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A Study of Effective Strategies, Programs, and Policies for School Leaders in Protecting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth from Peer Victimization

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A STUDY OF EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES, PROGRAMS, AND POLICIES FOR
SCHOOL LEADERS IN PROTECTING LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND
TRANSGENDER YOUTH FROM PEER VICTIMIZATION

by

LAURA ANN BACON

(Under the Direction of Russell Mays)

ABSTRACT

This study examined what school leaders can do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth from peer victimization and identified effective strategies, programs, and policies that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Students who identify as LGBT are often victimized by their peers (Chan, 2009; Kosciw, 2004; Markow & Fein, 2005; Weiler, 2004; Williams, Connolly, Pepler, & Craig, 2005). Peer victimization has a negative impact on the academic and psychological development of students, especially those in the sexual minority. LGBT youth are at a greater risk than their heterosexual peers for truancy, depression, substance abuse, isolation, and suicide ideation, attempts and success. The Delphi Technique research method was used to gather data from a panel of seven experts on what school leaders can do to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization and what effective strategies, programs, and policies school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Findings revealed that school leaders can protect LGBT youth from peer victimization by (a) having safe harbors for LGBT students to go to, (b) intervening in and addressing anti-LGBT comments/behaviors, and (c) training all adults who have contact with students regarding the school's bullying policies and procedures. Findings

also revealed effective strategies, programs, and policies that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Those effective strategies, programs, and policies include (a) talking about LGBT issues and identity throughout the curriculum and classes, (b) implementing a bullying/harassment/intimidation prevention program, (c) implementing Gay-Straight Alliances, (d) implementing policies with clear reporting procedures in place for youth and members of the community, and (e) implementing clear bullying policies that are inclusive of those who identify as LGBT. Three of the most effective ways that school leaders can protect LGBT youth from peer victimization are (1) educating students, faculty, staff, and school boards on LGBT issues and eliminating homophobia and transphobia in schools, (2) training staff on diversity acceptance and bullying prevention, and (3) implementing Gay-Straight Alliances.

INDEX WORDS: Delphi technique, LGBT, Panel of experts, Peer victimization, School leaders, Sexual minority

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all students who have ever been victimized by their peers.

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God—my creator and Christ—my savior, you have brought me through the darkest of nights and the brightest of days. I am eternally yours.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Legally, ethically, and morally, school leaders are obligated to protect all students, as well as provide them with an access to education that is equal to the access provided to all other students. However, for many students in the sexual minority, schools are unsafe. Education should be their priority, but survival takes precedence over their education (Weiler, 2004). School is rarely a safe place for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT), or questioning youth, much less an atmosphere that is conducive to teaching and learning (Kilman, 2009).

According to Weiler (2004), gay students are the students most susceptible to peer victimization in middle and high school. They face identical developmental and social challenges as their peers, and at times do so with the added stress of self-doubt, fear, and isolation. Weiler explained that approximately 10% of students are in the sexual minority, yet many schools do not provide a sufficient education that promotes an awareness of sexual orientation as a natural part of human development. This insufficiency allows gender nonconforming students and those in the sexual minority to be the objects of prejudice, discrimination, and harassment. They are denied equal access to a free and appropriate public education.

Billups (2009) argued that gays have basic human rights and should not suffer prejudice because of their sexual orientation. Still, they are victimized by their peers and suffer from homophobic bullying (Chan, 2009). Poland (2010) declared that homophobia exists within schools and that it truly affects students in profound ways, as evidenced by the 2009 suicides of two 11-year-old boys, one in Georgia and one in Massachusetts.

Both of these boys, perceived to be gay, were harassed regularly by their peers. In 2008, an eighth grader in California, who was often harassed at school because he was gay, was shot and killed by one of his peers one morning while in computer class (GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2008).

Billups (2009) stated that “We are called . . . to reach out to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and questioning youth” (p. 41). Leaders must begin by creating places that are safe for these youth. Weiler (2004) stressed that educators must be leaders who promote safe schools for *all* students, and at the same time they must be sensitive to the various viewpoints and beliefs held within their schools. It is crucial that research-based strategies are developed to help students, faculty and staff, and parents collaborate to build a school climate that upholds all students’ rights and dignity. The climate of a school determines whether or not a school environment is conducive to learning and good health. Educators should examine the climate of their school to “ensure that students are taught positive, nonbiased behavior and that all staff members are trained to model and reinforce such behavior and stop harassment immediately” (Weiler, 2004, p. 39-40).

Traditionally, schools have adopted the values of a heterosexual society and a culture that urges young people to become a part of the sexual majority. Over the course of hundreds of years, LGBT students have tried to “pass” as heterosexual to conform. They have tolerated exclusion and victimization, as well as harassment. They have had to suffer alone (Robertson, 2005).

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students are faced with considerable challenges while in school. LGBT students are not only unaccepted and harassed, but they are also silenced. Schools work to hide LGBT students’ sexuality; therefore, their

freedom of speech is denied. Thus, school becomes a hostile environment (Warbelow, 2008). Espelage, Aragon, Birkett, and Koenig (2008) explained that gays and lesbians are frequently victims of homophobia. Students who are targeted more often have increased levels of depression and anxiety and a lower sense of belonging to their school (Espelage, Aragon, Birkett, & Koenig, 2008; Graham & Bellmore, 2007).

Robertson (2005) explained that it takes five years for students in the sexual minority to “come out.” This means that a majority of LGBT students spend their adolescent years denying their sexuality not only to others, but to themselves as well. As a result of this denial, they are more likely to have higher rates of school absenteeism and are more likely to drop out of school. Nishina, Juvonen, and Witkow (2005) found that students who are targeted by their peers experience greater levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness. Williams, Connolly, Pepler, and Craig (2005) wrote that LGBT students reported more behavioral and emotional problems than their heterosexual peers. LGBT students also reported that they suffered more depression. Williams et al. (2005) found that students who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual are more likely to participate in risky behaviors such as substance abuse and suicide. Suicide is a leading cause of death for sexual minority youth. Billups (2009) stated that it is troubling that 30% of teens who commit suicide are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and questioning teens. Weiler (2004) expressed that the rates of suicidal ideation, attempts, and suicide by sexual minority students are estimated to be more than two to three times greater than that of heterosexual students.

The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, more commonly known as GLSEN, is a leading national educational organization whose primary goal is to ensure safe schools for all students. GLSEN’s mission statement is to “assure that each member

of every school community is valued and respected regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression” (Henneman, 2005, p. 47). Much of GLSEN’s work is focused on making bullying and harassment, specifically directed towards lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students, “unacceptable in America’s schools” (Markow & Fein, 2005, p. iii). GLSEN found that bullying and harassment has a negative effect on the learning environment. GLSEN noted that principals can make a difference. However, school leaders may not have the knowledge, skills, or experience to address issues related to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students (GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2008).

Principals are the leaders in their schools. They have the crucial responsibility for building and sustaining an environment that is safe, welcoming, and free from harassment for all students (GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2008). The experiences and perceptions of LGBT youth has been the focus of much research (Bochenek & Brown, 2001; Espelage et al., 2008; GLSEN, 1999; Kosciw, 2004; Kosciw & Diaz, 2006; Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008; Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, & Bartkiewicz, 2010; Markow & Fein, 2005). Teachers’ perceptions have been studied as well (Markow & Fein, 2005; Wright, 2010), but the voice of principals has been overlooked (GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2008).

In a GLSEN and Harris Interactive study (2008), 6 out of 10 principals reported that staff development initiatives addressed harassment or bullying. Only 5% of school leaders stated that staff development initiatives specifically addressed issues related to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students. Principals suggested that teachers need to be trained in issues relating to LGBT students. Principals reported that it would be most helpful if there were clear consequences for faculty and staff members who did not intervene when they were witnesses to homophobic epithets and harassment of LGBT

students. Principals also stated that there should be school policies that specifically address anti-discrimination and harassment of LGBT students.

Elementary and secondary school principals remain attentive to student harassment and bullying within their schools. Schools have implemented policies and programs for students, faculty and staff that specifically address student harassment and bullying. However, only a small number of these efforts are directed towards bullying and harassment based on students' gender identity/expression or sexual orientation. Additional research is needed in this area as school principals indicated that LGBT students do not feel as safe as other students in their school. These findings are crucial for schools to consider as principals work to create school environments that protect and ensure the safety of all students (GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2008).

Researchers have documented and suggested effective strategies, programs, and policies that can be implemented to help protect and ensure the safety of all students, including those who identify as LGBT. Very little research, however, has been conducted on strategies, programs, *and* [emphasis added] policies for school leaders in protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization. Weiler (2003) stated that supportive school personnel can have a positive influence on LGBT students and suggested strategies that can protect LGBT students from peer harassment. Those strategies include: improving school safety, affirming diversity, dispelling inaccurate information, providing a supportive network for LGBT students, preventing discrimination, ensuring that LGBT students have equal access to all school activities, training all staff to understand LGBT youth, implementing effective interventions, being wary of attempting to change a student's sexual orientation, and being ready to address controversial issues.

Morillas and Gibbons (2010), with others who agree, compiled the following strategies to support and protect LGBT students: become a visible ally (GLSEN, 2009; Kilman, 2009), provide resources (Whelan, 2006), create and support Gay-Straight Alliances (GLSEN, 2009; Hansen, 2007; Kilman, 2009, Poland, 2010), promote curriculum inclusion (GLSEN, 2009; Hanlon, 2009; Kilman, 2009), organize awareness and action training for school personnel, enforce zero-tolerance of harassment (Hansen, 2007), encourage schoolwide change, and become an advocate for systemic change.

The “Safe Space Kit: Guide to Being an Ally to LGBT Students,” published by GLSEN in 2009, emphasized that schools can create *Safe Spaces* to protect LGBT students from peer harassment. GLSEN described a Safe Space as a place that is safe, supportive, and welcoming for LGBT students. Safe Spaces should provide support, education, and advocacy for LGBT students.

GLSEN and Harris Interactive (2008) found that schools implemented national anti-bullying/harassment education programs to reduce peer harassment. Those programs include Bully-Proofing Your School, Steps to Respect: A Bullying Prevention Program, No Name-Calling Week, Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, Don’t Laugh at Me, Expect Respect, and Names Can Really Hurt Us. Programs that specifically address anti-gay harassment include Project 10 (Henning-Stout, James, & Macintosh, 2000), the Day of Silence (GLSEN, 2010b), and Think B4 You Speak (GLSEN, 2009).

The implementation and enforcement of safe school policies (anti-bullying and harassment policies) is a major step that schools can take to support and protect their LGBT students (GLSEN, 2009). Poland (2010) stated that anti-harassment policies which include sexual orientation, as well as gender identity and expression, should be included

in school district policies. Kilman (2009) stressed that schools should advocate for state-wide, anti-discrimination laws. The National Association of School Psychologists (2006) noted that anti-discrimination policies should be established, enforced, and applied to all students, including those in the sexual minority.

A publication by Just the Facts Coalition (2008) explained that public school officials need to be aware of legal guidelines concerning the rights of their LGBT students. The article pointed out that there are local, state, and federal laws, as well as school district policies, that can protect LGBT students from harassment and discrimination. The Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause protects all students including LGBT students. The United States Supreme Court has made it clear that public officials cannot burden LGBT individuals with unequal treatment or discrimination because of the public's hatred or disdain toward them. This means that school districts are responsible for protecting LGBT students from harassment just as they would protect other students from any other type of harassment.

The National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) (2010) explained that there are federal laws that can protect LGBT students from harassment. The Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment in the United States Constitution affirms that it is the right of every citizen to receive equal protection under the law. Title IX of the Education Amendments Acts of 1972 prohibits sex-based discrimination in programs and activities that receive financial assistance from the federal government. The Equal Access Act of 1984, a federal law, requires that secondary schools that allow space for non-instructional clubs initiated by students must allow space for all other non-instructional clubs, regardless of their political, philosophical, religious, or other beliefs. NCLR

explained that in addition to federal laws that protect LGBT students, state laws can also be helpful. Eliza Byard of GLSEN stated that “Because LGBT issues are controversial, it is hard to persist without the backup that statewide policy and legislative protection provides” (Kilman, 2009, p. 38).

Statement of the Problem

For many students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, school can be a very dangerous place. LGBT students are often victimized by their peers. The most common reasons for peer victimization in middle and high schools in America are sexual orientation, gender expression, and physical appearance. LGBT-related characteristics account for the top reasons students are singled out for mistreatment (GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2008). Peer victimization has a negative impact on the academic and psychological development of LGBT students (Billups, 2009; Chan, 2009; Hansen, 2007; Markow & Fein, 2005; Robertson, 2005; Stone, 2003; Swearer, Turner, Givens, & Pollack, 2008; Weiler, 2003, 2004; Williams, Connolly, Pepler, & Craig, 2005). LGBT youth are at a greater risk than their heterosexual peers for truancy, dropping out of school, depression, substance abuse, isolation, loneliness, and suicide ideation, attempts and success. School leaders are charged with protecting and ensuring the safety of all of their students, but school leaders may not know how to protect LGBT students from peer victimization. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine what school leaders can do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization and to identify effective strategies, programs, and policies that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth.

Research Questions

The following research question guided this study: “What do experts say school leaders can do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization?” The following supporting questions were identified and addressed through research instruments in this study:

- What effective strategies can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?
- What effective programs can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?
- What effective policies can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was based on Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs as explained at length in his work entitled *A Theory of Human Motivation* (1943). In essence, Maslow stated that all humans are motivated to meet five basic needs. Those needs in hierarchal order are (a) physiological, (b) safety, (c) love, (d) esteem, and (e) self-actualization. Maslow stated that these needs are driven by instinct. Before humans will move from a lower need to a higher need, the lower need must first be met. Physiological needs include homeostasis, breathing, food, sexual desires, sleep, and water. Once physiological needs have been met, humans then seek to meet safety needs. They want stability in their lives. When humans are relatively safe and secure, they then seek to love and be loved by others. They hunger for affection and belonging. They want to form friendships and relationships with others. Once humans have formed

loving relationships with others, they then move to fulfill the next need—esteem. All people need to feel satisfied and confident. They desire self-respect and the respect of others. Self-esteem leads to self-confidence, capability, and a feeling of usefulness in the world. After self-esteem needs have been satisfied, people can seek to meet the next need—self-actualization—the highest need. People desire to be self-fulfilled. Maslow explained that if a person is not doing what he is fitted to do, he will soon become restless and discontented. Maslow stated “A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be ultimately happy. What a man *can* be, he *must* be” (p. 10).

Maslow’s *Theory of Human Motivation* (1943) applies to all humans. According to Maslow, all humans have needs that must be fulfilled if they are to be satisfied and reach self-actualization. Thus, it can be presumed that Maslow’s theory includes those in the sexual minority. LGBT students, like heterosexual individuals, seek to fill physiological, safety, love, and esteem needs. They, too, seek to become self-actualized. LGBT students who are victimized by their peers may have difficulty fulfilling their physiological, safety, love, and esteem needs. Research has shown that students who are victimized by their peers may experience eating disorders and have difficulty sleeping (Sansone & Sansone, 2008); they do not feel safe (Graham, 2006; Williams et al., 2005); they are lonely and socially isolated (Storch, Brassard, & Masia-Warner, 2003; Weiler, 2004); and they have low self-esteem (Billups, 2009; Seals & Young, 2003). If lower-order needs are left unfulfilled, LGBT students who are victimized by their peers will not reach self-actualization and be completely happy. Nor, as Maslow stated, will they become what they *can* and *must* be.

Maslow (1943) explained that “the average child in our society generally prefers a safe, orderly, predictable, organized world, which he can count on, and in which unexpected, unmanageable or other dangerous things do not happen . . .” (p. 8).

Unfortunately, for victimized LGBT youth, school is not such a place. Kilman (2009) explained that school is hardly ever a safe space for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning youth, much less an atmosphere that is conducive to teaching and learning.

Markow and Fein (2005) wrote that peer victimization interferes with a child’s education. Kosciw (2004) explained that harassment adversely affects LGBT students’ sense of school belonging. Kosciw found that harassment is directly linked to poorer academic performance and an unsafe learning environment. Kosciw reported that LGBT students who were frequently victimized by their peers had grade point averages more than 10% lower than their non-victimized peers. Kosciw also reported that 75% percent of youth stated they did not feel safe in their school, primarily due to their gender expression or sexual orientation.

Importance of the Study

One hundred years ago had school children been asked what they worry about most in school, their answers might have been passing tests and moving on to the next grade. Today, school children would probably say they worry about their safety and being harassed by their peers (Graham, 2006). Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, and Scheidt (2001) stated that peer victimization is a widespread problem that is invading today’s schools. Nansel et al. found that 10% of students in the United States reported that at some point in their school careers they were victimized by their peers.

Graham (2006) pointed out that bullying is now a public health concern that is of utmost importance. This concern was triggered by the catastrophic consequences of bullying in schools in the United States (Seals & Young, 2003). Seals and Young explained that “School shootings have increased awareness that bullying may serve as a precursor to these violent eruptions” (p. 735). Seals and Young affirmed that “Recent acts of school violence have shown that bullying can no longer be viewed as merely a part of growing up” (p. 745).

Chan (2009) argued that matters are worse for those whose sexual orientation is not heterosexuality. Chan explained that school bullying, homophobic school bullying in particular, creates consequences that are traumatic for bullied children. Chan wrote:

Homophobic bullying, with which school bullying not attributable to sexual orientation is *always* intertwined, is a universal and the most fundamental sexual orientation-related problem affecting all children and adolescents of all ages around the world. Yet despite the tremendous harms school bullying in general and homophobic school bullying in particular causes, school authorities, parents, and society typically deny its occurrence and impact. Their denial is continually reinforced, perpetuated and exacerbated by responses, or the lack thereof, of the legal system as reflected by the paucity of legal research on the problem. Such denial is rooted in society’s general and pervasive unease with matters of sexuality and individual differences, and in its constructed image of childhood that, except for poverty, a child *cannot* struggle or suffer. Many children struggle and suffer a great deal, only to find their struggles and sufferings unseen, unheard,

ignored and disbelieved. For a child, school bullying is to him/her the biggest terror of all; for some, death means life. (p. 143)

Chan (2009) argued that students have the right to identify as a sexual minority. They also have the rights to health, non-discrimination, and access to education. Thus, as explained by Seals and Young (2003), information on how prevalent bullying is in today's schools can be useful to school leaders at all levels—school board members, school administrators, professional school counselors, and classroom teachers—as they work to develop plans to address the ever-increasing problem of peer victimization of LGBT students. Information obtained about this issue could be valuable for educators. It would be helpful to know the extent of how problematic peer victimization of LGBT students is, who is involved in the victimization, where the victimization occurs, and the effects that peer victimization has on both the bullies and victims.

The role of school leaders is to protect all students and provide them with a safe learning environment (GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2008). Findings in this study revealed what school leaders can do to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization and identified effective strategies, programs, and policies that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. In turn, these strategies, programs, and policies may decrease problems such as depression, anxiety, isolation, and suicide that LGBT students are faced with as a result of being victimized by their peers on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender expression/identity.

Conducting a study on what school leaders can do to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization was of interest to the researcher for two primary reasons. One, the

researcher was an assistant principal in a high school and had to address issues relating to bullying—more specifically bullying directed towards LGBT youth. The researcher was aware of few effective strategies, programs, or policies that could be relied on for guidance to address bullying directed towards LGBT students. This study provided school leaders and educators in general with a wealth of information that could prepare them to be effective when addressing issues related to the bullying of LGBT students.

The second reason that the researcher was interested in conducting this study was that a student at her high school committed suicide in 2010. Though the student did not leave a note explaining why she committed suicide, it was believed that she took her life because she was being bullied at school because her mother was gay. As a school leader, the researcher was responsible for protecting this student from being bullied by her peers. The researcher did not know how to protect this student. This excuse is unacceptable. A student may have been bullied to death and the researcher did nothing to help her. It is also unacceptable to say that because the researcher did not know the student, the researcher could not have stopped the student from being bullied. Preventive measures should have already been in place to protect this student and others like her who also suffer from peer victimization. One death due to peer victimization is one too many.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine what school leaders can do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization and to identify effective strategies, programs, and policies that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. This research study was qualitative in nature. The Delphi Technique was the chosen research

method and was used to gather data from a panel of seven experts. Two questionnaires and one survey were used to collect data for this study.

The Delphi Technique was created by Dalkey and his associates at the RAND Corporation (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975) in the early 1950s (Linstone & Turoff, 1975). The objectives of the Delphi Technique are to (1) determine other courses of actions for programs, (2) reveal information that can lead to varying judgments, (3) search for information that can lead to a consensus within a group of participants, (4) link informed judgments based on a topic from an array of learned disciplines, and (5) inform respondents of the different but interconnected parts of the research problem (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975). The Delphi Technique was chosen as the most appropriate research method for the purpose of this study. The Delphi Technique was used to determine what school leaders can do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization and to identify effective strategies, programs, and policies that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth.

The Delphi Technique research method focuses primarily on gathering desired information from a panel of experts. While the expertise of each panel member can add much value to the study, panel members do not meet face-to-face with other members because of their varied locations across the United States. The aims of a Delphi study are to ensure each participant's anonymity, prevent any one participant from dominating, and alleviate any hostility and personality conflicts that are likely to be present in face-to-face meetings (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975). The Delphi Technique allows each

panel member to freely voice their opinions without being persuaded by other panel members (Linstone & Turoff, 1975).

Sample

Purposeful sampling was used to choose respondents/participants for this study. Purposeful sampling allowed the researcher to select participants who were *information-rich* (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007) or who had expertise with the research problem. The Delphi panel of experts was chosen for their expertise in their field due to their advocacy of LGBT youth and protecting them from discrimination and harassment. Panel members were knowledgeable about what school leaders can do to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization and effective strategies, programs, and policies that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. The sample size for this Delphi study was seven participants.

Participants

Delbecq, Van de Ven, and Gustafson (1975) explained that three types of participants take part in a Delphi study: decision makers, staff, and respondents. Delbecq, Van de Ven, and Gustafson described the role of each participant. The decision makers for this study included the researcher and each dissertation committee member. The decision makers assessed the direction of the study. The committee Chair served as the staff member. The staff member had experience in both planning and conducting a Delphi study. The staff member also had knowledge about the problem identified in this study. Thus, the staff member had a critical role in guiding the Delphi process. The researcher also served as the support staff. The support staff created and evaluated each questionnaire, assessed the value of the information gathered, and revised ineffective

questionnaires. The support staff also developed and sent the research instruments to panel members and analyzed results of the study. Respondents were those who agreed to complete the research instruments. They comprised the Delphi panel of experts.

Lang (2000) explained that selecting the panel of experts is probably the most crucial aspect in conducting a successful Delphi study. Delbecq, Van de Ven, and Gustafson (1975) stated that if a Delphi study is to be successful, it is critical that the following conditions are ensured: (a) sufficient time to complete the study, (b) participants skilled in written communication, and (c) highly motivated participants. Delphi panel members are chosen based on four criteria. Delbecq, Van de Ven, and Gustafson stated that panel members must (1) have a deep personal interest and involvement in the research problem, (2) have significant information to contribute, (3) be motivated to participate in and complete the Delphi study, and (4) feel that aggregated information from the panel of experts will be of significant value to panel members and that the information attained would not otherwise be available to them.

The following participants who met the aforementioned conditions and criteria were invited to serve on the panel: two Gay Straight Alliance advisors and two college professors who have conducted research on LGBT individuals and the issues they face. Representatives from each of the following organizations were also invited to participate: American Civil Liberties Union, American Educational Research Association, American School Counselor Association, Child Advocacy Center, Committee for Children, Indiana Youth Group, Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, GroundSpark, Human Rights Campaign, Metamorphosis Counseling and Consulting, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Association of School Counselors, National

Association of School Psychologists, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Center for Lesbian Rights, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, Queer Studies Special Interest Group, Safe Schools Coalition, South Carolina Equality, The Trevor Project, and the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights.

Procedures

The Delphi process first began with the development of four open-ended research questions. The decision makers and staff worked to design straightforward, open-ended questions. Delbecq, Van de Ven, and Gustafson (1975) cautioned that if participants do not understand the questions, they may become frustrated, lose interest, and answer incorrectly or inappropriately. Delbecq, Van de Ven, and Gustafson explained that questions answered partially or incorrectly will reduce the validity and reliability of results.

Second, to ensure effective participation, panel members were carefully selected based on the following criteria: (a) they had a deep personal interest and involvement in the research problem, (b) they had significant information to contribute, (c) they were motivated to participate in and complete the Delphi study, and (d) they felt that aggregated information from the panel was of significant value to them and that information attained would not otherwise be available to them (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975).

Respondents were contacted by phone or email and asked to participate on the Delphi panel. The purpose and a description of the Delphi study were explained to each potential participant. Qualifications of each respondent were expressed, in addition to

reasons they should participate in the study. Respondent requirements, as well as how results would be dispersed, were discussed. After a personal and detailed introduction, participants were invited to serve as expert members on the Delphi panel. Each person contacted was asked to nominate other possible experts to serve on the panel (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975). This method of obtaining additional participants is known as snowball or chain sampling (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Two participants were nominated and chosen to participate using the snowball technique. Ten respondents agreed to participate on the Delphi panel of experts, but only seven returned required documents to participate in the study.

Instrumentation

Instrumentation consisted of a series of two questionnaires and one survey, respectively. A pilot study was conducted on each instrument before it was administered to respondents. The first questionnaire was open-ended. Participants responded to the following guiding question: “What do experts say school leaders can do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization?” Participants also responded to the following supporting questions:

- What effective strategies can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?
- What effective programs can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?
- What effective policies can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?

Panel members were sent a copy of the first questionnaire via email. The researcher analyzed the first questionnaire when it was returned and made a list of summarized items. The list was a reflection of the respondents' opinions and key ideas gathered from the first questionnaire. The list was reviewed to ensure that it was not so long that respondents had difficulty reviewing, criticizing, supporting, or opposing the information obtained from the first questionnaire. This list comprised the second questionnaire that was sent to respondents (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975).

Before the second questionnaire was sent to respondents, the researcher reviewed it to ensure that the information obtained from the first questionnaire was representative of what members wished to convey. The second questionnaire was a summarized list of items generated from the first questionnaire. Respondents were asked to support or oppose items and clarify any that appeared ambiguous. Respondents were given the opportunity to add items they felt should be included on the questionnaire. For each of the four questions, respondents were asked to rank the five most effective items in terms of personal priority with 1 being the most effective item, 2 the next most effective item, and so on, until the fifth item was assigned a value of 5. The second questionnaire served to identify: (1) areas of agreement and disagreement, (2) any items that needed clarification, and (3) the emergence of priorities (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975).

To avoid misrepresentation or inaccuracy on the survey, the third and final instrument, a comparison was made between the original comments on the second questionnaire and those that were included on the third instrument (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975). The survey was administered to the panel of experts. Panel members

were directed to read each statement and choose the level of effectiveness that best described how effective that action would be for school leaders in protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization, thus reducing the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth.

The survey was comprised of 30 Likert-type scale responses that were generated from panel member comments on the second questionnaire. Likert scale answer choices included *Extremely Effective*, *Very Effective*, *Moderately Effective*, *Slightly Effective*, and *Not at all Effective*, respectively. An analysis of the survey revealed how respondents rated surveys item in terms of how effective they were in protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization and reducing the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth.

Validity and Reliability

The Delphi Technique, qualitative in nature, was the chosen research method for this study. Data were collected through the use of two questionnaires and one survey. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) explained that when conducting educational research, the same standards used to measure validity and reliability in other data-collection instruments must also be used to measure the validity and reliability of questionnaires. Questionnaires often focus on the perceptions that respondents have about specific ideas and concepts in the study. If researchers desire to examine the true perceptions of respondents, Gall, Gall, and Borg explained that evidence demonstrating validity should be collected.

De Vaus (2002) stated that when an instrument measures what it is intended to measure, it is valid. The following strategies as suggested by Creswell (2009) were

implemented to help establish validity: (1) member checking was used to determine how accurate the findings were, (2) rich, thick descriptions were used to communicate results, (3) inconsistent and negative information that contradicted topics was presented, (4) peer debriefing was used to review the results for accuracy, and (5) an external auditor was used to review the study, thus providing an objective assessment of the findings.

Merriam (2009) explained that when a measure is reliable, its findings are consistent. To enhance reliability, the researcher, as recommended by Merriam, explained the theoretical concept of the study and provided a detailed description of how the study was conducted and how findings were interpreted from the data. As suggested by de Vaus (2002), the researcher sought to improve reliability by (1) carefully wording research questions, (2) avoiding questions that participants were not likely to be knowledgeable about, and (3) avoiding responses such as “do not know” or “cannot decide.”

Research is concerned with producing results that are both valid and reliable. If research studies are to influence a field’s theory or practice, they must be carefully conducted. Research studies must offer valid insights and conclusions to other researchers, practitioners, and readers. Due to the practicality of social sciences investigations, it is essential that researchers are not only confident in conducting their study, but also that they are confident in the findings of their study (Merriam, 2009).

Delimitations

This research study was delimited to members of the panel chosen by the researcher who had expertise in issues relating to LGBT students and effective strategies, programs, and policies that school leaders can implement in their schools to protect

LGBT youth from peer victimization. The study was also delimited to respondents who were nominated by other members of the panel but who also had knowledge about and experience with issues relating to the research topic. Additionally, the Delphi study was delimited to three rounds in which to gather information from the panel of experts. These rounds consisted of two questionnaires and one survey, respectively.

Limitations

The limitations of this study included a sample population of experts on the panel invited by the researcher or nominated by panel members. Other individuals with similar, if not more, adequate qualifications may have been overlooked as participants in this study. Another limitation of this study was that the response rate of participants decreased from Round One to Round Two. Additionally, this study may have been limited simply by the nature of the Delphi Technique. Linstone and Turoff (1975) explained that the goal of a Delphi study is for a group of people to reach consensus on a predetermined topic. In this attempt to reach consensus, extreme views were restrained when they could possibly have added new knowledge or information to the research topic.

Definition of Terms

The researcher included terms and definitions that are critical to understanding concepts and ideas as they relate to this study. The following terms and their definitions are included: *bisexual, coming out, Delphi Technique, gay, gender expression, gender identity, heterosexism, heterosexual, homophobia, homosexual, lesbian, LGBT, panel of experts, peer victimization/bullying/harassment, queer, questioning, sexual identity, sexual minority, sexual orientation, transgender, and two-spirited*. These definitions are

necessary to help the reader understand how the terms are used in this study, to clarify misconceptions about the topic, and to simply enlighten the reader.

Bisexual describes the sexual orientation of an individual who is emotionally and sexually attracted to members of both sexes (GLSEN, 2009).

Coming out is the process of declaring one's sexual identity and/or sexual orientation to an individual person in private or to a group of individuals (GLSEN, 2009).

The *Delphi Technique* is a research method that focuses primarily on gathering information from a panel of experts. The Delphi Technique is a succession of questionnaires developed from the responses of a panel of experts. The first questionnaire asks participants to respond to a general question that focuses on objectives, problems, solutions, or forecasts of the research study. The succeeding questionnaires are developed according to the responses of panel members from the previous questionnaire (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975). The process is complete when participants reach consensus (Dalkey, 1969) or adequate information has been exchanged and gathered (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975).

Gay describes the sexual identity and orientation of a man who is attracted physically, emotionally, and sexually to another man. The term gay was commonly used to refer to all people in the sexual minority. Today, it is more appropriate to use specific terminology such as *gay men*, *lesbian women*, *bisexual men and women*, and *transgendered persons* (Buccigrossi & Frost, 2003). In the past twenty years, using gay as an umbrella term has become less common. Today, gay is primarily used to refer only to men who are gay (King, n.d.).

Gender expression refers to the behaviors and physical characteristics of an individual that are traditionally related to either femininity or masculinity. These behaviors and characteristics include speech, mannerisms, dress, appearance, and social interactions (GLSEN, 2009).

Gender identity refers to the innate, self-perceived gender that an individual was born with (Buccigrossi & Frost, 2003). Some people may identify as male, female, or transgender (GLSEN, 2009). Gender identity is not the same as the biological gender of transgendered individuals (Buccigrossi & Frost, 2003).

Heterosexism refers to the oppression and discrimination of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people based on assumptions and prejudice that heterosexuality is the norm (Buccigrossi & Frost, 2003).

Heterosexual refers to a man or woman whose primary romantic and sexual attractions are to people of the opposite sex (King, n.d.).

Homophobia is the irrational fear and dislike of LGBT people (GLSEN, 2009). These feelings often result in harassment and discrimination of LGBT people (Buccigrossi & Frost, 2003).

Homosexual refers to a man or woman whose primary physical, emotional, and sexual attractions are to people of the same sex (Buccigrossi & Frost, 2003). Homosexuals now prefer the term *gay* or *lesbian* (GLSEN, 2009).

A *lesbian* is a woman who is attracted emotionally and sexually to other women (GLSEN, 2009).

LGBT is an acronym that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. LGBTQ is often used synonymously with LGBT. The “Q” can refer to those individuals

who are queer or who question their sexuality (GLSEN, 2009). GLBQQTT may also be used. The additional “T” refers to *two-spirited* (Robertson, 2005). Formerly the term gay was used as an umbrella term for LGBT people. Today, the more inclusive terms *LGBT* and *LGBTQ* are more commonly used and preferred by many LGBT people and their allies (GLSEN, 2009).

A panel of experts refers to those individuals who participate in a Delphi study. Delphi panel members are selected because they (1) have a deep personal interest and involvement in the research problem, (2) have significant information to contribute, (3) are motivated to participate in and complete the Delphi study, and (4) feel that aggregated information from the panel of experts will be of significant value to them and that the information attained would not otherwise be available to panel members (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975).

Peer victimization/bullying/harassment is defined as verbal, physical, or psychological abuse of victims by perpetrators whose only purpose is to cause harm (Olweus, 1993). Name calling, hitting, intimidating gestures, spreading of rumors, derogatory slurs, and social exclusion by powerful others are all examples of behaviors that constitute peer victimization (Graham & Bellmore, 2007). Peer victimization can be direct, indirect, overt or relational. Direct victimization refers to experiences that include attacks that are openly confrontational such as teasing, name calling, pushing, hitting, and kicking (Hawker & Boulton, 2000). Indirect victimization includes experiences that are covert such as making someone do something he/she does not want to do and telling other peers to dislike the victim (Mynard & Joseph, 2000). Overt victimization refers to verbal and physical insults. Relational victimization refers to acts that are intended to threaten or

damage the relationships of peers such as excluding peers and spreading rumors (Martin & Huebner, 2007).

Queer is a term that refers to a gender expression, gender identify, or sexual orientation that does not adopt the norms of a society that is primarily heterosexual. Historically, the term queer was offensive to LGBT people. Today, the term can reflect both positive and negative attitudes of LGBT people (GLSEN, 2009).

Questioning refers to the process of being unsure of one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity (GLSEN, 2009).

School leaders refer to those individuals within a school group that work together to increase the effectiveness and performance of the school group (Gorton, Alston, & Snowden, 2007).

Sexual identity refers to what people call themselves in relation to their sexuality. They can label themselves as *gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, heterosexual, straight*, and other sexually identifying names (GLSEN, 2009).

Sexual minority refers to people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and those who question their sexuality (Pope, 2003). Individuals who engage in same-sex behaviors or who are attracted to those of the same sex may be considered a sexual minority (Hansen, 2007).

Sexual orientation refers to the inward feelings of people and who they are attracted to emotionally and sexually (GLSEN, 2009). People can be attracted to one gender or both genders. Sexual orientations include bisexuality, heterosexuality, and homosexuality (Mongan-Rallis & Imbra, 1998).

Transgender refers to a person whose gender expression and identity does not match his or her biological gender. A transgendered person may transition to make his/her appearance and genitalia line up with his/her orientation. Some transgendered individuals may wear makeup and clothes of their innate gender, undergo hormone treatments to alter their physical appearance, or have surgery to reassign their genitalia. Transgendered people can be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or heterosexual (Buccigrossi & Frost, 2003).

Two-spirited is a term used by many Native Americans to describe themselves or other individuals who are LGBT or who do not conform to gender roles. The term implies that both a feminine and masculine spirit live in the same body (GLSEN, 2009).

Summary

The primary purpose of schools is to educate students. This education must be purposeful and effective so that students develop the knowledge and skills to become lifelong learners. If education is to be purposeful and effective, schools must be safe for all faculty, staff, and students, including those who identify as LGBT. However, schools are unsafe for many LGBT students. LGBT students are frequently harassed, bullied, and victimized by their peers, sometimes on a daily basis, because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression.

Peer victimization has a negative impact on the academic and psychological development of LGBT students. LGBT students who are victimized by their peers have lower grades, higher rates of school absenteeism, and higher dropout rates than their heterosexual peers. Victimized LGBT students also suffer greater levels of anxiety, depression, social isolation, substance abuse, and suicide than their heterosexual peers.

School leaders are charged with creating a school climate that is safe, welcoming, and protective of all students, including those in the sexual minority, though research has shown that many LGBT students are not protected from peer victimization. Additionally, research has found that school leaders may not have the knowledge, skills, or experience to address issues related to LGBT students. Further, school leaders may not know how to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization.

Though research has documented and suggested various strategies, programs, and policies to protect and ensure the safety of all students, including those in the sexual minority, very little research has been conducted on strategies, programs, *and* [emphasis added] policies for school leaders in protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization. This study sought to identify effective strategies, programs, and policies that school leaders can implement in their schools to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization. Thus, the following research question guided this study: “What do experts say school leaders can do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization?” The following supporting questions were identified and also addressed on the research instruments in this study:

- What effective strategies can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?
- What effective programs can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?
- What effective policies can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?

The Delphi Technique was the methodology used to conduct this study. The specific purpose of a Delphi study is to seek the expertise of members on a given topic. This method was chosen because the researcher wished to examine the perceptions of experts on effective strategies, programs, and policies that school leaders can implement in their schools to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization. Two questionnaires and one survey, respectively, were developed from the responses of the seven panel members. The first questionnaire asked participants to respond to four general questions that focused on the research problem. The succeeding questionnaire and survey were developed according to the responses of panel members from the previous questionnaire. The process was deemed complete when adequate information was gathered and exchanged regarding the research problem. Both questionnaires and the survey were analyzed after each administration and a summary of the results was provided to panel members.

To provide a sound research-based foundation for this study, Chapter Two focuses on a review of literature on the following topics: (a) peer victimization/bullying/harassment in public schools, (b) peer victimization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth, (c) the impact of peer victimization on LGBT youth, and (d) protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization through effective strategies, programs, and policies. A conceptual framework, in addition to a conceptual model, is included to demonstrate the proposed relationship between major concepts of the study. Chapter Two concludes with a summary of the review of literature.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In such a diverse and multi-faceted country as the United States of America, the role of public education should be to help students develop a respect for an individual's right to be free from harm and discrimination. Though students develop their own ideas about what is fair and right concerning sexuality, schools cannot dismiss their moral responsibility to protect every child from being harassed and harmed. Schools must not only develop and nurture an environment that is safe and protects students from emotional, social, and physical harm, but schools must also ensure that the environment is one in which students can develop a healthy sexual identity. The role of public education should be to guarantee that all students receive an education that is absent of discrimination, harassment, persecution and violence, regardless of their race, culture, ethnicity, national origin, religious background, gender, gender expression, *and* sexual orientation (Horn, Szalacha, & Drill, 2008).

President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, a federal mandate, into law in 2002 (Horn, Szalacha, & Drill, 2008). A major principle of the act centers on school safety. In regards to school safety, the purpose of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of NCLB is “to support programs that prevent violence in and around schools . . . and that are coordinated with related Federal, State, school, and community efforts and resources to foster a safe . . . learning environment that supports student academic achievement . . .” (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002, sec. 4002, para. 1). The act defines violence prevention as:

the promotion of school safety, such that students and school personnel are free from violent and disruptive acts, including sexual harassment and abuse, and victimization associated with prejudice and intolerance, on school premises, going to and from school, and at school-sponsored activities through the creation and maintenance of a school environment that is free of weapons and fosters individual responsibility and respect for the rights of others. (NCLB, 2002, sec. 7161, para. 4)

Unfortunately, this type of environment rarely exists for students who are or are perceived to be LGBT (Horn, Szalacha, & Drill, 2008). Historically, as well as presently, LGBT students and staff have not felt safe in schools because of their gender and sexual orientations (Markow & Fein, 2005). Each day LGBT students are harassed and victimized by their peers. Not only are LGBT students the victims of prejudice and discrimination from their peers, they also suffer these injustices from school administrators, counselors, and teachers—adults who have been charged with creating and sustaining safe and supportive school environments (Kosciw & Diaz, 2006). Wright (2010) argued that it is the responsibility of school leaders to encourage, support, and mandate school environments that are safe for all students and staff members.

Rottman (2006) explained that educators have emphasized more inclusive teaching and learning practices on issues related to diverse groups such as LGBT students. This emphasis has helped to develop school climates that are safer for all students and staff, including those in the sexual minority (Wright, 2010). The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, more commonly known as GLSEN, is a leading national educational organization whose primary goal is to ensure safe schools for all

students (Henneman, 2005). GLSEN, as well as other similar organizations, has surveyed LGBT students and staff not only to understand their school experiences, but to also understand how to create more supportive and positive school experiences for LGBT individuals (Markow & Fein, 2005). Wright (2010) pointed out that though progress has been made, schools still have difficulty improving the experiences of LGBT students.

Educators must be leaders who promote safe schools for all students, including those in the sexual minority (Weiler, 2004). Unfortunately for many students in the sexual minority, schools are not safe (Kilman, 2009). LGBT youth are victimized by their peers (Bochenek & Brown, 2001; Kosciw et al., 2010; Markow & Fein, 2005; Williams et al., 2005). Thus, this study was designed to provide school leaders with effective strategies, programs, and policies that can be implemented to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth; thereby ensuring their safety in schools.

Peer Victimization/Bullying/Harassment in Public Schools

Graham (2010) explained that peer victimization, often referred to as *bullying* or *harassment*, is not a new issue in American schools. Whitted and Dupper (2005) described bullying as “the most prevalent form of low-level violence in schools today” (p. 167). Hellams and Engec (2010) stated that bullying is present in every school in the United States. Wong (2009) asserted that bullying is a prevalent problem around the world. Though, in recent years, it appears that bullying has reached astounding proportions. Graham rationalized that within the past decade, probably in response to increased student concerns about bullying, there have been extensive studies on peer victimization in schools (see Table 1). Mishna (2004) explained that the prevalence of peer victimization is documented in the literature.

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development supported a study in 1998 to examine the prevalence of peer bullying in the United States. Nansel et al. (2001) interpreted the results and reported that more than 30% of children in the United States were regularly involved in bullying. More than 10 % of students in the United States reported that at some point in their school careers they were victimized by their peers. Graham (2010) stated that survey data indicated that 30% to 80% of youth in school reported that they were personally victimized by their peers. Another 10% to 15% of youth may be chronically victimized by their peers (Card & Hodges, 2008).

Olweus (1993) explained that when a student is victimized or bullied, he or she is repeatedly subjected to *negative actions* from one student or a group of students. These negative actions can be verbal or physical. Name calling, teasing, taunting, and threatening of peers are examples of negative verbal actions. Physical verbal actions include pinching, pushing, hitting, kicking, and restraining victims. Negative actions can also occur without using words or physical contact such as inappropriate gestures or not allowing the victim to be a part of a group.

Peer victimization can be direct, indirect, overt or relational. Direct victimization refers to experiences that are openly confrontational such as teasing, name calling, pushing, hitting, and kicking (Hawker & Boulton, 2000). Indirect victimization includes experiences that are covert, such as making a victim do something he/she does not want to do and telling other peers to dislike the victim (Mynard & Joseph, 2000). Overt victimization refers to verbal and physical insults. Relational victimization refers to acts that are intended to threaten or damage the relationships of peers such as excluding peers and spreading rumors (Martin & Huebner, 2007). Name calling, hitting, making

intimidating gestures, spreading rumors, using derogatory slurs, and social exclusion by powerful others are examples of behaviors that constitute peer victimization (Graham & Bellmore, 2007).

Olweus (1993) identified two critical features that distinguish peer fussing or fighting from peer victimization: (1) the intent to injure and (2) an imbalance in strength (power) between the bully and victim. Bullies intentionally seek to injure or bring discomfort to their victims. Craig and Pepler (2007) explained that children who are victimized never have more power than the children who bully. A bully's power may come as a result of being physically larger and stronger than his/her victims. Bullies may gain power from having a dominant role in society or a higher position in a peer group. A bully becomes powerful when a lone child is being bullied by a group of children. A bully may also exhibit systemic power over his/her victims because the victim may belong to a minority group (e.g., based on race, culture, economic disadvantage, disability, or sexual orientation). Bullies can attain power by knowing their victims' vulnerabilities such as learning difficulties, weight issues, family problems, or sexual orientation. The bully will use this information to distress his/her victims.

A critical feature characteristic of bullying identified by Olweus (1993) is that bullying occurs repeatedly. Craig and Pepler (2007) explained that each time a bullying incident occurs, the power relationship between the bully and victim becomes secured: The bully's power increases and the victim's power decreases. Pepler, Craig, Connolly, Yuile, McMaster and Jiang (2006) explained that bullying is a form of aggression that develops within a relationship when one child declares interpersonal power. Craig and Pepler referred to bullying as a *destructive relationship problem*. Bullies learn to use their

power and aggression to distress and control their victims; the victims become more and more powerless and, thus, unable to defend themselves from peer harassment.

Rigby (2003) cautioned that children who suffer repeated victimization from their peers must pay high social and personal costs. Victimized children become more and more socially isolated from their peers. Rigby explained that this process unfolds in two ways. First, victimized children avoid interacting with their peers. They may then experience social anxieties and become more hesitant about participating in social activities. To protect themselves from being bullied by their peers, they may even refuse to come to school. The second part of the process occurs within the group of peers. Children who are victimized by their peers tend to not have many friends. When peers realize that a child is being victimized, they are hesitant to intercede for fear that they too will become the object of the victimization. So these children isolate themselves from the child being victimized. They may even participate in the bullying so that those with power will accept them more. Rigby explained that children victimized for long periods of time will not develop appropriate societal norms that are crucial for them to interact and develop healthy relationships with their peers.

Though preventing bullying in schools is a complicated and challenging task, it is still a fundamental right of students to be safe in relationships (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007). Every child and adolescent has the right to be free and safe from bullying (Craig & Pepler, 2007). Research has proven that every child, primarily the LGBT youth, is not free or safe from bullying (Horn, Szalacha, & Drill, 2008). Nansel et al. (2001) stated that bullying is prevalent in schools and that bullying between school-age peers is now considered a major problem that affects the welfare of children and how

they function socially. Though some conflict and harassment is typical in peer relationships, bullying is a barrier to the healthy development of young people.

Table 1

Studies Related to Peer Victimization/Harassment/Bullying in Public Schools

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/Analysis	Outcomes
Mishna (2004)	Investigate bullying from the perspectives of bullied children, their parents, teachers, and administrators	61 public school students in grades 4 & 5; each child's parent, teacher, principal, and vice principal	Quantitative: surveys Qualitative: Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty existed in determining if an incident was considered bullying. • Difficulty existed in determining what constituted bullying between friends.
Pepler et al. (2006)	Examine the forms and relationship contexts of bullying in adolescence	1896 public school students from early to late adolescence (grades 6-8: 504 boys and 457 girls; grades 9-12: 456 boys and 479 girls)	Quantitative: questionnaires	<p>Adolescents who bully</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are more likely to sexually harass their opposite and same-sex peers. • are more likely to be physically aggressive with peers they date.
Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan (2007)	Examine the discrepancy between student and staff perceptions on bullying and peer victimization, retaliation, and intervention	15,185 public school students (grades 4-12), 1547 staff members from 109 public elementary, middle, and high schools in 1 district	Quantitative: survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff, on all levels, underestimated how prevalent bullying was at their schools. • Middle school students and staff were more concerned about bullying and reported being exposed more to bullying.
Martin & Huebner (2007)	Investigate the relationship between different forms of peer victimization, the pro-social experiences, and the emotional well-being of adolescents	571 public school students in grades 6-8; 226 boys and 345 girls	Quantitative: questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Females in early adolescence experienced more pro-social experiences than males. • Males experienced more overt victimization than females.

Peer Victimization of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth

As early as kindergarten, youth who will later identify as LGBT may start to feel different from their peers of the same gender. When LGBT youth reach middle school, most of them come to the realization that they are emotionally and physically attracted to peers of the same gender. Due to the changes that occur physically, cognitively, and psychologically, adolescence can be stressful for any teenager. Becoming aware of one's sexual identity is very important during this stage of development, but at times it is confusing (Weiler, 2004).

Brown (2002) explained that all individuals must conquer certain developmental tasks during their years as an adolescent if their lives are to be psychologically healthy and productive. Radkowsky and Siegel (as cited in Espelage et al., 2008) identified developmental tasks as “adjusting to the physical and emotional changes of puberty, establishing effective social and working relationships with peers, achieving independence from primary caretakers, preparing for a vocation, and moving toward a sense of values and definable identity” (p. 202). McAnarney (as cited in Espelage et al., 2008) explained that the fundamental goals of adolescence are to create a positive self image, to develop a secure self identity, and to develop the ability to enter into an intimate relationship with another person. However, Espelage et al. (2008) argued that for LGBT and questioning youth, accomplishing these tasks can be complicated because of a stigma associated with their homosexuality—homophobia.

Homophobia is the irrational fear and dislike of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (GLSEN, 2009). These feelings often result in the harassment and discrimination of LGBT individuals (Buccigrossi & Frost, 2003). Van Wormer and

McKinney (2003) explained that because homosexuality is still perceived to be abnormal, society sanctions hatred and intolerance toward lesbian and gay individuals. The harassment and discrimination of LGBT individuals is commonly referred to as homophobic bullying or homophobic victimization (Adams, Cox, & Dunstan, 2004; Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009; Chan, 2009; Kosciw, 2004).

Since 1999, GLSEN has conducted the National School Climate Survey (NSCS) biennially. The NSCS collects data on the school experiences of students who identify as LGBT (Kosciw et al., 2010). In GLSEN's 2003 National School Climate Survey, it was written that "violence, bias and harassment directed at LGBT students continue to be the rule—not the exception—in America's schools" (Kosciw, 2004, p. vii). Research continues to suggest that (1) homophobic bullying in schools is more severe than general bullying and (2) homophobic bullying is not often seen as serious as other types of bullying (Adams, Cox, & Dunstan, 2004). Van Wormer and McKinney (2003) argued that "the prevalence of homophobia is by far the most damaging influence on lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth" (p. 411).

Munoz-Plaza, Quinn, and Rounds (2002) described the classroom as "the most homophobic of all social institutions" (p. 53). The frequency of prejudice and homophobic attitudes, expressions, and behaviors in schools specifically directed towards LGBT students has been well documented (Bochenek & Brown, 2001; Kosciw, 2004; Kosciw & Diaz, 2006; Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008; Kosciw et al., 2010; Phoenix, Frosh, & Pattman, 2003). Research studies have shown that LGBT students are victimized by their peers (see Table 2). They are the victims of teasing, bullying,

discrimination, and sexual and physical harassment while in school (Markow & Fein, 2005; Williams et al., 2005).

In the 2007 National School Climate Survey, 33% of the students surveyed stated that their peers had been harassed frequently because of their real or perceived sexual orientation. Of these students surveyed, 39% reported that their peers had been harassed frequently because of how they looked physically. Of the youth surveyed, 65% had been either harassed or assaulted verbally or physically during the past school year by their peers because of their real or perceived race/ethnicity, religion, disability, gender, gender expression or sexual orientation. Of the LGBT teens surveyed, 90% reported that they had been harassed or assaulted verbally or physically during the past school year because of their real or perceived race/ethnicity, religion, disability, gender, gender expression or sexual orientation (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008).

Kosciw, Diaz, and Greytak (2008) explained that approximately 85% of LGBT students surveyed reported that they experienced some type of harassment or bullying while they were in school. Kosciw and Diaz (2006) surveyed students and found that more than 90% of lesbian, gay, and bisexual teens reported that they frequently or sometimes heard anti-gay remarks in their schools such as “dyke” and “faggot.” Of these students, 39.2% reported that adults in their school made these types of remarks and 99.4% reported that students made these types of remarks. LGBT students reported that they were isolated, stigmatized, harassed verbally and physically, and assaulted physically (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008). Swearer et al. (2008) explained that even when students are not victims of direct homophobic bullying such as verbal and physical

harassment, they may still experience isolation, anxiety, and depression in schools where homophobic language is used widely.

Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, and Hymel (2010) suggested that homophobic language in schools may create unsupportive environments for LGBT students. This type of environment may contribute to the negative consequences of peer harassment that LGBT youth experience. However, a positive school climate can help to buffer LGBT and questioning youth from negative social and psychological consequences of peer harassment (Espelage et al., 2008).

Weiler (2004) reported that approximately 10% of students in U.S. schools are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, yet many schools do not provide a sufficient education that promotes an awareness of sexual orientation as a natural part of human development. This insufficiency allows gender nonconforming students and those in the sexual minority to be the objects of prejudice, discrimination, and harassment. Though sexual minority students face identical developmental and social issues as their school-age peers and at times do so with the additional stress of self-doubt, fear, and isolation, they are the most susceptible students to peer victimization in middle and high school. Espelage and Swearer (2003) argued that the victimization of special groups, such as LGBT youth, needs to be examined.

Table 2

Studies Related to Peer Victimization of LGBT Youth

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/Analysis	Outcomes
Munoz, Quinn, & Rounds (2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the types of social support that was available to LGBT youth in high school • Examine the relationship between social support and the development of sexual identity 	12 male and female young adults, 18-21 year olds who identified as LGBT	Qualitative: interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-family LGBT and heterosexual adults were more supportive than family members. • LGBT peers and adults provided valuable emotional appraisal and informational support to participants.
Williams et al. (2005)	Examine buffering influences of positive parental relations and school climate on the mental health outcomes of sexual minority high school students	13,921 public high school students	Quantitative: survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual minority students were more likely to report high levels of drug use, depression, and feelings of suicide than their heterosexual peers.
Swearer et al. (2008)	Examine the effects of male adolescents' perceptions of being bullied with verbal taunts related to their gender nonconformity	251 male students, 9th through 11th grade, in a private all-male college preparatory school	Quantitative: surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boys who were bullied by being called gay had more negative perceptions about their school climate than boys who were bullied for other reasons. • Boys who were bullied by being called gay had greater anxiety and depression than boys who were bullied for other reasons. • Boys who were bullied by being called gay experienced more verbal and physical bullying than boys who were bullied for other reasons.

(table continues)

Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig (2009)	Examine how school contextual factors such as homophobic teasing and school climate affect truancy, drug use, depression, and suicidality among LGB, questioning, and heterosexual students	7,376 public school students in 7th and 8th grades	Quantitative: survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) and questioning students were more likely to report high levels of bullying, homophobic teasing, and other negative outcomes than their heterosexual peers. • Questioning students reported the most bullying, homophobic victimization, truancy, drug use, depression, and suicidality than their LGB or heterosexual peers. • All students, regardless of sexual orientation, reported the lowest levels of truancy, drug use, depression, and suicidality when they were in a positive school climate and when they were not the victims of homophobic teasing.
Kosciw et al. (2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine the experiences of LGBT youth in a negative school climate • Examine the effects of a negative school climate on LGBT youths' well-being. 	7,261 students from 2,783 school districts from all 50 states including the District of Columbia between the ages of 13 and 21 who identified as LGBT	Quantitative: survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nearly 90% of students heard "gay" used negatively. • Forty percent of students missed one day of school within the last month because they felt unsafe. • LGBT students with higher levels of bullying based on their sexual orientation reported higher levels of anxiety and depression.

Impact of Peer Victimization on the Development of LGBT Youth

School can be a dangerous place for students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (Markow & Fein, 2005). LGBT students are the victims of teasing, discrimination, and harassment (Chan, 2009; Kosciw & Diaz, 2006; Robertson, 2005; Weiler, 2004). Kosciw, Diaz, and Greytak (2008) reported that the most common reasons for peer victimization in middle and high schools in America are sexual orientation, gender expression, and physical appearance. LGBT-related characteristics account for the top reasons students are singled out for mistreatment.

Pope (2003) explained that in an attempt to force sexual minority youth to conform to society's idea of a "normal" sexuality, peers often tease LGBT youth and hurl a multitude of insulting and demeaning epithets at them as they attempt to make it through elementary, middle, and high school in the United States. More specific types of peer victimization toward LGBT youth include: death threats, having their clothes torn off, being ejaculated or urinated on, being assaulted with weapons, and being raped by a gang (Weiler, 2004). Findings from a study conducted by GLSEN in 2001 revealed that 83 % of LGBT youth had been assaulted verbally, physically, or sexually while in school (Kosciw & Cullen, 2002). Kosciw (2004) explained that numerous psychological and social effects of homophobic victimization stem from school climates that are not tolerant of sexual diversity. Living in this type of environment will take a psychological toll on LGBT and questioning youth, since this treatment happens during a time when LGBT youth so desperately seek and need to be a part of a peer group (Pope, 2003).

Conoley (2008) explained that in a society where standards for behavior are enforced through taunts, threats, and being attacked physically, LGBT youth, those

perceived to be LGBT, and those who question their sexuality, are at a higher risk for being victimized by their peers. As a result of victimization, their academic and psychological well-being becomes threatened (Poteat, 2008; Swearer et al., 2008). Much literature (see Table 3) exists on the relationship between victimized youth and negative academic and psychological outcomes (Beran, 2009; Billups, 2009; Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009; Chan, 2009; Hansen, 2007; Horn, Szalacha, & Drill, 2008; Kosciw, 2004; Markow & Fein, 2005; Martin & Huebner, 2007; Murdock & Bolch, 2005; Nishina, Juvonen, & Witkow, 2005; Poteat & Espelage, 2007; Robertson, 2005; Storch, Brassard, & Masia-Warner, 2003; Swearer et al., 2008; Weiler, 2003, 2004; Williams et al., 2005).

Kosciw, Diaz, and Greytak (2008) pointed out that peer harassment creates an atmosphere of fear and leads many LGBT students to disengage from school. Murdock and Bolch (2005) maintained that one of the most powerful predictors of school disengagement for lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) youth is peer victimization. School engagement, or a sense of belonging and acceptance to one's school, is related to numerous educational outcomes (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008). Victimized LGB youth do not adjust to school as well as their heterosexual peers, as indicated by lower levels of school belonging and school achievement (Poteat & Espelage, 2007; Rostosky, Owens, Zimmerman, & Riggle, 2003; Russell, Seif, & Truong, 2001).

Academic Development

Kosciw and Diaz (2006) and Williams et al. (2005) agreed that LGBT students experience a school environment that is more negative than that of their heterosexual peers. Russell, Seif, and Truong (2001) explained that LGB students tend to have greater negative attitudes about school and more school troubles than their non-LGB peers.

Hansen (2007) explained that LGBT youth may struggle more in school because negative school environments have an impact on their academic achievement.

Schwartz, Gorman, Nakamoto, and Tobin (2005) found that frequent peer victimization was related to poor academic performance. Beran, Hughes, and Lupart (2008) explained that the link between bullying and academic problems may be a result of the stress from constant mistreatment by peers. Stress may make it difficult for a child to concentrate in school. Lack of concentration will lower the achievement of the mistreated child. Schwartz et al. (2005) concluded that being bullied and rejected has a devastating effect on how children feel about school and how they adjust academically.

In the 2003 National School Climate Survey, it was reported that peer victimization in the forms of harassment both verbal and physical, as well as physical assault, were related to lower grade point averages (GPAs) of youth who identified as LGBT (Kosciw, 2004). Kosciw and Diaz (2006) found that lower academic achievement directly correlated with the severity of students' harassment experiences. LGBT students who were victimized more frequently because of their gender expression or sexual orientation reported GPAs that were considerably lower than those of students who were not harassed as frequently. These students' GPAs were nearly half a grade point lower than the GPAs of students who were not harassed as frequently (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008; Kosciw et al. 2010). Russell, Seif, and Truong (2001) found that LGB students had lower GPAs than their heterosexual peers.

In 2004 the Massachusetts Department of Education conducted a study and found that lesbian, gay, and bisexual high school students were nearly five times more likely than their heterosexual peers to report that they did not attend school because they did not

feel safe (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009). In a report published by the Human Rights Watch in 2001, LGBT youth who felt unsafe in school were likely to skip school nearly four times more often than their heterosexual peers (Bochenek & Brown, 2001). Robertson (2005) stated that LGBT youth are at a greater risk than their heterosexual peers for truancy and dropping out of school. Graham and Bellmore (2007) wrote “It is not difficult to imagine the chronic victim who becomes so anxious about going to school that she or he tries to avoid it at all costs” (p. 139).

Beran, Hughes, and Lupart (2008) stated that some studies have not found a significant relationship between low academic achievement and peer victimization. Kochenderfer and Ladd (as cited in Beran, Hughes & Lupart, 2008) found that bullying was not predicted by, nor did it predict, how a student would achieve academically. Woods and Wolke (2004) reported that the achievement levels of victimized and non-victimized youth were similar. Woods and Wolke also suggested that as an avenue of escaping from victimization, bullied children may try to cope with their negative feelings by exerting more effort academically.

One of the most important tasks for a child is to adjust successfully into the school environment. This adjustment involves a steady progress toward academic success throughout the child’s years in school. Regrettably, for some students, peer harassment creates a roadblock to academic achievement (Iyer, Kochenderfer-Ladd, Eisenberg, & Thompson, 2010). When students do not feel safe in school and they experience harassment, their academic achievement is hindered and it becomes difficult for them to succeed (Kosciw et al., 2010). Because learning occurs in an environment where students

are at risk for peer harassment, it is likely there will be a negative effect on academic performance (Beran, 2009).

Psychological Development

For adolescents, school is an environment where they can interact socially with their school-age peers. (Berndt, 2004; Guest & Schneider, 2003). Berndt explained that as students develop, peer interaction serves several purposes, including: increasing self worth, enhancing skills that are necessary for social interaction, and relying on peers for support and belonging. Unfortunately, repeated victimization disrupts the developmental process for many students. This victimization is related to negative social and psychological consequences that are not just temporary, but may be permanent as well.

Existing research has documented that students who reported homophobic victimization and being called homophobic epithets by their peers had experienced social and psychological consequences (Kosciw, 2004; Poteat & Espelage, 2007). Researchers have consistently found, throughout the general population of students, peer victimization to be associated with a variety of adjustment and psychological issues such as loneliness, rejection, depression, and lower self-esteem (Billups, 2009; Graham & Juvonen, 2002; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Kosciw et al., 2010; Martin & Huebner, 2007; Nansel et al., 2001; Nishina, Juvonen, & Witkow, 2005; Olweus, 1993; Seals & Young, 2003). Poteat and Espelage (2007) surveyed middle school students in Illinois and found that being the target of verbal homophobic harassment was related to increased levels of personal stress, anxiety, and depression. Junoven and Graham (as cited in Craig and Pepler, 2007) explained that students who are chronically victimized are often not accepted by their peers and as a result they become anxious, lonely, and depressed.

Social isolation is often cited in the literature as a risk factor associated with being a sexual minority (Goodenow, Szalacha, & Westheimer, 2006; Hansen, 2007). Rostosky et al. (2003) documented that the level of school belonging for LGB students was lower than that of their heterosexual peers. LGBT youth who were victimized by their peers experienced loneliness and social isolation (Hansen, 2007; Storch, Brassard, & Masia-Warner, 2003; Weiler, 2004). Savin-Williams (as cited in Hansen, 2007) clarified that research focused on stress factors in the lives of sexual minority youth indicated that in general peer relationships, and more specifically peer victimization, were related to feelings of being separated and emotionally isolated. For young people, these feelings may be among the most challenging obstacles to overcome.

Klomek, Marrocco, Kleinman, Schonfeld, and Gould (2008) found that all types of victimization (direct, indirect, overt, and relational) were linked to an increased risk of being depressed, having serious thoughts about committing suicide, and attempting suicide. Generally, the more students are victimized, the greater the risk for being depressed and committing suicide. Subsequently, students who have been subjected to more types of victimization are at a greater risk for being depressed and committing suicide. Pilkington and D'Augelli (1995) and Bontempo and D'Augelli (2002) stated that studies have shown that LGB youth who had increased levels of victimization also had increased levels of risky health behaviors such as unsafe sexual behaviors, substance abuse, and suicidality. Klomek et al. (2008) explained that peer victimization may be an indicator of suicidal behaviors.

In 2001, Juvonen and Graham (as cited in Craig & Pepler, 2007) explained that the negative impacts of peer victimization emphasize the reason it is important to protect

children from “all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse” (p. 87) that are committed by their peers. This protection is the responsibility of all adults in society including parents and teachers, as well as other adults in charge of children and adolescents. Craig and Pepler (2003) impressed that it is crucial that adults protect students who are victimized.

Kosciw et al. (2010) stressed that the central responsibility of schools is to provide a safe place where students can learn and succeed. Unsafe schools challenge this responsibility. It is evident that for some youth who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, school can be a place where victimization and harassment occur on a regular basis. This type of environment creates and sustains feelings of being unsafe academically and psychologically for the LGB student (Murdock & Bolch, 2005).

Table 3

Studies Related to the Impact of Peer Victimization on the Development of LGBT Youth

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/Analysis	Outcomes
Storch, Brassard, & Masia-Warner (2003)	Examine the relationship between relational and overt victimization, loneliness, social anxiety, and the prosocial behaviors of peers	383 adolescents 13 to 16 year olds in the 9th and 10th grade of a parochial high school; 238 females and 45 males	Quantitative: questionnaires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boys experienced fewer prosocial behaviors from peers and higher rates of overt victimization as compared to girls. Relational and overt victimization were positively associated with loneliness, social avoidance, and physiological symptoms.
Murdock & Bolch (2005)	Determine the relationship between school climate and the school adjustment of LGB high school students and how social support influences those relationships	101 high school students who identified as LGB	Quantitative: survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School climate was related to school adjustment as evidenced by school belonging, disruptive behavior, and grades.
Nishina, Juvonen, & Witkow (2005)	Examine the association between peer victimization, psychosocial problems, physical symptoms, and school functioning for first-year middle school students	1,526 6th grade middle school students	Quantitative: survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer victimization not only predicted but was also predicted by previous psychosocial problems. Being targeted for peer aggression and experiencing psychosocial aggression can serve as indirect and direct stress factors that over time will affect school functioning.
Martin & Huebner (2007)	Investigate the relationship between different types of peer victimization, prosocial experiences, and the emotional well-being of early adolescents	571 students (86 boys, 117 girls) in grades 6-8	Quantitative: questionnaires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Males reported more relational and overt victimization; females reported more experiences that were prosocial.

(table continues)

Poteat & Espelage (2007)	Examine the extent to which homophobic victimization predicted psychological and social stress indicators for middle school students	169 middle school students between the ages of 13 and 15; 95 males and 74 females	Quantitative: surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homophobic victimization significantly predicted an increase in anxiety, depression, and social distress, as well as a lower sense of school belonging in males and higher levels of withdrawal females.
Horn, Szalacha, & Drill (2008)	Investigate competing arguments regarding sexual orientation of gay and lesbian peers and their rights	1,076 heterosexual high school students (648 males, 428 females)	Quantitative: survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High school students knew the difference between the rights of others to be safe in school and their own individual beliefs about homosexuality.
Klomek et al. (2008)	Examine the difference between types of peer victimization, depression, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts of adolescents	2,342 high school students between the ages of 13 and 19	Quantitative: questionnaires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who were frequently exposed to all types of victimization were at a higher risk for depression, suicide ideation, and suicide attempts compared to students not victimized.
Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak (2008)	Examine the experiences of LGBT students in regard to indicators of negative school climate (biased language, feeling unsafe in school, and assault and harassment at school)	6,209 LGBT students in grades K-12 between the ages of 13 and 21 from all 50 states including the District of Columbia school)	Quantitative: survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nearly 75% students heard homophobic remarks frequently or often at school. • A little more than 60% of students reported that they did not feel safe in school because of their sexual orientation. • Forty-four percent of students reported being physically harassed because of their sexual orientation.
Beran (2009)	Investigate the relationship between peer victimization and academic achievement	4,293 adolescents between the ages of 12 and 15	Quantitative: questionnaires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When victimized adolescents experienced aggressive behavior, they had lower achievement.

Protecting LGBT Youth from Peer Victimization in Schools

The rights of LGBT youth have been violated. Even though this violation of rights has been documented in schools throughout the United States (Russell, Franz, & Driscoll, 2001) and research has evidenced the negative developmental outcomes experienced by students who are victimized by their peers (Beran, 2009; Graham & Juvonen, 2002; Goodenow et al., 2006; Klomek et al., 2008; Kosciw et al., 2010; Martin & Huebner, 2007; Nansel et al., 2001; Nishina, Juvonen, & Witkow, 2005; Poteat & Espelage, 2007), this situation remains quite complicated. The complexity of this situation is rooted in the diverse ways that individuals interpret the function of education and the role of schools in supporting the development of students, especially on issues of sex and sexuality (Horn, Szalacha, & Drill, 2008).

Opponents to ensuring the rights of LGBT youth often argue that when anti-harassment practices and policies are established to protect LGBT youth, schools began to endorse the acceptance of homosexuality. At this point, opponents argue that schools violate other students' rights, as well as the rights of their parents to believe and rear their children according to their own personal beliefs. This premise is grounded usually on religious or cultural principles (Nairn & Smith, 2003). Horn, Szalacha, and Drill (2008) agreed that this may be true, but counter-argued that young people are capable of understanding aspects of culture that conflict and compete with each other. Horn, Szalacha, and Drill found that students were able to believe in the right to be free from discrimination and harassment and still maintain their own beliefs about homosexuality.

Though some controversy exists over the role of schools in protecting sexual minority youth from peer harassment (Nairn & Smith, 2003), there is literature on why

and how school leaders should and can protect students, including those in the sexual minority, from peer harassment (Billups, 2009; Craig & Pepler, 2007; Espelage et al., 2008; GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2008; Horn, Szalacha, & Drill, 2008; Kosciw et al., 2010; Nansel et al., 2001; Swearer et al., 2010; Wright, 2010). If bullying is allowed to continue and no action is taken to prevent it, the entire school climate will be affected. The school environment will become one filled with fear and disrespect. This type of environment may suppress the learning ability of all students. Students may begin to feel insecure and develop a dislike of school. When students do not witness adults intervening or preventing bullying, they may feel that teachers and other adults cannot control the students, and that adults do not care what happens to students in school (South Carolina Association of School Administrators, 2010).

Weiler (2004) argued that it is the legal, ethical, and moral obligation of schools to protect *all* students. GLSEN and Harris Interactive (2008) wrote that because principals are the leaders in their schools, it is their responsibility to create and sustain school environments that are safe, welcoming, and free from harassment for all students. This task can be accomplished through the implementation of research-based strategies, programs, and policies proven to be effective in protecting students from peer victimization, including those in the sexual minority (Cianciotto, & Cahill, 2003; GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2008; Goodenow, Szalacha, & Westheimer, 2006; Graybill, Varjas, Meyers, & Watson, 2009; Hansen, 2007; Horn, Szalacha, & Drill, 2008; Just the Facts Coalition, 2008; Morillas & Gibbons, 2010; National Center for Lesbian Rights, 2010; Newman-Carlson & Horne, 2004; Orpinas, Horne, & Staniszewski, 2003; Stone, 2003; Underwood, 2004).

Strategies for Protecting LGBT Youth from Peer Victimization

Weiler (2004) maintained that it is essential that research-based strategies (see Table 4) are developed to help students, faculty and staff, and parents collaborate to build a school climate that upholds all students' rights and dignities. The climate of a school determines whether or not the environment is healthy and conducive to learning. Weiler argued that educators should examine the climate of their schools to "ensure that students are taught positive, nonbiased behavior and that all staff members are trained to model and reinforce such behavior and stop harassment immediately" (p. 39-40).

Goodenow, Szalacha, and Westheimer (2006) and Russell, Seif, and Truong (2001) suggested that some negative school experiences of LGBT youth can be counteracted by school personnel, thus developing a school climate that is more positive for the LGBT youth (Graybill et al., 2009). Weiler (2003, 2004) stated that supportive school personnel can have a positive influence on LGBT students. Weiler offered strategies that can protect LGBT students from peer harassment. Those strategies include: improving school safety, affirming diversity, dispelling inaccurate information, providing a supportive network for LGBT students, preventing discrimination, ensuring that LGBT students have equal access to all school-related activities, training all staff to understand LGBT students, implementing effective interventions, being wary of attempting to change a student's sexual orientation, and being ready to address controversial issues.

Graybill et al. (2009) explained that literature focused on the school climate of LGBT youth identifies five common strategies recommended when advocating for sexual minority youth in schools. First, advocates should promote a curriculum that increases the visibility of LGBT individuals, as well as one that focuses on their accomplishments.

Second, advocates should be trained on issues affecting LGBT youth. Third, advocates should support Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) which are designed to be safe spaces for sexual minority youth and their non-gay allies. Fourth, anti-discrimination policies should include clauses that specifically address sexual orientation. Fifth, supportive literature featuring the LGBT population should be displayed throughout the school, as well as in school libraries.

Though research on the prevention of bullying is still in its early stages, researchers have documented ten “best practices” to prevent and intervene in bullying. Those best practices include: (1) changing the culture and climate of the school in regard to bullying, (2) assessing the prevalence of bullying in schools, (3) getting school and parental “buy-in” to prevent bullying, (4) forming a group specifically designed to develop activities that prevent bullying, (5) training the faculty and staff on how to prevent bullying, (6) establishing and enforcing school rules and policies that address bullying, (7) increasing adult supervision in areas where bullying commonly occurs, (8) intervening consistently and appropriately when bullying occurs, (9) focusing class time on how to prevent bullying, and (10) continuing these bullying prevention efforts so they become ingrained in the school’s culture (Stop Bullying Now, n.d.).

Another strategy that schools can implement to protect LGBT students from peer victimization is to create what are called Safe Spaces. GLSEN (2009) described a Safe Space as a place that is welcoming, supportive, and safe for LGBT students. Safe Spaces should be easily identifiable (i.e., Safe Space stickers, posters, LGBT supportive materials) so that LGBT students will know who their allies are and where to go to when they need support and safety. In essence, Safe Space allies should be knowledgeable

about LGBT issues and provide support, education, and advocacy for students who identify as LGBT.

Morillas and Gibbons (2010), with others agreeing, argued that it is within the power of a school's faculty and staff to reduce the consequences of LGBT harassment. The following eight strategies were suggested to protect sexual minority students, thus ensuring their safety and promoting their sense of belonging in school: (1) become a visible ally (GLSEN, 2009; Kilman, 2009), (2) provide resources (Kosciw, 2004; Whelan, 2006), (3) create and support Gay-Straight Alliances (GLSEN, 2009; Goodenow, Szalacha, & Westheimer, 2006; Graybill et al., 2009; Hansen, 2007; Kilman, 2009; Lee, 2002; Mayberry, 2006; Orpinas et al., 2003; Poland, 2010; Valenti, & Campbell, 2009), (4) promote curriculum inclusion (GLSEN, 2009; Hanlon, 2009; Kilman, 2009; Stone, 2003), (5) organize awareness and action training for school personnel (Hansen, 2007; Weiler, 2003, 2004), (6) enforce zero-tolerance of harassment (Hansen, 2007; Weiler, 2003, 2004), (7) encourage schoolwide change, and (8) become an advocate for systemic change (Bocheneck & Brown, 2001).

As indicated in the preceding paragraph, much literature can be found on supporting the creation of GSAs as a strategy to protect LGBT students from peer harassment (GLSEN, 2009; Goodenow et al., 2006; Graybill et al., 2009; Hansen, 2007; Kilman, 2009; Mayberry, 2006; Orpinas, Horne, & Staniszewski, 2003; Poland, 2010). The "Safe Space Kit," published by GLSEN in 2009, wrote that GSAs, student clubs designed to address LGBT student issues, are critical to supporting LGBT students. GSAs are led by students and are generally formed in middle and high schools. GSAs

seek to promote a respect for all students, as well as address anti-gay language and harassment in schools.

Goodenow, Szalacha, and Westheimer (2006) argued that GSAs foster the well-being and safety of students in the sexual minority. GSAs also demonstrate that school leaders are committed to creating a school climate that is both supportive and inclusive of LGBT students. Groups, such as GSAs, that support LGBT students, provide evidence that a school is committed to, or in part is officially accepting of, LGBT students. GSAs may also indicate that harassment on the basis of sexual orientation will not be tolerated from students or staff. Morillas and Gibbons (2010) affirmed that GSAs are probably the most powerful tools for creating schoolwide change and safety that fosters a positive school climate. Hansen (2007) referred to GSAs as “the most potent factors for institutional change” (p. 845).

The 2005 National School Climate Survey conducted by GLSEN found that in schools with GSAs, LGBT students were less likely than other students who attended schools without GSAs to miss school because they felt unsafe. LGBT students in schools with GSAs also felt a greater sense of school belonging than students whose schools did not have a GSA (Kosciw & Diaz, 2006). The 2007 National School Climate Survey found that LGBT students with GSAs in their schools were less likely to hear homophobic language than students in schools without GSAs. LGBT students in schools with GSAs reported that they were less likely to feel unsafe because of their gender identify or sexual orientation (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008).

Even though literature has documented the need for GSAs to protect LGBT youth from peer harassment, controversy stills surrounds the issue. Evans (2006), in an article

published by the North Carolina Family Policy Council, wrote that “Gay-Straight Alliance clubs have been a key weapon in the arsenal of the homosexual movement for spreading its message to youth” (p. 1). Evans continued by impressing that as GSAs have become more prominent in schools, parents and school boards are concerned and have begun fighting to keep them out of American schools. Evans wrote that while GSAs claim they are harmless clubs that support students and fight harassment, they advocate teaching students about sex and homosexuality. Evans argued that these teachings place students at risk for mental, emotional, and physical problems and at the same time, they undermine the religious and moral teachings of parents. Evans suggested the following strategies as effective ways of keeping GSAs out of schools: (1) ban *sexuality* clubs, (2) enact regulations that require parental consent, and (3) advocate for local and statewide policies that ban GSAs.

Table 4

Studies Related to Strategies for Protecting LGBT Youth from Peer Victimization

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/Analysis	Outcomes
Lee (2002)	Investigate the impact that GSAs have on seven students	5 females, 2 males; 15-18 years of age in a culturally diverse high school	Qualitative: interviews, documents, and personal reflections of the researcher	GSAs have a positive impact on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • academic performance • relationships • level of comfort on sexual orientation • feeling safe physically • sense of school belonging
Kosciw (2004)	Determine supports and resources in schools for LGBT Youth	887 LGBT youth age 13-20 from 48 states including the District of Columbia	Quantitative: survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many LGBT youth reported that they did not have access to LGBT resources in school. • Most LGBT youth reported that they knew of a teacher or other staff member who supported LGBT youth.
Goodenow, Szalacha, & Westheimer (2006)	Investigate factors in school that may have an association with safety among sexual minority youth	202 sexual minority youth in 52 US schools	Quantitative: survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual minority youth in schools that have support groups for LGB students reported lower rates of peer victimization and suicide.
Graybill et al. (2009)	Investigate strategies used by advisors of GSAs when advocating for sexual minority youth in schools	22 high school GSA advisors; 26 to 55 years of age	Qualitative: interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GSA advisors implemented a variety of strategies that depended on the comments and situations of LGBT students.
Valenti & Campbell (2009)	Explore the motivation of advisors in GSAs	14 public high school advisors in one mid-western state	Qualitative: interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants were motivated to serve as advisors because of protective attitudes they have for LGBT youth and a personal connection they have with sexual minority issues and people.

Programs for Protecting LGBT Youth from Peer Victimization

Schools have implemented national anti-bullying/harassment education programs (see Table 5) to reduce peer harassment (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008). Newman-Carlson and Horne (2004) argued that not only should schools explore implementing bully prevention programs to assist victims, but they should also seek ways to promote positive relationships between teachers, bullies, and victims, as well as those students who may feel insecure and suffer academically as a result of being bystanders to bullying. Some anti-bullying programs implemented in schools include Bully-Proofing Your School, Steps to Respect: A Bullying Prevention Program, No Name-Calling Week, Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, Don't Laugh at Me, Expect Respect, and Names Can Really Hurt Us (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008). Programs that specifically address anti-gay harassment include Project 10 (Henning-Stout, James, & Macintosh 2000), Alley Week (GLSEN, 2010a), the National Day of Silence (GLSEN, 2010b), and Think B4 You Speak (GLSEN, 2009).

Most anti-bullying programs are classified as either targeted or universal. Targeted programs are created for students with a high risk for aggressive behaviors or for students who have already committed acts that are aggressive or violent. These programs are designed to increase protective factors and decrease risk factors seeking to minimize the likelihood that violent behaviors will occur or reoccur. Universal programs are created to keep violent behaviors from occurring by training every student, and at times the entire school staff, or by changing the school climate. Universal programs affect every person in the school (Orpinas, Horne, & Staniszewski, 2003). Smith, Schneider, Smith, and Ananiadou (2004) explained that the whole-school approach is

based on the assumption that since bullying is a systemic problem, interventions must be schoolwide rather than directed toward individual bullies or victims. Research has documented that to effectively reduce bullying, a schoolwide comprehensive approach is necessary. This approach should be designed to change the school's environment from one that commonly accepts bullying to one in which bullying is now recognized by all as unacceptable. Limber and Small (2003) added that bullying must also be addressed consistently.

The implementation of evidence-based bullying prevention programs is one of the most effective methods to address school bullying. A program is evidence-based if it has undergone rigorous evaluations that have proven to be effective in yielding positive results (South Carolina Association of School Administrators, 2010). Wong (2009) explained that few existing anti-bullying efforts have been evaluated for efficacy. Of those evaluated, an even smaller number have been observed with a research design that is able to reach conclusions based on cause and effect. Wong further explained that bullying prevention efforts that are evidence-based can be implemented only if evidence exists *and* an explanation is provided on the effectiveness of the implementations.

The South Carolina Association of School Administrators (2010) wrote that the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) is the best-known and most research-based bullying prevention program that is available today. Newman-Carlson and Horne (2004) explained that in 1978, Olweus' program became the first universal school-based bullying prevention program designed to be evaluated through systematic research. The OBPP can be modified to address bullying in elementary, middle, and high schools (Ferguson, Miguel, Kilburn, & Sanchez, 2007). This program was designed to have an

impact on a variety of school components including the classroom environment, students and teachers, as well as parents. This universal approach to preventing bullying was designed to improve peer relationships, thus making the school a safer and more positive place for students to learn and develop (South Carolina Association of School Administrators, 2010).

With more than 35 years of research and implementations that have been successful worldwide, the OBPP has proven to reduce or prevent bullying in schools. The program was found to have a significant effect on current school victimization and at the same time it reduced the number of new victims to bullying (Newman-Carlson & Horne, 2004). The South Carolina Association of School Administrators (2010) wrote that program results indicated significant reductions in student reports of overall antisocial behaviors such as truancy, theft, vandalism, fighting, violence, and bullying. There were also significant improvements in the social climate of classrooms as indicated by student reports of more positive attitudes and peer relationships, better order and discipline, and an increase in support for students victimized by their peers. Olweus (1993) impressed that two years after the program was implemented in participating schools, bullying rates decreased by approximately 50%.

Olweus (1993) explicated that the major goals of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program were to “reduce as much as possible—ideally to eliminate completely—existing bully/victim problems in and out of the school setting to prevent the development of new problems” (p. 65). Olweus made clear two general conditions that are critical to implementing these goals in school-based bullying intervention programs: (1) adults at school, and to an extent adults at home, should be made aware of the prevalence of

bullying in “their” school and (2) adults must make a decision to become seriously involved in changing the condition of bullying in their school.

Newman-Carlson and Horne (2004) warned that though Olweus’ program demonstrated the feasibility of reducing bullying problems in schools, his intervention program was conducted in Norway, a country with cultural and educational environments quite different than those in the United States. The article, “The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program” published in *The Brown Child and Adolescent University and Behavior Letter* in 2005, pointed out that the program has undergone successful implementation in other countries including Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Newman-Carlson and Horne stated that though Olweus utilized an approach that was comprehensive and broad in range, the need still exists to determine whether programs that are less comprehensive could also produce lower bullying rates in U.S. schools.

Another effective evidence-based program that school leaders can implement to help students build more supportive peer relationships, thereby decreasing bullying in school is the *Steps to Respect: A Bullying Prevention Program* (Frey, Hirschstein, Snell, Edstrom, MacKenzie, & Broderick, 2005). *Steps to Respect*, a universal bullying prevention program designed for third through sixth grades, places an emphasis on the entire school community for taking responsibility in reducing school bullying. A central part of the program is to provide training to staff members that increase their awareness of bullying and their ability to effectively address bullying situations. The *Steps to Respect* program addresses each school level—individual students, peer groups, and the

school community—thus providing schoolwide strategies and support to reduce bullying (Committee for Children, 2005).

Frey et al. (2005) wrote that the Steps to Respect bullying program can positively impact school bullying. Frey et al. conducted a review of the Steps to Respect program and documented a decrease in arguments and bullying behaviors in those students who participated in the bullying intervention program compared to those who did not participate in the program. There was also an increase in more positive student interactions and a reduction in destructive bystander behaviors. Students who participated in the intervention program reported both an increase in bystander responsibility and perceived adult reactions and a decrease in bullying acceptance from those students who did not participate in the program.

GLSEN's mission statement is centered on creating safe and effective schools for every student. For this reason, its Education Department developed a project designed for middle schools that focuses on reducing anti-gay name-calling and bullying in schools. The project, No Name-Calling Week (NNCW), takes place once a year and its activities focus on alleviating all types of name-calling. Students and educators are provided with tools and strategies to eliminate name-calling in their schools. *The Misfits*, a novel written by James Howe, served as the inspiration for NNCW. NNCW seeks to bring attention to the problem of name-calling in schools (Kosciw, Diaz, Colic, & Goldin, 2005). Kosciw et al. found that NNCW, after its first year of implementation, yielded a decrease in the number of students who witnessed name-calling, teasing, and bullying in their schools. The study also reported that students were not as likely to report that they were bystanders, victims, or the perpetrators of bullying.

Cushman (2009) expressed that though No Name-Calling Week has some admirable goals such as to eradicate all harmful name calling, regrettably the event also places an emphasis on indoctrinating homosexuality which has made GLSEN renowned. *The Misfits*, the book which inspired NNCW, contains messages that are positive yet liberal and pro-gay. Cushman continued by stating that a Christian's faith mandates that he/she protect victimized people, including those victimized because of their homosexuality. Cushman expressed that the Bible teaches Christians to protect those who are the victims of emotional and physical abuse, even if they disagree with those persons' beliefs or actions. Cushman stated that students should be taught that inappropriate language, for any reason, is wrong. However, wrote Cushman, God gave parents the fundamental responsibility of protecting their children. Cushman argued that the Constitution guarantees freedom of religion and this freedom will not be violated by institutions sanctioned by the government. Further, clarified Cushman, GLSEN's lessons and resources are often at risk of violating these religious principles by teaching students to advocate for such things as homosexuality, same-sex parenting, and gay marriage, regardless of whether or not parents approve of these teachings. Cushman rationalized that these lessons and resources are purposefully designed to challenge conservative viewpoints that are based on one's faith and that the classroom, funded by taxpayers, is no place for this type of political agenda.

Some bullying prevention programs are designed to specifically address the harassment of LGBT students in schools. One such program, though not evidence-based, is Project 10. Project 10 began in 1984 as a program for sexual minority high school students in a Unified School District in California. The program was designed in response

to the increasing rates of alcohol/substance abuse, risk of AIDS, and suicide among sexual minority youth. Project 10 works to decrease the dropout rate of sexual minority youth who are at a greater risk of dropping out due to reasons related to their sexual orientations. Students and staff are provided with (1) information that is accurate and nonjudgmental, (2) sensitivity counseling, and (3) educational workshops (Henning-Stout, James, & Macintosh 2000).

The Day of Silence (DOS) is another non-evidence based program often implemented in schools to address the bullying of LGBT students. The DOS, first held at the University of Virginia in 1996, is the largest action led by students that focuses on creating safer schools for all students, regardless of their gender expression/identity or sexual orientation. On the DOS, held in April of each year, students throughout the United States take a vow of silence to bring attention to the silencing effect of bullying and harassment directed towards LGBT students. Thousands of students take part in this action to educate their schools and communities on issues related to the harassment of LGBT students in schools. “Speaking cards” may be handed out to students and staff that read (GLSEN, 2010b):

Please understand my reasons for not speaking today. I am participating in the Day of Silence, a national youth movement bringing attention to the silence faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and their allies in schools. My deliberate silence echoes that silence, which is caused by name-calling, bullying and harassment. I believe that ending the silence is the first step toward fighting these injustices. Think about the voices you are not hearing today. What are you going to do to end the silence? (p. 4)

Students may also participate in other DOS activities such as posting information about anti-gay bias and conducting anti-gay bias workshops. Students also wear DOS buttons or shirts and participate in “Breaking the Silence” activities. “Breaking the Silence” activities are usually characterized by recognitions and celebrations of Day of Silence events (GLSEN, 2010b).

Newman-Carlson and Horne (2004) stated that numerous recommendations have been made to implement bullying prevention programs in schools, but due to the paucity of empirical research there is little evidence to validate whether or not these programs are truly effective. From a meta-analytic review, Merrell, Gueldner, Ross, and Isava (2008) found that bullying intervention programs do not appear to have a major impact on behaviors related to bullying and victimization. Ferguson et al. (2007) expressed that it is not certain as to whether or not bullying prevention programs actually achieve desired results. This uncertainty may be due in part to the fact that many anti-bullying programs have not been systemically or empirically reviewed.

Table 5

Studies Related to Programs for Protecting LGBT Youth from Peer Victimization

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/Analysis	Outcomes
Orpinas, Horne, & Staniszewski (2003)	Describe the impact of a schoolwide comprehensive bullying prevention intervention program	Elementary students from one large public school in the south-eastern US (541 students in the Fall and 520 in the Spring)	Quantitative: survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For younger students, there was a 40% decrease in self-reported victimization. • For older students, there was a 25% decrease in self-reported victimization, but no significant difference was found in victimization.
Newman-Carlson & Horne (2004)	Examine the effectiveness of a bullying prevention program	156 sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade middle school teachers in a public school in the southeastern United States	Quantitative: surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bully prevention and treatment program effectively increased teachers' knowledge and use of intervention skills, personal self-efficacy, the self efficacy related to working with certain students and decreased bullying that occurred in the classroom. • Programs that were systematically monitored tended to be more effective than programs that were not systematically monitored.
Smith et al. (2004)	Synthesize existing research evaluation on whole-school anti-bullying programs to determine the overall effectiveness of the approach	14 studies on whole-school anti-bullying intervention programs	Qualitative: document review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of programs produced outcomes that were not significant on self-report bullying and victimization measures. • Only a small number produced outcomes that were positive. • Programs that were systematically monitored tended to be more effective than programs that were not.

(table continues)

Frey et al. (2005)	Examine bully prevention program effects 1 year after Implementation	1,023 children from 6 elementary schools in grades 3-6	Quantitative: surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were positive changes in normative belief norms, social interaction skills, and playground bullying. • Both bullying and the attitudes believed to support bullying were reduced within a relatively short amount of time.
Kosciw et al. (2005)	Examine the severity of name-calling and bullying in schools	707 school stakeholders including school mental health professionals, teachers, students, administrators, nurses, librarians, and parents/guardians from 413 U.S. schools	Quantitative: survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of participants reported that name-calling and bullying were problems in their schools. • Nearly a quarter of participants reported that name-calling was a major problem in their school. • Students and parents were more likely than school personnel to report name-calling as a serious problem.
Ferguson et al. (2007)	Examine the effect of school-based anti-bullying programs	42 studies on school-based anti-bullying programs	Qualitative: document review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a significant effect for anti-bullying programs. • The effect for programs that targeted youth who were at-risk was a little more significant. • Overall, anti-bullying programs produced little effect on youth who participated.
Merrell et al. (2008)	Examine the effectiveness of whole-school anti-bullying programs	16 studies on school bullying intervention programs	Qualitative: document review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the outcomes evidenced no meaningful change, positive or negative. • Bullying intervention programs are more likely to have an influence on attitudes, knowledge, and self-perceptions rather than on actual bullying behaviors.

Policies for Protecting LGBT Youth from Peer Victimization

A Wisconsin high school student was urinated on in the restroom, mock-raped in a classroom, and kicked so severely that he bled internally. He underwent surgery to stop the bleeding. When he and his parents complained to a school official, they were told that because he was a homosexual, those kinds of things were expected to happen. In 1995, the student sued the school district. A jury found that school officials had violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The school district had to pay the student \$900,000 in damages. The 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals found “no rational basis for permitting one student to assault another student based on the victim’s sexual orientation” (Jones, 2000, p. 21).

Due to harassment and violence, some administrators, teachers, students, and parents are developing ways to support and protect LGBT youth. Methods that intervene and prevent violence directed toward LGBT students include the inclusion of LGBT curricula, the formation of Gay-Straight Alliances, and the implementation of safe-schools programs and policies that prohibit discrimination (Cianciotto & Cahill, 2003). Unfortunately, according to Cianciotto and Cahill, anti-gay activists and organizations often resist these programs because “homosexuals recruit public school children” (Sheldon, 2001, p. 1).

One of the most effective measures that schools, school districts, and states can implement to improve the climate of a school, thus creating safer schools, is to enact safe school laws and policies (GLSEN, n.d.). Non-discrimination laws have been passed by 13 states and the District of Columbia to protect LGBT students from harassment in schools. States that have enacted nondiscrimination laws to protect students from harassment

based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression are California, Colorado, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington. Additionally, eight states protect students on the basis of sexual orientation only: Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, Maryland, Nevada, New Hampshire, New York, and Wisconsin (National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2009). All states, except the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Michigan, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota, have state laws on bullying (Stop Bullying Now, 2010). Cianciotto and Cahill (2003) pointed out that even in states with laws specifically designed to protect LGBT students, they still continue to experience harassment and violence each day. Though passing and enforcing safe school laws are necessary, local level officials must continue to make antidiscrimination education a priority.

The Just the Facts Coalition (2008) wrote that sexual minority students, like all other students, are protected from victimization under the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause. The United States Supreme Court made clear that public officials cannot burden LGBT individuals with unequal treatment or discrimination because of the public's hatred or disdain towards them (*Flores v. Morgan*, 2003; *Nabozny v. Podlesny*, 1996). This means that school districts are responsible for protecting LGBT students from harassment just as they would protect other students from any other type of harassment (*Flores v. Morgan*, 2003). The National Center for Lesbian Rights (2010) explained that if school officials do not act against anti-gay harassment because they believe that LGBT students brought the harassment upon themselves because they are openly gay, the school fails to provide equal protection under the law to these students

(*Flores v. Morgan*, 2003; *Nabozny v. Podlesny*, 1996). Kate Kendell, Executive Director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR), commented that “This decision is long overdue. Finally, it’s clear that schools can no longer stand back and turn a blind eye to the kind of debilitating harassment that so many lesbian, gay and bisexual students face every day” (American Civil Liberties Union, 2003, para. 3).

Cianciotto and Cahill (2003) clarified that federal laws do not specifically provide protection to students based on gender identify or sexual orientation, but several do provide some protections for students who identify as LGBT. The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights (2001), wrote that Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs and activities that receive financial assistance from the federal government. Equal education opportunities are guaranteed to all students regardless of their sex (Title IX, 2003). Title IX also prohibits schools from denying or limiting a student’s participation in school programs based on sex. Though Title IX does not protect LGBT students from being harassed based on their sexual orientation, it does provide protection to students who are harassed because they do not conform to gender behavior norms. Under Title IX, school administrators must intercept and correct any harassment of a sexual nature that prevents sexual minority students from accessing or benefiting from any program within the school (Cianciotto & Cahill, 2003).

In 2001, the U.S. Department of Education revised guidelines that explained in detail Title IX’s applicability to sexual harassment in public schools. The revisions also applied to the harassment of same-sex students. In part the revision stated

Although Title IX does not prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, sexual harassment directed at gay or lesbian students that is sufficiently serious to limit or deny a student's ability to participate in or benefit from the school's program constitutes sexual harassment prohibited by Title IX. . . . Gender-based harassment, which may include acts of verbal, nonverbal, or physical aggression, intimidation, or hostility based on sex or sex-stereotyping, but not involving conduct of a sexual nature, is also a form of sex discrimination to which a school must respond, if it rises to a level that denies or limits a student's ability to participate in or benefit from the educational program. (p. 3)

The U.S. Department of Education further explained that under Title IX, school districts can be liable if they are aware that a student was harassed on the basis of sex by another student or a teacher and did not make practical efforts to end the harassment (*Davis v. Monroe*, 1999).

In 1984 President Ronald Reagan signed the Equal Access Act (EAA) into law. This act was designed to counteract perceived discrimination against religious speech and at the same time maintain separation of church and state in public high schools as written in the Constitution. This legislation was developed in response to two federal appellate courts which held that religious groups led by students could not meet before or after school hours on school property (Cianciotto & Cahill, 2003). According to the Equal Access Act (2003), schools cannot deny students equal access to activities because of the "religious, political, philosophical, or other content of the speech at such meetings" (Cianciotto & Cahill, 2003, p. 45). The EAA had a secondary, unexpected effect: Gay-Straight Alliances could now be legally formed in any public school that allows other

school-sponsored clubs (Cianciotto & Cahill, 2003). Students have formed over 4,000 Gay–Straight Alliances in schools (GLSEN, 2011). The EAA prohibits secondary schools from treating GSAs differently from other non-curriculum related student clubs that are permitted to meet on school campus (Just the Facts Coalition, 2008).

The Human Rights Campaign (2010), the largest LGBT civil rights organization in the United States, commended the introduction of the Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA) of 2010, H.R. 4530. The SNDA, if passed, would prohibit the discrimination of any student in public schools on the basis of perceived or actual gender identity or sexual orientation. Additionally, the SNDA would prevent the discrimination of any student in public schools on the basis of perceived or actual gender identity or sexual orientation of a person with whom the student associates with or has associated with. The SNDA was introduced by Congressman Jared Polis. Congressman Polis justified his actions by stating

Hatred has no place in the classroom. . . . Every student has the right to an education free from harassment and violence. This bill will protect the individual freedoms of our students and enshrine the values of equality and opportunity in our classrooms. (para. 2)

Human Rights Campaign President Joe Solmonese added that public schools are mandated to support all students and help them achieve academically and reach social stability. Historically, LGBT students have been the victims of alienation, harassment, and bullying in their schools with little, if any, interventions from school personnel. Solmonese expressed that the SNDA would mandate actions that are both immediate and appropriate to end the discrimination that students have long suffered.

In 2005 GLSEN and the NCLR jointly prepared a report entitled “Fifteen Expensive Reasons Why Safe Schools Legislation is in Your State’s Best Interest.” The article summarized 15 court cases that were brought against school districts because they failed to protect students from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Those court cases are: *Flores v. Morgan Hill Unified School District* (2003), *Massey v. Banning Unified School District* (2003), *Henkle v. Gregory* (2002), *Loomis v. Visalia Unified School District* (2002), *Dahle v. Titusville* (2002), *Snelling v. Fall Mountain Regional School District* (2001), *Putman v. Board of Education of Somerset Independent School District* (2000), *Montgomery v. Independent School District* (2000), *Ray v. Antioch* (2000), *O.H. v. Oakland* (2000), *Lovins v. Pleasant Hill* (2000), *Vance v. Spencer* (2000), *Iverson v. Kent* (1998), *Wagner v. Fayetteville* (1998), and *Nabonzy v. Podlesny* (1996). Joslin and Manke (2005) illustrated the following for each case: (a) under current federal law, school districts can be held liable if they fail to protect students from harassment based on gender nonconformity and sexual orientation, (b) with no clear directives from their state legislatures, many school districts have not protected students from discrimination and harassment, therefore taking a risk for potential legal liability, and (c) in all 15 court cases, the student either reached a settlement or prevailed at trial.

In today’s society, the preservation of statewide educational priorities is dependent on fiscal discipline. The cost that school districts pay in lawsuits brought against them for failing to protect students from anti-gay discrimination and harassment could have been avoided and can encumber state and school district budgets. School districts can avoid costly lawsuits by passing, implementing, and enforcing laws that explicitly prohibit the discrimination and harassment of individuals on the basis of their

perceived or actual gender identity or sexual orientation. These laws can also support school districts in accomplishing their primary mission—to ensure that all students receive an education that is both safe and effective. Given the daily harassment and discrimination experiences of many LGBT youth and the lawsuits that follow, schools and school districts throughout the nation are not fulfilling their obligations (Joslin & Manke, 2005).

Regardless of whether or not a state or school district has a law or policy that includes LGBT youth, public schools are still obligated under federal law to protect these students from anti-gay harassment. State legislatures can assist schools and school districts in fulfilling their obligations to federal law, avoiding unnecessary and costly lawsuits, and creating schools that are conducive to learning for all students. The aforementioned 15 court cases, brought against school districts for failing to protect LGBT students from discrimination based on sexual harassment, explicitly illustrate this point (Joslin & Manke, 2005).

Sacks and Salem (2009) explained that a consensus on bullying has been reached by educators, social scientists, civil rights advocates, and youth development organizations—bullying is neither normal nor is it inevitable and the health and achievement of its victims is seriously impaired. For this reason, more and more state legislatures are mandating that local school boards adopt anti-bullying policies aimed at reducing and preventing bullying. Sacks and Salem clarified that federal and state laws neither prevent bullying nor do they provide most victims with solutions to their psychological or physical impairments. Federal law, whether it is the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause or civil rights statutes, generally offers solutions

to victims who are bullied on the basis of criteria protected by the federal government. These criteria include race, nationality, sex, and disability. However, most bullying victims are not bullied for reasons that fall under these criteria. Even when victims fall under the federally protected criteria, courts have set high expectations for them to recover damages. It is only in the most horrific cases that plaintiffs will often prevail.

Generally, even if victims receive state or federal remedies, it is long after the damage is done—after the victim has moved to another school, dropped out of school, or passed the age of 18. More practically, schools need to implement and enforce anti-bullying policies that are effective at protecting students while they are *in* school. Policies that keep bullying from occurring in the first place clearly provide students with the greatest amount of protection, not those that simply impose consequences *after* bullying has occurred. Model anti-bullying policies *deter* bullying from happening by improving the overall climate of the school (Sacks & Salem, 2009).

Hansen (2007) wrote that nearly all literature on ending homophobic victimization in schools agree on one approach—implementing a policy that clearly and specifically prohibits harassment in schools (GLSEN, 2009; Graybill et al., 2009; Just the Facts Coalition, 2008; Kilman, 2009; National Association of School Psychologists, 2006; National Center for Lesbian Rights, 2010; Poland, 2010; Sacks & Salem, 2009). Hansen explained that if anti-harassment policies do not have the support of administrators and are not highly publicized, change is not likely to occur. In 2001 the American Association of University Women documented that policies, in and of themselves, do not appear to decrease harassment (Lipson, 2001). Nevertheless, a policy

that is well-publicized and protects all students' rights may be a valuable component in creating environments that are supportive of LGBT students (Hansen, 2007).

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth can no longer be ignored by schools. School administrators, teachers, professional school counselors, and other educators are in a unique position to support students. When educators take time to recognize LGBT and questioning youth and refuse to promote heterosexism, they help to ensure that sexual minority youth receive the same opportunities afforded to their heterosexual peers. Educators must demonstrate sensitivity, as well as test their own professional beliefs, so that they can help sexual minority youth come out about their sexual orientation. These actions will help educators improve the health of LGBT and questioning youth in schools (Munoz-Plaza, Quinn, & Rounds, 2002).

Historically, the public has not expressed much concern over school bullying. Many adults even view bullying as a rite of passage for children and adolescents. Currently, school personnel, community members, and policymakers have increased their attention to bullying. Bullying is now recognized as a serious problem. Thus, many people are beginning to rethink how school policies, aimed at reducing violence and creating safer schools, can be changed to address school bullying. Any new bullying prevention legislation has the potential to be effective, but it must be evaluated on how well it can encourage and support the development of effective strategies, programs, and policies to prevent school bullying (Limber & Small, 2003).

As school leaders, principals attempt to create school environments that are positive, safe, and free from harassment for all of their students. Nevertheless, all principals may not have the knowledge, skills or experience to address issues facing

LGBT youth. It is clear that school leaders are concerned about their students' well being, though it appears that safety issues associated with gender expression/identity and sexual orientation are not as urgent as other safety issues. Being concerned about school safety has a major impact on the academic performance of students. A deliberate course of action has been suggested in the literature for those school leaders who wish to create and sustain a school environment that is safe and conducive to teaching and learning for all students. This course of action includes protecting victimized youth, including those who are victimized on the basis of their gender expression/identity and sexual orientation (GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2008).

School leaders continue to focus their attention on the bullying and harassment of students in their schools. Efforts, such as programs and policies for faculty, staff and students, have been put into place to address peer bullying and harassment. Yet, only a small number of these efforts are specifically designed to address the bullying and harassment of students based on gender expression/identity and sexual orientation. This discrepancy creates a need for further examining the bullying and harassment of LGBT youth, particularly since school leaders believe that LGBT students would not feel as safe as other students in their school (GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2008).

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework was developed for this study and served two purposes: (1) to provide direction for the study and (2) to demonstrate the proposed relationship between the major concepts under investigation. The major concepts investigated in this study were (a) effective strategies that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth, (b) effective

programs that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth, and (c) effective policies that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. A conceptual model (see Figure 1) illustrates the proposed relationship between effective strategies, programs, and policies, consistent implementation and evaluation, and protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization.

The conceptual model was developed from literature that documented and/or suggested the use of strategies (GLSEN, 2009; Goodenow, Szalacha, & Westheimer, 2006; Graybill et al., 2009; Hansen, 2007; Morillas & Gibbons, 2010; Weiler, 2003, 2004), programs (GLSEN, 2010b; Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008; Henning-Stout, James, & Macintosh 2000; Newman-Carlson & Horne, 2004; Olweus, 1993), and policies (Cianciotto & Cahill, 2003; Human Rights Campaign, 2010; Just the Facts Coalition, 2008; National Center for Lesbian Rights, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2001) to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization in schools. The conceptual model proposes that effective strategies, programs, and policies, when implemented and evaluated consistently, will protect LGBT youth from peer victimization in schools.

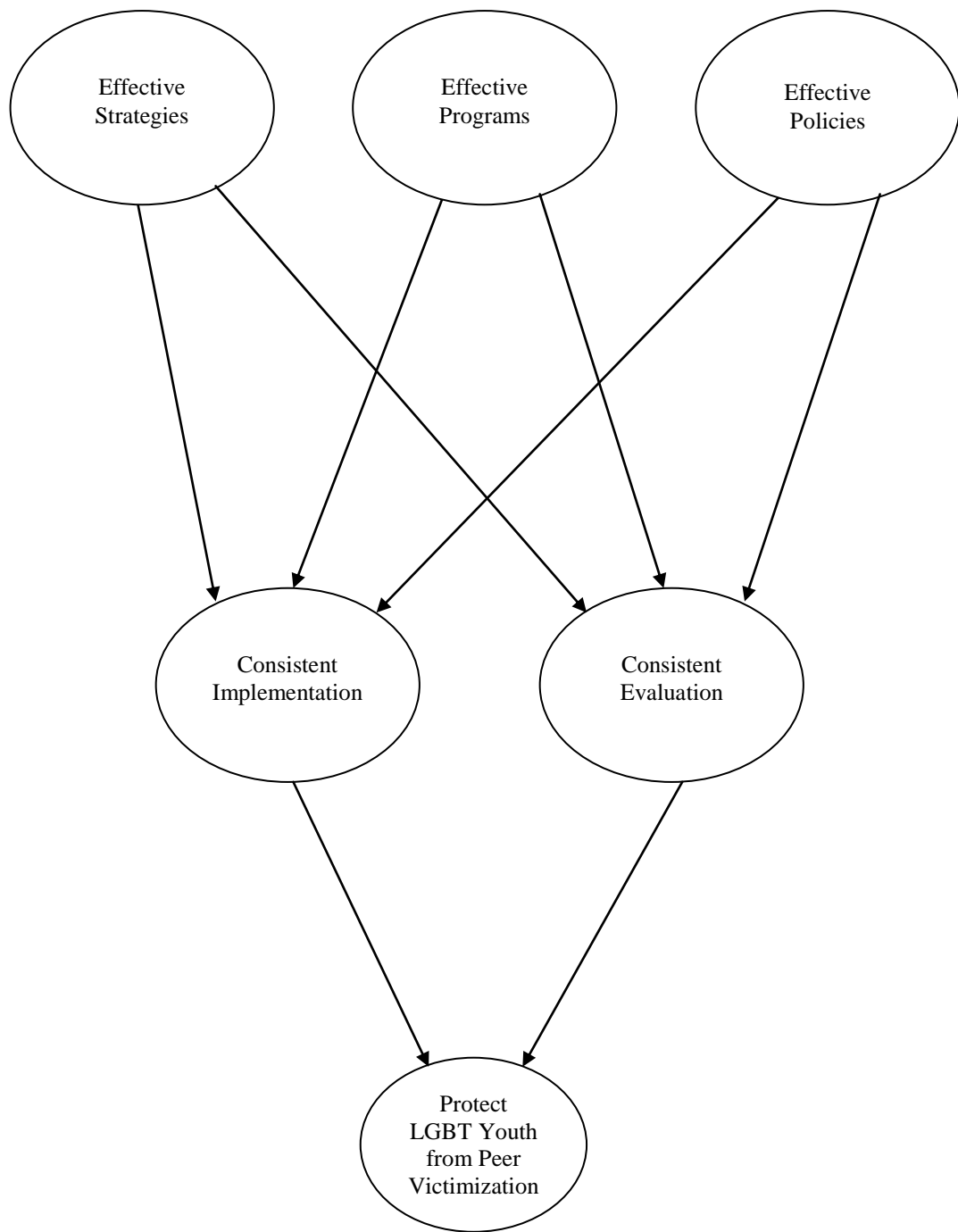


Figure 1. Conceptual model illustrating the proposed relationship between effective strategies, programs, and policies, consistent implementation and evaluation, and protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization in schools.

Summary

The primary goal of education is to prepare students to become life-long learners who, in turn, will become successful, productive, citizens. When schools are unsafe, this goal is difficult to accomplish. School leaders are responsible for creating school environments that are safe and conducive to educating students. A safe and conducive school environment is one in which students are free from harassment and discrimination. School leaders are charged with protecting all students from harm, including those in the sexual minority. For some sexual minority students, this protection is rare. Many times, these students are the victims of peer harassment and discrimination on a daily basis.

Peer victimization, often referred to as harassment or bullying, is a severe problem that is becoming more prevalent, invasive, and seemingly more acceptable, in today's schools. Peer victimization transcends a student's race, ethnicity, gender, religion, socioeconomic status, nationality, and sexuality. In other words, any student anywhere can be victimized for any reason; but, physical appearance, gender expression/identity, and sexual orientation are the most common reasons for peer victimization. Students who identify as LGBT, and those who are perceived to be, are victimized more often than any other group of students.

LGBT students are often victimized by those who suffer from homophobia—the irrational fear and hatred of homosexuals. Homophobia generally leads to the victimization of LGBT individuals. LGBT youth are many times abused both verbally and physically by their peers. They are called names, made fun of, and threatened. They are also pushed, hit, kicked, and shoved into lockers or other objects. Even more

demeaning than this, some LGBT students are sexually harassed and assaulted while in school. Their clothes are torn off. They are urinated on. They are mock-raped.

Peer victimization often has a devastating impact on the academic and psychological development of LGBT youth. LGBT youth who are victimized by their peers often achieve at lower levels than their non-victimized heterosexual peers, as indicated by their lower GPAs. They are more likely to skip class, cut school, become truant, and drop out of school than those not victimized. Victimized LGBT youth are more likely to suffer from loneliness, isolation, and dejection than their non-victimized heterosexual peers. Victimized LGBT youth are also more likely to be anxious, depressed, and suffer from low self-esteem. LGBT youth who are the victims of peer harassment and discrimination are more likely than their non-victimized heterosexual peers to have suicidal ideations, to attempt suicide, and to succeed at suicide.

School leaders have the legal, ethical, and moral duty to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization. Unfortunately, school leaders may not know how to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization; however, there are effective strategies, programs, and policies that can be implemented in schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. These implementations must be schoolwide approaches that are focused on changing the school's climate and attitude towards bullying. These approaches must also be implemented and evaluated consistently if they are to be effective in reducing, if not ending, the bullying and harassment of LGBT youth.

A number of effective strategies can be implemented by school leaders to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth in schools. Those strategies include (a) providing LGBT awareness training to faculty and staff members, (b)

encouraging LGBT curriculum inclusion, (c) creating Safe Spaces for LGBT youth, (d) supporting Gay-Straight Alliances, (e) forming a committee that is specifically designed to develop schoolwide activities that teach tolerance (f) advocating for LGBT youth, and (g) addressing incidences of LGBT harassment and discrimination as soon as they occur. These strategies, if implemented and evaluated consistently, can be effective in helping school leaders to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization, although school leaders must be willing and capable of supporting these strategies when opponents argue that such methods promote homosexuality in schools.

Several programs are effective in helping school leaders reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth in schools. Schools have implemented programs such as the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program which has proven to reduce bullying in schools. Another program, Steps to Respect, teaches the entire school community to take responsibility for reducing bullying in their school. Programs such as No Name-Calling Week, Project 10, and the National Day of Silence are specifically designed to address bullying issues related to LGBT youth in schools. These programs focus on implementing activities to prevent or reduce the bullying of LGBT youth in schools. If these programs are not research-based, implemented as a universal approach, and evaluated consistently, they are not likely to reduce bullying in schools.

One of the most effective ways for school leaders to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth is to enact and enforce anti-discrimination/harassment policies and safe school laws. Federal laws do not specifically protect students on the basis of their gender identify or sexual orientation, but some provide protections for students who identify as LGBT. Under the Equal Protection Clause of the

Fourteenth Amendment, schools cannot discriminate against nor permit the harassment of students who are LGBT. Title IX of the Education Amendments Act guarantees that all students receive equal educational opportunities regardless of their sex. Under the Equal Access Act, students are guaranteed equal access to all school activities. The Student Non-discrimination Act, if passed, would specifically prohibit the discrimination of any public school student on the basis of his/her perceived or real gender identity or sexual orientation. Thirteen U.S. states have enacted safe school laws to protect LGBT youth from discrimination and harassment based on gender expression/identity and sexual orientation in schools. Forty-five of the 50 states, excluding Hawaii, Michigan, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and the District of Columbia have enacted state laws against school bullying. Though federal and safe school laws do help to protect LGBT youth from discrimination and harassment, they do not protect students from the long term negative academic and psychological impact of peer victimization.

An extensive amount of research has been conducted on effective strategies, programs, and policies for protecting, in general, youth who are victimized. Less literature exists on effective strategies, programs, *and* [emphasis added] policies for school leaders in protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization. A review of the literature revealed a small number of empirical studies on effective strategies and programs for protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization. No empirical studies were located on effective policies for school leaders in protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization. This gap in the literature supports the purpose of this study—to identify effective strategies, programs, *and* [emphasis added] policies for school leaders in protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization in schools.

Chapter Three focuses on the methodology that was used to conduct this study. The research questions are identified and the research design, the Delphi Technique, is described. An explanation is provided on how the population, participants, and sample were selected for this study. The instrumentation and data collection procedures are described. The results of Rounds One, Two, and Three are analyzed. An explanation of what the pilot studies revealed is provided. The response rate for instruments is discussed and set for this study. An explanation of how data were reported and stored is included. An overview of the methodology used in the study concludes Chapter Three.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

For students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, school can be a dangerous place (Kilman, 2009). Many LGBT students are often discriminated against and harassed by their peers on a daily basis (Weiler, 2003). Research has documented that peer victimization negatively impacts the academic and psychological development of sexual minority students (Billups, 2009; Chan, 2009; Hansen, 2007; Markow & Fein, 2005; Robertson, 2005; Swearer et al., 2008; Weiler, 2003, 2004; Williams et al., 2005).

School leaders have the responsibility of protecting and ensuring the safety of all of their students, including LGBT youth (Billups, 2009; Craig & Pepler, 2007; Espelage et al., 2008; GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2008; Horn, Szalacha, & Drill, 2008; Kosciw et al., 2010; Nansel et al., 2001; Swearer et al., 2010; Wright, 2010). School leaders may not know how to protect LGBT students from peer harassment (GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2008). Thus, for this study the Delphi Technique was used to gather data from a panel of seven experts on what school leaders can do to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization and what effective strategies, programs, and policies school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth.

Research Questions

To guide this study, the following research question was developed: “What do experts say school leaders can do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization?” The following supporting questions were identified and also addressed with the research instruments for this study:

- What effective strategies can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?
- What effective programs can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?
- What effective policies can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?

Research Design

Due to the paucity of empirical research on the research topic, as well as the exploratory nature of the study, the Delphi Technique, a qualitative research method, was used to conduct this study. The Delphi Technique was designed to gather information from panel members who have some level of expertise on a given topic. Hence, the purpose of this study was to gather information from a panel of experts on what school leaders can do to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization and what effective strategies, programs, and policies school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth.

The Delphi Technique was developed by Dalkey and his associates in the early 1950s (Linstone & Turoff, 1975) at the RAND Corporation (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975). Objectives of the Delphi Technique include (1) determining alternative courses of actions for programs, (2) revealing information that can lead to varying judgments, (3) searching for information that can lead to a consensus within a group of participants, (4) linking informed judgments based on a topic from an array of learned disciplines, and (5) informing respondents of the different but interconnected parts of the research problem (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975).

The Delphi Technique research method utilized the expertise of panel members to gather information on the research topic. A succession of questionnaires was developed from the responses of the expert panel members. Even though the expertise of each panel member brought much value to the study, panel members did not meet face-to-face with each other because of their varied locations throughout the United States. Further, a Delphi study ensured the anonymity of each participant, prevented any participant from dominating, and alleviated hostility and personality conflict that was likely to be present in face-to-face sessions (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975). The Delphi study also permitted panel members to freely voice their opinions without being persuaded by other panel members (Linstone & Turoff, 1975).

Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) explained that in educational research the same standards which measure validity and reliability in other data-collection instruments must also be used to measure the validity and reliability of questionnaires. Questionnaires often focus on the perceptions that participants have on specific concepts and ideas in the study. If researchers wish to examine the true perceptions of participants, they must collect evidence that demonstrates validity. DeVaus (2002) stated that when an instrument measures what it is intended to measure it is valid. The following strategies, suggested by Creswell (2009), were implemented in this study to help establish the validity of instruments: (1) member checking was used to determine the accuracy of findings, (2) rich, thick descriptions were used to communicate results, (3) inconsistent and negative information that contradicted topics was presented, (4) peer debriefing was used to review the results for accuracy, and (5) an external auditor was used to review the study; thus, an objective assessment of the findings was provided.

Merriam (2009) explained that a measure is reliable when its findings are consistent. To enhance reliability, as recommended by Merriam, the researcher explained the theoretical framework of the study, provided a detailed description of how the study was conducted, and discussed how findings were interpreted from the data. As suggested by De Vaus (2002), the researcher improved reliability by (1) carefully wording research questions, (2) avoiding questions that participants were not likely to be knowledgeable about and (3) avoiding responses such as “cannot decide” or “do not know.”

Population

When a population is defined for a research study, it must be precise enough so that readers clearly understand how the research study applies to the population (Dale, 2006). The purpose of this study was to examine what school leaders can do to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization and identify effective strategies, programs, and policies that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Thus, the following population was identified from literature as research was being conducted on protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization: Gay Straight Alliance advisors and college professors who have conducted research on LGBT individuals and issues they face. Representatives from each of the following organizations were also identified: American Civil Liberties Union, American Educational Research Association, American School Counselor Association, Child Advocacy Center, Committee for Children, Indiana Youth Group, Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, GroundSpark, Human Rights Campaign, Metamorphosis Counseling and Consulting, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Association of School Counselors, National Association of School

Psychologists, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Center for Lesbian Rights, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, Queer Studies Special Interest Group, Safe Schools Coalition, South Carolina Equality, The Trevor Project, and the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights.

Participants

Three types of participants took part in this Delphi study: decision makers, staff, and respondents. The decision makers included each committee member and the researcher. The decision makers assessed the direction of the study. The committee Chair served as the staff member. The staff member had a critical role in guiding the Delphi process. The staff member had experience in planning, as well as conducting a Delphi study. The staff member also had knowledge about the problem identified in this study. The researcher served as the support staff. The researcher created and evaluated each research instrument, assessed the value of the information obtained, and revised ineffective questionnaires. The support staff also developed and sent each instrument to panel members, as well as analyzed results of the study. Respondents were those who agreed to complete the research instruments. They comprised the Delphi panel of experts (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975).

Sample

Selecting the panel members, also referred to as respondents, is perhaps the most critical aspect in conducting a successful Delphi study (Lang, 2000). The following conditions were ensured to guarantee success of this Delphi study: (a) sufficient time was allotted to complete the study, (b) participants were skilled in communicating through

writing, and (c) participants were highly motivated. Delphi panel members were chosen based on four criteria: (1) they had a deep personal interest and involvement in the research problem, (2) they had significant information to contribute, (3) they were motivated to participate in and complete the Delphi study, and (4) they felt that aggregated information from the panel of experts was of significant value to them and that the information obtained would not otherwise be available to them (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975).

Linstone and Turoff (1975) explained that effectively choosing a wide range of panel member expertise will provide credibility to the results of the study, as well as ensure that responses are of the highest quality. Hence, respondents for this research study were selected through purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling allowed the researcher to select participants who were *information-rich* (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007) or who had expertise in the research problem.

Before participants were selected for the study and data collection began, approval was requested and granted from Georgia Southern University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). A research proposal was submitted to the IRB, as well as documentation that the National Institutes of Health's "Protecting Human Research Participants" training course had been completed by the researcher (see Appendix A). The IRB approved the research proposal, as well as the first questionnaire (see Appendix B), second questionnaire (see Appendix C), and the survey (see Appendix D), before they were administered to participants.

After IRB approval, the support staff contacted potential Delphi panel members by phone and/or email and asked them to participate in the Delphi study. The study's

purpose and a description of the Delphi study were explained to each respondent. The support staff expressed each respondent's qualifications and reasons he/she should participate in the study. The requirements of respondents, as well as how results would be dispersed, were discussed. Following a personal and detailed introduction, participants were invited to serve as an expert member on the Delphi panel. Participants were also emailed a Letter of Invitation (see Appendix E). Each respondent contacted was asked to nominate other possible experts to serve on the panel (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975). This method of securing additional participants is known as snowball or chain sampling (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). As a result of the snowball sampling technique, two participants were nominated and agreed to serve on the panel.

The following required documents were emailed to participants: a Letter of Cooperation (see Appendix F) and an Informed Consent (see Appendix G). The Letter of Cooperation requested permission for the researcher to collect data from participants. The title of the research study was included in the Letter of Cooperation. Participants agreed that they were informed of the purpose of the study, as well as the nature of the research procedures. Participants also agreed that they were given the opportunity to ask questions of the researcher. Participants could add restrictions to the Letter of Cooperation. The following restrictions were added to one Letter of Cooperation:

- The researcher will restrict questions and contact to employees who volunteer to help with this project.
- Participation is limited to the completion of two anonymous questionnaires and one anonymous survey and to short-term appointment to an anonymous panel of experts.

One participant did not return the formal Letter of Cooperation but agreed to participate via email. Each Letter of Cooperation was signed by an authorized representative who granted the researcher permission to recruit participant(s) for the study and to collect research data from them.

An Informed Consent was emailed to participants. Those individuals who wanted to participate in the study but wished to remain anonymous—known as passive consent—were not required to submit an Informed Consent. The Informed Consent identified the researcher and the purpose of the research. An overview of research procedures was provided. Participant expectations regarding the completion of two questionnaires and one survey were explained. Possible discomforts and risks, as well as expected benefits, were shared with participants. The Informed Consent also provided a time frame for the study. The procedures for maintaining confidentiality were explained to participants. Participants were notified that they had the right to ask questions and receive answers from the researcher, faculty advisor, or Georgia Southern University's Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary, that they could withdraw at any time without penalty, and that they were not required to answer any question if they did not wish to do so. Participants were also informed that they had to be at least 18 years of age to consent to participate in the research study.

Although ten respondents agreed to participate on the Delphi panel of experts, only seven returned the required documents to participate in the study. The following participants served on the Delphi panel of experts: an Assistant Professor and faculty advisor of a college Gay-Straight Alliance, an Assistant Professor who has conducted

research on bullying and harassment in schools, and one representative each from The Trevor Project, Safe Schools Coalition, and an Indiana Youth Group. Two representatives from the Committee for Children, each who consented passively, also served on the Delphi panel of experts.

Instrumentation

The Delphi Technique was used to collect data from panel members over three rounds through the use of two questionnaires and one survey respectively, though there is no set number of rounds in a Delphi study. The first questionnaire was open-ended and included four broad research questions. Data from the first questionnaire determined experts' perceptions on what school leaders can do to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization. The second questionnaire was developed from panel member responses in the first questionnaire and it identified areas of agreement and disagreement, clarified items, and prioritized experts' opinions on what school leaders can do to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization. The third questionnaire, a survey which completed the Delphi process for this study, was developed from panel member responses from the second questionnaire. Data from the survey determined experts' perceptions on how effective strategies, programs, and policies are for school leaders in protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization, thus reducing the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth.

Pilot Studies

As suggested by Delbecq, Van de Ven, and Gustafson (1975), before each instrument was administered to participants, pilot studies were conducted with a group of individuals not a part of the Delphi panel. Therefore, three pilot studies were conducted

in this study. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) explained that a pilot study is a small-scale test of the procedures which will be followed in the actual study. The pilot studies served to develop and test the methods that would be used to collect data. The pilot studies allowed the researcher to revise procedures based on what the pilot studies revealed. Essentially, the pilot studies helped the researcher identify and solve problems before the actual study was conducted. Each pilot study revealed essential information that helped to increase the reliability of each instrument.

According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007), three to five participants are sufficient to participate in a pilot study for a qualitative study. Four individuals participated in the pilot study of the first questionnaire; three in the pilot study of the second questionnaire, and three in the pilot study of the survey. Pilot study participants included a principal, assistant principal, an NJROTC instructor, two teachers, a professional school counselor, a media specialist, and a Special Education coordinator. All pilot studies were conducted in a high school setting.

Pilot Study Results of First Questionnaire

A pilot study was conducted on the first questionnaire before it was sent to participants. An assistant principal, professional school counselor, a teacher, and a media specialist participated in this pilot study. Results revealed three grammatical errors—an unneeded question mark and a needed period and comma. These grammatical errors were corrected. Participants made suggestions or asked questions regarding content and clarity of the first questionnaire. The researcher's response follows each participant's suggestion(s) or question(s).

- One participant suggested that the researcher add a statement similar to this in the purpose. “Please note that this questionnaire is very open-ended in order to allow for a wider variety of responses. The second questionnaire will be much more directed.” The researcher found this to be a valid suggestion and added the following in the purpose: This questionnaire is open-ended to encourage a variety of responses. The second questionnaire will be less open-ended. The third questionnaire, a survey, will be closed-ended.
- One participant stated “This looks great. Your questions are right aligned with your topic. The only suggestion I have would be to include something that addresses the most common barrier to implementation of any new LGBT policies.” The researcher did not adhere to this suggestion because this would add another research question to an already approved study. Furthermore, a review of literature would have to be completed on this new concept.
- One participant suggested “You may want to specify who ‘school leaders’ are. Teachers? Administrators? Counselors? All?” The researcher did not feel it necessary to specify on the research instruments who school leaders are since the term *school leaders* was defined in Chapter One.
- One participant suggested that the researcher modify research questions 2, 3, and 4 to include the italicized words: “What effective strategies can school leaders implement, *assuming they are free to do so*, to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?” The participant justified this addition by stating “Pessimistic me wonders if you need to say this because what can realistically be done might not match what respondents think should

be done.” The researcher did not adhere to this suggestion since the researcher sought the perceptions of participants based on what they believe and have experienced to be effective strategies, programs, and policies.

- One participant asked “Aren’t strategies and programs the same thing?” The researcher did not feel it necessary to address this question because the researcher believes that the terms *strategies* and *programs* are general, generic educational terms. Thus, the educational community can distinguish between the two terms.
- One participant suggested that the researcher add the following italicized words to the last paragraph of the questionnaire: “If you need to return the questionnaire via traditional postal mail, please *email or call (803 644-7366)* and let me know.” The researcher did not adhere to this suggestion because the researcher’s email address and phone number were listed just above the last paragraph on the questionnaire.

Pilot Study Results of Second Questionnaire

A pilot study was conducted on the second questionnaire before it was administered to participants. A Special Education coordinator, a professional school counselor, and a teacher participated in this pilot study. Participants made the following suggestions regarding content and clarity of the second questionnaire. The researcher’s response follows each participant’s suggestion(s) or question(s).

- One participant suggested that the researcher add the word “please” to this sentence in the directions: “If you wish to add comments that agree, disagree, or clarify any of the items, *please* do so in the space provided.” This participant

also suggested deleting “please” from this statement in the directions: “*Please* feel free to add items.” The researcher accepted both of these suggestions.

These changes seemed to make the directions flow more smoothly.

- One participant suggested that the researcher restate each question from the first questionnaire. (The researcher had phrased each question as a statement). The researcher found this to be a valid suggestion and added each research question in the appropriate place on the questionnaire. This clarified the questions that item responses were generated from.
- One participant assumed that the item responses were a result of what respondents wrote on the first questionnaire. The researcher informed the participant that these items were indeed from panel members’ responses on the first questionnaire. Thus, the participant suggested that the researcher inform respondents that all items were based on respondent answers on the first questionnaire. The researcher added this statement to the directions: “All items included in this questionnaire were generated from panel member responses on the first questionnaire.” The researcher felt this suggestion was valid. Adding this statement reassured panel members that their perceptions and opinions, not the researcher’s, formed the basis of all items on the first questionnaire.
- One participant referred to this statement in the directions: “Finally, rank the ten most important items in terms of personal priority with 1 being the most important and 10 being the least important.” This participant pointed out that since each question had a little more than 15 items, choosing the ten *most important* items would not leave many that were *not important*. This

participant suggested having respondents rank the five most important items. This participant felt, and the researcher agreed, that having participants rank ten items would be a bit overwhelming for both the participants when selecting items and the researcher when analyzing items. The researcher agreed and decided to narrow the ranking down to the five most important items. This participant also suggested changing *most important* to another descriptive word such as *critical*. He stated that all of the items were important but that some were probably *more critical* than others. The researcher decided that since the research study is on “What *effective* [emphasis added] strategies, programs, and policies . . .” it would be most appropriate to ask participants to rank items in terms of their *effectiveness*. Hence, the researcher reworded the statement to read “Finally, select the five most effective items for each question. Assign a value of 1 to the most effective item. Assign a value of 2 to the next most effective item, and so on, until the fifth item is assigned a value of 5.”

- One participant pointed out that there need only be one set of directions for the entire questionnaire, not four separate sets, since each set of directions basically gave respondents the same instructions. The researcher agreed with this suggestion. Condensing all four sets of directions into one set shortened the questionnaire and made it flow more smoothly.
- All three participants suggested that the researcher bullet Question 1, Item Number 3. One participant suggested that the researcher bullet Question 2, Item Number 8. The researcher bulleted both these items. It appeared that bulleting these items would make them easier to read for the participants.

- Two participants commented that Question 1, Items 4 and 14 were similar. The researcher found that Items 4 and 14 were similar but not the same. Item 4 referred to *policies* and Item 14 referred to a *program*. One researcher commented that Question 2, Items 6 and 9 seemed to be similar. The researcher did find Items 6 and 9 to be very similar. The researcher deleted Item 9—the less inclusive of the two items.
- One participant asked “Will the people completing this form know what these *programs* refer to?” The researcher did not address this question because all of the programs listed on Question 3 were suggested by panel members. Further, if panel members were not familiar with certain programs, there was space on the questionnaire for them to ask a question about a program. Participants were not obligated to answer all questions. They could leave any items blank.
- Throughout the questionnaire, two participants suggested editing item content. (The researcher failed to inform participants that all items were the result of panel member responses from the first questionnaire). The researcher did not adhere to this suggestion for fear that editing item content would detract from what panel members wished to convey, though the researcher did edit for spelling and punctuation.

Pilot Study Results of Survey

A pilot study was conducted on the final instrument, a survey, before it was sent to participants. A principal, an NJROTC instructor, and a teacher participated in this pilot study. Participants made the following suggestions regarding content and clarity of the survey. The researcher’s response follows each participant’s suggestion(s) or question(s).

- One participant suggested that the researcher spell out the acronyms of LGBT and GLSEN the first time they appear in the survey. The researcher adhered to this suggestion as this is common practice for the use of acronyms.
- One participant directed the researcher to the term *statement* in the second sentence in the directions which reads: “Choose the level of effectiveness that best describes how effective that *statement* is for school leaders in protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization, thus reducing the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth.” The participant suggested the researcher change the word *statement* to *action* since all of the statements are actions of the school leader. The researcher adhered to this suggestion because all statements are essentially actions that the school leader can take to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization, thus reducing the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth.
- One participant wrote that survey Item Number 8 was confusing. It read: “Do away with zero tolerance [of bullying and harassment] and integrate a climate of acceptance and support.” This participant explained that the statement was confusing because he disagreed with the concept of doing away with zero tolerance of bullying and harassment. The participant could not understand how doing away with zero tolerance could help protect LGBT youth from peer victimization. The researcher explained that all items were generated by panel members and that their responses could not be changed.

- One participant felt that survey Numbers 11 and 13 were similar. The researcher explained that Number 11 was a strategy suggested by a panel member and Number 13 was a policy suggested by a panel member.
- One participant suggested the researcher check the spelling of *continuum* on survey question Number 16. The researcher verified that *continuum* was spelled correctly.
- One participant questioned the “Q” in “LGBTQ” in Numbers 16 and 23. The researcher deleted the “Q” to maintain consistency in the survey, as well as in the entire research study. (This was an oversight on the researcher’s part).
- One participant asked if research participants were familiar with the various programs listed in the survey. The researcher informed this participant that all panel members were not familiar with all of the programs listed. In addition, the researcher informed this participant that if respondents were not familiar with certain programs, they were not obligated to answer and they could leave those survey items blank.

Data Collection and Analysis

Delbecq, Van de Ven, and Gustafson (1975) suggested that a Delphi study begin with the development of a questionnaire with broad, open-ended questions. According to Delbecq, Van de Ven, and Gustafson, there are a number of benefits to participants for beginning with broad questions. Participants (1) have adequate time to reflect and think, (2) avoid unnecessary focusing on a particular idea, (3) avoid status pressures, conformity issues, and competition between members, (4) remain centered on the problem, (5) avoid choosing ideas prematurely, and (6) respond when it is convenient for them. The decision

makers and staff took measures to ensure that the research questions were unambiguous. The desired information from respondents was clarified and an explanation was provided about how the information would be utilized. These measures were an attempt to ensure that respondents understood the questions, would not become frustrated, lose interest, or answer inappropriately or incorrectly.

A cover letter accompanied each questionnaire before it was sent to respondents. The cover letter expressed appreciation to the respondents for participating in the Delphi study, explained why their help was necessary and how the results would be used. The cover letter also included instructions on how to complete the questionnaire and when it should be returned to the researcher. The following suggestions, as recommended by Delbecq, Van de Ven, and Gustafson (1975), were adhered to so that each questionnaire was successful: (a) both the letter and the questionnaire contained no technical errors, (b) the letter did not exceed one page, (c) the letter was personally typed rather than photocopied, (d) instructions for completing the questionnaire were clear, (e) return procedures for the questionnaire were simplified, and (f) a specific deadline was set for the response date of each questionnaire.

Even when the previously mentioned suggestions were followed, some participants did not respond and needed further encouragement. When respondents needed additional encouragement, the researcher sent what Delbecq, Van de Ven, and Gustafson (1975) referred to as a “dunning” letter. This letter was sent to respondents one to two weeks after the administration of each questionnaire. Respondents were reminded of the return date and encouraged to ask any questions. Respondents were also reminded how much their participation was needed in this research study.

Round One

The first round of the Delphi process began with the development of the first questionnaire which included four broad, open-ended research questions. The following research questions were included on the first questionnaire:

1. What do experts say school leaders can do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization?
2. What effective strategies can school leaders implement *in their schools* to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?
3. What effective programs can school leaders implement *in their schools* to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?
4. What effective policies can school leaders implement *in their schools* reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?

The researcher was not aware that she failed to include the phrase *in their schools* in research questions two, three, and four until after the first questionnaire was returned. This oversight did not appear to detract from the expected responses of panel members.

The purpose of the first questionnaire was to determine experts' perceptions on what school leaders can do to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization. This questionnaire was open-ended to encourage a variety of responses from panel members. Panel members were encouraged to provide honest responses which the researcher hoped would add more value to the research study. Participants were directed to answer each research question in a provided space. Participants were encouraged to use more space if needed. Space was also provided if participants wanted to add any other pertinent information related to the study. Respondents were asked to complete and return the

questionnaire by a set response date. The return information was located at the end of the questionnaire. Participants were given the option of returning the questionnaire to the researcher via email, fax, or traditional postal mail. Participants were thanked for completing the questionnaire.

A demographics section was included on the first questionnaire. Participants were asked to provide the following demographic information: name, address of business/organization, city, state and zip code of business, telephone number and email address of business, organization they were affiliated with, job title in that organization, and how long they worked in their current position. This demographic data provided the researcher with pertinent information that further qualified participants to serve on the Delphi panel of experts.

After the first questionnaire underwent pilot testing, the support staff/researcher sent panel members a copy via email. All seven questionnaires were returned via email. The support staff analyzed each questionnaire when it was returned. This analysis included a list of summarized items that were developed from the responses of panel members on the first questionnaire. This list included respondents' opinions and key ideas from the first questionnaire. The support staff ensured that the list was not so long that respondents had difficulty reviewing, criticizing, supporting, and/or opposing the information obtained from the questionnaire. This list comprised the second questionnaire (Delbec, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975).

Round Two

The second round of this Delphi study began with the development of the second questionnaire. The second questionnaire included a summarized list of items that were

generated from panel member responses on the first questionnaire. The purpose of the second questionnaire was to identify areas of agreement and disagreement, clarify items, and prioritize experts' opinions on what school leaders can do to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization. Participants were reminded that their honest responses would be very valuable to this research study. Participants were asked to return the completed questionnaire by a set return date. The return information was located at the end of the questionnaire. Participants could either return the questionnaire to the researcher via email, fax, or traditional postal mail. Six questionnaires were returned by email. One participant did not return the second questionnaire. Participants were thanked for completing the questionnaire.

All items on the second questionnaire were a reflection of panel members' opinions and key ideas for each research question on the first questionnaire. The researcher reviewed each response to each question submitted by panel members. The researcher then compiled a list of panel member responses that were similar. The most comprehensive responses of the similar items for each question were included on the second questionnaire. Sixty-five total items were included on the second questionnaire. Fifteen items were included under Question 1, fourteen items under Question 2, twenty items under Question 3, and sixteen items under Question 4. All items under Questions 1, 2, and 4 included key words that were underlined. Underlining key words created an ease of understanding the items for participants (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975). Question 3 did not include any key words that were underlined because all listed items were the names/types of programs that school leaders could implement to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth.

The second questionnaire directed respondents to read each item, support or oppose any items, and clarify any items that appeared ambiguous. Panel members were reminded that all items included in the questionnaire were generated from their responses on the first questionnaire. Respondents were given the opportunity to add any items they felt should be included on the questionnaire. Finally, for each question respondents were asked to select and prioritize the five most effective items and assign a value of 1 to the most effective item, 2 to the next most effective item, and so on until the fifth item was assigned a value of 5. The second questionnaire served to (a) identify areas of agreement and disagreement, (b) identify and discuss any items that needed clarification, and (c) identify the emergence of priorities (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975).

A pilot study was conducted on the second questionnaire. Before it was sent to respondents, the support staff reviewed the questionnaire to ensure that its information represented what respondents conveyed on the first questionnaire. Information on the second questionnaire was used to develop the survey which was administered during the third and final round of the Delphi process. The survey consisted of 30 Likert-type scale responses that related to the effectiveness of strategies, programs, and policies that school leaders can implement to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization.

Round Three

The third round of the Delphi process began with the development of the final instrument, a survey composed of 30 statements developed from panel member responses on the second questionnaire. To avoid misrepresentation or inaccuracy on the survey, the researcher implemented two strategies as suggested by Delbecq, Van de Ven, and Gustafson (1975). First, the researcher compared the original comments on the second

questionnaire with those included on the survey. Second, the researcher conducted a pilot study on the survey before it was administered to participants.

An electronic survey development tool, Kwik Survey, was used to create the survey. The survey was sent to participants electronically. Participants were given the opportunity to return the survey via traditional postal email. Six participants returned the survey electronically. One participant did not return the survey. The purpose of the survey was to determine experts' perceptions on how effective strategies, programs, and policies were for school leaders in protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization, thus reducing the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Participant honesty was encouraged as it would help to create a more valuable research study. Participants were asked to return the survey by a set response date. Return information was located on the survey. Participants were thanked for completing the survey.

The survey consisted of 30 Likert scale responses which were generated from respondent comments on the second questionnaire. All survey items were related to the effectiveness of strategies, programs, and policies for school leaders in protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization. Respondents were directed to read each statement and choose the level of effectiveness that best described how effective that action would be for school leaders in protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization, thus reducing the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Likert scale answer choices included *Extremely Effective*, *Very Effective*, *Moderately Effective*, *Slightly Effective*, and *Not at all Effective*, respectively. An analysis of the survey revealed how panel members rated items in terms of their effectiveness in protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization and reducing the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth.

Response Rate

The response rate is one of the most common ways to judge a measuring instrument. Traditionally, face-to-face interviews have yielded the highest response rates while telephone, mail, and internet surveys have yielded the lowest response rates; however, this statement is misleading. A number of factors influence the response rates in studies such as the nature of the study, the length of the survey, and the amount of effort put into implementing the survey. Internet or email surveys that are well-administered can produce response rates that are near equal to the response rates of interviews conducted in person or by telephone but at a cost that is much lower. It is most important to identify when various approaches should or should not be implemented (de Vaus, 2002). Hox and de Leeuw and de Leeuw and Collins (as cited in de Vaus, 2002) evaluated the response rates in 45 studies that administered face-to-face, telephone, and mail surveys. The researchers concluded that face-to-face interviews received the highest average response rate of 70%; telephone surveys had a response rate of 67%, and mail surveys had a response rate of 61%.

Dillman (as cited in de Vaus, 2002) found that the response rate of mail surveys, especially those that involved specific homogeneous groups of people, were nearly as good as the response rate of other methods—particularly when the research topic was relevant to a certain group. Surveys conducted in person and over the phone tended to yield higher response rates than internet and mail surveys in samples that include the general population. Even in this case, the response rate still partially depends on the survey topic. Web-based surveys can be expected to yield good response rates when they are used in particular situations (de Vaus, 2002). For instance, anonymous internet and

mail surveys that address sensitive topics may achieve higher response rates (de Leeuw & Collins, as cited in de Vaus, 2002). For these reasons, the response rate for each questionnaire and the survey were set at 70%. The response rate of each questionnaire and the survey was calculated in the following manner (de Vaus, 2002):

$$\text{Response Rate} = \frac{\text{Number Returned}}{\text{N in Sample} - (\text{Ineligible} + \text{Unreachable})} \times 100$$

There was a 100% response rate for the first questionnaire. That is, all seven participants returned the first questionnaire. Six participants returned the second questionnaire. This yielded an 86% response rate for the second questionnaire. Six participants returned the third and final questionnaire, a survey. This yielded an 86% response rate for the survey.

De Vaus (2002) further added that the easiest way to guarantee that surveys via the internet progress smoothly is to utilize an internet survey software package. These packages are specifically designed to (a) simplify creating questionnaires, (b) make them web compatible, (c) place them on the internet, and (d) receive responses from participants. Kwik Survey, an internet survey development tool, was used to create the survey instrument in this study.

Reporting the Data

According to De Vaus (2002), there are three general ways to report data results that are analyzed through descriptive statistics: tabular, graphical, and statistical form. The researcher found it necessary to report data in tabular form. This tabular analysis involved a presentation of data in tables. Data were also reported in written narrative form. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) explained that narrative analysis organizes what can be explained and represented as a result of human experience. Each of the four research

questions was addressed on all three research instruments. Results were presented in tabular and narrative form.

Securing the Data

Data was printed and deleted from all computer sources including Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint, Kwik Survey, email, and any storage devices such as USB ports and computer discs. Data is stored in a secure location in the researcher's home. Data will be kept on file for three years following the completion of the study. At the end of this three-year period, all data will be destroyed via shredding.

Summary

Many lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth are victimized daily by their peers. Peer victimization has a negative impact on the academic and psychological development of LGBT youth. School leaders are responsible protecting all of their students, including those in the sexual minority, though school leaders may not know how to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization. Thus, the purpose of this research study was to determine what school leaders can do to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization and identify effective strategies, programs, and policies that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth.

The Delphi Technique was the chosen methodology for this study. A Delphi study gathers information from a panel of experts on a particular topic. Due to the nature of the Delphi Technique, panel members did not meet face-to-face. Because panel members did not meet face-to-face, their anonymity was ensured, no one participant dominated, and there was no personality conflict between panel members. These conditions created an

environment in which panel members were more likely to freely voice their opinions about the research topic. All panel members had some level of expertise in supporting and protecting LGBT youth from discrimination and harassment. The Delphi panel determined what school leaders can do to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization and identified effective strategies, programs, and policies that can be implemented by school leaders to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth.

The sample size for this Delphi study was seven respondents. Participants were chosen through purposeful sampling. Panel members met the following criteria before being selected to participate in this study: (1) they were personally interested in, as well as involved in, the research problem and (2) they contributed significant information to the research study. The participants in this research study were an Assistant Professor and faculty advisor of a college's Gay Straight Alliance, an Assistant Professor who has conducted research on bullying and harassment in schools, and one representative each from the Indiana Youth Group, Safe Schools Coalition and The Trevor Project. Two representatives from the Committee for Children also served on the Delphi panel.

Pilot studies were conducted on the questionnaires and survey before they were administered to respondents. Results of the pilot studies revealed grammatical errors, but more importantly they revealed ambiguous information on the research instruments. The pilot studies allowed the researcher to adjust the procedures and instruments before the actual questionnaires were administered to respondents. Hence, these pilot studies enhanced the validity and reliability of the research study and instruments. Pilot study participants included a principal, assistant principal, an NJROTC instructor, two teachers, a professional school counselor, a media specialist, and a Special Education coordinator.

Data were collected and analyzed over three rounds. Panel members were administered two questionnaires and one survey, respectively. Each instrument was administered and analyzed during its own round. Data from the first questionnaire revealed what school leaders can do to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization and effective strategies, programs, and policies school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Data from the second questionnaire identified areas of agreement and disagreement, clarified items, and prioritized experts' opinions on what school leaders can do to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization and what effective strategies, programs, and policies school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. The survey, the final instrument, determined how effective various strategies, programs, and policies are for school leaders in protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization, thus reducing the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth.

Chapter Four focuses on a report and analysis of data. An introduction provides an overview of the problem and the purpose of the research. The Delphi Technique, the research method for this study, is briefly explained. The research questions and research design are presented. A demographic profile is provided on each respondent. Research findings are discussed, analyzed, and presented in tabular and narrative form. Results obtained from each instrument during each round are analyzed. A summary of the methodology and results concludes Chapter Four.

Table 6

Item Analysis for Data Collection Instruments

Item	Research	Research Question
1. What school leaders can do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization	Billups, 2009	1
	Cianciotto & Cahill, 2003	1
	Craig & Pepler, 2007	1
	Espelage et al., 2008	1
	GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2008	1
	Goodenow et al., 2006	1
	Graybill, Varjas, Meyers, & Watson, 2009	1
	Hansen, 2007	1
	Horn et al., 2008	1
	Just the Facts Coalition, 2008	1
	Kosciw et al., 2010	1
	Morillas & Gibbons, 2010	1
	Nansel et al., 2001	1
	National Center for Lesbian Rights, 2010	1
	Newman-Carlson & Horne, 2004	1
	Orpinas, Horne, & Staniszewski, 2003	1
Stone, 2003	1	
Swearer et al., 2010	1	
Underwood, 2004	1	
Wright, 2010	1	
2. Effective strategies that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth	Bocheneck & Brown, 2001	2
	Goodenow et al., 2006	2
	Graybill et al., 2009	2
	Hansen, 2007	2
	Kilman, 2009	2
	Lee, 2002	2
	Mayberry, 2006	2
	Morillas & Gibbons, 2010	2
	Orpinas et al., 2003	2
	Poland, 2010	2
	Valenti, & Campbell, 2009	2
Weiler, 2003, 2004	2	
Whelan, 2006	2	
3. Effective programs that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth	Carlson & Horne, 2004	3
	Committee for Children, 2005	3
	Ferguson et al., 2007	3
	Frey et al., 2005	3
	Henning-Stout, James, & Macintosh, 2000	3
	Kosciw et al., 2005	3
	Kosciw et al., 2008	3
	Limber & Small, 2003	3
	Newman-Carlson & Horne, 2004	3
	Olweus, 1993	3
	Orpinas et al., 2003	3
	Smith et al., 2004	3
	South Carolina Association of School Administrators, 2010	3
Wong, 2009	3	

4. Effective policies	Cianciotto & Cahill, 2003	4
that school leaders	Graybill et al., 2009	4
can implement in	Hansen, 2007	4
their schools to	Human Rights Campaign, 2010	4
reduce the level of	Just the Facts Coalition, 2008	4
peer victimization	Limber & Small, 2003	4
experienced by	National Association of School Psychologists,	4
LGBT youth	2006	4
	National Center for Lesbian Rights, 2010	4
	Sacks & Salem, 2009	4
	Underwood, 2004	4
	U.S. Department of Education, 2001	4

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

School can be a dangerous place for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth (Kilman, 2009). Many students who identify as LGBT are often harassed and discriminated against on a daily basis by their peers (Weiler, 2004). Research has documented that peer victimization has a negative impact on the academic and psychological development of LGBT youth (Billups, 2009; Chan, 2009; Hansen, 2007; Markow & Fein, 2005; Swearer et al., 2008; Weiler, 2003, 2004; Williams et al., 2005).

School leaders are responsible for protecting and ensuring the safety of all of their students, including those in the sexual minority (Billups, 2009; Craig & Pepler, 2007; Espelage et al., 2008; GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2008; Horn, Szalacha, & Drill, 2008; Kosciw et al., 2010; Nansel et al., 2001; Swearer et al., 2010; Wright, 2010). School leaders may not know how to protect LGBT youth from peer harassment (GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2008). Thus, the purpose of this research study was to determine what school leaders can do to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization and identify what effective strategies, programs, and policies school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth.

The Delphi Technique was used to gather data from seven panel members, all who had some level of expertise with the research topic. Two questionnaires and one survey, each administered during its own round, were developed from panel member responses. The first questionnaire asked participants to respond to four open-ended research questions. The second questionnaire and survey were developed from panel member responses on the preceding questionnaire.

Research Questions

The following research question was developed to guide this study: “What do experts say school leaders can do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization?” The following supporting questions were also identified and addressed on each of the three research instruments:

- What effective strategies can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?
- What effective programs can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?
- What effective policies can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?

Research Design

The Delphi Technique was used to conduct this study. Data were collected from seven panel members over three rounds through the use of two questionnaires and one survey, respectively, though there is no set number of rounds in a Delphi study. The first questionnaire was comprised of four broad research questions. Data from the first questionnaire determined experts’ perceptions on what school leaders can do to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization and what effective strategies, programs, and policies school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. The second questionnaire, developed from panel member responses on the first questionnaire, identified areas of agreement and disagreement, clarified items, and prioritized experts’ opinions on what school leaders can do to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization. The third instrument, a survey,

was developed from panel members' responses on the second questionnaire. Data from the survey determined experts' perceptions on how effective various strategies, programs, and policies were for school leaders in protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization, thus reducing the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Pilot studies were conducted on all three instruments. (See Chapter Three for pilot study results).

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Seven respondents participated in this Delphi study. A demographics section was included on the first questionnaire to assist the researcher in creating a profile of those participating in the study. Participants were asked to provide the following demographic information on the first questionnaire: name, address of business/organization, city, state and zip code of business, telephone number and email address of business, organization they were affiliated with, job title in that organization, and how long they worked in their current position. The following is a demographic profile on each Delphi panel member:

- An Assistant Professor of Interior Design and faculty advisor of a college Gay-Straight Alliance; in current position for one year.
- An Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership who has conducted research on bullying and harassment in schools; in current position for four years.
- The Manager of an organization that supports and protects LGBT youth from peer discrimination and harassment; in current position for one year but affiliated with organization for 14 years.
- The Youth Outreach Coordinator of an organization that supports and protects LGBT youth from peer discrimination and harassment; in current position for three years.

- The Project Manager of an organization that supports and protects LGBT youth from peer discrimination and harassment; in current position for four years.
- Two representatives of an organization that supports and protects LGBT youth from peer discrimination and harassment. These participants consented passively. Therefore, no demographic information is available on these participants.

Findings/Data Analysis

Data were collected from panel members over three rounds in this Delphi study. Thus, the research findings, as well as the data analysis, were presented succinctly for each of the three rounds. An open-ended questionnaire was used to collect data during Round One. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data during Round Two. A closed-ended survey was used to collect data during Round Three.

Round One Results

Round One began with the development of four open-ended research questions. These four questions comprised the first questionnaire (see Appendix H). The purpose of the first questionnaire was to determine experts' perceptions on what school leaders can do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization and to identify effective strategies, programs, and policies that school leaders can implement to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Respondents were directed to answer each research question in a provided space.

The first questionnaire was emailed to respondents. All seven panel members returned the first questionnaire via email. The open-ended questions were designed to encourage a variety of panel member responses. The researcher found that the open-

endedness of the first questionnaire did produce a variety of responses from panel members. Respondents generated a total of 162 responses on the first questionnaire.

Research Question 1: *What can school leaders do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization?*

Respondents generated a total of 45 responses to the first research question (see Appendix I). The most common responses related to training adults to address bullying issues (Response Numbers 19, 21, 31, and 38), intervening when bullying occurs (Response Numbers 8, 15, and 41), educating students, faculty and staff on diversity (Response Numbers 4, 23, and 35), creating a school climate/culture that is accepting of diversity (Response Numbers 1, 7, 12, 17, 19, 32, and 40), creating safe schools/spaces (Response Numbers 2, 11, 17, 32, 34, and 39), supporting Gay-Straight Alliances (Response Numbers 10, 16, 27, and 36), implementing anti-bullying programs (Response Numbers 5, 14, 32, and 40), and implementing/creating anti-bullying policies (Response Numbers 13, 20, 22, and 34). The following responses reflect what panel members perceived school leaders can do to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization:

Response Number 15: Intervene and address anti-LGBT comments/behaviors every time you hear and/or see them.

Response Number 17: Create safe schools, developing cultures of acceptance of all diversity, caring students, and adults working together, respectfully. If this is created no matter what the issues are, all students and adults will be respected.

Response Number 20: Create policies to protect LGBTQ students from harassment and policies that strictly reprimand and correct homophobic and transphobic harassment, and policies for bathroom and locker room use by transgender youth. AND BE SURE POLICIES ARE CARRIED OUT.

Response Number 23: Educate all school boards, faculty members, and staff on LGBTQ terms, the sexual orientation continuum, the gender expression continuum, and their mandatory roles in eliminating homophobia and transphobia in the schools.

Response Number 27: Work to start and support a Gay-Straight Alliance in the school with annual Straight Ally Week, No Name-Calling Week, National Day of Silence, National Transgender Day of Remembrance, and other national or local LGBTQ days of importance.

Response Number 38: Train all adults who have contact with the students in how to promote diversity and acceptance. Requiring staff to be trained in pro-social skills and to model those skills is important to creating an environment that demands respect for all students. In addition, all adults who have contact with the students should receive training in the school's policies and procedures related to bullying.

Response Number 40: Strong anti-bullying program that is systemic and inclusive of cultural competency.

Research Question 2: *What effective strategies can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?*

Respondents generated a total of 46 responses to the second research question (see Appendix J). The most common responses were related to discussing bullying and LGBT issues (Response Numbers 2, 11, 13, 22, 28, and 32), scheduling staff in “hot spots” (Response Numbers 5, 20, and 30), training staff and students to address bullying issues (Response Numbers 1, 4, 33, and 44), educating students, faculty and staff on diversity (Response Numbers 9, 10, 16, 24, 26, 36, 42, 43, and 45), implementing anti-bullying programs (Response Numbers 7, 31, and 35), and implementing/creating anti-bullying policies (Response Numbers 1, 14, 25, and 29). The following responses reflect what panel members perceived to be effective strategies that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth:

Response Number 1: Make your policies on harassment and bullying clear to staff, students, and families and put in place meetings/workshops over the course of the school year that reiterates those policies.

Response Number 4: Train staff in effective bullying, harassment and intimidation prevention and intervention.

Response Number 5: Schedule teachers and administrators in areas where peer victimization takes place.

Response Number 7: Implement a bullying/harassment/intimidation prevention program.

Response Number 10: Educate all students about diversity.

Response Number 30: Evaluate all areas of a school that may not be safe and ensure proper supervision in those areas.

Response Number 32: Talk about LGBT issues and identity throughout the curriculum and classes.

Research Question 3: *What effective programs can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?*

Respondents generated a total of 32 responses to the third research question (see Appendix K). The most common responses were to implement Gay-Straight Alliances (Response Numbers 3, 18, and 27), anti-bullying programs (Response Numbers 5, 6, 9, 13, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, and 32) and diversity acceptance programs (Response Numbers 1, 8, 9, 15, 16, 17, 20, 26, 29, 31, and 32). The following responses reflect what panel members perceived to be effective programs that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth:

Response Number 3: Gay-Straight Alliance Clubs

Response Number 21: The Olweus Anti-Bullying program is a sound, evidence-based program, though it's lacking significant content on LGBTQ issues and needs an update for cyberbullying.

Response Number 32: I can suggest some of the following organizations that are considered respected in the field of prevention as resources: Groundspark.org, HRC's Welcoming Schools, and The Safe Schools Coalition.

Panel members provided the following explanations on the implementation of bullying prevention programs in schools:

Response Number 4: There are a few, but they need to be systemic and the administration needs to be 100% on board!

Response Number 13: Highly effective, universal prevention programs have a proven track record of reducing bullying and harassment and building positive social skills.

Response Number 28: The effectiveness of prevention programs is determined through conducting studies on the programs. Whenever a school is choosing a program, it should look for a research-based program with proven outcomes.

Research Question 4: *What effective policies can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?*

Respondents generated a total of 39 responses to the fourth research question (see Appendix L). The most common responses were related to implementing the following: policies that require training for staff members (Response Numbers 1, 6, 23, and 31), policies with enumerated categories (Response Numbers 5, 15, and 25), policies that include a plan for reporting bullying (Response Numbers 21, 22, and 35), and policies that protect students on the basis of gender expression and sexual orientation (Response Numbers 12, 17, 18, and 36). The following responses reflect what panel members perceived to be effective policies that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth:

Response Number 5: Enumerated (lists/spells out protected categories like race, color, sex, sexual orientation, etc.) school anti-bullying policies

Response Number 17: Create policies to protect LGBTQ students from harassment and policies that strictly reprimand and correct homophobic and transphobic harassment, and policies for bathroom and locker room use by transgender youth. AND BE SURE POLICIES ARE CARRIED OUT.

Response Number 22: Clear, reporting procedures in place for youth and members of the community that designate who and how to report instances of victimization

Response Number 23: More important than what the policies are, is the fact that they must be taught to the staff and students and not sit in a book of policies on a shelf. They must be revisited often and enforced consistently.

Round Two Results

The second round of the Delphi process began with the development of a semi-structured second questionnaire (see Appendix M). The second questionnaire contained a total of 65 items generated from panel member responses on the first questionnaire. The second questionnaire served a three-fold purpose: (1) to identify areas of agreement and disagreement between panel members, (2) to clarify items on the first questionnaire, and (3) to prioritize experts' opinions on what school leaders can do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization.

The second questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first section allowed panel members to prioritize item responses. The second section was comprised of panel member responses/items from the first questionnaire. Panel members were given the opportunity to add items, though none of them did. The third section allowed panel members to comment on item responses. For each of the four research questions, panel members were directed to select the five most effective items for each question and assign a value of 1 to the most effective item, 2 to the next most effective item, and so on, until the fifth item was assigned a value of 5.

The second questionnaire was emailed to respondents. Six of the seven panel members returned the second questionnaire via email. A three-fold analysis was conducted on each research question when it was returned to the researcher: (1) an identification of areas of agreement and disagreement between expert panel members, (2) a clarification of response items by panel members, and (3) a prioritization of experts'

opinions on what school leaders can do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization.

An analysis of the second questionnaire also included a tally of all panel member responses (see Tables 7, 9, 11, and 13). Tallying the responses not only allowed the researcher to see the number of respondents who selected an item, but also allowed the researcher to see how diverse the rankings were for each item. This information permitted the researcher to contact any respondent for explanations or clarifications about an item or comment (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975).

Research Question 1: *What can school leaders do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization?*

Research Question 1 contained 15 response items. An analysis of Research Question 1 revealed that panel members agreed with 12 of the 15 item responses on Question 1 of the second questionnaire. Table 7 shows the number of panel members that expressed agreement with Question 1 item responses. Respondents expressed agreement with Item Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, and 15. Those item responses are shown below.

Item Response 1: Investigate all issues of victimization to see if they are substantiated or unsubstantiated.

Item Response 2: Motivate others to listen and not be bystanders (students as well as adults- teachers, parents, etc).

Item Response 3: Educate elementary students on different types of families, name-calling, and breaking down gender stereotypes. Educate middle school and high school youth on tolerance of LGBTQ schoolmates, breaking down gender stereotypes, and eliminating homophobia and transphobia in their school. Educate all school boards, faculty members, and staff on LGBTQ terms, the sexual orientation continuum, the gender expression continuum, and their mandatory roles in eliminating homophobia and transphobia in the schools.

Item Response 4: Make yourself an open and visible ally in classrooms.

Item Response 5: Intervene and address anti-LGBT comments/behaviors every time they are heard and/or seen.

Item Response 6: Include LGBTQ issues and historical figures in the curriculum.

Item Response 7: Make sure that effective anti-bullying policies and bullying reporting procedures and consequences are in place to ensure the safety of all students and to promote a safe environment for learning.

Item Response 9: Work to start and support a Gay-Straight Alliance in the school with annual Straight Ally Week, No Name-Calling Week, National Day of Silence, National Transgender Day of Remembrance, and other national or local LGBTQ days of importance.

Item Response 11: Create policies to protect LGBTQ students from harassment and policies that strictly reprimand and correct homophobic and transphobic harassment. BE SURE POLICIES ARE CARRIED OUT.

Item Response 13: Have safe harbors for these [LGBT] students to go to when they are feeling the need to talk or time to gather themselves. This safe harbor should have a caring, understanding, trained adult that will listen and then take action to help the student make good choices and decisions.

Item Response 14: Train all adults who have contact with the students in how to promote diversity and acceptance. Requiring staff to be trained in pro-social skills and to model those skills is important to creating an environment that demands respect for all students. In addition, all adults who have contact with the students should receive training in the school's policies and procedures related to bullying.

Item Response 15: Implement a strong anti-bullying program that is systemic and inclusive of cultural competency.

Table 7

Second Questionnaire, Research Question 1 Panel Member Agreement with Item Responses

Item Response Number	Item Response	# of Panel Members Who Agreed with Item Response
1	Investigate all issues of victimization to see if they are substantiated or unsubstantiated.	1
2	Motivate others to listen and not be bystanders (students as well as adults- teachers, parents, etc).	2
3	Educate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary students on different types of families, name-calling, and breaking down gender stereotypes. • Middle school and high school youth on tolerance of LGBTQ schoolmates, breaking down gender stereotypes, and eliminating homophobia and transphobia in their school. • All school boards, faculty members, and staff on LGBTQ terms, the sexual orientation continuum, the gender expression continuum, and their mandatory roles in eliminating homophobia and transphobia in the schools 	6
4	Make yourself an open and visible ally in classrooms.	1
5	Intervene and address anti-LGBT comments/behaviors every time they are heard and/or seen.	3
6	Include LGBTQ issues and historical figures in the curriculum.	1
7	Make sure that effective anti-bullying policies and bullying reporting procedures and consequences are in place to ensure the safety of all students and to promote a safe environment for learning.	4
8	Create safe schools, developing cultures of acceptance of all diversity, caring students, and adults working together, respectfully.	0
9	Work to start and support a Gay-Straight Alliance in the school with annual Straight Ally Week, No Name-Calling Week, National Day of Silence, National Transgender Day of Remembrance, and other national or local LGBTQ days of importance.	1
10	Engage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families and caregivers and promote take-home activities that reinforce pro-social skills and tolerance. • Civic leaders as part of the dialogue. 	0
11	Create policies to protect LGBTQ students from harassment and policies that strictly reprimand and correct homophobic and transphobic harassment. BE SURE POLICIES ARE CARRIED OUT.	2
12	Use inclusive language like “date” instead of “boyfriend” or “girlfriend” that doesn’t assume that everyone is heterosexual.	0

13	Have safe harbors for these [LGBT] students to go to when they are feeling the need to talk or time to gather themselves. This safe harbor should have a caring, understanding, trained adult that will listen and then take action to help the student make good choices and decisions.	3
14	Train all adults who have contact with the students in how to promote diversity and acceptance. Requiring staff to be trained in pro-social skills and to model those skills is important to creating an environment that demands respect for all students. In addition, all adults who have contact with the students should receive training in the school's policies and procedures related to bullying.	5
15	Implement a strong anti-bullying program that is systemic and inclusive of cultural competency.	2

Though no panel member expressed disagreement with Question 1 item responses on the second questionnaire, Panel Member 3 made clarifications to Question 1 item responses. This respondent clarified Item Response Number 2 which stated:

Item Response 2: Motivate others to listen and not be bystanders (students as well as adults- teachers, parents, etc).

Panel Member 3 added “and allied school staff!” Panel Member 3 also clarified Item Response Number 8 which read:

Item Response 8: Create safe schools, developing cultures of acceptance of all diversity, caring students, and adults working together, respectfully.

Panel Member 3 wrote “Great idea but too broad in current lang [language].

Each respondent was directed to prioritize items by selecting the five most effective items for Research Question 1 on the second questionnaire. Respondents were asked to assign a value of 1 to the most effective item, 2 to the next most effective item, and so on, until the fifth item was assigned a value of 5. Table 8 shows the priority vote assigned by each respondent to item responses for Question 1. No one item response received a priority vote from all six respondents. Item Response Numbers 3 and 14

received priority votes from five of the six respondents. Item Response Numbers 3 and 14 are below.

Item Response 3: Educate elementary students on different types of families, name-calling, and breaking down gender stereotypes. Educate middle school and high school youth on tolerance of LGBTQ schoolmates, breaking down gender stereotypes, and eliminating homophobia and transphobia in their school. Educate all school boards, faculty members, and staff on LGBTQ terms, the sexual orientation continuum, the gender expression continuum, and their mandatory roles in eliminating homophobia and transphobia in the schools.

Item Response 14: Train all adults who have contact with the students in how to promote diversity and acceptance. Requiring staff to be trained in pro-social skills and to model those skills is important to creating an environment that demands respect for all students. In addition, all adults who have contact with the students should receive training in the school's policies and procedures related to bullying.

No item response received 4 priority votes from panel members. Item Response Numbers 5, 7, and 13 received priority votes from three of the six respondents. Item Response Numbers 5, 7, and 13 are shown below.

Item Response 5: Intervene and address anti-LGBT comments/ behaviors every time they are heard and/or seen.

Item Response 7: Make sure that effective anti-bullying policies and bullying reporting procedures and consequences are in place to ensure the safety of all students and to promote a safe environment for learning.

Item Response 13: Have safe harbors for these [LGBT] students to go to when they are feeling the need to talk or time to gather themselves. This safe harbor should have a caring, understanding, trained adult that will listen and then take action to help the student make good choices and decisions.

Item Response Numbers 2, 6, 11, and 15 received priority votes from two of the six respondents. Item Response Numbers 2, 6, 11, and 15 are shown below.

Item Response 2: Motivate others to listen and not be bystanders (students as well as adults- teachers, parents, etc).

Item Response 6: Include LGBTQ issues and historical figures in the curriculum.

Item Response 11: Create policies to protect LGBTQ students from harassment and policies that strictly reprimand and correct homophobic and transphobic harassment. BE SURE POLICIES ARE CARRIED OUT.

Item Response 15: Implement a strong anti-bullying program that is systemic and inclusive of cultural competency.

Item Response Numbers 1, 4, and 9 received priority votes from one of the six respondents. Item Response Numbers 1, 4, and 9 are shown below.

Item Response 1: Investigate all issues of victimization to see if they are substantiated or unsubstantiated.

Item Response 4: Make yourself an open and visible ally in classrooms.

Item Response 9: Work to start and support a Gay-Straight Alliance in the school with annual Straight Ally Week, No Name-Calling Week, National Day of Silence, National Transgender Day of Remembrance, and other national or local LGBTQ days of importance.

Item Response Numbers 8, 10, and 12 received no priority votes from respondents. Item Response Numbers 8, 10, and 12 are shown below.

Item Response 8: Create safe schools, developing cultures of acceptance of all diversity, caring students, and adults working together, respectfully.

Item Response 10: Engage families and caregivers and promote take-home activities that reinforce pro-social skills and tolerance. Engage civic leaders as part of the dialogue.

Item Response 12: Use inclusive language like “date” instead of “boyfriend” or “girlfriend” that doesn’t assume that everyone is heterosexual.

Table 8

Second Questionnaire, Research Question 1 Panel Member Priority Votes on Item Responses

Item #	Item Response	Priority Votes					
		Panel Member 1	Panel Member 2	Panel Member 3	Panel Member 4	Panel Member ^a 5	Panel Member 6
1	Investigate all issues of victimization to see if they are substantiated or unsubstantiated.				5		
2	Motivate others to listen and not be bystanders (students as well as adults- teachers, parents, etc).		3				5
3	Educate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Elementary students on different types of families, name-calling, and breaking down gender stereotypes. •Middle school and high school youth on tolerance of LGBTQ schoolmates, breaking down gender stereotypes, and eliminating homophobia and transphobia in their school. •All school boards, faculty members, and staff on LGBTQ terms, the sexual orientation continuum, the gender expression continuum, and their mandatory roles in eliminating homophobia and transphobia in the schools. 	4	1	3	4	3	1
4	Make yourself an open and visible ally in classrooms.			4			
5	Intervene and address anti-LGBT comments/ behaviors every time they are heard and/or seen.			2	1	2	
6	Include LGBTQ issues and historical figures in the curriculum.						4
7	Make sure that effective anti-bullying policies and bullying reporting procedures and consequences are in place to ensure the safety of all students and to promote a safe environment for learning.	1	2	1		4	
8	Create safe schools, developing cultures of acceptance of all diversity, caring students, and adults working together, respectfully.						

9	Work to start and support a Gay-Straight Alliance in the school with annual Straight Ally Week, No Name-Calling Week, National Day of Silence, National Transgender Day of Remembrance, and other national or local LGBTQ days of importance.					2
10	Engage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Families and caregivers and promote take-home activities that reinforce pro-social skills and tolerance. •Civic leaders as part of the dialogue. 					
11	Create policies to protect LGBTQ students from harassment and policies that strictly reprimand and correct homophobic and transphobic harassment. BE SURE POLICIES ARE CARRIED OUT.			2		1
12	Use inclusive language like “date” instead of “boyfriend” or “girlfriend” that doesn’t assume that everyone is heterosexual.					
13	Have safe harbors for these [LGBT] students to go to when they are feeling the need to talk or time to gather themselves. This safe harbor should have a caring, understanding, trained adult that will listen and then take action to help the student make good choices and decisions.	5	5			5
14	Train all adults who have contact with the students in how to promote diversity and acceptance. Requiring staff to be trained in pro-social skills and to model those skills is important to creating an environment that demands respect for all students. In addition, all adults who have contact with the students should receive training in the school’s policies and procedures related to bullying.	2	4	5	3	3
15	Implement a strong anti-bullying program that is systemic and inclusive of cultural competency.	3				3

^aPanel Member 5 assigned Item Response Numbers 3 and 14 a priority vote of 3.

Research Question 2: *What effective strategies can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?*

Research Question 2 contained 14 response items. An analysis of Research Question 2 showed that panel members agreed with all 14 of the item responses on Question 2 of the second questionnaire. Table 9 shows the number of panel members that expressed agreement with Question 2 item responses. The 14 item responses that respondents expressed agreement with on Question 2 are shown below.

Item Response 1: Evaluate all areas of a school that may not be safe and ensure proper supervision in those areas.

Item Response 2: Make clear to students the options for counseling within the school and provide access to community resources specific to LGBT youth.

Item Response 3: Talk about LGBT issues and identity throughout the curriculum and classes.

Item Response 4: Never force a confrontation between the individual being victimized and the person(s) committing acts of harassment. Those involved should be counseled separately by a designated coach/counselor.

Item Response 5: Do away with “zero tolerance” and integrate a climate of acceptance and support.

Item Response 6: Make your policies on harassment and bullying clear to staff, students, and families and put in place meetings/workshops over the course of the school year that reiterates those policies.

Item Response 7: Role model a culture of acceptance from the top down.

Item Response 8: Document 6 W’s for every instance of harassment:

- Who was involved
- What happened
- Where it happened
- When it happened
- Who it was reported to
- Witnesses to the event

Item Response 9: Survey students, staff, and families to determine the scope of the LGBT victimization problem. Use the data to support decision making around program implementation or the creation of new policies or procedures.

Item Response 10: Conduct parent meetings to help with understanding.

Item Response 11: Implement a bullying/harassment/intimidation prevention program.

Item Response 12: Use teachable moments. Everything does not need a consequence but does need a “What just happened here? Apologize. Do you know what that means or how does this person feel when you say that?”

Item Response 13: Establish “peer leaders” among groups (clubs, athletic organizations, etc.) to receive required specialized training.

Item Response 14: Provide safe spaces and safe staff. Let it be known if you are an ally or LGBT identified.

Table 9

Second Questionnaire, Research Question 2 Panel Member Agreement with Item Responses

Item Response Number	Item Response	# of Panel Members Who Agreed with Item Response
1	Evaluate all areas of a school that may not be safe and ensure proper supervision in those areas.	3
2	Make clear to students the options for counseling within the school and provide access to community resources specific to LGBT youth.	2
3	Talk about LGBT issues and identity throughout the curriculum and classes.	3
4	Never force a confrontation between the individual being victimized and the person(s) committing acts of harassment. Those involved should be counseled separately by a designated coach/counselor.	1
5	Do away with “zero tolerance” and integrate a climate of acceptance and support.	3
6	Make your policies on harassment and bullying clear to staff, students, and families and put in place meetings/workshops over the course of the school year that reiterates those policies.	5
7	Role model a culture of acceptance from the top down.	1
8	Document 6 W’s for every instance of harassment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Who was involved •What happened •Where it happened •When it happened •Who it was reported to •Witnesses to the event 	1
9	Survey students, staff, and families to determine the scope of the LGBT victimization problem. Use the data to support decision making around program implementation or the creation of new policies or procedures.	2
10	Conduct parent meetings to help with understanding.	1
11	Implement a bullying/harassment/intimidation prevention program.	4
12	Use teachable moments. Everything does not need a consequence but does need a “What just happened here? Apologize. Do you know what that means or how does this person feel when you say that?”	1
13	Establish “peer leaders” among groups (clubs, athletic organizations, etc.) to receive required specialized training.	1
14	Provide safe spaces and safe staff. Let it be known if you are an ally or LGBT identified.	3

Two respondents disagreed with item responses on Question 2 of the second questionnaire. Panel Member 5 disagreed with Item Response Number 5 which read:

Item Response 5: Do away with “zero tolerance” and integrate a climate of acceptance and support.

Panel Member 5 simply wrote “Strongly disagree.”

Panel Member 3 disagreed with the second sentence of Item Response Number 14 which read:

Item Response 14: Provide safe spaces and safe staff. Let it be known if you are an ally or LGBT identified.

Panel Member 3 underlined “Let it be known if you are an ally or LGBT identified” and wrote “Not realistic in states without employment discrimination protections for LGBTQ staff.”

Only one clarification was made on an item response on Question 2 of the second questionnaire. Panel Member 3 clarified Item Response Number 1 which read:

Item Response 1: Evaluate all areas of a school that may not be safe and ensure proper supervision in those areas.

Panel Member 3 wrote “Agree, but bathrooms and locker rooms will always be challenging.”

Each respondent was directed to prioritize items by selecting the five most effective items for Research Question 2 on the second questionnaire. Respondents were asked to assign a value of 1 to the most effective item, 2 to the next most effective item, and so on, until the fifth item was assigned a value of 5. Table 10 shows the priority vote assigned by each respondent to item responses for Question 2. No one item response received a priority vote from all six respondents. Item Response Number 6 received a priority vote from five of the six respondents. Item Response Number 6 is below:

Item Response 6: Make your policies on harassment and bullying clear to staff, students, and families and put in place meetings/workshops over the course of the school year that reiterates those policies.

Item Response Number 11 received priority votes from four of the six respondents. Item Response Number 11 is below:

Item Response 11: Implement a bullying/harassment/intimidation prevention program.

Item Response Numbers 1, 3, 5, and 14 received priority votes from three of the six respondents. Item Response Numbers 1, 3, 5, and 14 are shown below.

Item Response 1: Evaluate all areas of a school that may not be safe and ensure proper supervision in those areas.

Item Response 3: Talk about LGBT issues and identity throughout the curriculum and classes.

Item Response 5: Do away with “zero tolerance” and integrate a climate of acceptance and support.

Item Response 14: Provide safe spaces and safe staff. Let it be known if you are an ally or LGBT identified.

Item Response Numbers 2 and 9 received priority votes from two of the six respondents. Item Response Numbers 2 and 9 are shown below.

Item Response 2: Make clear to students the options for counseling within the school and provide access to community resources specific to LGBT youth.

Item Response 9: Survey students, staff, and families to determine the scope of the LGBT victimization problem. Use the data to support decision making around program implementation or the creation of new policies or procedures.

Item Response Numbers 4, 7, 8, 10, 12, and 13 received priority votes from one of the six respondents. Item Response Numbers 4, 7, 8, 10, 12, and 13 are shown below.

Item Response 4: Never force a confrontation between the individual being victimized and the person(s) committing acts of harassment. Those involved should be counseled separately by a designated coach/counselor.

Item Response 7: Role model a culture of acceptance from the top down.

Item Response 8: Document 6 W's for every instance of harassment:

- Who was involved
- What happened
- Where it happened
- When it happened
- Who it was reported to
- Witnesses to the event

Item Response 10: Conduct parent meetings to help with understanding.

Item Response 12: Use teachable moments. Everything does not need a consequence but does need a “What just happened here? Apologize. Do you know what that means or how does this person feel when you say that?”

Item Response 13: Establish “peer leaders” among groups (clubs, athletic organizations, etc.) to receive required specialized training.

Table 10

Second Questionnaire, Research Question 2 Panel Member Priority Votes on Item Responses

Item #	Item Response	Priority Votes					
		Panel Member 1	Panel Member ^a 2	Panel Member 3	Panel Member 4	Panel Member 5	Panel Member 6
1	Evaluate all areas of a school that may not be safe and ensure proper supervision in those areas.	1	4		4		
2	Make clear to students the options for counseling within the school and provide access to community resources specific to LGBT youth.		3	2			
3	Talk about LGBT issues and identity throughout the curriculum and classes.		5		5		4
4	Never force a confrontation between the individual being victimized and the person(s) committing acts of harassment. Those involved should be counseled separately by a designated coach/counselor.		2				
5	Do away with “zero tolerance” and integrate a climate of acceptance and support.	5		5			1
6	Make your policies on harassment and bullying clear to staff, students, and families and put in place meetings/workshops over the course of the school year that reiterates those policies.		3	1	2	1	2
7	Role model a culture of acceptance from the top down.					2	
8	Document 6 W’s for every instance of harassment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Who was involved •What happened •Where it happened •When it happened •Who it was reported to •Witnesses to the event 			3			
9	Survey students, staff, and families to determine the scope of the LGBT victimization problem. Use the data to support decision making around program implementation or the creation of new policies or procedures.	2		4			

10	Conduct parent meetings to help with understanding.			3	
11	Implement a bullying/harassment/intimidation prevention program.	3	1	1	3
12	Use teachable moments. Everything does not need a consequence but does need a “What just happened here? Apologize. Do you know what that means or how does this person feel when you say that?”				5
13	Establish “peer leaders” among groups (clubs, athletic organizations, etc.) to receive required specialized training.				5
14	Provide safe spaces and safe staff. Let it be known if you are an ally or LGBT identified.	4		4	3

“Panel Member 2 assigned Item Response Numbers 2 and 6 a priority vote of 3.

Research Question 3: *What effective programs can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?*

Research Question 3 contained 20 response items. An analysis of Research Question 3 revealed that five of the six panel members agreed with 12 of the 20 item responses on Question 3 of the second questionnaire. Panel Member 5 did not answer this question. He/she wrote “Not qualified to respond.” An email from Panel Member 5 explained “On the one section, I am just not informed enough about the different programs to evaluate them, so I left that section blank.” Panel Member 3 wrote “Don’t know what this is” on Item Responses 6, 7, 9, 12, 13, 16, 19, and 20. Table 11 shows the number of panel members that expressed agreement with Question 3 item responses. Respondents expressed agreement with Item Numbers 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, and 17. Those 12 item responses are listed below.

Item Response 1: Peer mediations

Item Response 2: PFLAG’s Safe Schools Program

Item Response 4: Gay-Straight Alliances

Item Response 5: Trevor Project's Lifeguard Workshop or Survival Kits

Item Response 7: Safe from Bullies: Saving Lives

Item Response 8: Character education

Item Response 9: Second Step: Skills for Social and Academic Success

Item Response 10: Olweus anti-bullying program

Item Response 12: Steps to Respect: A Bullying Prevention Program

Item Response 13: Let's Get Real

Item Response 15: HRC's Welcoming Schools Initiative

Item Response 17: GLSEN's Lunchbox Program

Table 11

Second Questionnaire, Research Question 3 Panel Member Agreement with Item Responses

Item Response Number	Item Response	# of Panel Members Who Agreed with Item Response
1	Peer mediations	1
2	PFLAG's Safe Schools Program	2
3	Campus Pride	0
4	Gay-Straight Alliances	5
5	Trevor Project's Lifeguard Workshop or Survival Kits	1
6	Rachel's Challenge	0
7	Safe from Bullies: Saving Lives	1
8	Character education	1
9	Second Step: Skills for Social and Academic Success	2
10	Olweus anti-bullying program	3
11	Diversity days	0
12	Steps to Respect: A Bullying Prevention Program	2
13	Let's Get Real	2
14	Internet safety programs	0
15	HRC's Welcoming Schools Initiative	3
16	Ruby Payne	0
17	GLSEN's Lunchbox Program	2
18	Conflict resolution	0
19	AIM (Awareness, Investigate, Motivate)	0
20	It's Elementary	0

Though no panel member expressed disagreement with Question 3 item responses, one panel member did make clarifications to Question 3 item responses on the second questionnaire. Panel Member 3 clarified Item Response Number 3 which read:

Item Response 3: Campus Pride

Panel Member 3 clarified that Campus Pride was “only for college campuses.” Panel Member 3 also clarified Item Response Number 10 which read:

Item Response 10: Olweus anti-bullying program

Panel Member 3 wrote “Great program, but it’s easy for schools to remove LGBT component.”

Each respondent was directed to prioritize items by selecting the five most effective items for Research Question 3 on the second questionnaire. Respondents were asked to assign a value of 1 to the most effective item, 2 to the next most effective item, and so on, until the fifth item was assigned a value of 5. Table 12 shows the priority vote assigned by each respondent to item responses for Question 3. Item Response Number 4 received priority votes from all five respondents. Item Response Number 4 is below.

Item Response 4: Gay-Straight Alliances

No item response received 4 priority votes from panel members. Item Response Numbers 10 and 15 received priority votes from three of the five respondents. Item Responses 10 and 15 are below.

Item Response 10: Olweus anti-bullying program

Item Response 15: HRC’s Welcoming Schools Initiative

Item Response Numbers 2, 9, 12, 13, and 17 received priority votes from two of the six respondents. Item Responses 2, 9, 12, 13, and 17 are listed below.

Item Response 2: PFLAG’s Safe Schools Program

Item Response 9: Second Step: Skills for Social and Academic Success

Item Response 12: Steps to Respect: A Bullying Prevention Program

Item Response 13: Let's Get Real

Item Response 17: GLSEN's Lunchbox Program

Item Response Numbers 1, 5, 7, and 8 received priority votes from one of the six respondents. Item Responses 1, 5, 7, and 8 are listed below.

Item Response 1: Peer mediations

Item Response 5: Trevor Project's Lifeguard Workshop or Survival Kits

Item Response 7: Safe from Bullies: Saving Lives

Item Response 8: Character education

Item Response Numbers 3, 6, 11, 14, 16, 18, 19, and 20 received no priority votes from respondents. Item Responses 3, 6, 11, 14, 16, 18, 19, and 20 are listed below.

Item Response 3: Campus Pride

Item Response 6: Rachel's Challenge

Item Response 11: Diversity days

Item Response 14: Internet safety programs

Item Response 16: Ruby Payne

Item Response 18: Conflict resolution

Item Response 19: AIM (Awareness, Investigate, Motivate)

Item Response 20: It's Elementary

Table 12

Second Questionnaire, Research Question 3 Panel Member Priority Votes on Item Responses

Item #	Item Response	Priority Votes					
		Panel Member 1	Panel Member 2	Panel Member 3	Panel Member 4	Panel Member 5	Panel Member 6
1	Peer mediations				4		
2	PFLAG's Safe Schools Program		5	4			
3	Campus Pride						
4	Gay-Straight Alliances	5	4	1	2		5
5	Trevor Project's Lifeguard Workshop or Survival Kits			3			
6	Rachel's Challenge						
7	Safe from Bullies: Saving Lives						1
8	Character education				3		
9	Second Step: Skills for Social and Academic Success	1					4
10	Olweus anti-bullying program		3	2	1		
11	Diversity days						
12	Steps to Respect: A Bullying Prevention Program	2	2				
13	Let's Get Real	4					2
14	Internet safety programs						
15	HRC's Welcoming Schools Initiative		1		5		3
16	Ruby Payne						
17	GLSEN's Lunchbox Program	3		5			
18	Conflict resolution						
19	AIM (Awareness, Investigate, Motivate)						
20	It's Elementary						

Research Question 4: *What effective policies can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?*

Research Question 4 contained 16 response items. An analysis of Research Question 4 revealed that panel members agreed with 13 of the 16 item responses on Question 4 of the second questionnaire. Table 13 shows the number of panel members that expressed agreement with Question 4 item responses on the second questionnaire. Respondents expressed agreement with Item Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15 and 16. Those item responses are shown below.

Item Response 1: Alternative and progressive discipline policies; not “zero tolerance” policies or automatic expulsion

Item Response 2: Published, enumerated anti-bullying and non-discrimination policies

Item Response 3: Policies that provide a “go to” person for staff, students, and families that is knowledgeable and supportive

Item Response 4: Clear bullying policies that are inclusive of those who identify as LGBT and other high risk groups

Item Response 6: Policies that explicitly lay out what offenses are severe enough according to district policy and state law to warrant legal action

Item Response 7: Policies on equal rights for all students

Item Response 8: Policies with clear, reporting procedures in place for youth and members of the community that designates who and how to report instances of victimization

Item Response 10: Policies that require professional development for all school staff on intervening when bullying occurs (including when sexual orientation or gender identity are salient)

Item Response 11: “Zero Tolerance” bullying policy

Item Response 13: Diversity acceptance policies

Item Response 14: Policies that include a safety plan that gives staff and students direct access to help when a bullying situation arises

Item Response 15: Policies with uniform complaint forms across schools, districts and states for instances of bullying/harassment

Item Response 16: Cyberbullying policies

Table 13

Second Questionnaire, Research Question 4 Panel Member Agreement with Item Responses

Item #	Item Response	# of Panel Members Who Agreed with Item Response
1	Alternative and progressive discipline policies; not “zero tolerance” policies or automatic expulsion	1
2	Published, enumerated anti-bullying and non-discrimination policies	3
3	Policies that provide a “go to” person for staff, students, and families that is knowledgeable and supportive	3
4	Clear bullying policies that are inclusive of those who identify as LGBT and other high risk groups	3
5	Use of cell phone policies	0
6	Policies that explicitly lay out what offenses are severe enough according to district policy and state law to warrant legal action	1
7	Policies on equal rights for all students	2
8	Policies with clear, reporting procedures in place for youth and members of the community that designates who and how to report instances of victimization	4
9	Policies that explicitly state that harassment, discrimination, and bullying of any sort for any real or perceived difference are prohibited.	0
10	Policies that require professional development for all school staff on intervening when bullying occurs (including when sexual orientation or gender identity are salient)	4
11	“Zero Tolerance” bullying policy	1
12	Policies that explicitly state how to prevent and intervene and what resources are available within and outside the district	0
13	Diversity acceptance policies	1
14	Policies that include a safety plan that gives staff and students direct access to help when a bullying situation arises	3
15	Policies with uniform complaint forms across schools, districts and states for instances of bullying/harassment	1
16	Cyberbullying policies	2

Panel Member 5 disagreed with Research Question 4, Item Response Number 1 which read:

Item Response 1: Alternative and progressive discipline policies; not “zero tolerance” policies or automatic expulsion

Panel Member 5 wrote “Alternative and progressive can include zero tolerance for some offenses (and should).” Panel Member 5 also disagreed with Research Question 4, Item

Response Number 6 which read:

Item Response 6: Policies that explicitly lay out what offenses are severe enough according to district policy and state law to warrant legal action

Panel Member 5 wrote “Boo. Students, teachers, and administrators with boots on the ground are the best agents of change.” Panel Member 5 commented on Item Response

Number 9 which read:

Item Response 9: Policies that explicitly state that harassment, discrimination, and bullying of any sort for any real or perceived difference are prohibited

Panel Member 5 wrote “The inclusion of ‘perceived’ is unsettling to me.” An addendum to the second questionnaire asked Panel Member 5 to elaborate on his/her comments. The researcher received no response from Panel Member 5 regarding this request.

Panel Member 3 disagreed with Item Response Number 11 which read:

Item Response 11: “Zero Tolerance” bullying policy

Panel Member 3 simply wrote “DISAGREE.”

Only one respondent clarified an item response on Question 4. Panel Member 5 clarified Item Response Number 16 which read:

Item Response 16: Cyberbullying policies

Panel Member 3 wrote “This is not limited to LGBT, but a good idea.”

Each respondent was directed to prioritize items by selecting the five most effective items for Research Question 4 on the second questionnaire. Respondents were asked to assign a value of 1 to the most effective item, 2 to the next most effective item, and so on, until the fifth item was assigned a value of 5. Table 14 shows the priority vote assigned by each respondent to item responses for Question 4. No one item response received a priority vote from all six respondents. No one item response received a priority vote from five respondents. Item Response Numbers 8 and 10 received priority votes from four of the six respondents. Item Response Numbers 8 and 10 are below.

Item Response 8: Policies with clear, reporting procedures in place for youth and members of the community that designates who and how to report instances of victimization

Item Response 10: Policies that require professional development for all school staff on intervening when bullying occurs (including when sexual orientation or gender identity are salient)

Item Response Numbers 2, 3, 4, and 14 received priority votes from three of the six respondents. Item Responses 2, 3, 4, and 14 are below.

Item Response 2: Published, enumerated anti-bullying and non-discrimination policies

Item Response 3: Policies that provide a “go to” person for staff, students, and families that is knowledgeable and supportive

Item Response 4: Clear bullying policies that are inclusive of those who identify as LGBT and other high risk groups

Item Response 14: Policies that include a safety plan that gives staff and students direct access to help when a bullying situation arises

Item Response Numbers 1, 7, and 16 received priority votes from two of the six respondents. Item Responses 1, 7, and 16 are below.

Item Response 1: Alternative and progressive discipline policies; not “zero tolerance” policies or automatic expulsion

Item Response 7: Policies on equal rights for all students

Item Response 16: Cyberbullying policies

Item Response Numbers 6, 11, 13, and 15 received a priority vote from one of the six respondents. Item Responses 6, 11, 13, and 15 are below.

Item Response 6: Policies that explicitly lay out what offenses are severe enough according to district policy and state law to warrant legal action

Item Response 11: “Zero Tolerance” bullying policy

Item Response 13: Diversity acceptance policies

Item Response 15: Policies with uniform complaint forms across schools, districts and states for instances of bullying/harassment

Item Response Numbers 5, 9, and 12 received no priority votes from respondents.

Item Response Number 5, 9, and 12 are below.

Item Response 5: Use of cell phone policies

Item Response 9: Policies that explicitly state that harassment, discrimination, and bullying of any sort for any real or perceived difference are prohibited

Item Response 12: Policies that explicitly state how to prevent and intervene and what resources are available within and outside the district

Table 14

Second Questionnaire, Research Question 4 Panel Member Priority Votes on Item Responses

Item #	Item Response	Priority Votes					
		Panel Member 1	Panel Member 2	Panel Member 3	Panel Member 4	Panel Member 5	Panel Member 6
1	Alternative and progressive discipline policies; not “zero tolerance” policies or automatic expulsion	4					4
2	Published, enumerated anti-bullying and non-discrimination policies	5		1		5	
3	Policies that provide a “go to” person for staff, students, and families that is knowledgeable and supportive			4	3	5	
4	Clear bullying policies that are inclusive of those who identify as LGBT and other high risk groups	1	1		1		
5	Use of cell phone policies						
6	Policies that explicitly lay out what offenses are severe enough according to district policy and state law to warrant legal action				4		
7	Policies on equal rights for all students					1	3
8	Policies with clear, reporting procedures in place for youth and members of the community that designates who and how to report instances of victimization	2	2	2		2	
9	Policies that explicitly state that harassment, discrimination, and bullying of any sort for any real or perceived difference are prohibited						
10	Policies that require professional development for all school staff on intervening when bullying occurs (including when sexual orientation or gender identity are salient)		3	5	2		1
11	“Zero Tolerance” bullying policy					3	
12	Policies that explicitly state how to prevent and intervene and what resources are available within and outside the district						
13	Diversity acceptance policies						2

14	Policies that include a safety plan that gives staff and students direct access to help when a bullying situation arises	3	4	4
15	Policies with uniform complaint forms across schools, districts and states for instances of bullying/harassment			3
16	Cyberbullying policies		5	5

Round Three Results

Round Three began with the development of the final instrument, a closed-ended survey (see Appendix N). Survey items were developed from panel member responses on the second questionnaire. To avoid misrepresentation or inaccuracy on the survey, a comparison was made between the original comments on the second questionnaire and those that were included on the final instrument (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975). The purpose of the survey was to determine how effective strategies, programs, and policies are for school leaders in protecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization, thus reducing the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth.

Kwik Survey, an online survey development tool, was used to create the survey. The survey was sent to participants electronically. Six of the seven respondents returned the survey. The survey was comprised of 30 Likert scale responses that were generated from panel member comments on the second questionnaire. All survey items were related to what school leaders can do to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization through the implementation of effective strategies, programs, and policies.

Each survey item was accompanied by five Likert scale answer choices. Those answer choices were *Extremely Effective*, *Very Effective*, *Moderately Effective*, *Slightly Effective*, and *Not at all Effective*. Participants were directed to read each statement and

choose the level of effectiveness that best described how effective that action would be for school leaders in protecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization, thus reducing the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth.

Research Question 1: *What can school leaders do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization?*

Eight panel member responses were used to measure Research Question 1. Those responses were survey Item Numbers 1, 3, 5, 11, 16, 19, 23, and 30. Research Question 1 survey answers were analyzed to determine how effective panel members perceived various actions to be for school leaders in protecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization (see Table 15).

Although no survey item was rated by all six panel members as *Extremely Effective*, all survey items were rated by at least one panel member as *Extremely Effective*. No survey item was rated by four or five of the panel members at any level of effectiveness. Three panel members found survey Item Numbers 5 and 11 to be *Extremely Effective* and survey Item Numbers 1 and 3 to be *Very Effective*. Two panel members found survey Item Numbers 1, 3, 16, 19, and 30 to be *Extremely Effective*, survey Item Number 16 to be *Moderately Effective*, and survey Item Numbers 11, 16, and 23 to be *Slightly Effective*. One panel member found survey Item Number 23 to be *Extremely Effective*, survey Item Numbers 1, 3, 5, 11, 19, and 30 to be *Moderately Effective*, and survey Item Numbers 19 and 30 to be *Slightly Effective*. No Research Question 1 survey items were rated as *Not at all Effective* by any of the panel members.

Table 15

Panel Member Ratings on the Effectiveness of Research Question 1 Survey Items

Item #	Survey Item	Survey Rating					
		Panel Member 1	Panel Member 2	Panel Member 3	Panel Member 4	Panel Member 5	Panel Member 6
1	Have safe harbors [with a caring, understanding, and trained adult] for LGBT students to go to when they are feeling the need to talk or time to gather themselves.	Very Effective	Very Effective	Extremely Effective	Extremely Effective	Moderately Effective	Very Effective
3	All adults who have contact with the students should receive training in the school's policies and procedures related to bullying.	Moderately Effective	Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Very Effective
5	Intervene and address anti-LGBT comments/behaviors every time they are heard and/or seen.	Moderately Effective	Extremely Effective	Extremely Effective	Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Very Effective
11	Train all adults who have contact with the students in how to promote diversity and acceptance.	Slightly Effective	Extremely Effective	Moderately Effective	Extremely Effective	Slightly Effective	Extremely Effective
16	Educate all school boards, faculty members, and staff on LGBT terms, the sexual orientation continuum, the gender expression continuum, and their mandatory roles in eliminating homophobia and transphobia in the schools.	Slightly Effective	Extremely Effective	Moderately Effective	Extremely Effective	Slightly Effective	Moderately Effective
19	Motivate others (students, as well as adults—teachers, parents, and allied school staff) to listen and not be bystanders.	Moderately Effective	Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Extremely Effective	Slightly Effective	Very Effective

23	Educate middle school and high school youth on tolerance of LGBT schoolmates, breaking down gender stereotypes, and eliminating homophobia and transphobia in their school.	Slightly Effective		Very Effective	Extremely Effective	Slightly Effective	Very Effective
30	Educate elementary students on different types of families, name-calling, and breaking down gender stereotypes.	Slightly Effective	Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Extremely Effective	Moderately Effective	Very Effective

Research Question 2: *What effective strategies can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?*

Seven panel member responses were used to measure Research Question 2. Those responses were survey Item Numbers 6, 8, 12, 21, 24, 26, and 28. Research Question 2 survey answers were analyzed to determine how effective panel members perceived various strategies to be for school leaders to implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth (see Table 16).

No survey item was rated by all six panel members as *Extremely Effective*, but all survey items were rated by at least one panel member as *Extremely Effective*. No survey item was rated by five of the panel members at any level of effectiveness, but survey Item Number 28 was rated by four panel members as *Moderately Effective*. Three panel members found survey Item Numbers 6, 21, and 24 to be *Very Effective*. Two panel members found survey Item Numbers 21 and 26 to be *Extremely Effective*, survey Item Numbers 8, 12, and 26 to be *Very Effective*, and survey Item Number 12 to be *Moderately Effective*. One panel member found survey Item Numbers 6, 8, 12, 24, and 28 to be *Extremely Effective*, survey Item Numbers 6, 8, 24, and 26 to be *Moderately*

Effective, and survey Item Numbers 6, 8, 21, and 28 to be *Slightly Effective*. One panel member rated survey Item Numbers 24 and 26 as *Not at all Effective*.

Table 16

Panel Member Ratings on the Effectiveness of Research Question 2 Survey Items

Item #	Survey Item	Survey Rating					
		Panel Member 1	Panel Member 2	Panel Member 3	Panel Member 4	Panel Member 5	Panel Member 6
6	Talk about LGBT issues and identity throughout the curriculum and classes.	Slightly Effective	Very Effective	Very Effective	Extremely Effective	Moderately Effective	Very Effective
8	Do away with “zero tolerance” [of bullying and harassment] and integrate a climate of acceptance and support.	Moderately Effective		Very Effective	Extremely Effective	Slightly Effective	Very Effective
12	Implement a bullying/harassment/intimidation prevention program.	Moderately Effective		Very Effective	Extremely Effective	Moderately Effective	Very Effective
21	Make policies on harassment and bullying clear to staff, students, and families.	Slightly Effective	Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Very Effective
24	Survey students, staff, and families to determine the scope of the LGBT victimization problem.	Not at all Effective	Very Effective	Very Effective	Extremely Effective	Moderately Effective	Very Effective
26	Evaluate all areas of a school that may not be safe and ensure proper supervision in those areas.	Moderately Effective	Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Extremely Effective	Not at all Effective	Very Effective
28	Make clear to students the options for counseling within the school.	Moderately Effective	Moderately Effective	Moderately Effective	Extremely Effective	Slightly Effective	Moderately Effective

Research Question 3: *What effective programs can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?*

Eight panel member responses were used to measure Research Question 3. Those responses were survey Item Numbers 2, 10, 14, 18, 22, 25, 27, and 29. Research Question 3 survey answers were analyzed to determine how effective panel members perceived various programs to be for school leaders to implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth (see Table 17).

Although no survey item was rated by all six panel members as *Extremely Effective*, all survey items were rated by at least one panel member as *Extremely Effective*. No survey item was rated by four or five of the panel members at any level of effectiveness. Three panel members found survey Item Number 10 to be *Moderately Effective*. Two panel members found survey Item Numbers 2, 25, and 29 to be *Extremely Effective*, survey Item Numbers 18, 22, and 25 to be *Very Effective*, survey Item Number 27 to be *Moderately Effective*, and survey Item Numbers 2, 14, and 25 to be *Slightly Effective*. One panel member found survey Item Numbers 10, 14, 18, 22, and 27 to be *Extremely Effective*, survey Item Numbers 14, 27, and 29 to be *Very Effective*, survey Item Numbers 2, 14, 18, 22, and 29 to be *Moderately Effective*, and survey Item Numbers 18, 22, 27, and 29 to be *Slightly Effective*. No Research Question 3 survey items were rated as *Not at all Effective* by any of the panel members.

Table 17

Panel Member Ratings on the Effectiveness of Research Question 3 Survey Items

Item #	Survey Item	Survey Rating					
		Panel Member 1	Panel Member 2	Panel Member 3	Panel Member 4	Panel Member 5	Panel Member 6
2	Implement Steps to Respect: A Bullying Prevention Program	Moderately Effective	Extremely Effective	Slightly Effective	Extremely Effective		Slightly Effective
10	Implement the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network Lunchbox Program.	Slightly Effective	Moderately Effective	Moderately Effective	Extremely Effective		Moderately Effective
14	Implement the Let's Get Real Program.	Slightly Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Extremely Effective		Very Effective
18	Implement the Human Rights Campaign Welcoming Schools Initiative Program.	Slightly Effective	Very Effective	Very Effective	Extremely Effective		Moderately Effective
22	Implement the Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays Safe Schools Program.	Slightly Effective	Very Effective	Very Effective	Extremely Effective		Moderately Effective
25	Implement Gay-Straight Alliances.	Slightly Effective	Very Effective	Extremely Effective	Extremely Effective	Slightly Effective	Very Effective
27	Implement the Second Step: Skills for Social and Academic Success Program.	Moderately Effective	Very Effective	Slightly Effective	Extremely Effective		Moderately Effective
29	Implement the Olweus Anti-Bullying Program	Slightly Effective	Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Extremely Effective		Moderately Effective

Research Question 4: *What effective policies can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?*

Seven panel member responses were used to measure Research Question 4. Those responses were survey Item Numbers 4, 7, 9, 13, 15, 17, and 20. Research Question 4 survey answers were analyzed to determine how effective panel members perceived

various policies to be for school leaders to implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth (see Table 18).

No survey item was rated by all six panel members as *Extremely Effective*, but all survey items were rated by at least one panel member as *Extremely Effective*, *Very Effective*, and *Moderately Effective*. No survey item was rated by four or five of the panel members at any level of effectiveness. Three panel members found survey Item Number 4 to be *Very Effective* and survey Item Number 13 to be *Moderately Effective*. Two panel members found survey Item Numbers 7, 9, 13, and 15 to be *Extremely Effective*, survey Item Numbers 7, 9, 15, and 20 to be *Very Effective*, survey Item Numbers 4, 7, 9, 17, and 20 to be *Moderately Effective*, and survey Item Numbers 17 to be *Slightly Effective*. One panel member found survey Item Numbers 4, 17, and 20 to be *Extremely Effective*, survey Item Numbers 13 and 17 to be *Very Effective*, survey Item Number 15 to be *Moderately Effective*, and survey Item Numbers 15 and 20 to be *Slightly Effective*. No Research Question 4 survey items were rated as *Not at all Effective* by any of the panel members.

Table 18

Panel Member Ratings on the Effectiveness of Research Question 4 Survey Items

Item #	Survey Item	Survey Rating					
		Panel Member 1	Panel Member 2	Panel Member 3	Panel Member 4	Panel Member 5	Panel Member 6
4	Implement published, enumerated anti-bullying and non-discrimination policies.	Moderately Effective	Very Effective	Very Effective	Extremely Effective	Moderately Effective	Very Effective
7	Implement policies with clear, reporting procedures in place for youth and members of the community that designate who and how to report instances of victimization.	Moderately Effective	Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective
9	Implement policies that require professional development for all school staff on intervening when bullying occurs.	Moderately Effective	Moderately Effective	Extremely Effective	Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Very Effective
13	Implement policies that provide a knowledgeable and supportive “go to” person for staff, students, and families.	Moderately Effective	Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Extremely Effective	Moderately Effective	Moderately Effective
15	Implement clear bullying policies that are inclusive of those who identify as LGBT.	Slightly Effective	Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Extremely Effective	Moderately Effective	Very Effective
17	Implement policies on equal rights for all students.	Slightly Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Extremely Effective	Slightly Effective	Moderately Effective
20	Implement cyberbullying policies.	Slightly Effective	Very Effective	Very Effective	Extremely Effective	Moderately Effective	Moderately Effective

Six of the seven panel members returned the last research instrument, though not all six panel members responded to all survey questions. Tables 15, 16, 17, and 18 indicated how each panel member rated each survey item in terms of how effective they perceived that item to be in protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization. Panel members also rated survey items in terms of how effective strategies, programs, and policies were in reducing the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth.

Panel Member 1 responded to all survey items, though all responses, with the exception of Items Numbers 1 and 24, were either *Moderately Effective* or *Slightly Effective*. Item Number 1 was *Very Effective* and Item Number 24 was *Not at all Effective*. Panel Member 2 responded to all survey items except Item Numbers 8, 12, and 23. Item Numbers 8 and 12 measured Research Question 2 on effective strategies that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Item Number 23 measured Research Question 1 on what school leaders can do to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization. Panel Member 3 responded to all survey items. Panel Member 4 responded to all survey items, though every response was *Extremely Effective*. Panel Member 5 responded to all survey items except Item Numbers 2, 10, 14, 18, 22, 27, and 29. These survey items measured Research Question 3 on effective programs that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Panel Member 5 noted on Question 3 of the second questionnaire that he/she was “Not qualified to respond.” A later email from Panel Member 5 explained “On the one section, I am just not informed enough about the different programs to evaluate them, so I left that section blank.” Panel Member 6 responded to all survey items.

Summary

The Delphi Technique was the methodology used to conduct this research study. A panel of seven experts determined what school leaders can do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization. The experts also identified effective strategies, programs, and policies that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Data were collected from panel members over three rounds. Research findings and data analysis were presented succinctly for each of the three rounds. An open-ended questionnaire was used to collect data during Round One. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data during Round Two. A closed-ended survey was used to collect data during Round Three. All research instruments were administered and returned electronically.

An analysis of Research Question 1 over Rounds One, Two, and Three revealed a number of ways that school leaders can protect LGBT youth from peer victimization including (a) having safe harbors [with a caring, understanding, and trained adult] for LGBT students to go to when they are feeling the need to talk or time to gather themselves, (b) ensuring that all adults who have contact with the students receive training in the school's policies and procedures related to bullying, (c) intervening and addressing anti-LGBT comments/behaviors every time they are heard and/or seen, and (d) training all adults who have contact with the students in how to promote diversity and acceptance.

An Analysis of Research Question 2 over Rounds One, Two, and Three revealed that school leaders can implement various strategies in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Those strategies include (a) talking about LGBT issues and identity throughout the curriculum and classes, (b) implementing a

bullying/harassment/intimidation prevention program, (c) making policies on harassment and bullying clear to staff, students, and families, (d) evaluating all areas of a school that may not be safe and ensuring proper supervision in those areas, and (e) surveying students, staff, and families to determine the scope of the LGBT victimization problem.

An Analysis of Research Question 3 over Rounds One, Two, and Three revealed that school leaders can implement various programs in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Those programs include (a) Gay-Straight Alliances, (b) the Olweus Anti-Bullying Program, and (c) the Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays Safe Schools Program.

An Analysis of Research Question 4 over Rounds One, Two, and Three revealed that school leaders can implement various policies in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Those policies should (a) be published and enumerated, (b) have clear, reporting procedures in place for youth and members of the community that designate who and how to report instances of victimization, (c) require professional development for all school staff on intervening when bullying occurs, and (d) provide a knowledgeable and supportive “go to” person for staff, students, and families.

Chapter Five begins with a summary of the research project. An overview of major findings are presented, discussed, and connected to information presented in the Literature Review of Chapter Two. Conclusions are drawn concerning research findings. Implications are made for the field of Educational Administration and the educational community at large. Recommendations are made for further research. Chapter Five concludes with an explanation of how the research findings will be disseminated.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Historically and presently LGBT students have not felt safe in schools because of their sexual and gender orientations (Markow & Fein, 2005). Many LGBT students are discriminated against and victimized by their peers on a daily basis (GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2008). Research has documented that peer victimization has a negative impact on the academic and psychological development of LGBT students (Billups, 2009; Chan, 2009; Hansen, 2007; Swearer et al., 2008; Weiler, 2003, 2004; Williams et al., 2005).

School leaders are responsible for protecting and ensuring the safety of all of their students, including those who identify as LGBT (Billups, 2009; Espelage et al., 2008; GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2008; Horn, Szalacha, & Drill, 2008; Kosciw et al., 2010; Swearer et al., 2010; Wright, 2010), though some school leaders may not know how to protect LGBT students from peer victimization (GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2008). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine what school leaders can do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization and to identify effective strategies, programs, and policies that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth.

The Delphi Technique was the methodology used to conduct this research study. The seven participants, often referred to as Delphi panel members, all had some level of expertise in supporting and protecting LGBT youth from peer harassment. The data collection instruments for this study were two questionnaires and one survey, each administered during its own round. The first questionnaire, administered during Round

One, was comprised of four open-ended research questions. The first questionnaire determined experts' perceptions on what school leaders can do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization. The second questionnaire, administered during Round Two, was developed from panel member responses on the first questionnaire. The second questionnaire identified areas of agreement and disagreement, clarified items, and prioritized experts' opinions on what school leaders can do to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization. The survey, administered during Round Three, was developed from panel member responses on the second questionnaire. The survey determined how effective strategies, programs, and policies are for school leaders in protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization, thus reducing the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth.

This study's research questions were developed as a result of an extensive literature review on the harassment of LGBT youth by their peers (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009; Chan, 2009; Kosciw, 2010; Markow & Fein, 2005; Robertson, 2005; Swearer, 2008; Weiler, 2003, 2004; Williams et al., 2005), the negative impact that peer victimization has on the academic and psychological development of LGBT youth (Billups, 2009; Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009; Hansen, 2007; Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008; Murdock & Bolch, 2005; Poteat & Espelage, 2007; Williams et al., 2005), and the responsibility of school leaders in protecting LGBT youth from peer harassment (GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2008; Kosciw & Diaz, 2006; Weiler, 2003, 2004; Wright; 2010). Additionally, the research questions were developed in response to the gap in literature on what school leaders can do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization through the implementation of effective strategies,

programs, *and* [emphasis added] policies, thereby reducing the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth.

The guiding research question for this study was “What do experts say school leaders can do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization?” The following questions were developed to support the guiding question:

- What effective strategies can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?
- What effective programs can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?
- What effective policies can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?

Major Findings of the Study

Findings in this study revealed what school leaders can do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization. Findings also revealed that school leaders can implement effective strategies, programs, and policies in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. The major findings in this study are presented following each research question.

Research Question 1: *What can school leaders do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization?*

- A. Train all adults who have contact with the students in how to promote diversity and acceptance.
- B. Train all adults who have contact with the students in the school’s policies and procedures related to bullying.

- C. Have safe harbors [with a caring, understanding, and trained adult] for LGBT students to go to when they are feeling the need to talk or time to gather themselves.
- D. Intervene and address anti-LGBT comments/behaviors every time they are heard and/or seen.
- E. Motivate others (students, as well as adults—teachers, parents, and allied school staff) to listen and not be bystanders.
- F. Educate elementary students on different types of families, name-calling, and breaking down gender stereotypes.
- G. Educate middle school and high school youth on tolerance of LGBT schoolmates, breaking down gender stereotypes, and eliminating homophobia and transphobia in their school.
- H. Educate all school boards, faculty members, and staff on LGBT terms, the sexual orientation continuum, the gender expression continuum, and their mandatory roles in eliminating homophobia and transphobia in the schools.

Research Question 2: *What effective strategies can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?*

- A. Evaluate all areas of a school that may not be safe and ensure proper supervision in those areas.
- B. Talk about LGBT issues and identity throughout the curriculum and classes.
- C. Implement a bullying/harassment/intimidation prevention program.
- D. Survey students, staff, and families to determine the scope of the LGBT victimization problem.

- E. Do away with “zero tolerance” [of bullying and harassment] and integrate a climate of acceptance and support.
- F. Make policies on harassment and bullying clear to staff, students, and families.
- G. Make clear to students the options for counseling within the school.

Research Question 3: *What effective programs can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?*

- A. Olweus Anti-Bullying Program
- B. Steps to Respect: A Bullying Prevention Program
- C. Gay-Straight Alliances
- D. Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays Safe Schools Program
- E. Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network Lunchbox Program
- F. Human Rights Campaign Welcoming Schools Initiative Program
- G. Second Step: Skills for Social and Academic Success Program
- H. Let’s Get Real Program

Research Question 4: *What effective policies can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?*

- A. Policies on equal rights for all students
- B. Clear bullying policies that are inclusive of those who identify as LGBT
- C. Policies that require professional development for all school staff on intervening when bullying occurs
- D. Policies that provide a knowledgeable and supportive “go to” person for staff, students, and families

- E. Cyberbullying policies
- F. Published, enumerated anti-bullying and non-discrimination policies
- G. Policies with clear, reporting procedures in place for youth and members of the community that designate who and how to report instances of victimization

Discussion of Research Findings

The major findings of this study are discussed in comparison to information presented in the review of literature. The discussion identified similarities, contradictions, and gaps between the research findings in Chapter Four and information presented in the Literature Review of Chapter Two. The discussion of research findings follows each research question.

Research Question 1: *What can school leaders do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization?*

It is the legal, ethical, and moral obligation of schools to protect all students (Weiler, 2004). Principals are the leaders in their schools, so they are responsible for creating and sustaining school environments that are safe, welcoming, and free from harassment for all of their students. Unfortunately, schools are unsafe for many LGBT youth. They are often victimized by their peers (GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2008). Research findings revealed what school leaders can do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization.

To protect LGBT youth from peer victimization, school leaders can train all adults who have contact with the students in how to promote diversity and acceptance (Research Question 1A). Weiler (2003, 2004) stated that school leaders can train all staff to

understand LGBT students. Graybill et al. (2009) explained that those who support LGBT youth should be trained on issues affecting LGBT youth. Morillas and Gibbons (2010) explained that to protect sexual minority students and ensure their safety, as well as promote their sense of school belonging, awareness and action training should be organized for school personnel. Weiler (2004) explained that educators should examine the climate of their school to “ensure that students are taught positive, nonbiased behavior and that all staff members are trained to model and reinforce such behavior and stop harassment immediately” (p. 39-40).

Findings also revealed that training all adults who have contact with the students in the school’s policies and procedures related to bullying can protect LGBT youth from peer victimization (Research Question 1B). Two similar “best practices,” according to the article “Stop Bullying Now” (n.d.), are to train the faculty and staff on how to prevent bullying and establish and enforce school rules and policies that address bullying. Another similar concept is a key component of the Steps to Respect: A Bullying Prevention Program—to provide training to staff members to increase their awareness of bullying and their ability to effectively address bullying situations (Committee for Children, 2005).

Another finding revealed that school leaders can provide safe harbors with a caring, understanding, and trained adult for LGBT students to go to when they are feeling the need to talk or time to gather themselves (Research Question 1C). “The Safe Space Kit: Guide to Being an Ally to LGBT Students,” published by GLSEN in 2009, explained that schools can implement Safe Spaces to protect LGBT students from peer victimization. GLSEN described a *Safe Space* as a place that is welcoming, supportive,

and safe for LGBT students. The kit explained that Safe Spaces should be easily identified by Safe Space stickers, posters, and LGBT supportive materials so that LGBT students will know who their allies are and where to go when they need support and safety. The kit further explained that Safe Space allies should be knowledgeable about LGBT issues and provide support, education, and advocacy for LGBT students.

Findings revealed that to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization, school leaders should intervene and address anti-LGBT comments/behaviors every time they are heard and/or seen (Research Question 1D). The article, “Stop Bullying Now” (n.d.), explained that a “best practice” for preventing and intervening in bullying is to intervene consistently and appropriately when bullying occurs. In a study conducted by GLSEN and Harris Interactive in 2008, principals reported that it would be most helpful if the consequences were clear for faculty and staff members who did not intervene when they witnessed homophobic epithets and harassment of LGBT youth. In 2010, the South Carolina Association of School Administrators wrote that when students do not witness adults intervening or preventing bullying, they may feel that teachers and other adults cannot control the students and that adults do not care what happens to students in school.

A research finding revealed that to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization, school leaders can motivate students, teachers, parents, and allied school staff to listen and not be bystanders (Research Question 1E). Though this study’s review of literature did not specifically address motivating individuals not to be bystanders, Newman-Carlson and Horne (2004) did state that schools should seek ways to promote positive relationships between teachers, bullies, and victims, as well as those students who may feel insecure and suffer academically as a result of being bystanders to bullying.

One partial gap in the research findings that is somewhat addressed in this study's review of literature on protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization is educating students, faculty, staff, and school boards on understanding and accepting LGBT individuals, as well as ending homophobia and transphobia in schools. Findings revealed that school leaders can protect LGBT youth by (a) educating elementary students on different types of families, name-calling, and breaking down gender stereotypes (Research Questions 1F); (b) educating middle school and high school youth on tolerance of LGBT schoolmates, breaking down gender stereotypes, and eliminating homophobia and transphobia in their school (Research Questions 1G); and (c) educating all school boards, faculty members, and staff on LGBT terms, the sexual orientation continuum, the gender expression continuum, and their mandatory roles in eliminating homophobia and transphobia in the schools (Research Questions 1H). A partially supporting statement made by Rottman (2006) explained that educators have emphasized more inclusive teaching and learning practices on issues related to diverse groups such as LGBT students, though the literature review does not address educating students, faculty, staff, and school boards on eliminating homophobia and transphobia in schools.

Research Question 2: *What effective strategies can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?*

Morillas and Gibbons (2010) argued that it is within the power of a school's faculty and staff to reduce the consequences of LGBT harassment. Findings revealed a variety of effective strategies that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. One effective strategy is to evaluate all areas of a school that may not be safe and ensure proper supervision in those

areas (Research Question 2A). One “best practice” to preventing and intervening in bullying, according to the article “Stop Bullying Now” (n.d.), is to increase adult supervision in areas where bullying commonly occurs. Weiler (2003, 2004) stated that improving school safety can protect LGBT students from peer harassment.

The findings revealed that talking about LGBT issues and identity throughout the curriculum and classes (Research Question 2B) is another effective strategy that school leaders can implement to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. The article “Stop Bullying Now” (n.d.) explained that a “best practice” to preventing and intervening in bullying is to focus class time on how to prevent bullying. Similarly, the articles written by Weiler (2003, 2004) stated that dispelling inaccurate information can protect LGBT students from peer harassment. Graybill et al. (2009) stated that LGBT advocates should promote a curriculum that increases the visibility of LGBT individuals, as well as one that focuses on their accomplishments. Graybill et al. added that supportive literature featuring the LGBT population should be displayed throughout the school, as well as in school libraries. According to Cianciotto and Cahill (2003), one method to intervene in and prevent violence directed toward LGBT students is the inclusion of an LGBT curriculum. Hanlon (2009), Kilman (2009), and Stone (2003) agreed that promoting curriculum inclusion of LGBT individuals can help reduce the harassment of LGBT students.

Research findings revealed that the implementation of a bullying/harassment/intimidation prevention program (Research Question 2C and Research Question 3A, B, and H) is not only an effective strategy, but also an effective program that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer harassment experienced by

LGBT youth. The South Carolina Association of School Administrators (2010) wrote that the implementation of evidence-based bullying prevention programs is one of the most effective methods to address school bullying. GLSEN and Harris Interactive (2008) and Kosciw, Diaz, and Greytak (2008) found that national anti-bullying/harassment education programs were implemented in schools to reduce peer harassment. Newman-Carson and Horne (2004) stated that schools should explore implementing bully prevention programs to assist victims.

Findings revealed that surveying students, staff, and families to determine the scope of the LGBT victimization problem is an effective strategy for school leaders to reduce the level of peer harassment experienced by LGBT youth (Research Question 2D). According to the article “Stop Bullying Now” (n.d.), assessing the prevalence of bullying in schools is a “best practice” to prevent and intervene in bullying. Olweus (1993) explained that adults at school and home should be made aware of the prevalence of bullying in “their” school. Since 1999, GLSEN has surveyed LGBT students and staff on bullying and harassment to not only understand their school experiences but to also understand how their school experiences can be more positive and supportive (Markow & Fein, 2005). GLSEN found that 90% of students surveyed reported that they had been verbally or physically harassed or assaulted during the past school year because of their real or perceived disability, religion, race/ethnicity, gender, gender expression or sexual orientation (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008). Poteat and Espelage (2007) surveyed middle school students and found that being the target of verbal homophobic harassment was related to higher levels of personal anxiety, stress, and depression.

One research finding, doing away with “zero tolerance” and integrating a climate of acceptance and support, partially contradicts what is presented in the literature review on effective strategies that can reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Morillas and Gibbons (2010), Hansen (2007), and Weiler (2003, 2004) counter argue that zero tolerance of harassment should be enforced, though Weiler (2003, 2004) agreed that school leaders can train all staff to understand LGBT students and ensure that they are taught positive, nonbiased behavior.

Another effective strategy, identified in the findings, that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT students is to make policies on harassment and bullying clear to staff, students, and families. Hansen (2007) wrote that nearly all literature on ending homophobic victimization in schools agrees on one approach—implementing a policy that clearly and specifically prohibits harassment in schools. Hansen added that if anti-harassment policies do not have the support of administrators and are not publicized highly, change will likely not occur.

Findings also revealed one gap not addressed in the literature review for this research study on effective strategies that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of harassment experienced by LGBT youth. That gap centers around making clear to students the options for counseling within the school (Research Question 2G). The literature review in this study did not specifically address this particular strategy, but Project 10, a bullying prevention program designed to address the harassment of LGBT students in schools, provides sensitivity counseling to students and staff (Henning-Stout, James, & Macintosh 2000).

Research Question 3: *What effective programs can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?*

Research findings revealed that effective programs can be implemented by school leaders to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. One such program is the Olweus Anti-Bullying Program (Research Question 3A). The South Carolina Association of School Administrators (2010) described the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) as the best-known and most research-based bullying prevention program that is available today. OBPP was designed to impact a variety of school components, including students, teachers, parents, as well as the classroom environment. The universal approach of the OBPP to preventing bullying is designed to create schools that are safer and more positive places for students to learn, develop, and improve their relationships with peers.

Findings revealed that the Steps to Respect: A Bullying Prevention Program (Research Question 3B) is another effective program that school leaders can implement to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Frey, Hirschstein, Snell, Edstrom, MacKenzie, and Broderick (2005) stated that Steps to Respect is an effective evidence-based program that school leaders can implement to help students create supportive peer relationships, thereby decreasing bullying in schools. Steps to Respect emphasizes that the entire school take responsibility to reduce bullying. A central component of the program is to train staff members to increase their awareness of bullying and their ability to effectively address bullying situations. The Steps to Respect program addresses every school level including individual students, peer groups, and the school community (Committee for Children, 2005).

Though the researcher referred to Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) as effective strategies, findings revealed that Gay-Straight Alliances (Research Question 3C) are effective programs that school leaders can implement to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Morillas and Gibbons suggested that GSAs should be created and supported to protect sexual minority students, thus ensuring their safety and promoting their sense of belonging in school. The “Safe Space Kit,” published by GLSEN in 2009, wrote that GSAs are crucial to supporting sexual minority students. The purpose of GSAs in schools is to promote a respect for all students, as well as address anti-gay language and harassment. Goodenow, Szalacha, and Westheimer (2006) argued that GSAs foster the safety and well-being of LGBT students. Additionally, GSAs demonstrate that school leaders are committed to creating a school climate that is not only inclusive but supportive of LGBT students. GSAs may also be an indication that harassment on the basis of an individual’s sexual orientation will not be tolerated from students or staff. Morillas and Gibbons (2010) asserted that GSAs are possibly the most powerful tools that can be used to bring about change and safety within the school. Hansen (2007) called GSAs “the most potent factors for institutional change” (p. 845).

Findings also revealed other effective programs that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth including the: (a) Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays Safe Schools Program (Research Question 3D), (b) Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network Lunchbox Program (Research Question 3E), (c) Human Rights Campaign Welcoming Schools Initiative Program (Research Question 3F), (d) Second Step: Skills for Social and Academic Success Program (Research Question 3G), and the (e) Let’s Get Real

Program (Research Question 3H). These findings on effective programs reflect a gap in the literature since the above listed programs were not included in the review of literature for this research study as effective programs that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth.

Research Question 4: *What effective policies can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?*

Research findings revealed that policies on equal rights for all students (Research Question 4A) are effective at reducing the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Cianciotto and Cahill (2003) wrote that one method to intervene in and prevent violence directed toward LGBT students is the implementation of policies that prohibit discrimination. The Just the Facts Coalition (2008) explained that LGBT students, like all students, are protected from victimization under the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause. The United States Supreme Court clearly stated that public officials cannot place the burden of unequal treatment or discrimination on LGBT individuals because of hatred or disdain toward them (*Flores v. Morgan*, 2003; *Nabozny v. Podlesny*, 1996). The National Center for Lesbian Rights (2010) explained that if school officials do not address anti-gay harassment because they believe that LGBT students brought the harassment upon themselves because they are openly gay, the school did not equally protect these students under the law (*Flores v. Morgan*, 2003; *Nabozny v. Podlesny*, 1996). Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 (2003) guarantees that all students receive equal education opportunities regardless of their sex. Under Title IX schools cannot limit or deny a student's participation in school programs based on sex. School administrators must intercept and amend any sexually-based

harassment that prevents gay students from accessing or benefiting from any school program (Cianciotto & Cahill, 2003). The U.S. Department of Education (2001) explained that according to Title IX, school districts can be legally responsible if they are aware that a student was harassed by another student or a teacher on the basis of sex and did not make practical efforts to end the harassment (*Davis v. Monroe*, 1999). In 1984 the Equal Access Act (EAA) was signed into law by President Ronald Reagan. The EAA states that schools cannot deny students equal access to activities because of the “religious, political, philosophical, or other content of the speech at such meetings” (Cianciotto & Cahill, 2003, p. 45). Weiler (2003) expressed that supportive school personnel can have a positive influence on LGBT students and should ensure that they have equal access to all school activities.

Findings also revealed that clear bullying policies inclusive of those who identify as LGBT (Research Question 4B) are effective at reducing the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Graybill et al. (2009) asserted that anti-discrimination policies should include clauses that specifically address sexual orientation. Poland (2010) explained that anti-harassment policies that include sexual orientation, as well as gender identity and expression, should be included in school district policies. In a study conducted by GLSEN and Harris Interactive in 2008, principals stated that there should be school policies that specifically address anti-discrimination and harassment of LGBT students. The Human Rights Campaign (2010), the United States’ largest LGBT civil rights organization, praised the introduction of the Student Non-Discrimination Act of 2010, H.R. 4530. If this act is passed, the discrimination of any public school student on the basis of actual or perceived gender identity or sexual orientation would be prohibited.

As expressed in the previous paragraph, the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause, Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, and the Equal Access Act of 1984 are all policies that include the protection of those who identify as LGBT.

Findings revealed that the following policies are effective at reducing the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth: (a) policies that require professional development for all school staff on intervening when bullying occurs (Research Question 4C) and (b) policies that provide a knowledgeable and supportive "go to" person for staff, students, and families (Research Question 4D). Though the review of literature does not address these ideas as effective policies, they are addressed as effective strategies. Two similar strategies on requiring professional development are training the faculty and staff how to prevent bullying and intervening consistently and appropriately when bullying occurs (Stop Bullying Now, n.d.). Safe Spaces, as suggested by GLSEN, are places for LGBT youth to go to when they need to be safe and supported. Safe Space allies are knowledgeable about LGBT issues and provide advocacy, support, and education for LGBT students (GLSEN, 2009). Although Safe Spaces provide a knowledgeable and supportive person, they are primarily designed for students, not staff or family members.

Three gaps were identified between the review of literature and the research findings on effective policies that school leaders can implement to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Findings revealed that implementing the following policies are effective at reducing the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth, though these policies were not discussed in the literature review: (a) cyberbullying policies (Research Question 4E), (b) published, enumerated anti-bullying and non-discrimination policies (Research Question 4F), and (c) policies with clear,

reporting procedures in place for youth and members of the community that designate who and how to report instances of victimization (Research Question 4G).

Conclusions from Research Findings

This research study examined what school leaders can do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization. This study also identified effective strategies, programs, and policies that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. The discussion of the findings led to the development of a number of research conclusions.

First, findings suggested that education is possibly the most essential factor in protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization. All six panel members included educating students, faculty, staff, and school boards on LGBT issues and eliminating homophobia and transphobia in schools as one of their five priority votes. This education must be universal. Everyone from the top down must be educated on the impact that peer victimization has on LGBT youth and what their role is in preventing bullying. Education at every level is essential to ending the bullying and harassment of LGBT youth.

Second, findings suggested that training all adults in diversity acceptance and bullying prevention is pivotal to protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization. Five of six panel members included training adults in diversity acceptance and bullying prevention as one of their five priority votes. Adults play a key role in learning, then teaching and modeling appropriate behaviors to students. When adults first understand and accept the individual differences of others and ensure their safety, students will do the same. Adults are capable of changing the school culture and creating a school climate that values diversity and ensures a safe learning environment for all students.

Third, findings suggested that implementing Gay-Straight Alliances in schools is one of the most effective programs that school leaders can implement to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Five of six panel members included Gay-Straight Alliances as one of their five priority votes. Gay-Straight Alliances provide an avenue of escape, acceptance, and support for LGBT students. Gay-Straight Alliances accept students for who they are and not what society wants or tries to force them to be. This acceptance and support is crucial to the healthy development of LGBT students.

Fourth, further findings suggested that implementing policies with clear reporting procedures in place for youth and members of the community that designates who and how to report instances of victimization is a very important component to reducing the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Four of six panel members included this policy as one of their five priority votes. All four panel members assigned this policy a priority vote of 2. When students know that bullying is not tolerated and there are procedures for reporting bullying, they are more likely to report bullying not as “tattle tales” but as responsible, concerned citizens. Students are also more likely not to be bystanders to bullying for fear of being reported. Clear bullying reporting procedures hold everyone accountable. Therefore, people are more likely to intervene when they witness bullying.

Fifth, findings suggested that implementing policies that require professional development for all school staff on intervening when bullying occurs is a crucial factor in reducing the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Four of six panel members included this policy as one of their five priority votes. When school staff is required to participate in professional development on how to intervene when bullying

occurs, they become better trained and more accountable to address bullying situations when they arise. Because bullying can occur in many places in a school and happen any time during the school day, all faculty and staff (security monitors, school resource officers, cafeteria workers, custodians, grounds keepers, bus drivers, paraprofessionals, office workers, and other support personnel) should be trained to intervene in bullying.

Sixth, findings indicated that the implementation of a bullying/harassment/intimidation prevention program is necessary to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Four of six panel members included this strategy as one of their five priority votes. Bullying is not an isolated incident. It occurs repeatedly. Hence, a universal bullying prevention program can train students, faculty, and staff on how to distinguish bullying from peer arguments or fights. These programs are designed to teach students, faculty, and staff how to intervene when they witness bullying. Effective anti-bullying programs become ingrained in the school's culture and create a school climate that is filled with acceptance of diversity and free of discrimination and harassment.

Seventh, findings indicated that implementing clear bullying policies that are inclusive of LGBT individuals is crucial to reducing the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Although only three of the six panel members included this policy as one of their five priority votes, all three of them assigned this policy a priority vote of 1. Bullying prevention policies inclusive of LGBT individuals uphold their right to equal protection under the law. The 14th Amendment's Equal Protection Clause does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. LGBT students are guaranteed the same protections as their heterosexual peers. Thus, school leaders are obligated to protect all students from discrimination and harassment.

Implications of the Research Study

The findings in this research study revealed valuable information on what school leaders can do to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization and effective strategies, programs, and policies that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. This information proves itself useful to the field of educational administration. Educational administrators would find it important to know that educating and training from the top down—including themselves, faculty, staff and students—is crucial to the successful implementation of any strategy, program, or policy if they are to be effective in reducing the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Educational administrators, who have a pivotal role in protecting all students from peer victimization, must understand that even though the strategies, programs, and policies in this research study are considered effective, they must be universally taught, successfully implemented, consistently enforced, and systematically evaluated before they can be truly effective at protecting any student from any type of peer victimization.

Educational practitioners—school boards, school administrators, professional school counselors, and classroom teachers—can all use the information presented in the findings to create school environments that are more accepting of differences and freer of bullying and harassment. School boards will find the information useful when developing strategies, programs, and policies on diversity acceptance and bullying prevention for their school districts. School administrators will find the information helpful when developing, implementing, and enforcing strategies, programs, and policies on diversity acceptance and bullying prevention within their schools. Professional school counselors

will benefit from the research findings when counseling victimized LGBT youth specifically and victimized youth in general. Classroom teachers will find the strategies, programs, and policies helpful when teaching students how to recognize, intervene in, and report bullying and harassment, thus creating a more accepting and understanding school environment.

Organizations that advocate for and protect LGBT students from peer harassment would also be interested in the research findings. Those organizations include, but are not limited to: Gay-Straight Alliances, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, the Committee for Children, the Human Rights Campaign, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, the Safe Schools Coalition, The Trevor Project, and Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. Research findings would be beneficial to these organizations and others like them, as they seek to improve and expand their knowledge, as well as train others, on protecting LGBT youth from peer harassment.

Those individuals who conduct research on protecting LGBT youth from peer harassment and preventing bullying in schools would also be interested in the research findings as they work with schools and other organizations to better protect LGBT youth from peer victimization. Additionally, the literature review, as well as the references, provides numerous resources for those interested in further researching the topic. These individuals can expand their existing knowledge by further researching ideas reported in the findings. The research findings may also provide information that researchers would like to include in articles and literature reviews on protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization.

Though findings in this research study are specifically designed to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization, findings can be generalized beyond this population of students. Victimized youth in general can benefit from the strategies, programs, and policies revealed in the findings. Any victimized student can benefit from a safe and protective environment while in school. Peer victimization knows no race, color, gender, ethnicity, nationality, religion, socioeconomic status, size, weight, ability, disability, sexuality, gender expression or identity, or sexual orientation. In other words, any student anywhere can be victimized for any reason. All students deserve to be protected from bullying and harassment, regardless of anything that makes them “different” from mainstream society’s concept of a “normal” person.

Findings in this research study will add to the existing knowledge of educational administration and the educational community at large. Educators can benefit from the findings on what school leaders can do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization and effective strategies, programs, and policies that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Effective implementation of these findings can better equip educators to protect all students from peer victimization, thereby creating safer schools that are conducive to the most effective teaching and learning for all students.

Recommendations for Further Research

Although the findings in this research study provided valuable information on what school leaders can do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization and effective strategies, programs, and policies that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by

LGBT youth, further research on the topic is necessary. There is still much to learn about protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization. Based on the findings and conclusions reported in this research study, the following recommendations are made for further research:

1. Bullying is not just an individual, group, school, community, or national problem. It is much bigger than that. It is a universal problem. Further research should be conducted on which industrial nations have the lowest percentage of peer victimization and what factors can be attributed to this lower percentage.
2. Educating students, faculty, staff, and school boards on LGBT issues and eliminating homophobia and transphobia in schools is effective in protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization. Further research should be conducted on why, if the United States is one of the most educated countries in the world, peer harassment of LGBT youth is so prevalent in the United States.
3. Training adults in diversity acceptance and bullying prevention is effective in protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization. Further research should be conducted on why more adults are not trained to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization.
4. Universal bullying prevention programs are effective in reducing the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Evidence suggested that bullying occurs in every school. Further research should be conducted on why bullying prevention programs are not implemented in every school.

5. Findings in this study revealed little agreement between panel members on effective programs that school leaders can implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth. Further research is necessary to determine the effectiveness of programs specifically designed to prevent and reduce the bullying and harassment of LGBT youth.

Dissemination of Research Findings

The nature of the Delphi Technique automatically imposes that a summary of the findings be presented to the panel of experts. (This summary of results is essential as it officially concludes a Delphi study). Hence, research findings were automatically shared via email with the Committee for Children, a Safe Schools Coalition manager, a project manager at The Trevor Project, the Youth Outreach Coordinator of an Indiana Youth Group's Gay-Straight Alliance, an assistant professor and advisor of a college Gay-Straight Alliance, and an assistant professor and researcher on bullying and harassment.

Findings will also be presented to school boards and school leaders. These individuals will be interested in the results of this research study because they are charged with protecting all students and ensuring a safe learning environment for them. When given the opportunity to present at school board meetings and principal's meetings, the researcher will share information on what school leaders can do to protect LGBT youth from peer victimization. The researcher anticipates presenting research findings at professional conferences/meetings that focus on advocating for and protecting all students from peer harassment, including those who identify as LGBT. The researcher also anticipates that two or more articles will be generated and published from this dissertation.

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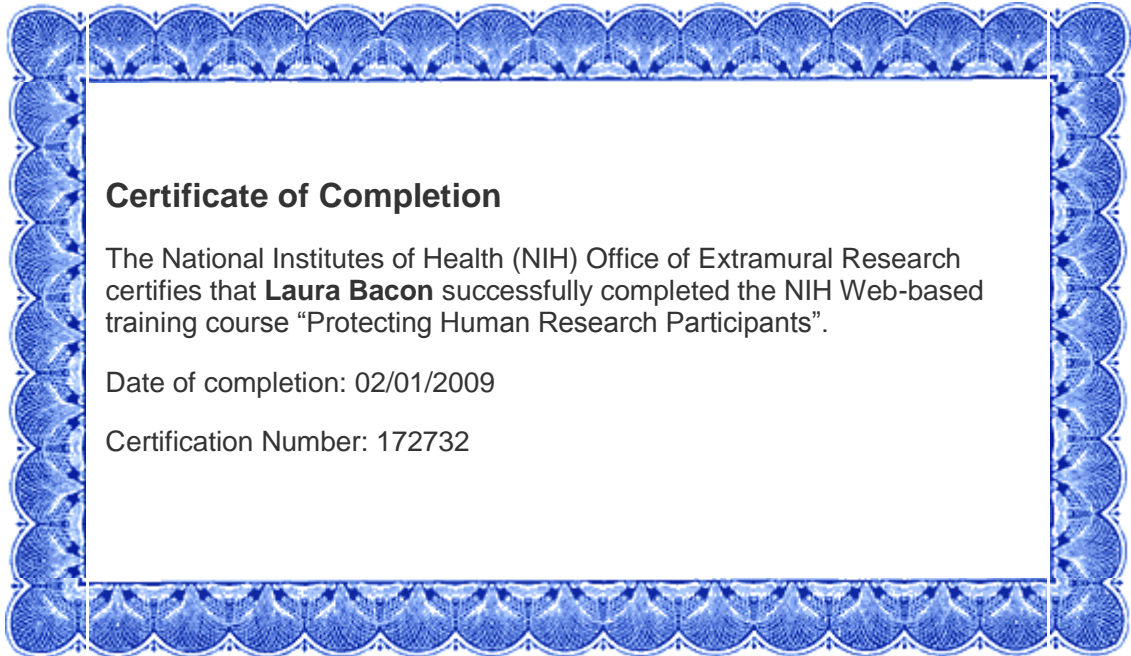
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APPENDIX A

NIH PROTECTING HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION



APPENDIX B

IRB LETTER OF APPROVAL FOR FIRST QUESTIONNAIRE

Georgia Southern University
Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Phone: 912-478-0843

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Statesboro, GA 30460

To: Laura A. Bacon
Russell O. Mays
Department of Leadership, Technology, and Human Development

CC: Charles E. Patterson
Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate College

From: Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

Initial Approval Date: April 11, 2011

Expiration Date: March 31, 2012

Subject: Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

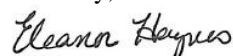
After a review of your proposed research project numbered H11383 and titled **“A Study of Effective Strategies, Programs, and Policies for School Leaders in Protecting Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual, and Transgender Youth from Peer Victimization,”** it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable. You are authorized to enroll up to 50 subjects.

Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research with the following conditions:

- 1. A letter of cooperation is provided for each institution or business where participants will be recruited.*
- 2. The second round survey is submitted and amended onto your project.*

If at the end of this approval period there have been no changes to the research protocol; you may request an extension of the approval period. Total project approval on this application may not exceed 36 months. If additional time is required, a new application may be submitted for continuing work. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,



Eleanor Haynes
Compliance Officer

APPENDIX C

IRB LETTER OF APPROVAL FOR SECOND QUESTIONNAIRE

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs Institutional Review Board (IRB)		
Phone: 912-478-5465		Veazey Hall 2021
Fax: 912-478-0719	IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	P. O. Box 8005 Statesboro, GA 30460-8005

To: Laura Bacon
Russell O. Mays
Department of Leadership, Technology, and Human Development

Cc: Charles E. Patterson
Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate College

From: Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

Date: June 14, 2011

Expiration Date: March 31, 2012

Subject: Status of Research Study Modification Request

After a review of your Research Study Modification Request on research project numbered **H11383** and titled "**A Study of Effective Strategies, Programs, and Policies for School Leaders in Protecting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth from Peer Victimization.**" your request for modification appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your modification request to add additional participating facilities and second round questionnaire.

The expiration date of your original application approval remains in effect. If additional time beyond your expiration date is required to complete your data collection and analysis and there have been no further changes to the research protocol; you may request an extension of the approval period. If your project will require approval beyond 36 months from the initial approval date, a new submission and review will be required. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, another change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary; you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to provide the final information to allow your file to be closed.

Sincerely,



Eleanor Haynes
Compliance Officer

APPENDIX D

IRB LETTER OF APPROVAL FOR SURVEY

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs		
Institutional Review Board (IRB)		
Phone: 912-478-5465		Veazey Hall 2021
		P. O. Box 8005
Fax: 912-478-0719	IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	Statesboro, GA 30460-8005

To: Laura Bacon
Russell O. Mays
Department of Leadership, Technology, and Human Development

Cc: Charles E. Patterson
Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate College

From: Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

Date: July 6, 2011

Expiration Date: March 31, 2012

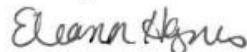
Subject: Status of Research Study Modification Request

After a review of your Research Study Modification Request on research project numbered **H11383** and titled "**A Study of Effective Strategies, Programs, and Policies for School Leaders in Protecting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth from Peer Victimization,**" your request for modification appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your modification request to administer the third round questionnaire.

The expiration date of your **original application approval** remains in effect. If additional time beyond your expiration date is required to complete your data collection and analysis and there have been no further changes to the research protocol; you may request an extension of the approval period. If your project will require approval beyond 36 months from the initial approval date, a new submission and review will be required. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, another change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary; you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to provide the final information to allow your file to be closed.

Sincerely,



Eleanor Haynes
Compliance Officer

APPENDIX E
LETTER OF INVITATION

April 29, 2011

Dear Participant:

The expertise that you have in advocating for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth and protecting them from discrimination and harassment qualifies you to serve on a panel of experts that will address issues affecting these youth in schools. Your participation on this panel of experts will be anonymous.

The primary focus of this panel is to identify ways that school leaders can support and protect LGBT youth from peer victimization. Specifically, your expertise is needed to help identify effective strategies, programs, and policies that school leaders can implement to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth.

Many LGBT youth are victimized by their peers on a daily basis. Due to this victimization, LGBT youth are more likely to skip class, cut school, and struggle academically than those students not victimized. Additionally, LGBT youth suffer greater levels of isolation, loneliness, anxiety, depression, suicide ideation, suicide attempts, and suicide than their non-gay, non-victimized peers. LGBT youth must be protected from peer harassment and discrimination in schools.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete two open-ended questionnaires and one survey. Each instrument should take you no longer than one hour to complete. The instruments will be administered over approximately a 35-day period. The first instrument will be sent to you in April 2011. The final instrument will be sent to you in May 2011. You will have one week to complete each instrument. A return date will be set for each instrument.

Results of the study will be published in my dissertation entitled "A Study of Effective Strategies, Programs, and Policies for School Leaders in Protecting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth from Peer Victimization." Results will also be made available to the education community at large. It is my hope that research findings will be implemented, thus creating safer schools and communities for LGBT youth so that they can develop into healthy and productive lifelong citizens.

Please consider joining the panel of experts. Your expertise will add much value to this study. Hence, your participation is crucial to the success of this study.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to call me at (803) 646-2221 or email me at laura_a_bacon@georgiasouthern.edu. You may also contact my dissertation Chairperson, Russell Mays at (912) 478-5605 or by email at Rmays@georgiasouthern.edu. This study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Georgia Southern University.

Sincerely,

Laura A. Bacon

Laura A. Bacon
Student Researcher

APPENDIX F

LETTER OF COOPERATION

April 29, 2011

Human Subjects – Institutional Review Board
Georgia Southern University
P.O. Box 8005
Statesboro, GA 30461
(912) 478-0843

To Whom It May Concern:

Laura A. Bacon has requested permission to collect research data from employees at _____ through a project entitled “A Study of Effective Strategies, Programs, and Policies for School Leaders in Protecting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth from Peer Victimization.”

I have been informed of the purposes of the study and the nature of the research procedures. I have also been given an opportunity to ask questions of the researcher.

As a representative of the _____, I am authorized to grant permission to have the researcher recruit research participants from our organization. Laura A. Bacon is also permitted to collect research data during office hours at our organization.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (area code and phone number).

Sincerely,

Name of Authorized Representative

APPENDIX G

INFORMED CONSENT



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF LEADERSHIP, TECHNOLOGY, AND HUMAN
DEVELOPMENT

INFORMED CONSENT

1. My name is Laura A. Bacon. I am a candidate for the doctoral degree in Educational Administration at Georgia Southern University. I am conducting this research to fulfill requirements for my dissertation.
2. The purpose of this research is to identify effective strategies, programs, and policies that school leaders can implement to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth in schools.
3. Participation in this research will include the completion of two open-ended questionnaires and one survey, respectively. The first questionnaire will consist of four open-ended questions. The second questionnaire will be developed from the responses on the first questionnaire. You will be asked to support or oppose the items and clarify any that may seem ambiguous. You will also be asked to rank the items in terms of personal priority. The survey, the final instrument, will be developed from the responses on the second questionnaire. You will be asked to rank items in terms of their effectiveness.
4. It is possible that you may experience psychological discomfort such as anger and sorrow when participating in this study. Completing this research study indicates that you have read, understand, and agree to the following statement:

I understand that psychological care is available in the event of injury resulting from research but that neither financial compensation nor free psychological treatment is provided. I also understand that I am not waiving any rights that I may have against the University for injury resulting from negligence of the University or investigators.

If you wish to seek assistance at any point during this study, please contact the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services toll free at 1-877-696-6775.

5. This study will be beneficial to you as a participant. You will gain access to new information that might otherwise not be available to you outside of this research.

This study will also be beneficial to society in general. Findings in this study will help to create safer schools and communities for LGBT youth so that they can develop into healthy and productive lifelong citizens.

6. Each instrument will take you approximately one hour to complete. (Though the instruments will be administered over approximately a 35-day period).
7. Each instrument will be administered electronically. There is only limited assurance of confidentiality due to the technology of the Internet. Information gathered in this study will be accessible to the principal investigator, the faculty advisor, committee members, and analyst(s). Your participation on the panel of experts will be anonymous. Data will be reported in aggregate form so that individual answers will not be identifiable.

To protect the confidentiality of participants through each round of data collection, all instruments will be stored and remain in a secure location in the principal investigator's home. All communication, as well as the transmission of data collection instruments, will only occur through the researcher's personal telecommunication devices.

All information obtained throughout the course of this study will be kept in a secure location in the principal investigator's home for a minimum of three years. At the end of this three-year period, all information will be shredded.

8. You have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. If you have questions about this study, please contact me or my faculty advisor, Dr. Russell Mays. Our contact information is located at the end of this informed consent. For questions concerning your rights as a research participant, contact Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 1-912-478-0843.
9. You are not required to participate in this study. You may skip any question(s) on the instrument(s). You may end your participation at any time. You can either inform me that you no longer wish to participate or you can simply choose not to return the instrument(s).
10. There is no penalty for deciding not to participate in this study. You may decide at any time that you do not wish to participate any further. You may withdraw from the study without penalty or retribution.

11. You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study. If you consent to participate in this research study and to the terms above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records. This project has been reviewed and approved by the GSU Institutional Review Board under tracking number **H11383**.

Title of Project: A Study of Effective Strategies, Programs, and Policies for School Leaders in Protecting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth from Peer Victimization

Principal Investigator:

Laura A. Bacon
585 Summer Lakes Drive
Aiken, SC 29805
1-803-646-2221
laura_a_bacon@georgiasouthern.edu

Faculty Advisor:

Dr. Russell Mays
College of Education
Department of Leadership, Technology, and Human Development
Georgia Southern University
Room 3116
P.O. Box 8131
Statesboro, GA 30460-8131
1-912-478-5605
rmays@georgiasouthern.edu

Participant Name

Date

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

Laura A. Bacon

Investigator Signature

Date

APPENDIX H

FIRST QUESTIONNAIRE

Protecting LGBT Youth from Peer Victimization Questionnaire

Purpose: The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine experts' perceptions on what school leaders can do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth from peer victimization. This questionnaire is open-ended to encourage a variety of responses. The second questionnaire will be less open-ended. The third questionnaire, a survey, will be closed-ended. Your honest responses will add much value to this study. Please return the completed questionnaire to Laura Bacon. The return information is located at the end of this questionnaire. Thank you for taking time to complete this questionnaire.

Directions: Answer the following questions in the space provided. If you need more space, please feel free to use it.

1. What can school leaders do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
 - f.
 - g.

2. What effective **strategies** can school leaders implement to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.

- e.
 - f.
 - g.
3. What effective **programs** can school leaders implement to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?
- a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
 - f.
 - g.
4. What effective **policies** can school leaders implement to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?
- a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
 - f.
 - g.

Demographic Information: Please complete the following information.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Business/Organization Address: _____

City, State, Zip Code: _____

Business/Organization Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Organization Affiliated With: _____

What is your job title in this organization? _____

How long have you been in your current position? _____

If you would like to add any other pertinent information related to this study, do so in the following space. Please feel free to use more space if you need it.

Please return the completed questionnaire to:

Laura A. Bacon

Email: laura_a_bacon@georgiasouthern.edu or

Phone/Fax: 1-803-644-7366

Please return this questionnaire to me by Friday, May 6, 2011. If you need to return the questionnaire via traditional postal mail, please email or call and let me know. Your help is greatly appreciated. Once again, thank you for completing this questionnaire.

APPENDIX I

ROUND ONE, FIRST QUESTIONNAIRE PANEL MEMBER RESPONSES, QUESTION 1

1. Create a school climate that embraces tolerance, fairness, respect.
2. Have safe harbors for these students to go to when they are feeling the need to talk or time to gather themselves. This safe harbor should have a caring, understanding, trained adult that will listen and then take action to help the student make good choices and decisions.
3. Use inclusive language like “date” instead of “boyfriend” and “girlfriend” that doesn’t assume everyone is heterosexual.
4. Educate middle school and high school youth on tolerance of LGBTQ schoolmates, breaking down gender stereotypes, and eliminating homophobia and transphobia in their school.
5. Start a district-wide Olweus anti-bullying program.
6. Investigate all issues of victimization to see if it is substantiated or unsubstantiated.
7. Model the behavior that others should follow. Principals/leaders are key in the schools and mold that culture in the school. If you do not take care of the culture, the culture grows itself, most often not in a positive way.
8. Intervene when they see it in an appropriate manner.
9. Include LGBTQ issues and historical figures in curriculum.
10. Have gay straight alliance in school.
11. Make sure students and families understand how to and to whom they report problems with safety of any kind, including of LGBT students.
12. Ensure a climate of acceptance and valuing diversity.
13. Stand by the separation of church and state.
14. Establish and strictly enforce anti-bullying measures.
15. Intervene and address anti-LGBT comments/behaviors every time you hear and/or see them.
16. Support LGBT groups/clubs.
17. Create safe schools, developing cultures of acceptance of all diversity, caring students, and adults working together, respectfully. If this is created no matter what

the issues are, all students and adults will be respected.

18. Allow same-gender and transgender couples at school dances and proms, including allowing youth to wear opposite gender attire.
19. Provide cultural competency training to all staff and students.
20. Create policies to protect LGBTQ students from harassment, policies to strictly reprimand and correct homophobic and transphobic harassment, and policies for bathroom and locker room use by transgender youth, **AND BE SURE POLICIES ARE CARRIED OUT.**
21. Have professional development for you and colleagues on bullying and LGBTQ youth issues.
22. Mandate heterosexual couples following the school's policy on Public Displays of Affection, just as one would non-heterosexual couples.
23. Educate all school boards, faculty members, and staff on LGBTQ terms, the sexual orientation continuum, the gender expression continuum, and their mandatory roles in eliminating homophobia and transphobia in the schools.
24. Encourage frank discussions of diversity in the classroom.
25. Make yourself an open and visible ally in classrooms-post a sticker or sign.
26. Engage families and caregivers and promote take-home activities that reinforce pro-social skills and tolerance.
27. Work to start and support a Gay Straight Alliance in the school with annual Straight Ally Week, No Name-Calling Week, National Day of Silence, National Transgender Day of Remembrance, and other national or local LGBTQ days of importance.
28. Sample policies that have been proven to be effective are often provided in research-based anti-bullying programs.
29. Be more aware that they have lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth in their school.
30. Have buy-in from the top down.
31. Train all staff (teachers, administrators, cafeteria, bus drivers, support staff, and custodial staff) to understand what these behaviors look like and watch for peer victimization.
32. Work with student councils, governments, etc. to have programs on school respect, safety, and challenging bullying/harassment.

33. Assure that coaches of athletic teams do not use homophobic, transphobic, or misogynistic put-downs to inspire strength in their athletes.
34. Make sure that effective anti-bullying policies and bullying reporting procedures and consequences are in place to ensure the safety of all students and to promote a safe environment for learning.
35. Educate elementary students on different types of families, name-calling, and breaking down gender stereotypes through www.welcomingschools.org curricula.
36. Allow GSA to post signs, raise funds, hold events, educate schoolmates on important LGBTQ people in history, and make announcements like any other extra-curricular clubs at school.
37. Promote diversity through programming and curricula.
38. Train all adults who have contact with the students in how to promote diversity and acceptance. Requiring staff to be trained in pro-social skills (empathy, problem solving, emotion management, impulse control, etc.) and to model those skills is important to creating an environment that demands respect for all students. In addition, all adults who have contact with the students should receive training in the school's policies and procedures related to bullying.
39. Establish and follow policies that ensure the safety of LGBT students. Communicate those policies to all students and their families.
40. Strong anti-bullying program that is systemic and inclusive of cultural competency
41. Teach students how to intervene.
42. Engage civic leaders (including religious, sports, etc) as part of dialogue.
43. Motivate others to listen and not be bystanders (students and well as adults-teachers, parents, etc).
44. Understand what lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth are feeling by listening.
45. Add "sexual orientation" and "gender expression" to the school district's student and staff non-discrimination policies.

APPENDIX J

ROUND ONE, FIRST QUESTIONNAIRE PANEL MEMBER RESPONSES, QUESTION 2

1. Make your policies on harassment and bullying clear to staff, students, and families and put in place meetings/workshops over the course of the school year that reiterates those policies.
2. Include LGBTQ issues and historical figures in curriculum.
3. Do away with ‘zero tolerance’ and integrate a climate of acceptance and support.
4. Train staff in effective bullying, harassment and intimidation prevention and intervention.
5. Schedule teachers and administrators in areas where peer victimization takes place.
6. Allow GSA to post signs, raise funds, hold events, educate schoolmates on important LGBTQ people in history, and make announcements like any other extra-curricular clubs at school.
7. Implement a bullying/harassment/intimidation prevention program.
8. Make clear to students the options for counseling within the school and provide access to community resources specific to LGBT youth.
9. Education about and engagement with issues of diversity throughout curricula
10. Educate all students about diversity.
11. Circle talks about how to be upstanders
12. Add “sexual orientation” and “gender expression” to the school district’s student and staff non-discrimination policies.
13. Conduct assemblies.
14. Create policies to protect LGBTQ students from harassment, policies to strictly reprimand and correct homophobic and transphobic harassment, and policies for bathroom and locker room use by transgender youth, **AND BE SURE POLICIES ARE CARRIED OUT.**
15. Assure that coaches of athletic teams do not use homophobic, transphobic, or misogynistic put-downs to inspire strength in their athletes.
16. Educate all teachers and staff.

17. Work to start and support a Gay Straight Alliance in the school with annual Straight Ally Week, No Name-Calling Week, National Day of Silence, National Transgender Day of Remembrance, and other national or local LGBTQ days of importance.
18. Be fair and consistent at all times.
19. Schools need to collect better data on why and the type of bullying occurring so they can appropriately tailor their school's responses.
20. Staff presence in “hot spots”
21. Survey students, staff, and families to determine the scope of the LGBT victimization problem. Use the data to support decision making around program implementation or the creation of new policies or procedures.
22. Conduct parent meetings to help with understanding.
23. Be sure that consequences for offenses are clear, consistent, and appropriate. Picking up garbage around campus or cleaning graffiti off school property is a good example.
24. Use teachable moments, everything does not need a consequence but does need a “what just happened here, apologize, do you know what that means, or how this person feels when you say that?”
25. Stand by the separation of church and state.
26. Educate elementary students on different types of families, name-calling, and breaking down gender stereotypes through www.welcomingschools.org curricula.
27. Use consequences that promote the student that is committing acts of bullying to view the schools as a community and an environment where disrespect is not tolerated.
28. Role play situations.
29. Mandate heterosexual couples following the school’s policy on Public Displays of Affection, just as one would non-heterosexual couples.
30. Evaluate all areas of a school that may not be safe and ensure proper supervision in those areas.
31. Olweus Anti-Bullying program is a sound, evidence-based program, though it’s lacking significant content on LGBTQ issues and needs an update for cyberbullying.
32. Talk about LGBT issues and identity throughout curriculum and classes.

33. Establish “peer leaders” among groups (clubs, athletic orgs, etc) to receive required specialized training.
34. Never force a confrontation between the individual being victimized and the person(s) committing acts of harassment. Those involved should be counseled separately by a designated coach/counselor.
35. Start a district-wide Olweus anti-bullying program.
36. Educate all school boards, faculty members, and staff on LGBTQ terms, the sexual orientation continuum, the gender expression continuum, and their mandatory roles in eliminating homophobia and transphobia in the schools.
37. Provide safe spaces and safe staff. Let it be known if you are an ally or LGBT identified.
38. “Zero Tolerance” policies introduced as part of orientation
39. Youth leaders should document 6 W’s for every instance of harassment: (1) Who was involved; (2) What happened; (3) Where it happened; (4) When it happened; (5) Who it was reported to; and (6) Witnesses to event.
40. Role model culture of acceptance from the top down.
41. Allow same-gender and transgender couples at school dances and proms, including allowing youth to wear opposite gender attire.
42. Provide educators with lessons designed to prevent bullying and harassment, encourage bystanders to act against bullying, and teach students how to report incidents. It would be best to teach these lessons over the course of the school year and to reinforce the concepts with activities, readings, etc. Beyond this, encouraging alliances/clubs may be helpful.
43. Educate don’t just discipline when issues do come up.
44. Training around bullying inclusive of LGBT identity
45. Educate middle school and high school youth on tolerance of LGBTQ schoolmates, breaking down gender stereotypes, and eliminating homophobia and transphobia in their school.
46. Safe spaces and faculty/staff available to LBGT who are or are not in crisis

APPENDIX K

ROUND ONE, FIRST QUESTIONNAIRE PANEL MEMBER RESPONSES, QUESTION 3

1. It's Elementary
2. Internet safety programs/social networking sites teaching proper use
3. Gay-Straight Alliance Clubs
4. There are a few, but they need to be systemic and the administration needs to be 100% on board!
5. Let's Get Real
6. Start an Olweus anti-bullying program in the district—www.olweus.org.
7. Peer mediations
8. Curriculum from www.tolerance.org
9. HRC's Welcoming Schools Initiative
10. AIM (Awareness, Investigate, Motivate)
11. Character education
12. Campus Pride
13. Highly effective, universal prevention programs have a proven track record of reducing bullying and harassment and building positive social skills. I recommend Committee for Children's Second Step: Skills for Social and Academic Success and Steps to Respect: A Bullying Prevention Program.
14. Ruby Payne
15. Curriculum from www.glsen.org
16. Anti-bullying programs
17. Trevor Project's Lifeguard Workshop or Survival Kits
18. Gay straight alliances
19. Rachel's Challenge
20. Curriculum www.welcomingschools.org

21. The Olweus Anti-Bullying program is a sound, evidence-based program, though it's lacking significant content on LGBTQ issues and needs an update for cyberbullying.
22. Safe from Bullies: Saving Lives
23. Conflict resolution
24. Curriculum from www.safeschoolscoalition.org
25. I would recommend the Second Step program for K-8 and the Steps to Respect program for Grades 3-6.
26. PFLAG's Safe Schools Program
27. Gay-Straight Alliances
28. The effectiveness of prevention programs is determined through conducting studies on the programs. Whenever a school is choosing a program, they should look for a research based program with proven outcomes.
29. GLSEN's Lunchbox Program
30. Diversity days
31. Curriculum from www.trevorproject.org
32. I can suggest some of the following organizations that are considered respected in the field of prevention as resources: Groundspark.org, HRC's Welcoming Schools, and The Safe Schools Coalition.

APPENDIX L

ROUND ONE, FIRST QUESTIONNAIRE PANEL MEMBER RESPONSES, QUESTION 4

1. Requiring professional development for all school staff on intervening when bullying occurs (including when sexual orientation or gender identity are salient)
2. Diversity acceptance policies
3. Explicitly lay out what offenses are severe enough according to district policy and state law to warrant legal action.
4. Include youth in the discussion and creation of policies and procedures. Policies are good, but procedures strengthen them.
5. Enumerated (lists/spells out protected categories like race, color, sex, sexual orientation, etc.) school anti-bullying policies
6. Educate all school boards, faculty members, and staff on LGBTQ terms, the sexual orientation continuum, the gender expression continuum, and their mandatory roles in eliminating homophobia and transphobia in the schools.
7. Allow same-gender and transgender couples at school dances and proms, including allowing youth to wear opposite gender attire.
8. Include LGBTQ issues and historical figures in curriculum.
9. Anti-bullying policies
10. State when policies will be reviewed for possible needed change and create a committee to oversee this.
11. Uniform complaint forms across schools, districts and states for instances of bullying, harassment
12. Add “sexual orientation” and “gender expression” to the school district’s student and staff non-discrimination policies.
13. Assure that coaches of athletic teams do not use homophobic, transphobic, or misogynistic put-downs to inspire strength in their athletes.
14. Beyond zero tolerance
15. Enumerated anti-discrimination policies for all youth who are frequently targeted
16. Cyberbullying policies

17. Create policies to protect LGBTQ students from harassment, policies to strictly reprimand and correct homophobic and transphobic harassment, and policies for bathroom and locker room use by transgender youth, AND BE SURE POLICIES ARE CARRIED OUT.
18. Clear bullying policies that are inclusive of LGBT identity and other high risk groups
19. Stand by the separation of church and state.
20. Gender-neutral bathrooms a requirement wherever M/F bathrooms exist
21. There should be a safety plan in place that gives staff and students direct access to help when a bullying situation arises.
22. Clear, reporting procedures in place for youth and members of the community that designate who and how to report instances of victimization
23. More important than what the policies are, is the fact that they must be taught to the staff and students and not sit in a book of policies on a shelf. They must be revisited often and enforced consistently.
24. Mandate heterosexual couples following the school's policy on Public Displays of Affection, just as one would non-heterosexual couples.
25. Published, enumerated anti-bullying and non-discrimination policies on schools' and districts' websites
26. Zero Tolerance bullying policy
27. Explicitly state how to prevent and intervene and what resources are available within the district and outside of the district.
28. Work to start and support a Gay Straight Alliance in the school with annual Straight Ally Week, No Name-Calling Week, National Day of Silence, National Transgender Day of Remembrance, and other national or local LGBTQ days of importance.
29. Equal rights to learn for all students
30. Educate middle school and high school youth on tolerance of LGBTQ schoolmates, breaking down gender stereotypes, and eliminating homophobia and transphobia in their school.
31. Ongoing training for all--not just a onetime class
32. Gender-neutral inclusivity throughout all academic and extra-curricular activities and programs (any gender or non-gender can play football, take whoever you want to the dance, any gender can be homecoming queen, etc).

33. Use of cell phones
34. Allow GSA to post signs, raise funds, hold events, educate schoolmates on important LGBTQ people in history, and make announcements like any other extra-curricular clubs at school.
35. Provide a “go to” person for staff, students, and families that is knowledgeable and supportive.
36. In my experience, effective policies explicitly state that harassment, discrimination, and bullying of any sort for any real or perceived difference are prohibited.
37. Alternative and progressive discipline for bullies; not “zero tolerance policies” or automatic expulsion
38. Start a district-wide Olweus anti-bullying program.
39. Educate elementary students on different types of families, name-calling, and breaking down gender stereotypes through www.welcomingschools.org curricula.

APPENDIX M

SECOND QUESTIONNAIRE

Protecting LGBT Youth from Peer Victimization Second Questionnaire

Purpose: The purpose of this questionnaire is to identify areas of agreement and disagreement, clarify items, and prioritize experts’ opinions on what school leaders can do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth from peer victimization.

Your honest responses will be very valuable to this research study. Please return the completed questionnaire to Laura Bacon by Tuesday, June 21, 2011. The return information is located at the end of this questionnaire. Thank you for taking time to complete this questionnaire.

Directions: Please read each question. Then review each item. (All items included in this questionnaire were generated from panel member responses on the first questionnaire). If you wish to add comments that agree, disagree, or clarify any of the items, please do so in the space provided. Feel free to add items. Finally, select the five most effective items **for each question**. Assign a value of “1” to the most effective item. Assign a value of “2” to the next most effective item, and so on, until the fifth item is assigned a value of “5”. Please be aware that this is simply a preliminary vote and that you will be able to revote on the third and final instrument, a survey.

Question 1: What can school leaders do to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from peer victimization?

Priority Vote	Items from Questionnaire #1, Question 1	Comments on Items (Agree, Disagree, Clarify)
	1. <u>Investigate</u> all issues of victimization to see if they are substantiated or unsubstantiated.	
	2. <u>Motivate</u> others to listen and not be bystanders (students as well as adults- teachers, parents, etc).	
	3. Educate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Elementary students</u> on different types of families, name-calling, and breaking down gender stereotypes. • <u>Middle school and high school youth</u> on tolerance of LGBTQ schoolmates, breaking down gender stereotypes, and eliminating homophobia and transphobia in their school. • <u>All school boards, faculty members, and staff</u> on LGBTQ terms, the sexual orientation continuum, the gender expression continuum, and their mandatory roles in eliminating homophobia and transphobia in the schools. 	
	4. Make yourself an <u>open and visible ally</u> in classrooms.	
	5. <u>Intervene and address</u> anti-LGBT comments/ behaviors every time they are heard and/or seen.	

Priority Vote	Items from Questionnaire #1, Question 1	Comments on Items (Agree, Disagree, Clarify)
	6. <u>Include</u> LGBTQ issues and historical figures in the curriculum.	
	7. Make sure that <u>effective anti-bullying policies</u> and bullying reporting procedures and consequences are in place to ensure the safety of all students and to promote a safe environment for learning.	
	8. <u>Create safe schools</u> , developing cultures of acceptance of all diversity, caring students, and adults working together, respectfully.	
	9. Work to <u>start and support</u> a Gay-Straight Alliance in the school with annual Straight Ally Week, No Name-Calling Week, National Day of Silence, National Transgender Day of Remembrance, and other national or local LGBTQ days of importance.	
	10. Engage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Families and caregivers</u> and promote take-home activities that reinforce pro-social skills and tolerance. • <u>Civic leaders</u> as part of the dialogue. 	
	11. <u>Create policies</u> to protect LGBTQ students from harassment and policies that strictly reprimand and correct homophobic and transphobic harassment. BE SURE POLICIES ARE CARRIED OUT.	
	12. <u>Use inclusive language</u> like “date” instead of “boyfriend” or “girlfriend” that doesn’t assume that everyone is heterosexual.	
	13. <u>Have safe harbors</u> for these [LGBT] students to go to when they are feeling the need to talk or time to gather themselves. This safe harbor should have a caring, understanding, trained adult that will listen and then take action to help the student make good choices and decisions.	
	14. <u>Train all adults</u> who have contact with the students in how to promote diversity and acceptance. Requiring staff to be trained in pro-social skills and to model those skills is important to creating an environment that demands respect for all students. In addition, all adults who have contact with the students should receive training in the school’s policies and procedures related to bullying.	
	15. <u>Implement a strong anti-bullying program</u> that is systemic and inclusive of cultural competency.	

Priority Vote	Items from Questionnaire #1, Question 1	Comments on Items (Agree, Disagree, Clarify)
	Additional Items	
	16.	
	17.	

Question 2: What effective strategies can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?

Priority Vote	Items from Questionnaire #1, Question 2	Comments on Items (Agree, Disagree, Clarify)
	1. <u>Evaluate</u> all areas of a school that may not be safe and ensure proper supervision in those areas.	
	2. <u>Make clear to students</u> the options for counseling within the school and provide access to community resources specific to LGBT youth.	
	3. <u>Talk about</u> LGBT issues and identity throughout the curriculum and classes.	
	4. <u>Never force</u> a confrontation between the individual being victimized and the person(s) committing acts of harassment. Those involved should be counseled separately by a designated coach/counselor.	
	5. <u>Do away with</u> “zero tolerance” and <u>integrate</u> a climate of acceptance and support.	
	6. <u>Make your policies on harassment and bullying clear</u> to staff, students, and families and put in place meetings/workshops over the course of the school year that reiterates those policies.	
	7. <u>Role model</u> a culture of acceptance from the top down.	
	8. <u>Document 6 W’s</u> for every instance of harassment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who was involved • What happened • Where it happened • When it happened • Who it was reported to • Witnesses to the event 	

Priority Vote	Items from Questionnaire #1, Question 2	Comments on Items (Agree, Disagree, Clarify)
	9. <u>Survey students, staff, and families</u> to determine the scope of the LGBT victimization problem. Use the data to support decision making around program implementation or the creation of new policies or procedures.	
	10. <u>Conduct parent meetings</u> to help with understanding.	
	11. <u>Implement</u> a bullying/harassment/intimidation prevention program.	
	12. <u>Use teachable moments</u> . Everything does not need a consequence but does need a “What just happened here? Apologize. Do you know what that means or how does this person feel when you say that?”	
	13. <u>Establish “peer leaders”</u> among groups (clubs, athletic organizations, etc.) to receive required specialized training.	
	14. <u>Provide safe spaces and safe staff</u> . Let it be known if you are an ally or LGBT identified.	
	Additional Items	
	15.	
	16.	

Question 3: What effective programs can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?

Priority Vote	Items from Questionnaire #1, Question 3	Comments on Items (Agree, Disagree, Clarify)
	1. Peer mediations	
	2. PFLAG’s Safe Schools Program	
	3. Campus Pride	
	4. Gay-Straight Alliances	
	5. Trevor Project’s Lifeguard Workshop or Survival Kits	
	6. Rachel’s Challenge	

Priority Vote	Items from Questionnaire #1, Question 3	Comments on Items (Agree, Disagree, Clarify)
	7. Safe from Bullies: Saving Lives	
	8. Character education	
	9. Second Step: Skills for Social and Academic Success	
	10. Olweus anti-bullying program	
	11. Diversity days	
	12. Steps to Respect: A Bullying Prevention Program	
	13. Let's Get Real	
	14. Internet safety programs	
	15. HRC's Welcoming Schools Initiative	
	16. Ruby Payne	
	17. GLSEN's Lunchbox Program	
	18. Conflict resolution	
	19. AIM (Awareness, Investigate, Motivate)	
	20. It's Elementary	
	Additional Items	
	21.	
	22.	

Question 4: What effective policies can school leaders implement in their schools to reduce the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth?

Priority Vote	Items from Questionnaire #1, Question 4	Comments on Items (Agree, Disagree, Clarify)
	1. <u>Alternative and progressive discipline policies; not "zero tolerance" policies</u> or automatic expulsion	
	2. <u>Published, enumerated</u> anti-bullying and non-discrimination policies	

Priority Vote	Items from Questionnaire #1, Question 4	Comments on Items (Agree, Disagree, Clarify)
	3. Policies that provide a <u>“go to” person</u> for staff, students, and families that is <u>knowledgeable and supportive</u>	
	4. <u>Clear bullying policies that are inclusive of those who identify as LGBT</u> and other high risk groups	
	5. Use of cell phone policies	
	6. Policies that explicitly lay out what offenses are severe enough according to district policy and state law to <u>warrant legal action</u>	
	7. Policies on <u>equal rights</u> for all students	
	8. Policies with <u>clear, reporting procedures</u> in place for youth and members of the community <u>that designates who and how</u> to report instances of victimization	
	9. Policies that explicitly state that <u>harassment, discrimination, and bullying of any sort for any real or perceived difference are prohibited.</u>	
	10. Policies that <u>require professional development for all school staff</u> on intervening when bullying occurs (<u>including</u> when sexual orientation or gender identity are salient)	
	11. “Zero Tolerance” bullying policy	
	12. <u>Policies that explicitly state how to prevent and intervene</u> and what resources are available within and outside the district	
	13. Diversity acceptance policies	
	14. Policies that include a <u>safety plan</u> that gives staff and students direct access to help when a bullying situation arises	
	15. Policies with <u>uniform complaint forms</u> across schools, districts and states for instances of bullying/harassment	
	16. Cyberbullying policies	

	Additional Items	
Priority Vote	Items from Questionnaire #1, Question 4	Comments on Items (Agree, Disagree, Clarify)
	17.	
	18.	

Name:

Date:

Please return the completed questionnaire to:

Laura A. Bacon

Email: laura_a_bacon@georgiasouthern.edu or

Phone/Fax: 1-803-644-7366

Please return this questionnaire to me by Tuesday, June 21, 2011. If you need to return the questionnaire via traditional postal mail, please email or call and let me know. Your help is greatly appreciated. Once again, thank you for completing this questionnaire.

APPENDIX N

SURVEY

Protecting LGBT Youth from Peer Victimization Survey

Purpose: The purpose of this survey is to determine how effective strategies, programs, and policies are for school leaders in protecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth from peer victimization, thus reducing the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth.

Your honest responses will be valuable to this research study. Please return the completed survey to Laura Bacon by Friday, July 15, 2011. The return information is located at the end of this survey. Thank you for participating in this research study and taking time to complete this survey.

Directions: Read each statement. Choose the level of effectiveness that best describes how effective that action is for school leaders in protecting LGBT youth from peer victimization, thus reducing the level of peer victimization experienced by LGBT youth.

1. Have safe harbors [with a caring, understanding, and trained adult] for LGBT students to go to when they are feeling the need to talk or time to gather themselves.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. Implement Steps to Respect: A Bullying Prevention Program.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. All adults who have contact with the students should receive training in the school's policies and procedures related to bullying.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Implement published, enumerated anti-bullying and non-discrimination policies.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. Intervene and address anti-LGBT comments/behaviors every time they are heard and/or seen.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Talk about LGBT issues and identity throughout the curriculum and classes.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. Implement policies with clear, reporting procedures in place for youth and members of the community that designate who and how to report instances of victimization.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. Do away with “zero tolerance” [of bullying and harassment] and integrate a climate of acceptance and support.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. Implement policies that require professional development for all school staff on intervening when bullying occurs.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Implement the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network Lunchbox Program.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Train all adults who have contact with the students in how to promote diversity and acceptance.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. Implement a bullying/harassment/intimidation prevention program.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. Implement policies that provide a knowledgeable and supportive “go to” person for staff, students, and families.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. Implement the Let’s Get Real Program.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. Implement clear bullying policies that are inclusive of those who identify as LGBT.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. Educate all school boards, faculty members, and staff on LGBT terms, the sexual orientation continuum, the gender expression continuum, and their mandatory roles in eliminating homophobia and transphobia in the schools.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. Implement policies on equal rights for all students.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. Implement the Human Rights Campaign Welcoming Schools Initiative Program.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19. Motivate others (students, as well as adults—teachers, parents, and allied school staff) to listen and not be bystanders.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

20. Implement cyberbullying policies.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

21. Make policies on harassment and bullying clear to staff, students, and families.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

22. Implement the Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays Safe Schools Program.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

23. Educate middle school and high school youth on tolerance of LGBT schoolmates, breaking down gender stereotypes, and eliminating homophobia and transphobia in their school.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

24. Survey students, staff, and families to determine the scope of the LGBT victimization problem.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

25. Implement Gay-Straight Alliances.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

26. Evaluate all areas of a school that may not be safe and ensure proper supervision in those areas.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

27. Implement the Second Step: Skills for Social and Academic Success Program.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

28. Make clear to students the options for counseling within the school.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

29. Implement the Olweus Anti-Bullying Program.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

30. Educate elementary students on different types of families, name-calling, and breaking down gender stereotypes.

Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please return the completed survey to:

Laura A. Bacon

Email: laura_a_bacon@georgiasouthern.edu or

Phone/Fax: 1-803-644-7366

Please return this survey to me by Friday, July 15, 2011. If you need to return the survey via traditional postal mail, please email or call and let me know. Your help is greatly appreciated. Once again, thank you for participating in this research study and taking time to complete this survey!