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To cite this article: Stephen T. Russell , Jenifer K. McGuire , Sun-A Lee , Jacqueline C. Larriva & Carolyn Laub (2008) Adolescent Perceptions of School Safety for Students with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Parents, Journal of LGBT Youth, 5:4, 11-27, DOI: [10.1080/19361650802222880](https://doi.org/10.1080/19361650802222880)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19361650802222880>



Published online: 12 Oct 2008.



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This research was supported by a contract from the California Endowment to the California Safe Schools Coalition, and by a William T. Grant Foundation Scholar Award to the first author. The authors thank the Gay-Straight Alliance Network for their role in collecting the data, the California Safe Schools Coalition Evaluation Committee for access to the data and for their thoughtful input, Cesar Egurrola for assistance with data management, and Nicole Lehman for assistance with manuscript preparation. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 2005 Annual Conference of the National Council on Family Relations in Phoenix.

ABSTRACT. A growing body of research indicates that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students are often unsafe at school. Little research has examined school safety for students with LGBT parents. We examined adolescents' perceptions of school safety for students with LGBT parents using data from a survey of 2,302 California sixth through twelfth grade students. We examined the influence of adolescents' personal characteristics and school environments on perceptions of school safety for students with LGBT parents. Compared to heterosexual students, adolescents who identified as LGBT were less likely to perceive their schools as safe for students with LGBT parents. Students who received education on LGBT issues knew where to get information about LGBT issues and had teachers that step in to prevent harassment were more likely to say that their schools were safe for students with LGBT parents. Implications for educational policy and practice are discussed.

KEYWORDS. Bullying, California, children of LGBT parents, harassment, LGBT parents, school safety

There is a large and growing population of children who live in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) families (Casper, Schultz, & Wickens, 1992) and there is anecdotal evidence to indicate that children of LGBT parents face LGBT bias-motivated victimization or harassment (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Because safe environments and healthy peer relationships are critical to positive psychosocial adjustment for adolescents, school safety for LGBT students has become a concern for educators, parents, and students. However, there is limited research on school safety for students with LGBT parents. Research on issues confronting LGBT parents has included legal issues, their children's health and development, and coming out issues for parents. Little research has focused specifically on the school experiences of their children.

Here we focus on student perceptions of safety for peers with LGBT parents. We examine how adolescents' reports of school safety strategies (teacher intervention in harassment, sexual orientation and gender identity-inclusive harassment policies, sources of information and support about LGBT issues, learning about LGBT issues in classes at school, and gay-straight alliance [GSA] clubs at school) influence their perceptions of safety for students with LGBT parents.

SCHOOL SAFETY AND ADOLESCENT ADJUSTMENT

The school environment is a particularly important context for adolescents. It is where they spend most of their time and interact with peers. The nature of peer relationships at school has a strong influence on psychosocial development and achievement during adolescence (Perren & Hornung, 2005). Rejection by peers, such as teasing, bullying, or harassment, has been shown to be detrimental to adolescents' well-being and psychosocial development. Researchers have linked peer rejection to negative psychosocial adjustment, including depression, behavior problems, and academic difficulties (DeRosier, Kupersmidt, & Patterson, 1994; French, Conrad, & Turner, 1995; Kupersmidt, Burchinal, & Patterson, 1995; Panak & Garber, 1992; Prinstein & Aikins, 2004). Others have questioned the direction of this association, suggesting that depressive affect or poor adjustment in an adolescent may elicit rejection from peers (Burchill & Stiles, 1988; Hokanson & Butler, 1992). However, a prospective study of depression and peer rejection disputed such a claim and found that victimization preceded depression (Nolan, Flynn, & Garber, 2003). Bond and colleagues found concurring evidence that peers' victimization predicted emotional problems for adolescents, but that previous emotional problems did not predict peers' victimization (Bond, Carlin, Thomas, Rubin, & Patton, 2001). Thus, the emerging consensus in the research literature is that peer rejection or victimization is a precursor to (rather than a product of) compromised psychosocial adjustment.

Nine to 15% of children experience chronic teasing and bullying that may lead to negative psychosocial adjustment (Horowitz et al., 2004). Reasons for teasing and bullying include physical appearance, personal behavior, or family and environment. However, the underlying theme of bullying can be traced to being "different" from majority groups. Same-sex sexuality and LGBT issues are a major contemporary issue around which harassment is often based (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Thus, LGBT adolescents or adolescents with LGBT parents are expected to experience peer rejection due to their personal or family difference. Such problems are compounded because while most teachers express willingness to create safe school environments, many are uncomfortable with addressing LGBT-specific issues in the classroom (Bliss & Harris, 1999).

LGBT PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN

A meta-analysis of studies of children of lesbian and gay parents (Stacey & Biblarz, 2001) found few differences between children of lesbians

compared to heterosexuals. One exception was that daughters of lesbians were more likely to endorse both masculine and feminine activities while daughters of heterosexual women tended to endorse more traditionally feminine gender role and activities. A review of 23 studies (Anderssen, Amlie, & Ytteroy, 2002) on outcomes of children with gay and lesbian parents from 1978 to 2000, based on nonclinical samples (615 offspring and 387 controls), showed that children raised by gay/lesbian parents did not significantly differ in emotional and cognitive functioning, gender role behavior, gender identity, sexual preference, and behavioral adjustment from children raised by heterosexual parents.

The only consistent difference between children of gay/lesbian parents and heterosexual parents (in 4 of the 23 studies) was that children of gays/lesbians were more concerned about stigmatization and fear of being teased (Anderssen et al., 2002). Similarly, Bliss and Harris (1999) and Casper and colleagues (1992) found that LGBT parents fear that their status as LGBT parents may affect how their children are treated at school or in the community. Many of those parents believed that it was not worth coming out to their child's school. This is often the same reasoning adopted by LGBT adolescents who hide their sexual orientation or gender identity based on similar fears of victimization (Raymond, 1994; Walters & Hayes, 1998).

Adolescents with LGBT parents may be more likely to be victimized due to stigma by association; experiencing stigma as if they were themselves a sexual minority. In an early study, Haack-Moller and Mohl (1984) had found that children with lesbian mothers experienced more direct negative action by peers, such as teasing, harassment, or bullying. To date there are mixed results in research that has examined stigmatization differences based on parents' sexual orientation (Anderssen et al., 2002).

There is little research on children with LGBT parents that focuses specifically on school experiences of harassment, stigmatization, or teasing by peers. However, the comparatively larger research on LGBT adolescents suggests that anti-LGBT victimization is a serious problem in the United States and that LGBT youth are often the targets of verbal harassment and, at times, physical violence. Much of this victimization occurs at schools (Human Rights Watch, 2001; Smith & Smith, 1998). In fact, studies of anti-LGBT victimization have reported that two-thirds of LGBT students feel unsafe at school and one-third missed at least one day in the past month due to safety concerns (Kosciw & Cullen, 2003). The consequences of LGBT-motivated victimization vary, ranging from short-term and relatively minor symptoms, such as headaches, or sleep disturbance, to long-term and severe negative psychosocial adjustment, such as depression,

drug use, posttraumatic stress disorder, and even suicidality (Hershberger, Pilkington, & D'Augelli, 1997; Rivers, 2001; Russell, 2003).

Despite differences in duration and degree of suffering, it is clear that being victimized based on sexual orientation or gender identity can have a significant negative effect on adolescents' psychosocial adjustment regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

SCHOOL STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE LGBT STUDENT SAFETY

Scholars and advocates for LGBT students' well-being have begun to focus on strategies that schools can employ to create a safer environment for LGBT youth. The most common of those strategies include: having a nondiscrimination and antiharassment policy that specifically includes sexual orientation and gender identity, training teachers to stop harassment among the students, supporting a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) or similar student support or advocacy club, providing information and resources for students interested in LGBT issues, and explicitly addressing issues of sexual orientation in the formal curriculum (O'Shaughnessy, Russell, Heck, Calhoun, & Laub, 2004; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). It is likely that strategies that have shown promise in improving the environment for LGBT youth will also be likely to improve the environment for children with LGBT parents.

First, *policies* that specifically prohibit harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity communicate to school personnel and students that *action* to protect students from harassment is required. Verbal abuse, graffiti, and other anti-LGBT activities are ubiquitous in many schools (Human Rights Watch, 2001; Smith & Smith, 1998). School personnel may not feel compelled to take such harassment seriously and have even expressed the view that victims "cause" their own harassment (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Prior research has shown that such policies have been beneficial in improving the school climate for LGBT youth and those perceived to be LGBT (O'Shaughnessy et al., 2004; Szalacha, 2003). Having such policies should likewise improve the environment for children with LGBT parents.

Second, teacher intervention in harassment is a crucial strategy for promoting a safe school climate. Research suggests that many teachers are willing to be nonjudgmental and expand their understanding of LGBT issues. However, they may be less open to initiate discussions with students that could create safe environments for LGBT students and parents (Bliss

& Harris, 1999). Prior studies have found that when teachers intervene to stop harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity, all students experience a safer climate (O'Shaughnessy et al., 2004; Szalacha, 2003). Hence, students' experience of teachers' intervention in harassment should enhance their perceptions of safety for all students, including students who have LGBT parents. School policies are explicit statements to teachers of administrative expectations that they undertake such actions.

Third, several studies have documented that GSAs or similarly focused clubs promote individual student safety and safer overall school climates (Snively, 2004; Szalacha, 2003). Having a GSA should similarly benefit the school climate for children with LGBT parents.

Access to LGBT information and resources in schools can also help normalize the experience of LGBT persons and contribute to a less prejudiced and safer environment for everyone. Such resources may provide much-needed social and institutional support for students. Herek (2000) also found that people who have discussed LGBT issues with LGBT people showed low levels of sexual prejudice/homophobia. In addition, most prejudice and stereotypes stem from a lack of personal knowledge. Herek (2000) found that sexual prejudice, including homophobia, was strongly related to whether an individual personally knew gay people. The lowest levels of prejudice are correlated with heterosexual people who knowingly have gay friends or family members.

Although researchers argue that prejudice toward LGBT people can be addressed through education about LGBT people and issues, and that such education should be provided to students, staff, and teachers at schools (Raymond, 1994), it is still the case in many communities that LGBT issues are rarely mentioned in classrooms (e.g., Bliss & Harris, 1999).

There are few empirical studies on safety of children with LGBT parents at schools. The present study focuses on students' perceptions of school safety for those with LGBT parents. Drawing on data from over 2,000 middle and high school students in California, we examined students' background characteristics (race/ethnicity, grade in school, gender, and sexual orientation) and their perceptions of school safety for students with LGBT parents. Because of their affiliation with a LGBT status (that of their parents), we expected that students who reported a same-sex sexual orientation or a transgender gender identity would report less safety for students who have LGBT parents. We also anticipated that young women would report less safety for students who have LGBT parents. We hypothesized that individual experiences with harassment would be negatively associated with perceptions of safety due to heightened sensitivity for safety concerns

that should come as a result of those experiences. Finally, we expected that student reports of school LGBT safety strategies would be positively associated with reports of safety for students who have LGBT parents.

METHODS

Participants

The Preventing School Harassment (PSH) survey included 2,559 middle and high school students in the state of California. It was conducted at the end of the school year (the months of April through June) in three consecutive years (2003–2005) and was distributed in paper format and online. Because the initial purpose of the PSH survey was to understand institutional strategies to improve school safety for LGBT students, the target population was LGBT students and their heterosexual allies. To recruit this population, electronic communication about the online survey was sent to high school GSA organizations, LGBT community-based youth groups, and LGBT community resource centers. In addition, copies of the survey were mailed to high school GSAs (O’Shaughnessy et al., 2004). This diverse method for recruitment precludes the possibility of calculating a response rate for the sample. Analyses were conducted with list wise deletion of missing data, yielding a final analytic sample of 2,257 respondents.

Measures

The survey included questions about bias-motivated harassment in school based on ethnicity, gender, body size, religion, physical or mental disability, actual or perceived sexual orientation, and gender identity. There were multiple questions about school safety. For the purposes of the present study, we focus on the question: “My school is safe for students with LGBT parents” (1 = Strongly Disagree; 4 = Strongly Agree).

The survey included measures of the respondents’ background characteristics. Grade in school was asked in an open-ended format. Sexual orientation was measured with a series of dichotomous variables: “gay/lesbian,” “bisexual,” “queer, questioning, write in, or multiple,” and “straight/heterosexual” (used as the reference category in multivariate analyses). Gender was coded into three groups: “male” (used as the reference category in multivariate analyses), “female,” and a group that combined the responses of “transgender,” “questioning,” and a write-in option. Ethnicity was measured through a series of dichotomous

variables: American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino/Latina, Black/African American (non-Hispanic), White/Caucasian non-Hispanic (used as the reference category in multivariate analyses), and Other. An additional group called Western Asian/ Middle Eastern was created to include students who wrote in responses such as Pakistani, Iranian, and Middle Eastern. Individuals could be in more than one ethnic group.

The survey also included five questions about strategies schools might use to promote supportive and safe environments: “How often do you hear teachers or school staff stop others from making negative comments or using slurs based on sexual orientation?” (1 = Never; 4 = Often), “Does your school have a harassment policy based on sexual orientation?” (0 = No/I Don’t Know, 1 = Yes), “If you wanted more information and support from your school about sexual orientation, gender identity, or LGBT issues would you know where to go?” (0 = No/I Don’t Know, 1 = Yes), “In your classes at school, have you ever learned about LGBT people, discussed LGBT history or current news events, or received information about sexual orientation and gender identity?” (0 = No/I Don’t Know, 1 = Yes), and “Does your school have a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) or similar club?” (0 = No/I Don’t Know, 1 = Yes). Participation in the GSA was assessed with one item: “If yes, then are you a member of the Gay-Straight Alliance or similar club/group?” (0 = No or School Doesn’t Have GSA, 1 = Yes).

There were three indicators of students’ personal experience. Personal safety was assessed with one item “I feel safe at my school” (0 = No, 1 = Yes). Experiences of harassment were assessed with one item: “During the past 12 months, how many times on school property were you harassed or bullied for the following reason: Because you are gay, lesbian, or bisexual or someone thought you were?” (0 = 0 times, 1 = 1 or more times).

Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting our findings. First, students were not asked whether they had LGBT parents, if they knew students with LGBT parents, or to identify if they had been harassed because a member of their family was LGBT. All reports were based on perceptions by all students of safety for students with LGBT parents. Further research on school environments should incorporate direct study of youth who have LGBT parents.

Second, the target sample for this study was students who are sensitive to LGBT issues (e.g., students in GSA clubs); and as such is not generalizable

to all students, or to students who are less informed about LGBT issues. However, to fully explore school strategies to promote safety concerning LGBT people and issues, an informed and interested sample is necessary. These data are based on self-report of a highly informed and motivated sample and does not include corroboration of reports of the school climate from other perspectives (i.e., incident reports of violence, district reports about training or policies, or even teacher reports of the climate). This concern is not unique to this study, but two potential forms of bias may be present.

First, such a sample of youth may be motivated to overemphasize concerns or fears for LGBT-associated persons because of their attachment to the LGBT community. Second, youth in a GSA are more likely to be aware of school or district policies or interventions that exist to reduce harassment of LGBT-based bullying; it is not clear whether school safety is more closely linked to a student's knowledge of policies and interventions, or the simple presence of a school policy.

Finally, the survey measure for this study was limited to only the most basic background and demographic measures, and assessments of school strategies. Most basically, future studies could directly ask students whether they have LGBT parents. In addition, future work could focus in more detailed ways on the enactment and experience of each of the school safety strategies we examined here. For example, the general question about LGBT curriculum does not include specific information about possible discussions about LGBT families; future work should investigate the content or messages about LGBT families that are included by teachers and school personnel in school curriculum. Either of those approaches would build substantially on the current study.

In preliminary analyses we tested for differences in the independent and dependent variables used in our study based on whether the survey was taken online or in paper format. Based on mean level differences, regression analyses were run to assess the potential impact of online status on the relationships among variables. While online status was a significant predictor of feelings of safety at school, it did not alter the relationships among the other variables of interest. The decision was made not to include online status in the analyses for reporting.

RESULTS

As Table 1 shows, over half of the participants (57%) were from 11th and 12th grades, two-thirds identified themselves as heterosexual, 3%

TABLE 1. Demographic characteristics of participants

Variable	Number	Percentage
Grade		
6th	46	2.0
7th	18	0.8
8th	90	3.9
9th	300	13.0
10th	543	23.6
11th	678	29.5
12th	627	27.2
Sexual Orientation		
Straight/Heterosexual	1580	61.7
Gay/lesbian/	290	11.3
Bisexual/	320	12.5
Queer/Questioning/	250	9.8
Write-in/Multiple		
Gender		
Male	796	34.6
Female	1444	62.7
Transgender/Questioning/	62	2.7
Write-in/Multiple		
Ethnicity		
White	1162	50.5
Am. Indian/Alaska Native	121	4.8
Asian/ Pacific Islander	618	24.2
Latino/a	536	21.3
Black	189	7.5
West Asian/Middle Eastern	45	1.8
Other	1140	49.5

Total $N = 2302$.

self-identified as transgender or questioning. Approximately 50% were White, with the predominate minority groups being Latino/a (21%) and Asian/Pacific Islander (25%). More White students self-identified as LGBT (41%) than did non-White students (21%); $\chi^2(1, N = 2302) = 39.63, p < .001$. LGBT students were more likely to report a transgender/queer/other gender (7%) while heterosexual students were more likely to report a female or male gender (0.5%); $\chi^2(1, N = 2302) = 88.46, p < .001$.

T tests showed that while there were no gender differences in perceptions of safety for students with LGBT parents, there were significant differences based on sexual orientation and ethnicity. Respondents who self-identified

TABLE 2. Hierarchical regression of demographic status and school environments on safety of adolescents with LGBT parents

Variable	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3	
	<i>B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>
Demographic						
Information						
Grade in School	-.008	-.013	-.015	-.026	-.029	-.050**
Gay or Lesbian	-.125	-.051*	-.114	-.046*	.164	.066**
Bisexual	-.241	-.102***	-.224	-.095***	.036	.015
Other Sexual Orientation	-.161	-.061**	-.165	-.063**	.024	.009
Orientation						
Female	-.001	-.001	-.010	-.006	-.007	-.004
Transgender	-.010	-.002	.02	.004	.166	.034+
American	-.064	-.017	-.058	-.016	.014	.004
Indian/Alaska Native						
Asian/ Pacific Islander	.007	.004	-.034	-.019	-.027	-.015
Latino/a	-.113	-.058**	-.133	-.068***	-.072	-.037+
Black	-.094	-.031	-.065	-.022	-.057	-.019
Western Asian Middle Eastern	.184	.032	.170	.029	.110	.019
Other Ethnicity	.049	.018	.054	.019	.053	.019
School Safety Strategies						
Antiharassment Policy			.012	.012	.013	.008
Teacher Intervention			.073	.073	.045	.058**
Presence of GSA at School			.141	.141	.175	.086***
LGBT Information Available			.171	.171	.188	.113***
LGBT Education			.184	.184	.119	.076***
Personal Experiences						
Feelings of Safety at School					.571	.314***
Bullied for being LGBT					-.233	-.134***
Participate in GSA					-.140	-.087***
<i>R</i> ²		.021		.075		.199
ΔR^2		.021		.055		.124
ΔF		3.94***		26.53***		115.33***

Note. Reference categories are White, male, and straight/heterosexual.
 $p < .0001$ ***, $p < .001$ ** , $p < .01$ * $p < .05$ +

as “straight/heterosexual” were more likely to perceive their schools as safe for students with LGBT parents (66%) compared to LGBT students (52%), $t(2, 2300) = 17.32$, $p < .001$, $d = .42$. White students were also more likely to perceive their schools as safe for students with LGBT parents

(67%) compared to ethnic minority students (55%), $t(2, 2300) = 5.86, p < .001, d = .17$.

As shown in Table 2, in the first stage of the hierarchical linear regression analyses, results indicated that same-sex, bisexual, or other sexual orientation (i.e., all but those who identified as “straight/heterosexual”), and Latino/a ethnicity were associated with perceptions of safety for students with LGBT parents. That is, each of these groups perceived students with LGBT parents to be less safe in school than their heterosexual, White counterparts. Students’ grade, gender, and other ethnic affiliations were not related to perceptions of safety for students with LGBT parents.

Strategies to promote school safety were added in the second model. Four of the five school safety strategies were significantly associated with positive endorsements of safety for students with LGBT parents. Specifically, students who reported that teachers stopped others from making negative comments or using slurs based on sexual orientation also felt that students of LGBT parents were safer than those respondents who did not report such teacher intervention.

Students in schools with a GSA also reported greater levels of safety for children with LGBT parents. Further, those students who knew where to get information about LGBT issues were more likely to perceive their schools as safe for students with LGBT parents than those who were unaware of such resources. Finally, students who reported that they had been educated about LGBT issues reported more safety for students with LGBT parents.

Unexpectedly, the presence of antiharassment policies that include sexual orientation, as reported by the respondents, was not linked to their perception of safety for students with LGBT parents. Given this null finding and that nondiscrimination policies that included sexual orientation and gender identity were legally mandated, we wondered whether the effect of school policy would be obscured by the inclusion of the other school strategies in a single multivariate analysis. Thus, we tested this possibility, by rerunning Models 2 and 3 excluding the four other school strategies. When policy is the only school strategy included in the model, it is a significant independent predictor of perceptions of school safety ($\beta = .05, p < .05$) and continues to be a significant predictor when individual perceptions of school safety are added in the third model ($\beta = .04, p < .05$).

Students’ personal experiences (harassment and GSA participation) were entered into our final model. Those who reported personally feeling safe at school were more likely to describe the environment as safe

for children with LGBT parents. Conversely, students who had been personally bullied because they were LGBT or someone thought they were reported less safety for students with LGBT parents. Finally, students who participated in the GSA reported lower levels of safety for students with LGBT parents.

The role of school strategies for promoting safety was not altered when personal experiences were entered into the model. Notable changes were evident, however, in the demographic information about respondents. Because younger students are more likely to have reported harassment, the significant effect of grade in Models 1 and 2 is diminished once bullying experiences are included in Model 3.

Most striking is that sexual orientation group differences changed as well. Youth who reported a bisexual orientation or who selected "other" (e.g., queer) were no longer less likely to report safety for students with LGBT parents; gay or lesbian youth actually report higher levels of safety for students with LGBT parents. Post hoc analyses (not presented; available from the authors by request) indicated that these nonheterosexual-identified youth were more likely to be in GSAs and to report personal feelings of being unsafe. Once the model accounted for GSA membership and harassment experiences, gay and lesbian youth reported more safety for their peers who had LGBT parents.

DISCUSSION

This study examined whether student personal characteristics, aspects of the school environment, and student harassment experiences were associated with perceptions of safety for students with LGBT parents. Overall, LGBT students were less likely to report that students who have LGBT parents are safe at school. Because they may face similar negative reactions at school, LGBT students appear to be more sensitive to victimization and harassment toward students with LGBT parents. However, once these LGBT students' personal safety, harassment, and GSA experiences were taken into account, we found fewer sexual orientation group differences. In fact, gay and lesbian students (but not those who are bisexual or transgender) reported, on average, safer climates for students with LGBT parents once their harassment experience and status of GSA participation were taken into consideration.

Although we did not ask students about the LGBT status of their own parents, we learned something about other students' perceptions of safety

for this important, often overlooked group of students. LGBT students may be more sensitive to the potential risks that children of LGBT parents face than their heterosexual peers. However we found LGBT students' own experiences with safety and harassment enhanced their ability to identify concerns for those having LGBT parents.

Children of LGBT parents may be negatively influenced by the heterosexual climate of the school (Chesir-Teran, 2003) even though they themselves are likely to be heterosexual. If efforts to attend to school safety focus only on LGBT students, we risk overlooking the concerns of these other children.

Regarding LGBT school safety strategies, we found that students reported more safety for their peers with LGBT parents when they also reported that their schools were employing school safety strategies. Each of these safety strategies pertain to the daily school experiences of youth. On the other hand, in the context of the other school safety strategies, student reports that their school had an antiharassment policy that covered sexual orientation were not directly related to perceptions of school safety for students of LGBT parents. Therefore, while policies are an important first step for establishing school safety, their mere existence or knowing about them does not influence students' perspectives about safety for students with LGBT parents.

This was an unexpected finding because other studies have found that policies are significant in creating climates in which students report greater safety (O'Shaughnessy et al., 2004; Szalacha, 2003).

Although having an antiharassment policy that includes sexual orientation/gender identity did not account for unique variance when the other strategies were controlled, its importance as a gateway into creating a safer climate for all students should not be underestimated. In practice, such a policy is often the first of many interventions a school will take to improve its climate. In fact, it is often the creation of a policy that provides the groundwork for schools (and other institutions) to implement other safety strategies such as providing information, having a GSA, or training teachers to intervene in cases of harassment.

The role of policies that prohibit discrimination and harassment can function to alter social climates through direct or indirect pathways. For instance, in a school district where teachers can legally be fired for being LGBT (as is true in most districts in the United States), all teachers may suppress content about LGBT issues for fear of being targeted. Since California is one of the few states protected by a statewide ban on discrimination based on sexual orientation, this study did not allow us to

systematically examine the influence of nondiscrimination policies. In the many places where teachers legitimately fear losing their jobs for being LGBT, it falls to heterosexual peers and allies to do the work of promoting safety for LGBT students. However, being an ally also runs the risk of being targeted in those school districts that lack legal protections or are not inclusive.

In summary, four of the five strategies designed to promote school safety for LGBT students continued to be associated with student reports of safety for children with LGBT parents, even when the individual respondent's experiences were included in the model. The policy implications of this finding are significant: all students report safer environments when schools take steps to create a better climate, regardless of their personal experiences. While personal experiences are clearly significant in a students' interpretation of the climate for other students, actions that schools can take (supporting GSAs, providing both information and education about LGBT issues, and intervening when harassment occurs) have unique, direct, and positive effects on the perceptions of students. In fact, having a GSA at the school was associated with higher reports of safety for children of LGBT parents, regardless of whether the respondent was in the GSA. In sum, the same strategies that have been shown to improve the climate for LGBT youth may also improve the climate for children with LGBT parents.

There are few existing studies of children with LGBT parents' experiences in school. This study, like the few others, begins to illuminate the experiences for children with LGBT parents in school. Specifically, we found that youth believe that children of LGBT parents may experience an unsafe environment, which is consistent with findings that youth and their LGBT parents fear that children of LGBT parents will experience harassment (Anderssen et al., 2002; Bliss & Harris, 1999; and Casper et al., 1992).

In this study, we found evidence that individuals who may have experienced negative climates themselves (sexual minorities, those who have been bullied, and those in the GSA) may be more sensitive to the potential safety issues for children with LGBT parents. There, too, was evidence that strategies considered promising for improving the climate for LGBT youth are also perceived as being effective for promoting safe school climates for children with LGBT parents. More research is needed to identify additional strategies that make schools safe, as well as the processes through which these strategies are adopted and enacted in schools.

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