ participants.[52] As shown in Figure 27, however, almost three-quarters of LGBTQ individuals (74.4%) stated feeling very comfortable speaking with their close friend, which is only slightly less than non-LGBTQ respondents (81.1%).[53]

Figure 27: Comfort Level Talking to Parents and Close Friends about LGBTQ Issues by LGBTQ/Non-LGBTQ
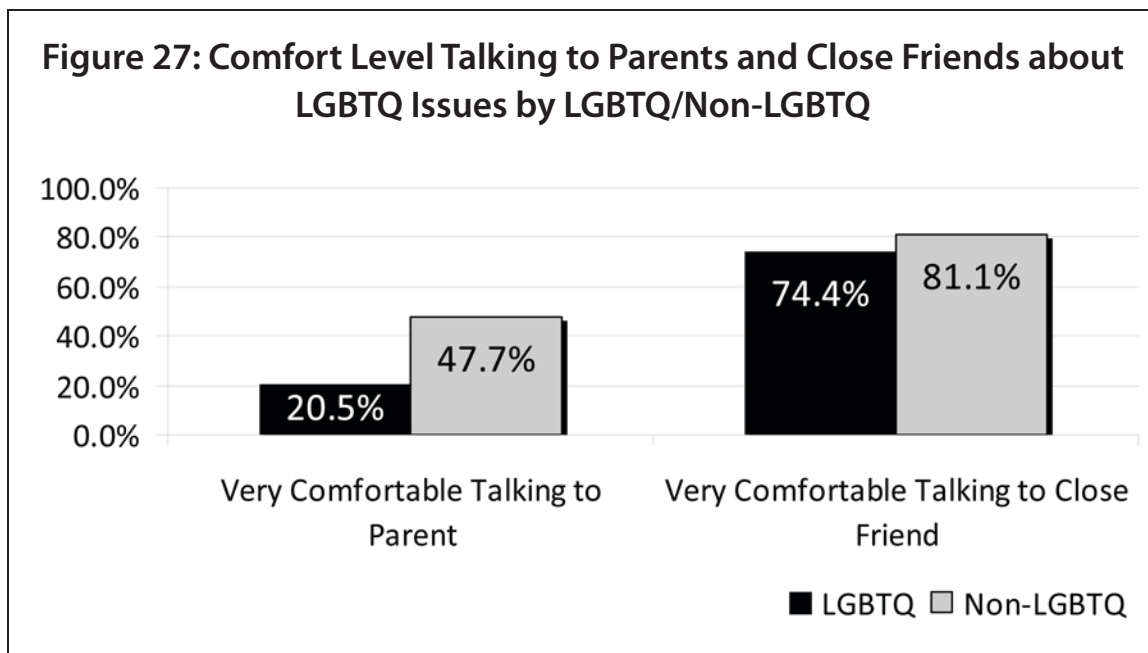
Many students in our study, however, described themselves as unable to talk to anyone about being LGBTQ because of the negative messages they have been getting:

> *Afraid, and peers are not supportive. I feel it's difficult to talk to either teachers or counselors about this matter.*

> *I am not sure how people would react. I do very well at school with marks and academics but I'm afraid my teachers may become prejudiced about me if I was out. I'm also afraid of how my parents would react as they have said several homophobic remarks in the past.*

> *I don't feel that I would be accepted by my peers, and am worried about my parents hearing about my sexual orientation. My mother has openly told me that she does not approve of homosexuality, and if she knew, she would almost certainly keep me away from my girlfriend.*

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52   χ^2=52.5; p=.000.
53   χ^2=7.8; p=.051.

Student Experiences

School Attachment

Studies have suggested that there is a link between bullying and suicide, and that there is a correspondingly high rate of "suicidality" (suicide attempts and suicidal thinking) among LGBTQ students.[54] This might be expected, given the amount of bullying and other homophobic and transphobic experiences they typically face. However, there is some suggestion that school attachment – the feeling that one belongs in the school community – is a crucial issue in this regard because of its connection to lower suicidality rates in the general school population and among LGBTQ students.[55] School attachment has also been linked to academic performance for LGBTQ students, especially for boys.[56]

We did not ask directly about suicidal thinking in our survey but we did ask a series of questions gauging school attachment. In order to measure the level of attachment participants felt to their school, participants were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with a list of statements, some of them positive, such as "I feel like a real part of my school," and some of them negative, such as "It is hard for me to feel accepted at my school."[57] Figures 28 and 29 are organized to reflect these distinctions.

LGBTQ students were far more likely than non-LGBTQ to either strongly or somewhat agree with the negative statements. For instance, half of LGBTQ participants strongly agreed (16.5%) or somewhat agreed (another 34.1%) that "It is hard for me to feel accepted at my school," compared to one in five non-LGBTQ students (3.4% strongly and 15.9% somewhat).[58]

Similar significant differences were found with the positive based statements. For example, 16.7% of LGBTQ participants, compared to only 5.6% of non-LGBTQ, strongly disagreed that "I can be myself at school", while another 32% of LGBTQ participants and 16.3% of non-LGBTQ disagreed somewhat. Only 16.4% of LGBTQ participants strongly agreed that "I am treated

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54 O'Donnell, O'Donnell, Wardlaw, & Stueve, 2004; Remafedi, French, Story, Resnick, & Blum, 1998; Robin et al., 2002; Russell, 2003; Russell & Joyner, 2001; Udry & Chantala, 2002; Wichstrom & Hegna, 2003.

55 O'Donnell et al., 2004.

56 Pearson, Muller, & Wilkinson, 2007.

57 Questions were loaded into the two groups via a factor analysis statistical procedure.

58 $\chi^2 = 68.5$; p=.000.

with as much respect as other students," compared to 27.1% of non-LGBTQ.[59]

Figure 28: School Attachment by LGBTQ/Non-LGBTQ

Figure 29: School Attachment by LGBTQ/Non-LGBTQ

59   Be myself (χ^2=45; p=.000); treated with respect (χ^2=19.1; p=.000).
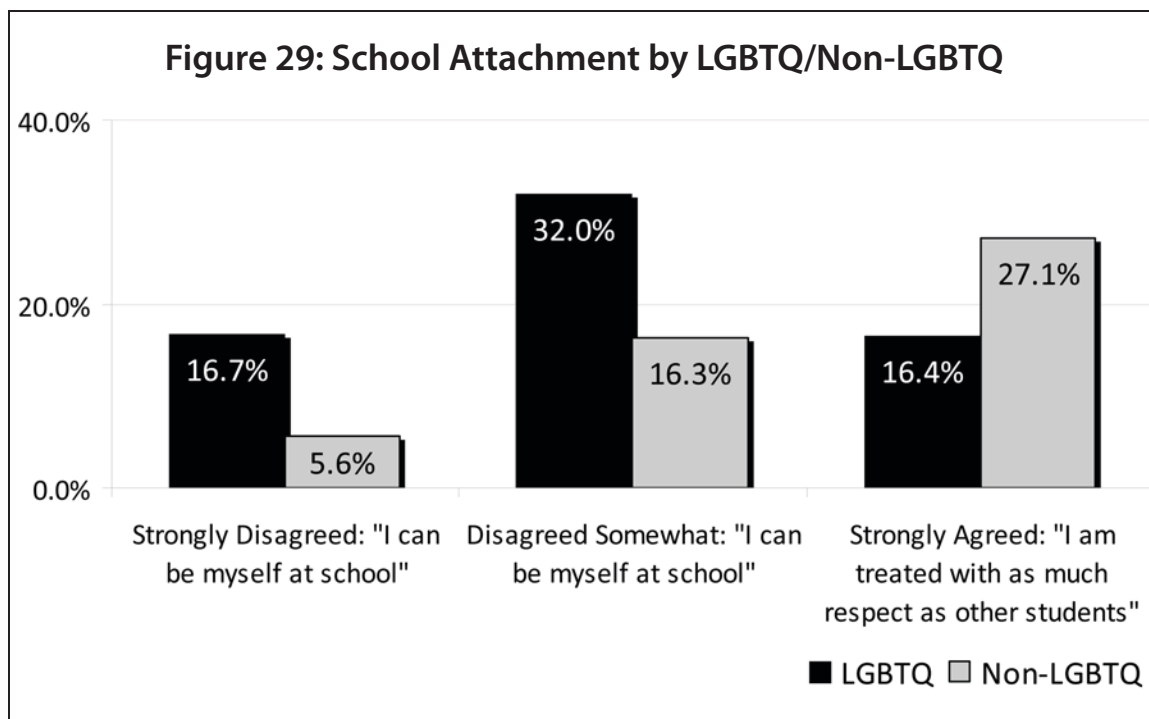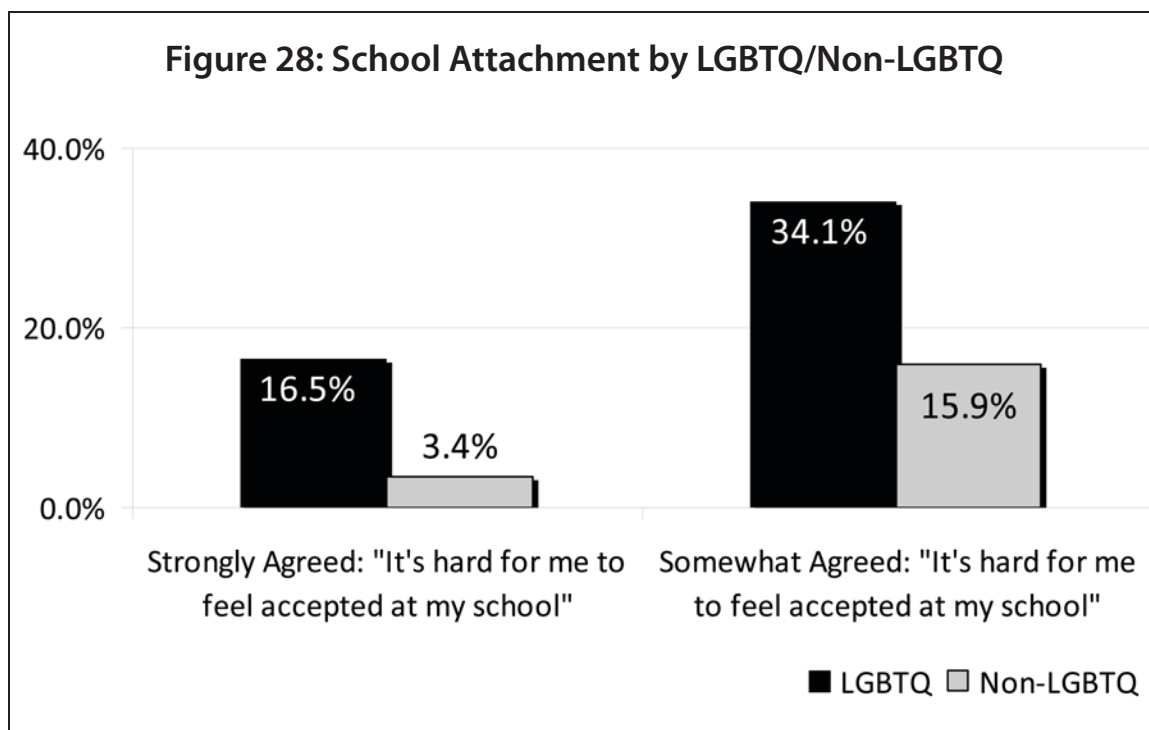
As illustrated in Figure 30, transgender students reported even lower levels of school attachment. Of particular concern is that 42.1% strongly agreed that they sometimes felt "very depressed" about their school, compared to 21.7% of LGB participants and 10.1% of non-LGBTQ students. Similarly, 35.9% of transgender respondents strongly agreed with the statement, "sometimes I don't feel like I belong in my school", compared to 19.7% of LGB students and 11.8% of non-LGBTQ individuals.[60]

Figure 30: School Attachment by Non-LGBTQ / LGB / Transgender
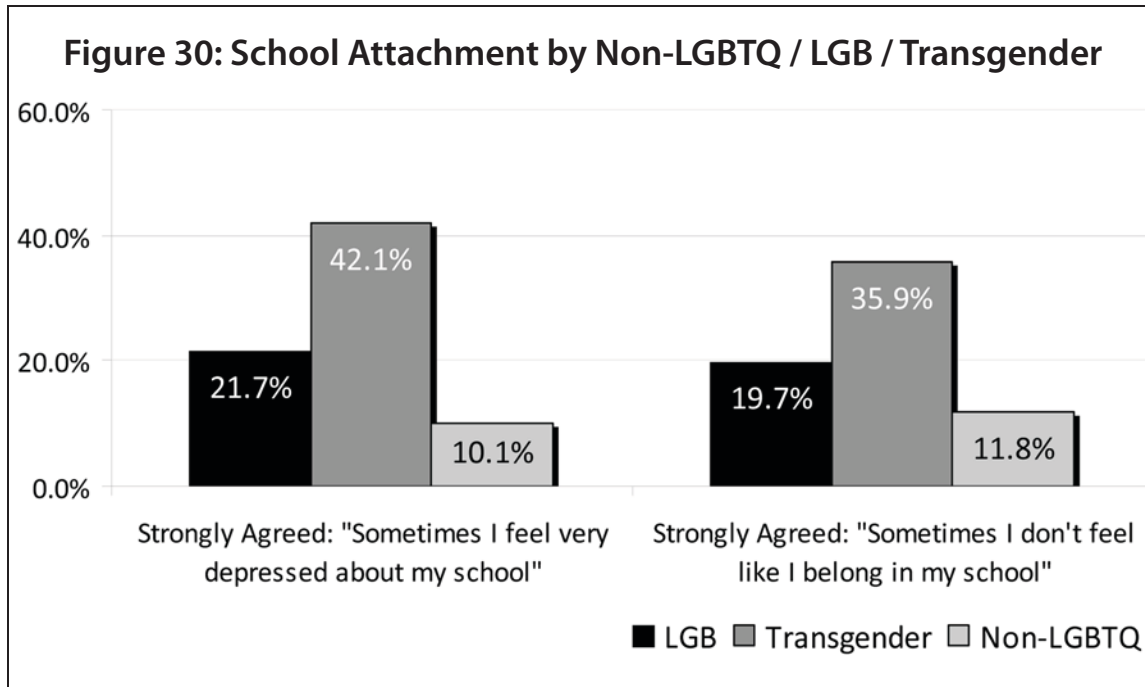
Transgender students were also more likely to disagree with positive comments assessing school attachment (see Figure 31). For example, over two-thirds (69.2%) of transgender participants[61] either strongly disagreed or somewhat disagreed with the statement, "I feel like a real part of my school", compared to fewer than half (44.6%) of LGB[62] and only a quarter (24.6%) of non-LGBTQ.[63,64] Moreover, when asked if students felt proud of belonging to their school, two-thirds (65.8%) of transgender participants[65] either strongly disagreed or somewhat disagreed with the statement. Just under

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60   Very depressed (χ^2=59.6; p=.000); don't belong (χ^2=31.4; p=.000).
61   Strongly disagreed, 25.6%; somewhat disagreed, 43.6%.
62   Strongly disagreed, 14.2%; somewhat disagreed, 30.4%.
63   Strongly disagreed, 9.5%; somewhat disagreed, 15.1%.
64   χ^2=36.8; p=.000.
65   Strongly disagreed, 26.3%; somewhat disagreed, 39.5%.

a half of LGB students felt this way (45.3%),[66] and under a third of non-LGBTQ (31.1%).[67,68]

Figure 31: School Attachment by Non-LGBTQ / LGB / Transgender

Strongly Disagreed or Disagreed: "I feel like a real part of my school"
- LGB: 44.6%
- Transgender: 69.2%
- Non-LGBTQ: 24.6%

Strongly Disagreed or Disagreed: "I feel proud of belonging to my school"
- LGB: 45.3%
- Transgender: 65.8%
- Non-LGBTQ: 31.1%

■ LGB ▨ Transgender ▢ Non-LGBTQ

Student Experiences

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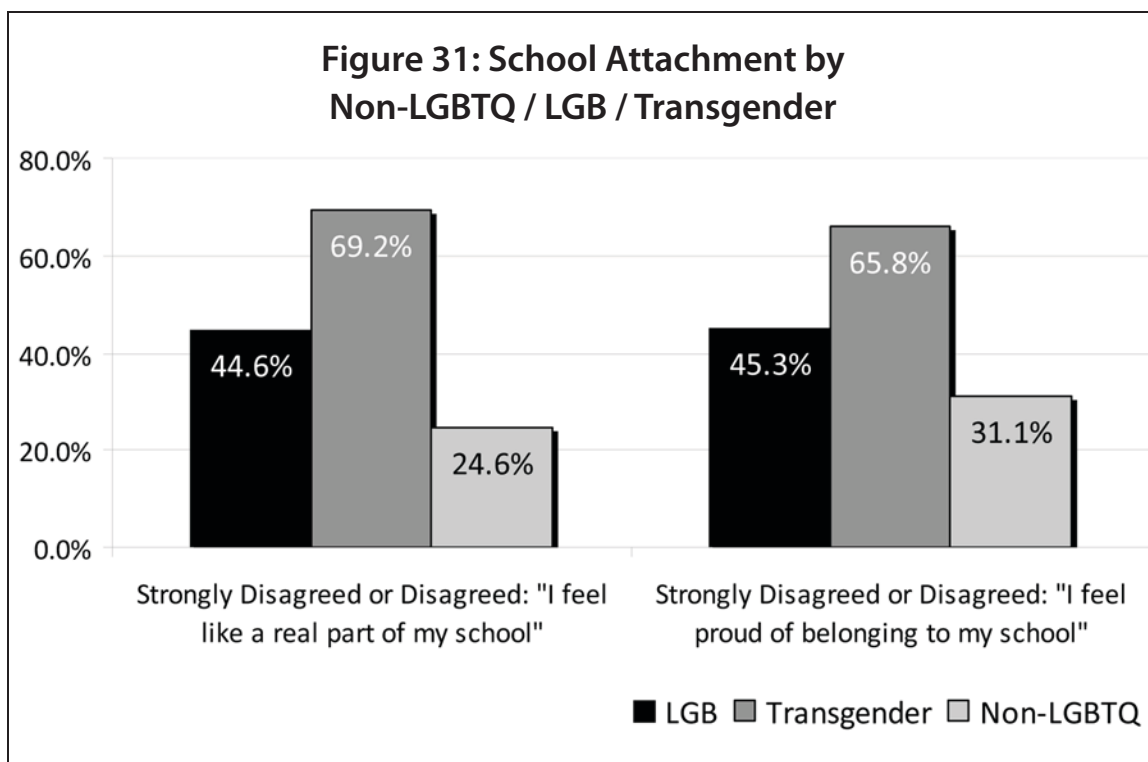
66   Strongly disagreed, 18.2%; somewhat disagreed, 27.1%.
67   Strongly disagreed, 9.6%; somewhat disagreed, 21.5%%.
68   χ^2=21.7; p=.000.

Institutional Responses

KEY FINDINGS

- Fewer than half of participants knew whether their school had a policy for reporting homophobic incidents.

- Of those, only one-third believed there was such a policy.

LGBTQ students who believe their schools have anti-homophobia policies were much more likely than other LGBTQ students . . .

- to feel their school community was supportive (one half compared to fewer than one-fifth),

Institutional Responses

KEY FINDINGS (CONTINUED)

- to feel comfortable talking to a (one half compared to fewer than one-third), and to feel comfortable talking to classmates (over a third compared to one-fifth),

- to believe their school was becoming less homophobic (85% compared to 59%),

- to hear fewer homophobic comments and to say staff intervene more often,

- to report homophobic incidents to staff and their parents,

- to feel attached to their school.

LGBTQ students who believe their schools have anti-homophobia policies were much less likely than other LGBTQ students . . .

- to have had lies and rumours spread about them at school or on the Internet,

- to have had property stolen or damaged,

- to feel unsafe at school, to have been verbally or physically harassed.

The results were similar for students who believed their school districts had such policies.

- Of Catholic-school students who said they knew whether their school or district had an anti-homophobia policy, only one in ten believed there was such a policy.

- Students from Catholic schools were much more likely than students from non-Catholic schools to feel their school was unsupportive of LGBTQ people (72% versus 46%), that teachers were ineffective in addressing homophobic harassment (87% versus 64%), and that they could talk to at least one adult in their school (43% versus 25%).

SCHOOL-LEVEL SAFE SCHOOL POLICIES

One of the main findings of the 2007 U.S. Climate Survey[1] was that LGBTQ students in schools with comprehensive safe school policies that explicitly address homophobia report lower levels of harassment, fewer homophobic comments, more staff intervention when such comments are made, and more willingness to report harassment and assault to school staff. They also found that generic safe school policies that do not include specific measures on homophobia are ineffective in improving the school climate for LGBTQ students. Students from schools with a generic policy reported experiencing levels of homophobic harassment similar to those reported by students from schools with no policies at all. We therefore asked students in the Canadian Climate Survey whether their schools had anti-homophobia policies or procedures and analyzed their responses in the context of what those students were reporting about their lives at school.

Asking students about policy, of course, does not tell us whether schools actually have policies, only whether students *think* they do. It is quite likely that some students were wrong about their schools or school divisions having no policies. It is also possible that students in relatively supportive schools assume that there are such policies, when there are not.

However, if students are reporting that no anti-homophobia policy exists when in fact it does, or that they do not know whether it exists, that suggests that schools need to make further efforts to publicize the policy among their students: an anti-homophobia policy that even LGBTQ students suffering harassment do not know about has not been successfully implemented. (Participating boards will be able to use the private reports of their results to see whether their students are aware of their own anti-homophobia policies and procedures.)

Overall, only 45.1% of all respondents reported that they knew whether or not their school had a policy or procedure for reporting incidents of homophobia. A third (33.6%) of participants who knew about such an anti-homophobia procedures reported "yes," while two-thirds (66.4%) said that their school did not have a policy.

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1   Koskiw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008.

Not surprisingly, more LGBTQ respondents knew whether or not their school had a policy or procedure for reporting incidents of homophobia (47.8%, compared to 37% for non-LGBTQ individuals). Of the LGBTQ students who said they knew, only a third (33.1%) reported that their school did have such a policy or procedure (see Figure 32).

Figure 32: Awareness of School-Based Policy or Procedure for Reporting Incidents of Homophobia by LGBTQ/Non-LGBTQ
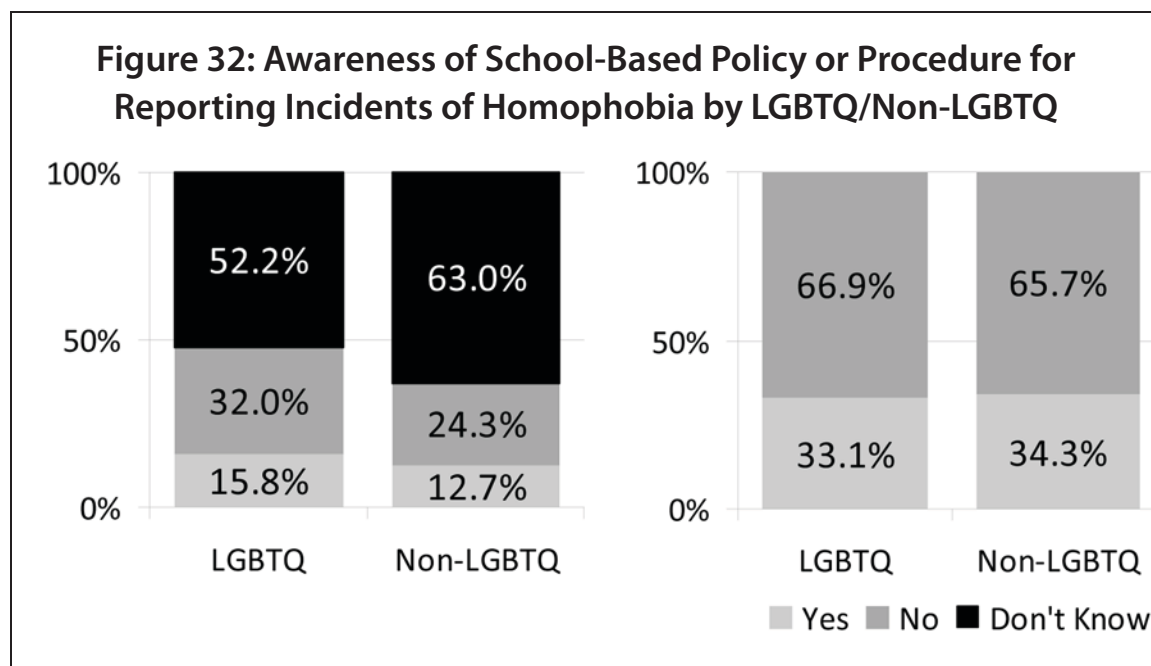
Comparisons were also made between Catholic and non-Catholic schools. Results show that, of those respondents who were aware of whether or not their school had an anti-homophobia policy, only 9.5% of participants from Catholic schools reported "yes," compared to 37.4% of non-Catholic school students.[2]

Overall, we found that in schools where LGBTQ students believe they are included in safe school policies, the students are much more likely to feel a respected part of the school community, and to feel they could talk to teachers, principals, counsellors, coaches, and classmates. They are exposed to fewer homophobic comments and their teachers are more likely to intervene. They are targeted less often by verbal and physical attacks, they are more likely to report when they are targeted, and they find their teachers more effective in addressing the incident. They find fewer parts of

Institutional Responses

2   χ^2=28.2; p=.000.

their school unsafe. We go through all of these topics below before moving on to district-level policies.

Supportive School Communities

Respondents were asked how supportive they thought their school community was of LGBTQ people. Half (50.5%) of the students who believed their school had anti-homophobia policies found their school community was supportive of LGBTQ people, compared to less than a fifth (18.1%) of students who believed their school did not have such a policy (see Figure 33). In addition, students from schools with anti-homophobia policies were more likely to report knowing at least one LGBTQ student who was publicly open at school (92.9%, compared to 78.8% of students from schools with no anti-homophobia procedures[3]).

Figure 33: School Community Support for LGBTQ People by Schools with Anti-Homophobia Policies/Schools without Anti-Homophobia Policies
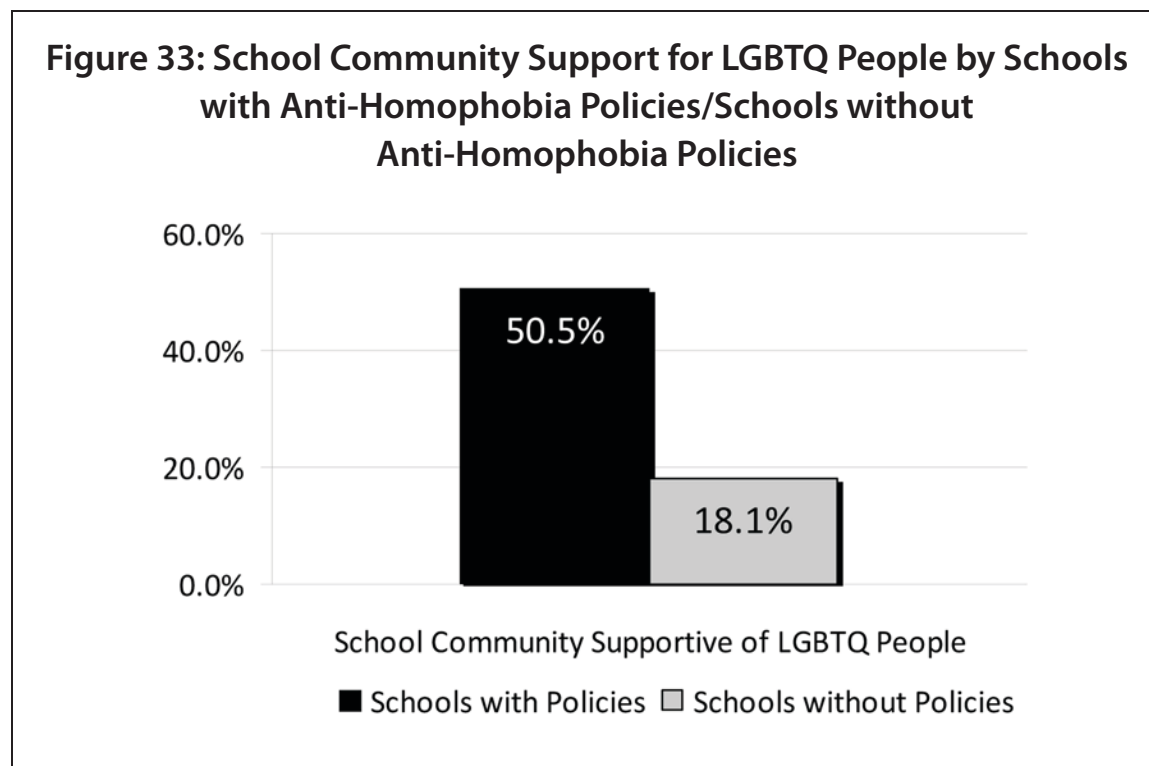
Similarly, as illustrated in Figure 34, many more students from schools who believed their schools had anti-homophobia policies than from schools without such policies reported feeling "very comfortable" talking to teach-

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3   School community supportive (χ^2=55.1; p=.000); know at least one LGBTQ (χ^2=9.3; p=.009).

ers (43.1% versus 20.3%[4]), the principal (30% versus 19%[5]), counsellors (48.5% versus 31%[6]), school coaches (26.8% versus 13.6%[7]), and classmates (38% versus 21%[8]) about LGBTQ issues.

Figure 34: Comfort Level Talking about LGBTQ Issues by Schools with Anti-Homophobia Policies/Schools without Anti-Homophobia Policies
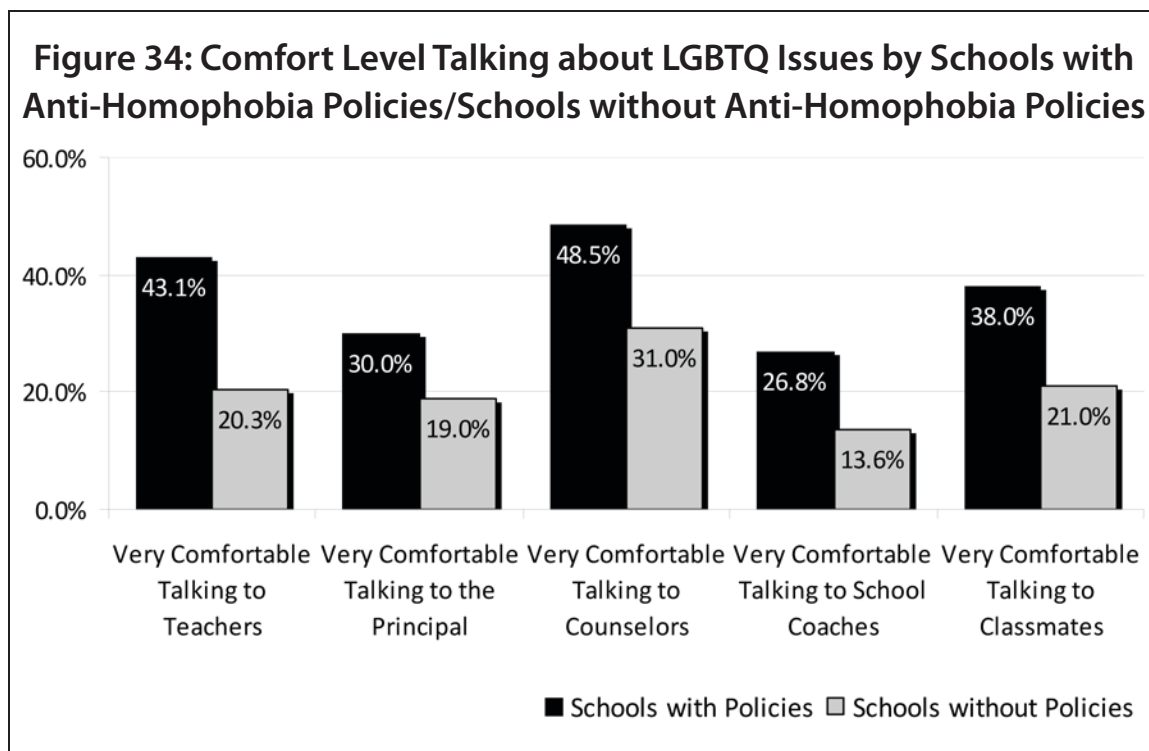
Finally, respondents were asked if, in their opinion, their school climate was less or more homophobic this year, than in previous years. Students in schools with policies to deal with incidents of homophobia were significantly more likely to feel that their school was less homophobic, compared to participants who went to schools without such procedures (85.1% versus 59.4%[9]).

Students in less supportive schools expressed frustration at their teachers' silence about LGBTQ issues (sometimes enforced by school policy on inappropriate topics in the classroom):

No one wants to talk about gay relationships, they all just avoid it.

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4   χ^2=23.9; p=.001.
5   χ^2=14.3; p=.026.
6   χ^2=16.4; p=.012.
7   χ^2=25.4; p=.000.
8   χ^2=16.2; p=.013.
9   χ^2=21.6; p=.000.

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Teachers/principles/other adults, all avoid any talk about gay relationships … which makes it seem okay for students to bother the gay community.

My school doesn't have a lot of physical harm/bullying towards LGBTQ but offensive slang and put-downs can sometimes occur. For the most part, I just wish teachers and staff could more openly talk about it. We have "Positive Space" signs around the school but yet our health teachers aren't allowed to talk about gay relationships. Seems odd to me, you know?

Homophobic Language

Students who believed their schools had anti-homophobia policies or procedures reported hearing expressions like "that's so gay" less often than participants from schools without such policies (74% versus 86.3% reported hearing such comments frequently/daily[10]). As shown in Figure 35, the same relationship holds for homophobic comments such as "faggot," "queer," "lezbo," or "dyke" (46.1% compared to 64%[11]). They also report that when homophobic comments are made, staff members are more likely to intervene on some level (81.6% versus 58.9%[12]).

Of particular interest is the fact that there is no significant difference between schools with or without anti-homophobia policies and gender-related comments that are derogatory in nature. More specifically, a quarter (25.2%) of students from schools with such policies reported frequently (i.e. daily) comments about boys not acting "masculine" enough or girls not acting "feminine" enough every day, compared to 27% of respondents from schools without anti-homophobia procedures.[13] This may be because insufficient attention has been paid to the damaging effects of such comments on students, especially transgender students, who are targeted by them (and points to the need for policy development that specifically addresses transphobia).

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10   χ^2=31.7; p=.000.
11   χ^2=33.9; p=.000.
12   χ^2=26.9; p=.000.
13   χ^2=9.1; p=.166.

Figure 35: Homophobic Remarks by Schools with Anti-Homophobia Policies/Schools without Anti-Homophobia Policies

Figure 36: Homophobic Incidents by Schools with Anti-Homophobia Policies/Schools without Anti-Homophobia Policies

Institutional Responses
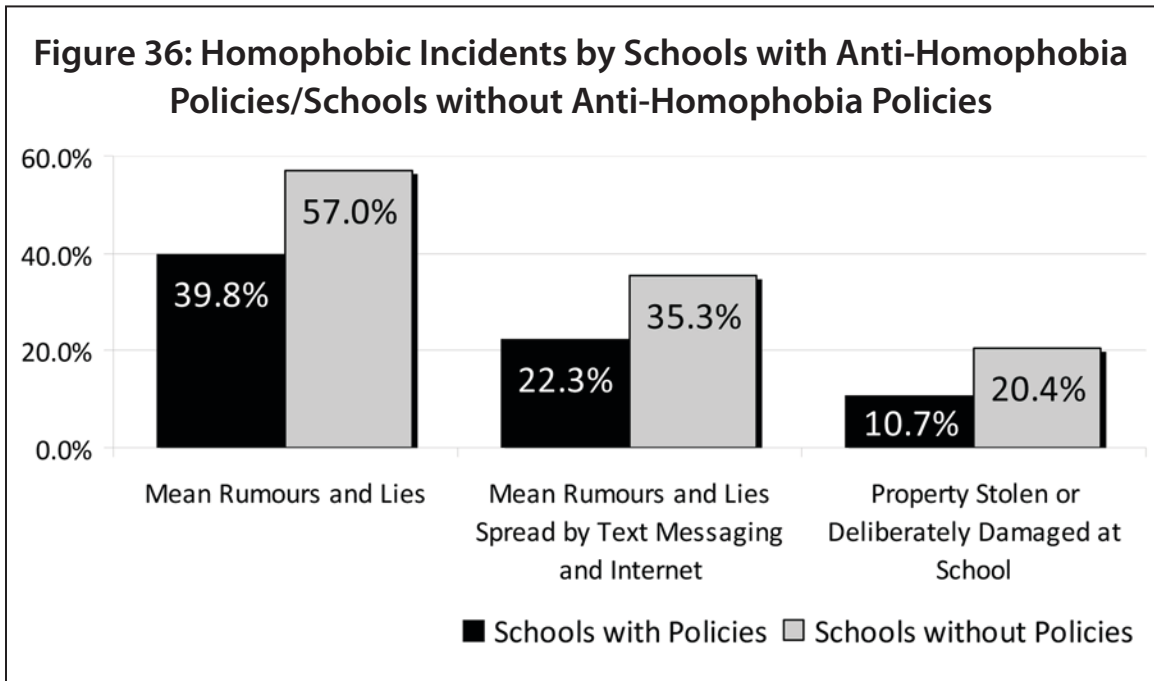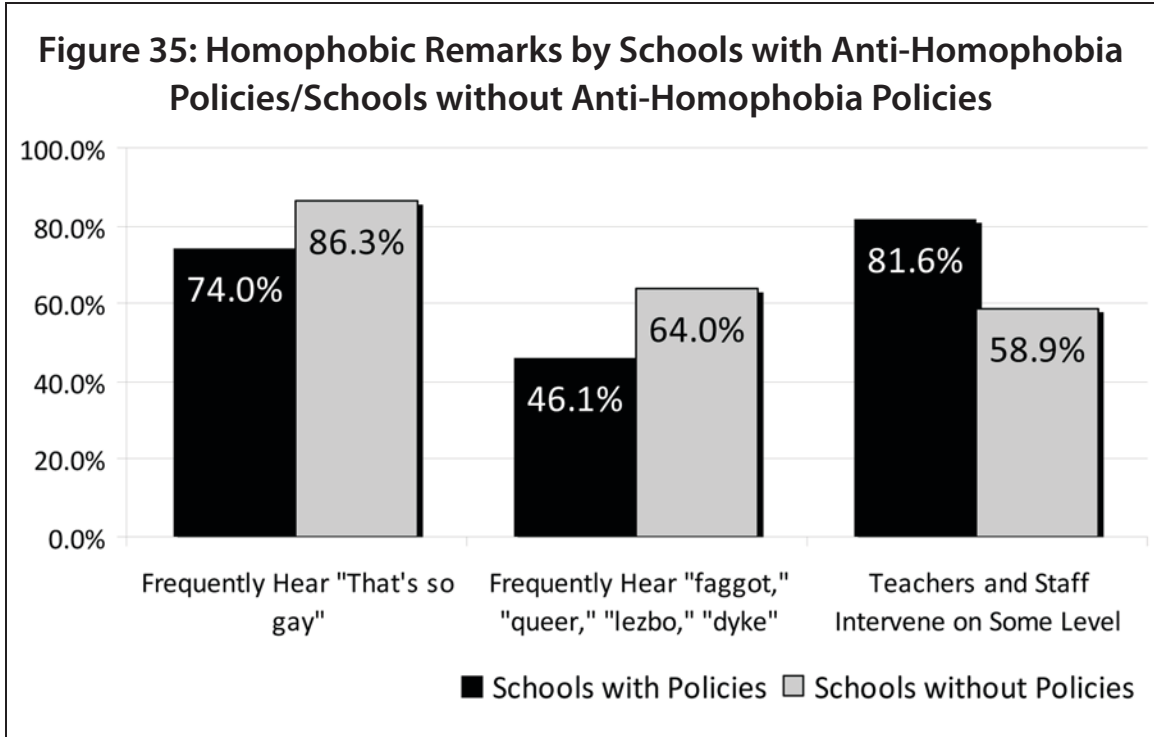
Homophobic Incidents

Participants who believed their schools had anti-homophobia policies reported that they were less likely to be targets of homophobic bullying. For instance, 39.8% of students from such schools reported having mean ru-

mours or lies spread about them at school because they were, or were perceived to be, LGBTQ, compared to 57% of respondents who believed their schools did not have anti-homophobia policies[14] (see Figure 36). They were also less likely to have "had mean rumours or lies spread about you on the Internet or text-messaging because you are or are perceived to be LGBTQ"[15] or to have "had property stolen or deliberately damaged at school because you are or are perceived to be LGBTQ."[16]

Feelings of Safety

As illustrated in Figure 37, students who believed their schools had no policies or procedures for reporting incidents of homophobia were more likely to feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation (50% versus 42.7% for schools with a policy) and their perceived sexual orientation (32.8% versus 16.5%). In addition, overall 68.1% of students from schools without such a policy, compared to 56.3% who came from institutions with anti-homophobia procedures, reported feeling unsafe in some way at school.[17]

Figure 37: Feelings of Safety by Schools with Anti-Homophobia Policies/Schools without Anti-Homophobia Policies
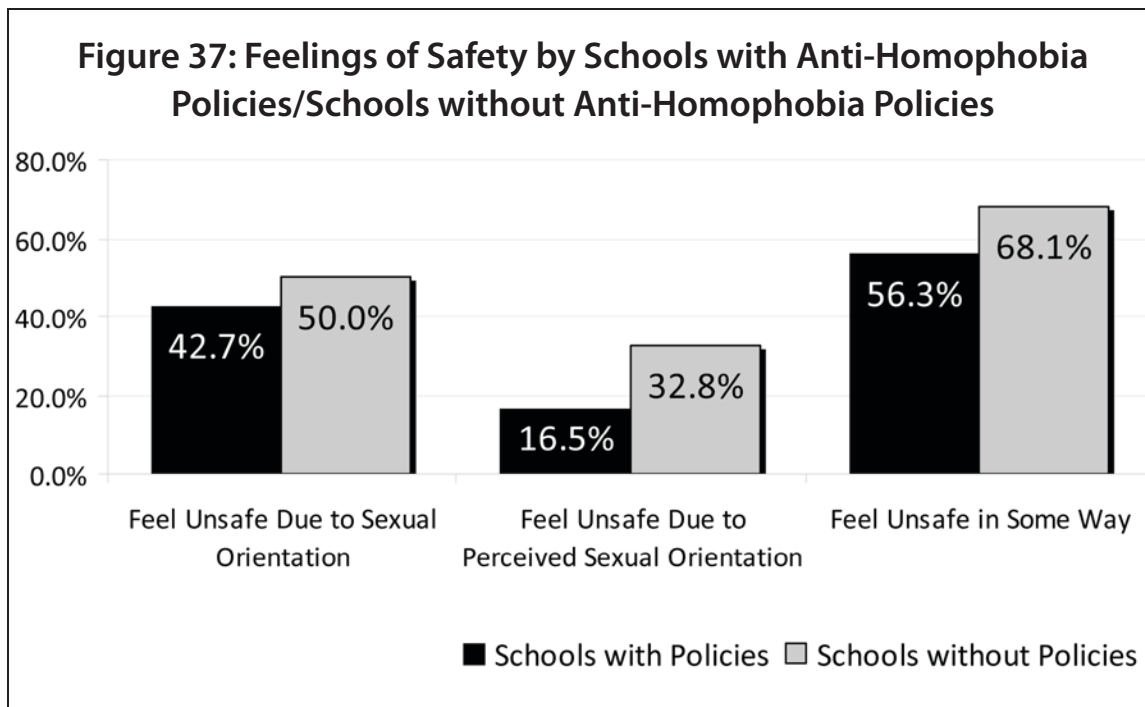
14   χ^2=26.8; p=.000.
15   χ^2=21.7; p=.001
16   χ^2=17.1; p=.009
17   χ^2=9.9; p=.007

Verbal and Physical Harassment

Similarly, students who believed their schools had anti-homophobia policies reported significantly fewer incidents of verbal harassment due to their sexual orientation (59.8% never experienced verbal harassment, compared to 46.3%[18]). As illustrated in Figure 38, the same significant relationship holds for physical harassment.[19]

Figure 38: Verbal and Physical Harassment by Schools with Anti-Homophobia Policies/Schools without Anti-Homophobia Policies
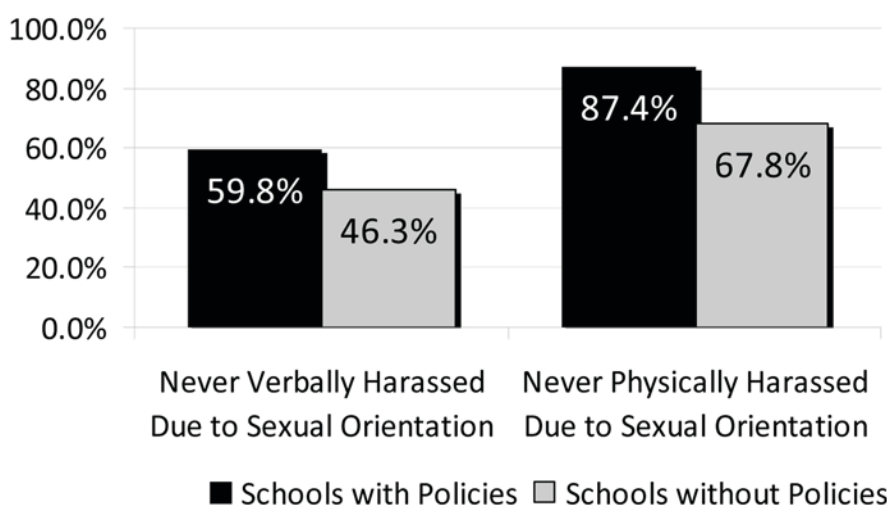
Participants were also asked whether they had reported the incident to a teacher, principal, or other staff person. Encouragingly, students from schools with anti-homophobia policies were much more likely to indicate a willingness to report the incident (i.e. 69.4%, compared to 41.7% reported incidents at least some of the time[20]). Similarly, almost half (45.9%) of these students felt that teachers or staff members were effective in addressing homophobic harassment,[21] compared to only 13.6% of students who believed their schools had no procedures for reporting homophobic behaviour.[22,23] Finally, as shown in Figure 39, students from schools with a

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18   χ^2=26.5; p=.000.
19   χ^2=27.5; p=.001.
20   χ^2=29.3; p=.000.
21   15.3% very effective, 30.6% somewhat effective.
22   1.5% very effective, 13.6% somewhat effective.
23   χ^2=79.3; p=.000.

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policy to report incidents of homophobia were significantly more likely to tell their parents if they had been bullied.[24]

Figure 39: Harassment Reporting and Intervention by Schools with Anti-Homophobia Policies/Schools without Anti-Homophobia Policies
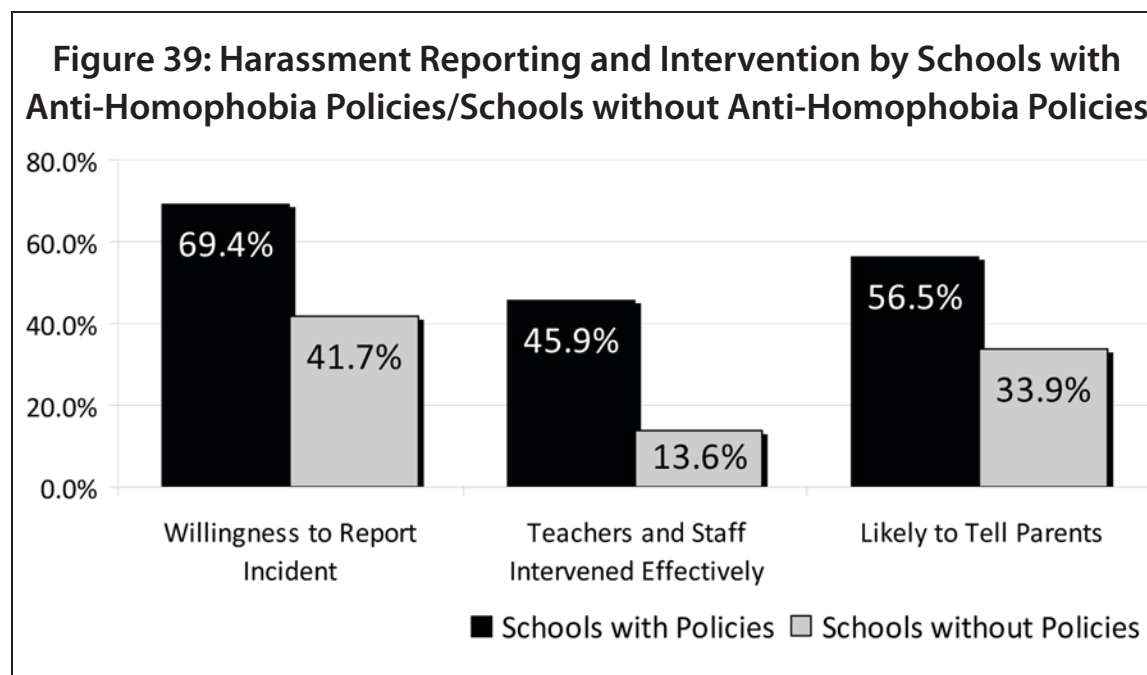
A likely explanation for the above results is that students are more likely to confide in adults about homophobic harassment if they have reason to believe their complaints will be taken seriously and acted upon. School-based policy sends that message very clearly.

Safe Spaces

Another significant finding showed that participants who believed their schools had no anti-homophobia procedures reported more areas in and around school that were considered unsafe for LGBTQ students. As illustrated in Figure 40, significantly higher percentages of all students from schools without procedures for reporting homophobic incidents identified the following spaces or areas as unsafe: the physical education change room (58.3% versus 41.7%); hallways (51.5% versus 40.8%); washrooms (49% versus 34%); the schoolyard (40.7% versus 22.3%); school buses (40.7% versus 24.3%); and the gymnasium (35.3 versus 18.4%).[25]

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24    $\chi^2=16$; p=.014.
25   Physical education change room (58.3% versus 41.%; $\chi^2=13.8$; p=.001); hallways (51.5% versus 40.8%; $\chi^2=15.1$; p=.001); washrooms (49% versus 34%; $\chi^2=8.8$;

In total, students from schools with anti-homophobia policies reported an average of 3.1 unsafe areas at school, compared to 4.6 places for participants from schools without such procedures[26] (still too high, but an improvement).

Figure 40: Unsafe Areas for LGBTQ students by Schools with Anti-Homophobia Policies/Schools without Anti-Homophobia Policies
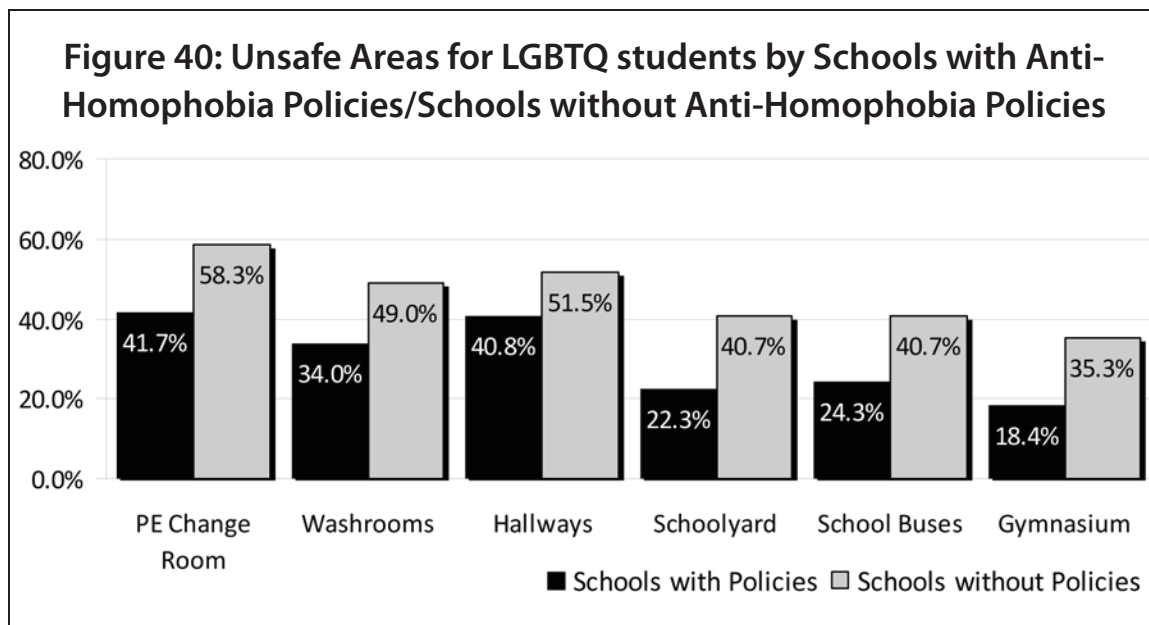
School Attachment

Students who believed their schools had anti-homophobia policies were significantly more likely to report feeling attached to their school (see Figure 41). For example, 87.2% of students from schools with policies or procedures for reporting incidents of homophobia agreed with the statement, "there is at least one adult I can talk to in my school," compared to 63.6% of participants from schools without such a policy. Similarly, three-quarters (74.7 %) of students who believed their schools had anti-homophobia policies agreed that they felt like a real part of their school, compared to half (50.3%) of students who went to schools without such policies. Students from schools with anti-homophobia policies were also more likely agree that they are treated with as much respect as other students (78%), compared to respondents attending schools without such policies (56.6%). Finally, students who attend schools with anti-homophobia procedures re-

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26   p=.012); schoolyard (40.7% versus 22.3%; χ^2=15; p=.001); school buses (40.7% versus 24.3%; χ^2=15.9; p=.000); gymnasium (35.3 versus 18.4%; χ^2=19.4; p=.000). f=11.8; p=.000.

ported feeling more positive (i.e., lower incidents of depressive feelings) about their school (52%), compared to those who did not attend schools with these policies (33.2%).[27]

Figure 41: School Attachment by Schools with Anti-Homophobia Policies/Schools without Anti-Homophobia Policies
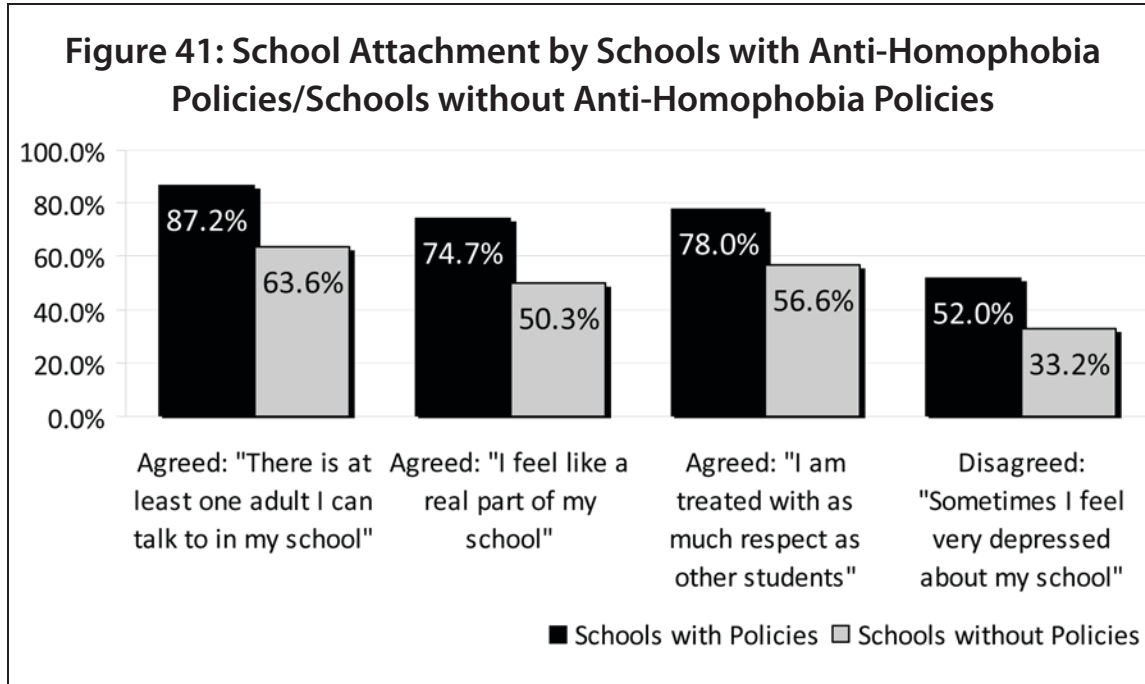
Fostering Diverse Curriculums and Environments

Because it is generally understood that students enjoy a healthier, more respectful learning environment when they are included in the curriculum, most Canadian schools have taken measures to diversify many of their courses to include the ethnic and religious diversity of the students in their classrooms. Making the curriculum reflect the existence of LGBTQ students has been a much more contentious effort, and in the absence of mandate or even permission from principals and school districts to do so, most teachers hesitate to integrate LGBTQ content into their classes. Sadly, the message to many LGBTQ students, explicit or implicit, is that other forms of diversity are respectable, but they and their issues are not fit for classroom discussion. [28]

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27   At least one adult (χ^2=27; p=.000); real part of school (χ^2=26.9; p=.000); treated with respect (χ^2=26.1; p=.000); less depressed (χ^2=25.3; p=.000).

28   Taylor, 2007.

However, students in our study from schools with an anti-homophobia policy were more likely to have had at least a little LGBTQ-related education. A series of questions asked respondents whether or not LGBTQ issues or events were taught in class or mentioned at school assemblies. As shown in Figure 42, participants from schools with anti-homophobia policies were much more likely to have been informed about LGBTQ history, LGBTQ literature, and famous LGBTQ people.[29] Students from schools with a procedure for reporting incidents of homophobia were also more likely to have learned about LGBTQ celebrations such as Pride Days and other events such as the National Day against Homophobia.[30]

Figure 42: LGBTQ Issues or Events in Classes or Assemblies by Schools with Anti-Homophobia Policies/Schools without Anti-Homophobia Policies
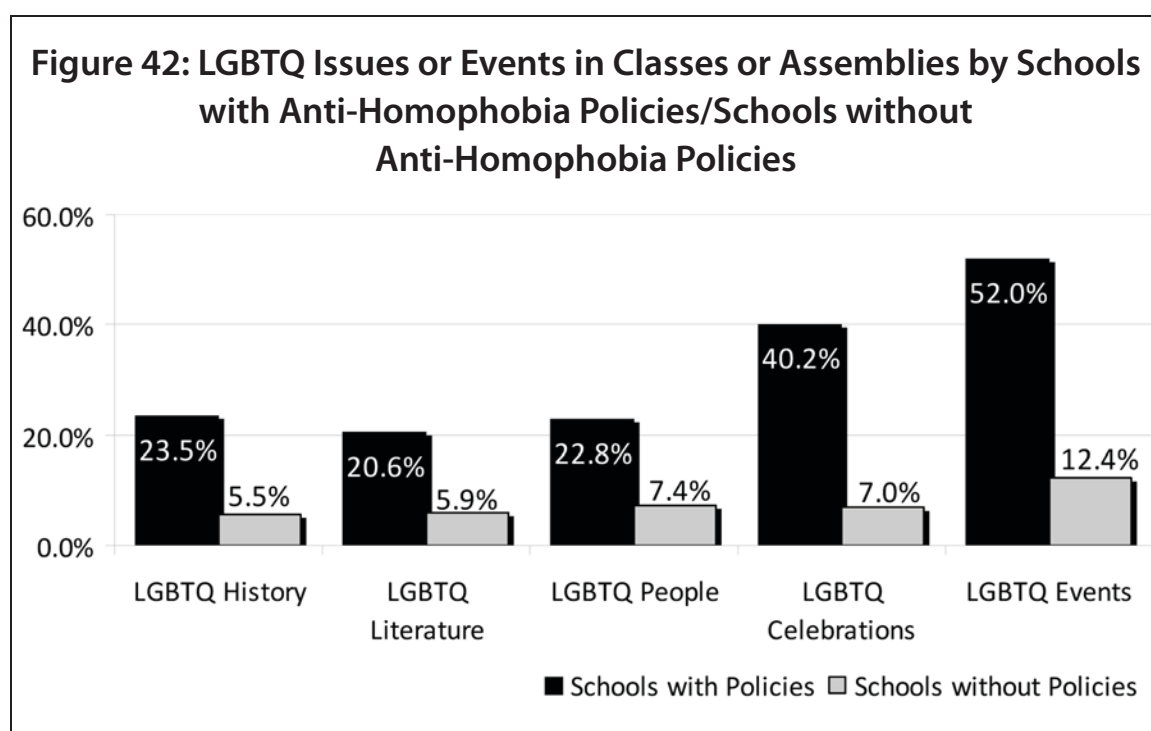
Classes where LGBTQ topics were more likely to be taught included: social studies (history/geography), planning/health education/family life, English/language arts, and current events. As shown in Figure 43, students who believed their schools had anti-homophobia policies were significantly more likely to report being taught about LGBTQ issues, compared to those

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29   LGBTQ history (23.5% versus 5.5%; χ^2=34.2; p=.000), LGBTQ literature (20.6% versus 5.9%; χ^2=25.8; p=.000), famous LGBTQ people (22.8% versus 7.4%; χ^2=27.5; p=.000).

30   Celebrations (40.2% versus 7%; χ^2=65.5; p=.000); other events (52% versus 12.4%; χ^2=71.5; p=.000).

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from schools without such policies. More specifically, students who said their schools had anti-homophobia policies reported being taught about LGBTQ issues in an average of 1.76 classes (compared to .59 classes[31]).

Figure 43: Number of Classes Including LGBTQ Issues by Schools with Anti-Homophobia Policies/Schools without Anti-Homophobia Policies
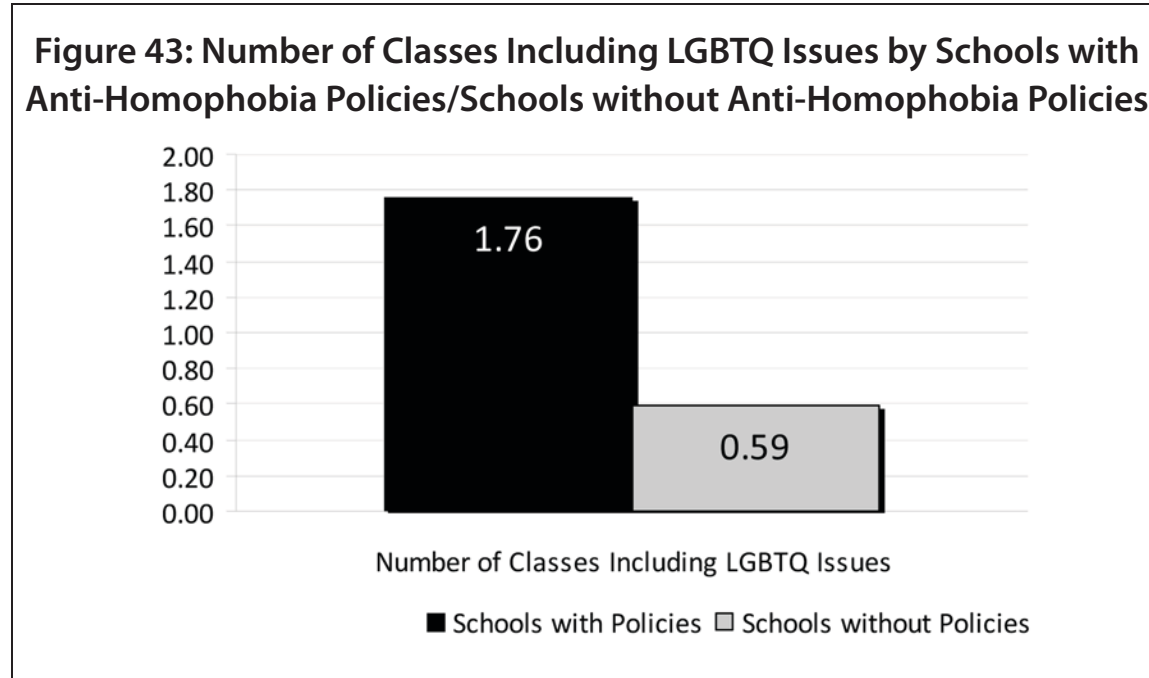
Finally, when respondents were specifically asked if, in their family life/sexual education classes, LGBTQ people's relationships were included in discussions about dating, 50.5% of students from schools with anti-homophobia procedures reported that they had been, compared to 20% of participants from schools without such policies. [32]

One student summed up the experience of going to a school that had a safe school policy but had done little to actively support LGBTQ students this way:

> *… on the surface all is well, no one suffers from extreme harassment…but beneath it all, the whispers and torn posters remind us all of the prevailing undercurrents of homophobia. LGBT students are not offered any positive models or information in curriculum, nor from staff in general. Resources are only available upon request, but then … those who need it are not likely to have the confidence to come out and request it.*

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31   f=33.7, p=.000.
32   χ^2=53.2; p=.000.

DISTRICT-LEVEL SAFE SCHOOL POLICIES

Results were similar at the school district level. Overall, only 42.8% of participants were aware whether or not their school district had a safe school policy that protects against homophobia. Of these respondents, 55% reported "yes." More specifically, 63.9% of non-LGBTQ participants, compared to 55% of LGBTQ respondents, did not know if there was an anti-homophobia policy (see Figure 44).

Figure 44: Awareness of District-Based Anti-Homophobia Policy by LGBTQ/Non-LGBTQ
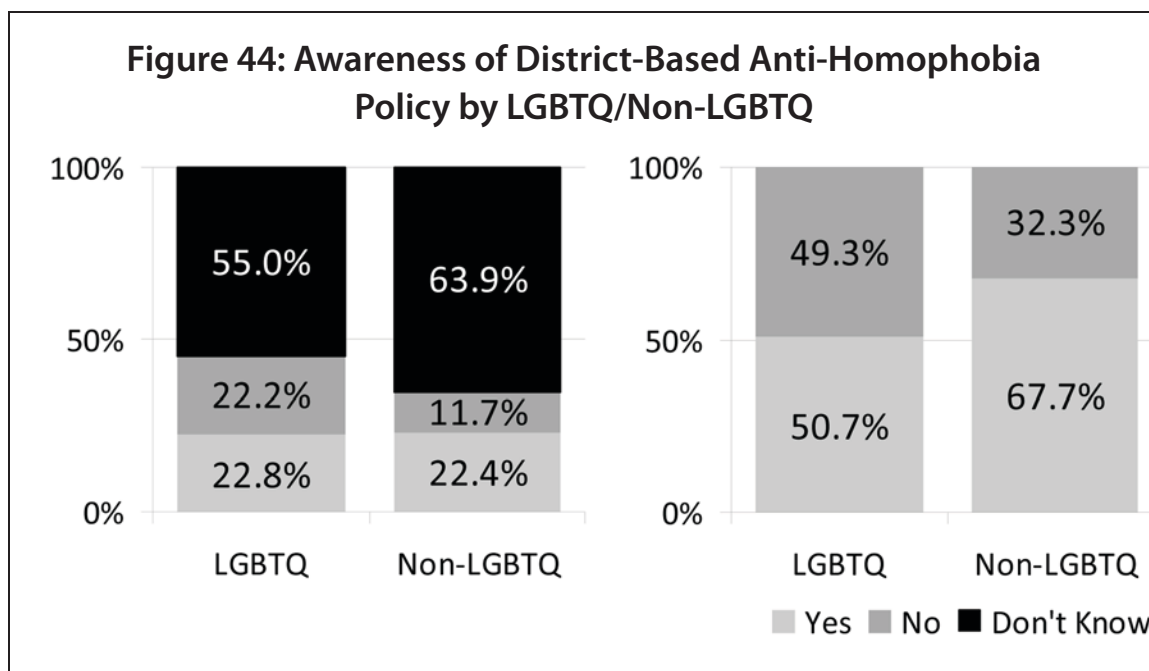
Of the non-LGBTQ students who knew whether or not such a policy existed, two-thirds (67.7%) indicated that their school district had an anti-homophobia policy. Of the LGBTQ students who knew whether or not such a policy existed, half (50.7%) stated their district had such a policy.

Comparisons were also made between Catholic and non-Catholic school districts. Results show that, of those students who were aware of whether or not their school district had a safe schools policy that protects against homophobia, only 16.7% of participants from Catholic schools reported yes, compared to 60.5% of non-Catholic school students.[33]

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33   χ^2=35.4; p=.000.

Institutional Responses

Supportive School Communities

When asked how supportive they felt their school community was of LG-BTQ people, as illustrated in Figure 45, students who said their school districts had safe school policies against homophobia reported much higher percentages of support (i.e. 47.2% felt schools were supportive versus 11.5%[34]).

Figure 45: School Community Support for LGBTQ People by Districts with Anti-Homophobia Policies / Districts without Anti-Homophobia Policies
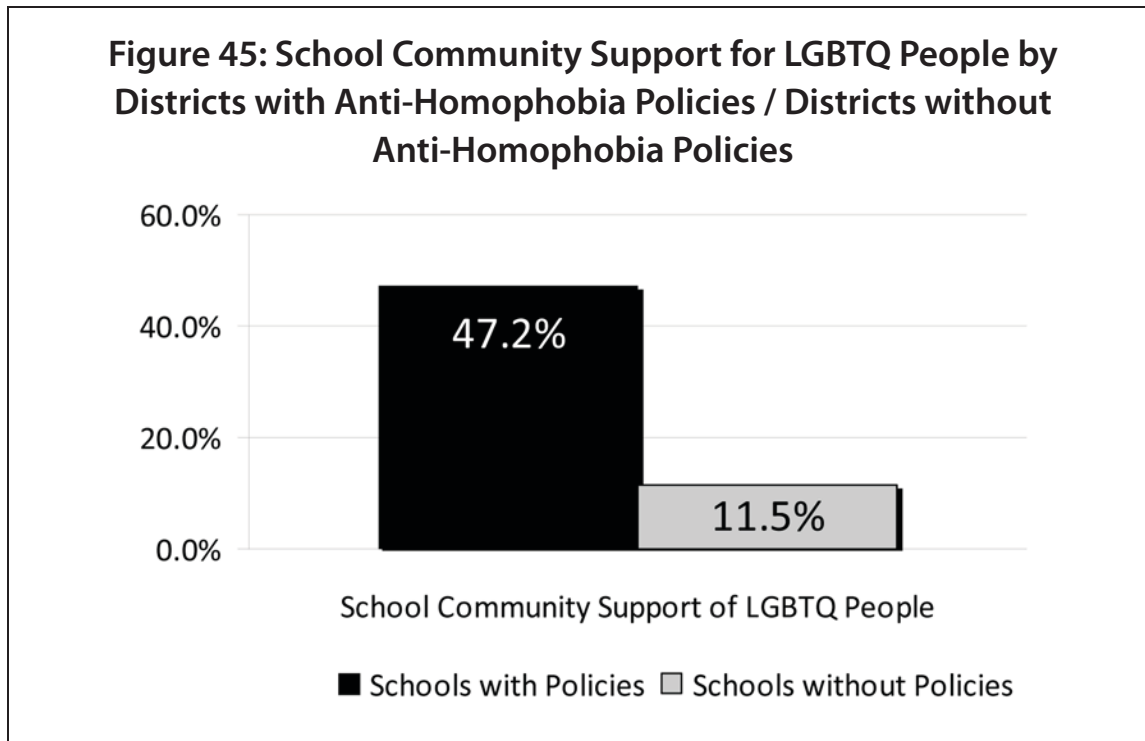
In addition, as shown in Figure 46, participants from school districts with safe school policies were much more likely to feel "very comfortable" talking to teachers (47.5% versus 16.3%[35]). Similar positive results were found with principals, counselors , school coaches, and classmates.[36]

In terms of a general assessment of school climate in relation to whether or not school districts had anti-homophobia policies, most students (81.3%) in districts with such policies felt their school was less homophobic than in

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34   χ^2=67.9; p=.000.
35   χ^2=60.6; p=.000.
36   Principals (34.4% versus 14.8%; χ^2=37.2; p=.000), counselors (53.8% versus 28.1%; χ^2=43.4; p=.000), school coaches (28.4% versus 12.7%; χ^2=39.4; p=.000), class-mates (41.7% versus 19.7%; χ^2=31.1; p=.000).

past years, in contrast to just over half (54.9%) of students who did not go to schools with anti-homophobia procedures at the district level.[37]

Figure 46: Comfort Level Talking about LGBTQ Issues by Districts with Anti-Homophobia Policies / Districts without Anti-Homophobia Policies
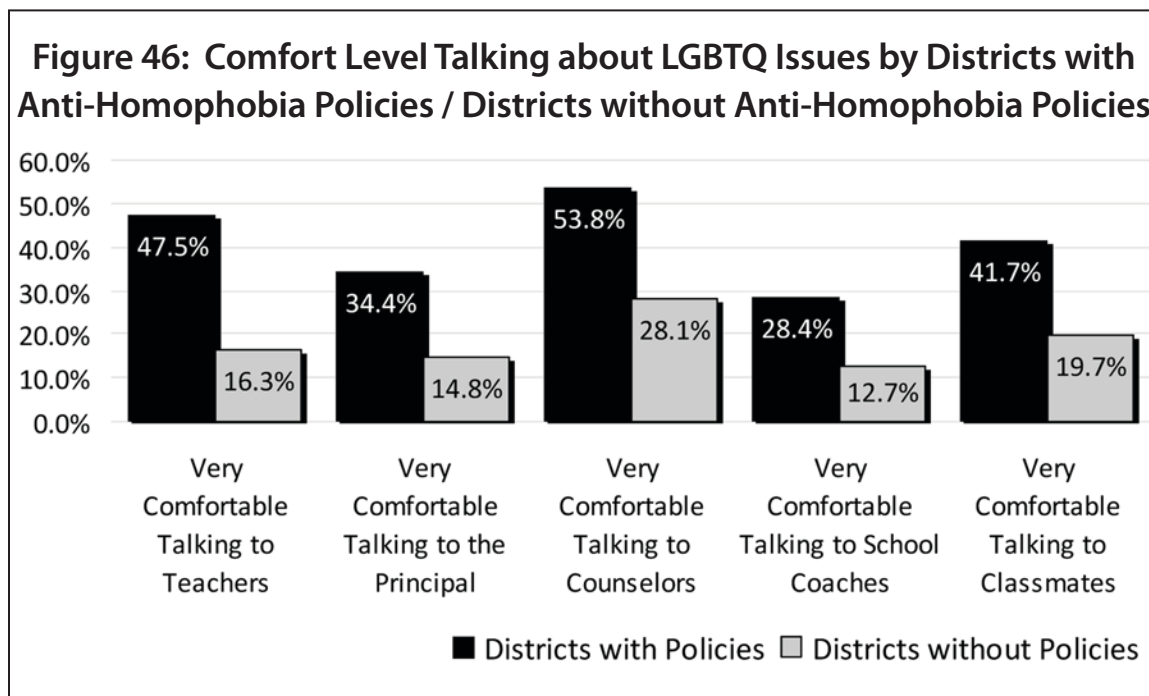
Homophobic Language

Again, similar to school-level anti-homophobia policies, participants who belong to schools with district-level policies reported hearing derogatory remarks, such as "faggot," "queer," "lezbo," or "dyke," less often. Under half (44.3%) reported hearing such comments frequently/daily versus almost three-quarters (71.3%) in schools without district-level policies.[38] Moreover, as illustrated in Figure 47, they reported that when homophobic language was used, staff members were more likely to intervene at some level (81% versus 57%).[39]

Homophobic Incidents

Homophobic bullying was also significantly less likely to occur in schools where districts had safe school policies. More specifically, 36.3% of students from schools with safe school procedures at the district level reported having mean rumours or lies spread about them because they were, or were

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37   χ^2=22.5; p=.000.
38   χ^2=41.9; p=.000.
39   χ^2=28.6; p=.000.

Institutional Responses

perceived to be, LGBTQ, compared to 61.7% of participants from districts without such policies.[40] As shown in Figure 48, similar relationships were found between safe school policies at the district level and other types of homophobic bullying.

Figure 47: Homophobic Remarks by Districts with Anti-Homophobia Policies/Districts without Anti-Homophobia Policies

Figure 48: Homophobic Incidents by Districts with Anti-Homophobia Policies/Districts without Anti-Homophobia Policies
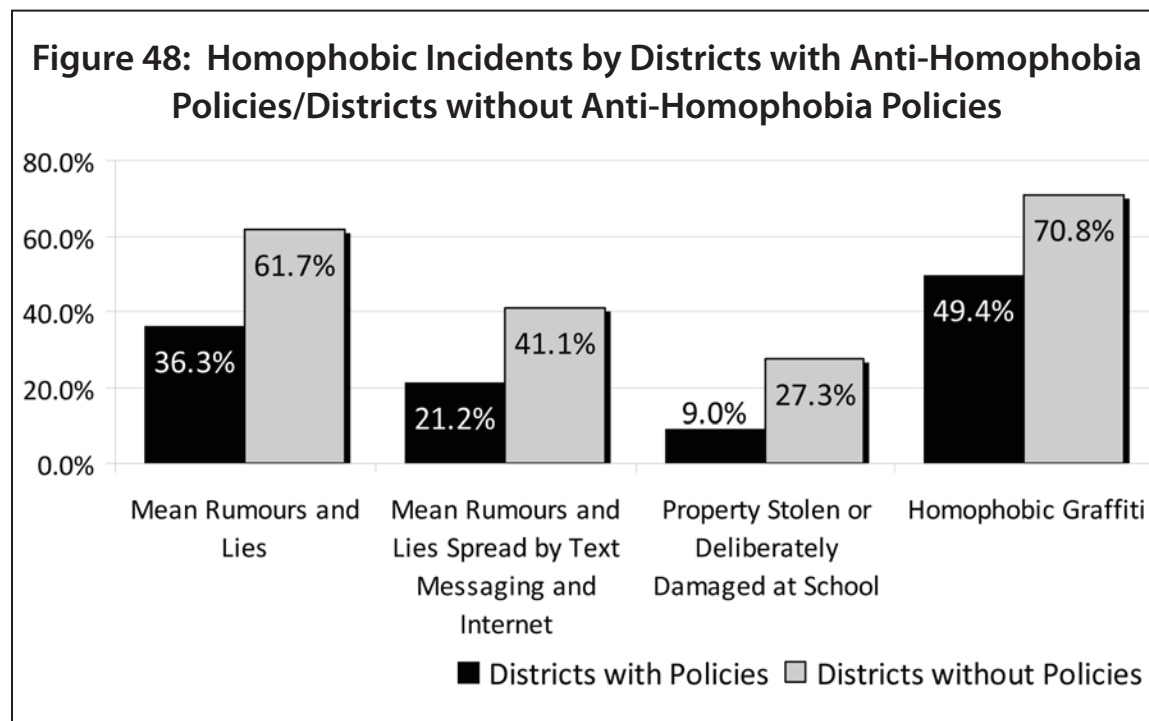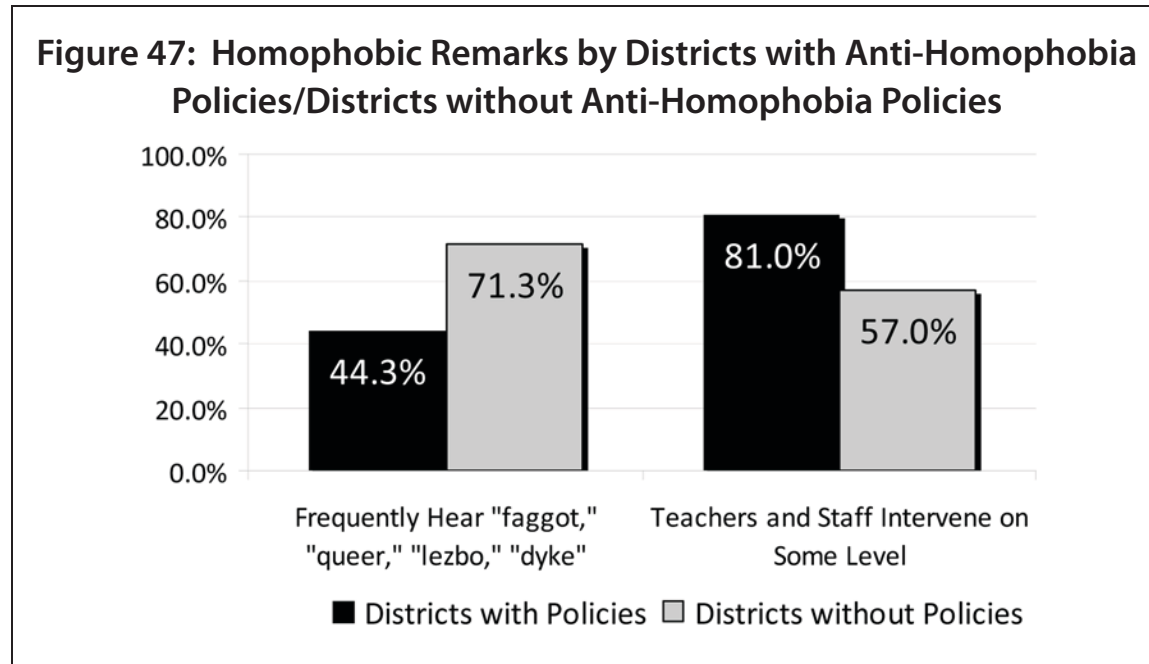
40   χ^2=34.1; p=.000.

Feelings of Safety

Overall, students from districts without safe school policies were more likely to feel unsafe at school (73.1% versus 51.6%),[41] and they were much more likely to feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation, perceived sexual orientation, and their expression of gender.[42]

Verbal and Physical Harassment

Similarly, students from districts with safe school policies that provide protection against homophobia reported significantly fewer incidents of verbal harassment and physical harassment due to their sexual orientation.[43] (See Figure 49).

Figure 49: Verbal and Physical Harassment by Districts with Anti-Homophobia Policies / Districts without Anti-Homophobia Policies
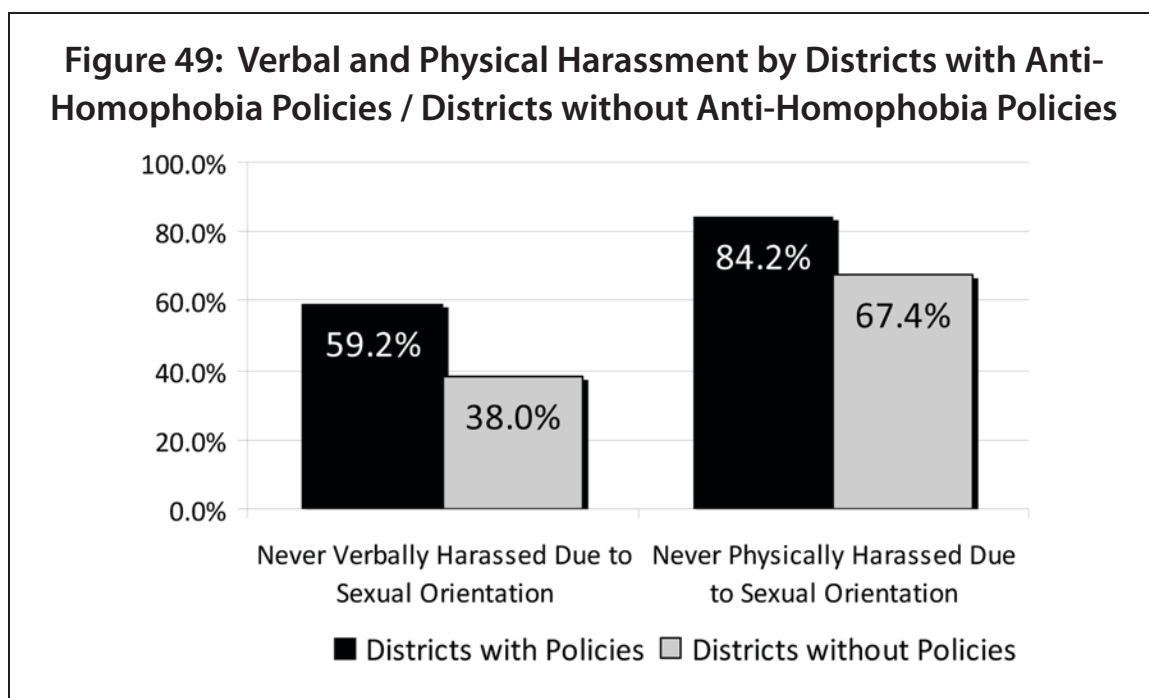
Results for the subsections "safe spaces," "school attachment," and "fostering diverse curricula and environments" at the district level were also identical to the school level. Overall, districts that were perceived as having anti-

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41   χ^2=14.7; p=.000.

42   Sexual orientation (59.2% versus 37.7%; χ^2=30.4; p=.000), perceived sexual orientation (37.7% versus 13.2%; χ^2=23; p=.000), gender expression (30.8% versus 20.8%; χ^2=5.8; p=.054).

43   59.2% versus 38% never experienced verbal harassment (χ^2=38.7; p=.000); 84.2% versus 67.4% never experienced physical harassment (χ^2=21; p=.007).

Institutional Responses

homophobia policies had students who believed that their school was a safer place. These participants also reported being more attached to their school. Finally, students from these districts were exposed to diverse curricula and environments.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Data were also analyzed by whether or not participants attended Catholic schools. As shown in Figure 50, one significant finding showed that students from Catholic schools were far more likely to feel that their school community was unsupportive of LGBTQ people (72.3%, compared to 46% of participants from non-Catholic schools).[44] Similarly, students from Catholic schools were significantly more likely to believe that their teachers were ineffective in addressing homophobic harassment (87.5% versus 64.8%).[45]

Figure 50: Catholic Schools Compared to Non-Catholic Schools
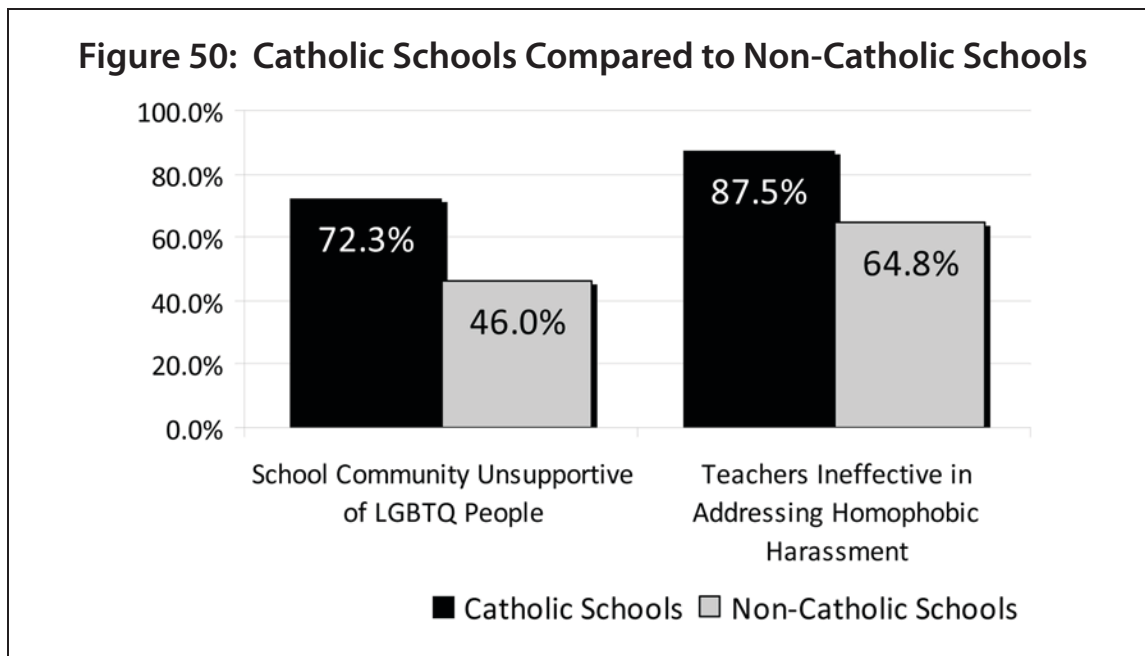
Finally, participants from Catholic schools were more likely to disagree with the following statement: "There is at least one adult I can talk to in my school" (43.7% versus 25%; see Figure 51).[46]

44   χ^2=21.9; p=.000.
45   χ^2=8.4; p=.004.
46   χ^2=17; p=.001.

Figure 51: Catholic Schools Compared to Non-Catholic Schools
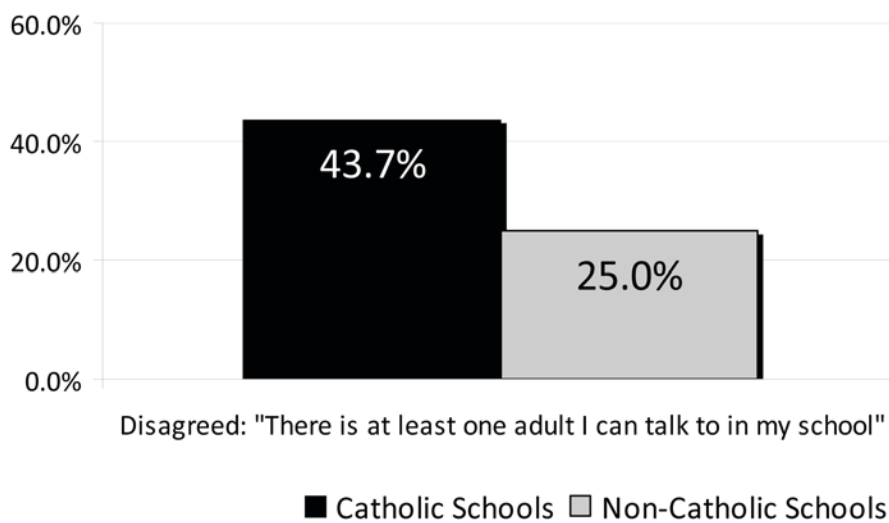

Unfortunately, while a few Catholic schools in integrated divisions have implemented the survey, no Catholic school boards have agreed to do so, and we regret that we will therefore not be able to report on the situation in Catholic school boards in Phase 2.

GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCES

Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) are official student clubs with LGBTQ and heterosexual student membership and typically two teachers who serve as faculty advisors. Students in a school with a GSA know that they have at least one or two adults they can talk to about LGBTQ issues. The purpose of GSAs is to provide a much-needed safe space in which LGBTQ students and allies can work together on making their schools more welcoming of sexual and gender minority students. Some GSAs go by other names such as Human Rights Clubs or Social Justice Clubs in order to signal an openness to non-LGBTQ membership (though of course, some of these are not GSAs and might not address homophobia). Very often it is LGBTQ students themselves who initiate the GSA, although sometimes a teacher will come forward. Well over 3500 US schools have GSAs, and there are many in Canada as well. Although there is no comprehensive registry of Canadian GSAs yet, Egale Canada will be launching a national directory in spring 2009.

Institutional Responses

Not surprisingly, participants from schools with anti-homophobia policies were twice as likely to confirm that their school had a GSA or some other club that addresses homophobia (65% versus 31.3%). As shown in Figure 52, participants from schools with anti-homophobia policies were also significantly more likely to agree that their school's administration was very supportive of the GSA club (49.4% versus 19.4%).[47]

Figure 52: Staff Support for Gay-Straight Alliances by Districts with Anti-Homophobia Policies / Districts without Anti-Homophobia Policies
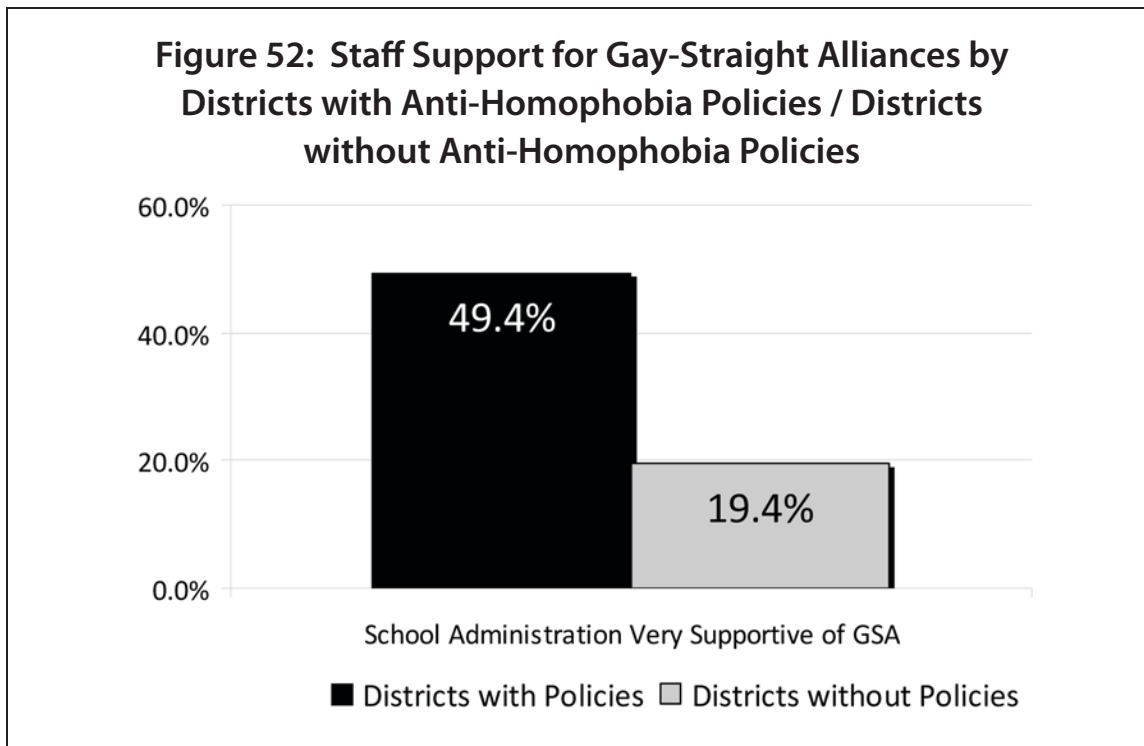
Moreover, students from schools with GSAs were much more likely to agree that their school community was supportive of LGBTQ people, compared to participants from schools without GSAs (47.6% versus 19.8%).[48]

However, that still means that fewer than half of students in GSA schools find their schools supportive of LGBTQ people. We asked students, "If you have a GSA or have tried to get one, did you have any obstacles?" Students described a range of obstacles from fearful potential allies who advocated maintaining a low profile, to occasionally fierce opponents:

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47   Have a GSA (χ^2=59.3; p=.000); administration supportive (χ^2=32; p=.000).
48   χ^2 83.3; p=.000.

Obstacles from the administration for fear of backlash from parents, or "creating problems where there wasn't one". Though generally supportive, they were afraid of explicitly queer events for fear of "giving bullies ideas".

Posters were written on, torn down and drawn on in discriminating ways. Rumors that anyone who attended the meetings would be beaten up circulated. When staff were told, the students destroying the posters easily lied their way out of it and not much concern was shown by the staff member talking to them. The teacher superviser of the GSA was more concerned about the reactions of the staff to a GSA than those of the students.

yes at first our proposal in front of the school staff was denied because they figured that our school did not need a G.S.A because thier was not many glbt but we proved them wrong by joining together and showing them how many of us thier really are in such a small school and they granted the right to our club/safe space.

Uninterested/unsupportive students often turned violent. During our school's first Rainbow Day one student had his clothing set on fire for dressing up. He was uninjured, and took the issue to the staff.

Others encountered very little or no opposition, and in response to the question, "If you have a GSA or tried to start one, did you get help from teachers or other school staff?" they wrote of supportive teachers and administrators:

It was a teacher that started a gsa, with influence from the school board in an attempt to stop bullying.

There was quite a lot of support offered by the staff at my school. We have various teacher supervisors who love helping out with our first meetings and events. There were a few very minor complaints about some posters that were put up during October, "Coming Out Month," which was the first major GSA event. But those were dealt with and we came up with the solution that we were to go to various classrooms explaining our objective. Our principal is very supportive of the club and loves to help out as well. Many of the teachers, including those not directly involved

> *in GSA, put up "Positive Space" signs in their classrooms or other GSA posters.*

> *Absolutely. They receive tons of support and suggestions from multiple different teachers in our school. In addition to that, when while we were posting positive space posters, multiple teachers in our school were completely comfortable with allowing them in their classrooms.*

Several participants wrote of empowering experiences of contributing to the safe school effort:

> *Currently a group of students, including myself . . . under the direction of one of our teachers are in the process of creating and performing a presentation that hopes to battle homophobia in our school. In previous years our presentations on bullying helped deter those events and we hope that we will obtain similar results this year.*

> *After shooting the documentary on homophobia in high schools, i think it got kids at our school to talk about it, and the people that are against homophobia, who didn't really speak up before, spoke up. I think it sort of intimidated some of the homophobes. it is still a huge problem in our school though. not much has changed, but i think we are on the right track. perhaps once they see our documentary, some people will become more open minded.*

While GSAs do yield significant results in regards to enhancing safe environments for LGBTQ students, we found that the magnitude of the relationship is not as strong as anti-homophobia policies at the district and school-level. One reading of the greater robustness of school and/or district policies is that the onus for providing safe places for students is best achieved at the district level or from school administration.

This does not diminish the importance of GSAs as key components of a safe school environment for LGBTQ students. Our own and other studies have shown that GSAs make a big difference.[49] It does suggest, however, that the most effective measure for creating more inclusive environments is policy and procedure established by school and district administration. It is also important to remember that most schools with GSAs also have school and

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49   E.g., Goodenow, Szalacha, & Westheimer, 2006.

district level policies to deal with homophobia. GSAs are often a positive outcome of inclusive schools that have taken measures to encourage and facilitate safer places.

Institutional Responses

Conclusions and Recommendations

Fear is a continuous theme throughout the survey data – LGBTQ students fearing for their personal safety; students fearing they, too, will be targeted by homophobia if they are known to have LGBTQ friends or family; teachers appearing to be fearful of backlash for supporting LGBTQ people, administrators appearing to be fearful of parental complaints.

In contrast, LGBTQ adults in Canada enjoy a level of legal equality and protection that makes it entirely possible for some people (not all, certainly, and not in all places) to live openly in their homes, their workplaces, their places of worship, and their circle of friends. "Faggot" and "lesbo" and "that's so gay" are not staple features of everyday discourse for them. LGBTQ adults generally do not have to worry about whether it is safe to go to the gym or take the stairs or walk down the hall to their next meeting. Being shoved into lockers and ridiculed in the lunch room are not everyday events for the adult members of the Canadian LGBTQ community.

Conclusions and Recommendations

> *Speaking up works. When we don't let fear stop us, we win.*

Despite the enormous efforts made in many schools to create safe and respectful school climates, in some ways the public school system is the land that time forgot. (In some provincially-funded public schools in this country, there is an explicit ban on discussing LGBTQ issues, with teachers having to sign a contract pledging to shut down any questions on the subject and refer the student for guidance counselling.) LGBTQ children are paying the price. This survey has provided statistically-tested confirmation of what LGBTQ students and their allies have known for some time. Consider the situation in many schools:

- LGBTQ students are exposed to language that insults their dignity as part of everyday school experience.

- LGBTQ students experience much higher levels of verbal, physical and other forms of harassment than other students.

- Many LGBTQ students do not feel safe at school.

- The situation is worse on all counts for transgender students.

- LGBTQ students in Catholic schools are even less likely to believe they are included in safe schools policies, to feel there is someone they can talk to, and to feel that teachers will intervene in cases of homophobic harassment.

- Many students do not have one single person they can talk to about being LGBTQ.

- Many schools have a well-developed human rights curriculum that espouses respect for every identity group protected in the Canadian Charter of Rights except LGBTQ people.

- Many teachers look the other way when they hear homophobic comments.

It is extremely unlikely that there is a high school anywhere in Canada, public or private, religious or secular, that does not have students who are LGBTQ; the figure is probably somewhere between 2.5% and 11% of the student body. Being harassed, insulted, and told that their issues belong in the guidance office, not the classroom, will not succeed in making them heterosexual; it will only make them unhappy.

Courageous LGBTQ students across the country have decided not to let their fear or anyone else's stop them. They have started GSAs, organized consciousness-raising events, and asked their teachers to get on board. They find schools that have a well-known school or division level anti-homophobia policy much safer than ones that do not. They have told us the following:

- They are much more likely to feel safe at school and a respected part of the school community.

- They are more likely to feel they can talk to teachers, principals, counsellors, coaches, and classmates.

- They are more likely to feel like a real part of their school, and less likely to feel depressed about school.

- They are exposed to fewer homophobic comments and their teachers are more likely to intervene.

- They are less likely to be bullied and more likely to report harassment or assault.

- They are less likely to feel unsafe at school, and in fewer places at school.

Inclusive safe schools policies are not the entire solution; we never found that 100% of students reported hearing no homophobic comments or that they could talk to all of their teachers, for example. There is much room for improvement on every issue in the above list. However, this survey has identified big differences between schools with and schools without inclusive policies, and these differences stand up to statistical tests of significance.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the analysis presented in this report we strongly recommend the following:

1. That schools develop and implement anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia policies and make these policies well known to students, parents, administration, and all staff as a positive part of their commitment to making schools safe.

2. That schools strongly support the efforts of students to start Gay-Straight Alliance clubs (GSAs).

3. That in schools where students have not come forward, administration should ask teachers to offer to work with students to start a GSA club. It is not safe to assume that LGBTQ students would prefer to go through high school isolated from their peers and teachers.

4. That school divisions develop anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia policies to provide leadership for schools. Although our analysis showed that students are less likely to know about division-level policies, it would be helpful for principals to know that their school-level efforts have strong divisional endorsement in the form of official policy at that level.

5. That provincial Ministries of Education advocate the inclusion of anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia measures in safe schools policies and programs, including those of Catholic schools, along with steps for the implementation of these policies, in order to provide institutional support and motivation to divisional and school staff.

6. That individuals and organizations with expertise in anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia education be consulted in the above developments.

What students have told us in the First National Climate Survey on Homophobia in Canadian Schools is that speaking up works, and that they want the adults in their lives to do their part, too. They are weary of seeing teachers and principals look the other way. And they are grateful to the many dedicated teachers and principals who have worked to make schools safer for everyone in their care – not everyone but them.

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References

Appendix: Resources

Many thanks to Liz Meyer for permission to adapt the following resource list from her excellent book: Meyer, E. (2009). *Gender, bullying, and harassment: Strategies to end sexism and homophobia in schools.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

$ = $50 or less $$ = $50 - $150 $$$ = $150 – 500 $$$$ = $500 +

SCHOOL-WIDE INTERVENTIONS

- **Ally Week (Free)**
  www.glsen.org/allyweek
  An event held every October to end anti-LGBTQ bullying and harassment in K-12 schools by building ties with "allies."

- **Challenge Day ($$$$)**
  www.challengeday.org
  A community building initiative to jumpstart anti-bullying and harassment work in a school.

- **Day of Silence (Free)**
  www.dayofsilence.org
  A non-confrontational, yet empowering way to highlight issues of LGBTQ name-calling. Free resources to help student groups organize this event in their school community.

- **The International Day Against Homophobia (Free)**
  http://www.homophobiaday.org/
  Provides informational posters and publications for schools and other organizations to participate in the activities on May 17 and year round.

- **Mix It Up at Lunch (Free)**
  http://www.tolerance.org/teens/lunch.jsp
  Annual event encourages students to break out of their cliques and cross divisions in their school's social culture at lunchtime.

- **No Name Calling Week (Free/$$)**
  www.nonamecallingweek.org
  Free downloadable resources, as well as a kit that can be purchased online. Many school-wide organizing ideas as well as classroom activities are available. Grades 5-8.

- **Day of Pink (Free)**
  http://www.dayofpink.org/
  International day against bullying, discrimination and homophobia in schools and communities that invites everyone to celebrate diversity by wearing a pink shirt and by organizing activities in their communities and schools.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- **Challenging Silence, Challenging Censorship ($)**
  http://www.ctf-fce.ca/e/publications/ctf_publications.asp
  Valuable guide for librarians and other educators interested in resources and support for LGBTQ youth, families, and their allies. Provides an annotated bibliography of materials for students of all ages.

- **GLSEN Lunchbox ($$)**
  www.glsenstore.org
  Training toolkit that provides many interactive activities, videos, and fact sheets on LGBTQ issues in schools. Valuable for consultants, resource centers, and organizations that provide in-service training and support.

- **It Takes a Team (Free/$) Video & resources**
  www.ittakesateam.org
  Kit addresses how gender and sexual orientation stereotypes can harm athletes, coaches, and the team environment. Includes video, action guides, posters, stickers, and additional resources.

Resources

- **It's Elementary: Talking about Gay Issues in Schools ($$)**
  Video & discussion guide
  http://www.groundspark.org/films/elementary/
  Excellent teaching resource that models age-appropriate ways to talk about gay and lesbian issues with elementary age students. Includes actual classroom footage.

- **Just Call Me Kade ($$) Video**
  http://cart.frameline.org/ProductDetails.asp?ProductCode=T526
  Award-winning documentary traces the transition of an adolescent FTM (female to male) transgender person. Provides a valuable first person narrative for those who are new to learning about transgender issues.

- **Lessons Learned ($)**
  http://www.ctf-fce.ca/e/publications/ctf_publications.asp
  Canadian Teachers' Federation publication provides brief introduction to terminology and studies as well as stories from educators to better understand the cultural and political contexts for addressing LGBTQ issues in Canadian schools.

- **Teaching Respect for All ($) Video**
  www.glsenstore.org
  Training video captures compelling talk by GLSEN Executive Director, author, and former high school teacher, Kevin Jennings. Covers key points for educators to understand when addressing homophobia and LGBTQ issues in schools.

K-12 CLASSROOM

- **Dealing With Differences ($) Video & teacher guide**
  www.glsenstore.org
  This lesson kit available to order provides 20 minute video and discussion guides for teachers to introduce conversations about respect and anti-LGBTQ harassment in the secondary classroom (grades 7-12).

- **GLSEN (Free/$) Lesson plans and resource lists**
  http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/library/curriculum.html
  Free downloadable lesson plans (K-12) and reading lists (sorted by age) to assist teachers interested in integrating information about sex, gender, sexual orientation and related forms of diversity education into their classes.

- **Let's Get Real! ($$) Video & curriculum guide**
  http://www.groundspark.org/films/letsgetreal/index.html
  Film addresses multiple forms of bias and harassment that happen in schools. Provides first hand narratives from students who have been targeted and students who have taken a stand on behalf of others. Grades 6-12.

- **Media Awareness Network (Free) Lesson plans and resources**
  www.media-awareness.ca
  French/English site provides rich variety of lessons on gender and stereotypes using media texts. Teachers can search by grade-level (K-12) or topic for classroom activities and resources.

Resources

Egale Canada
8 Wellington Street East
Toronto, ON M53 1C5
Ph: 1-888-204-7777

www.egale.ca

University of Winnipeg
515 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3B 2E9
Ph: 204-786-7811

www.uwinnipeg.ca