

A National Study of LGBT Educators' Perceptions of Their Workplace Climate¹

Presented March 25, 2008 at the Annual Conference
Of the American Educational Research Association
NYC, NY

Nancy J. Smith
Millersville University

Tiffany Wright
C. Milton Wright High School
Johns Hopkins University

Cole Reilly
Pennsylvania State University

Jennifer Esposito
Georgia State University

¹ This project has been approved by the Millersville University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects.

Introduction

Students need to feel safe and accepted in order to take the risks associated with academic and social development (Bluestein, 2000; Merrow, 2004). Educators also need to feel safe and accepted in order to provide the best education to these students. Leithwood & McAdie (2007) provided evidence that teachers who felt safe had a higher level of professional efficacy, which in turn contributed to increased student achievement. Historically and presently, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and/or transgender students and staff have felt unsafe in many school environments due to their sexual and gender orientations (Markow & Fein, 2005).

Within the past decade or so, educators have increasingly included lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT)² issues into the scope of teaching and learning about diverse populations within multicultural education (Rottman, 2006), which has assisted many schools in creating safer climates for students. Many organizations have surveyed students and staff to understand not only what type of climate exists in schools for LGBT youth but also to understand what mechanisms and pedagogy support positive experiences for LGBT students and staff in schools. For example, Jackson (2007) found that LGBT teachers who had reached the authentic teacher phase in their development were more willing and able to confront issues of homophobia within the classroom, school and curriculum, which directly supported all LGBT individuals in schools.

² These four groups of individuals identify with each other and are frequently analyzed as one because members of these groups share many of the same experiences in regards to discrimination, negative public opinion, and targeting from conservative religious organizations. However, one must recognize that heteronormativity and hegemony have worked in different ways against each group as well.

As education professionals continue to struggle with how to improve the climate for LGBT students, they have only begun to struggle with acknowledging and improving the climate for LGBT educators. In the research literature, considerably less scholarship is available on LGBT educators. Most of the research and writing to date on this topic revolves around three themes: 1) the history of LGBT educators and the climates they have faced and currently face within schools (Blount, 1996, 2000; Griffin & Ouellett, 2003; Harbeck, 1997; Khayatt, 1992; Kissen, 1996; Yared, 1997); 2) the individual experiences of LGBT educators or pre-service educators (Evans, 2002; Ferfolja, 1998; Griffin, 1992; Jennings, 1992, 2005; Juul & Repa, 1993; Litton, 1999; Jackson, 2007; McCarthy, 2003; Melillo, 2003; Resenbrink, 1996; Woods & Harbeck, 1992; Woog, 1995); and 3) the need for acceptance by LGBT educators (Anderson, 1997).

To date, only one comprehensive quantitative study (Juul & Repa, 1993) has been published that examines the relationship between level of "outness" (being open about their sexual orientation) for LGBT educators and job satisfaction. These results, however, are somewhat outdated and do not provide further details about factors that contribute to these educators' perceptions of the climate at their schools. The purpose of this research is to understand the workplace or school climate for LGBT educators as perceived by the LGBT educators themselves.

Historical Literature

Blount (1996, 2000, 2005) and Harbeck (1997) have contributed greatly to the literature on the history of LGBT educators. They examined how the climate for LGBT educators has been influenced by cultural shifts in the larger society. The earliest

educators were men. Shortly thereafter, single females were employed as educators because paying a lower salary to women was accepted and considered smart money-management. In spite of the poor salary, single women earned enough money to live independently of men or with each other, and this profession and lifestyle attracted women whom by today's standards would be defined as lesbians (Blount, 1996). Female educators also advanced into educational leadership positions until the 1920s, when researchers began to study and publicize information about sexuality, which began the process of teachers' personal lives being scrutinized (Blount, 2000). This scrutiny led to the examination of the lives of educators and promoted gender role polarization and introduced the concept of "heteronormativity" to the education literature (Blount, 2000; Melillo, 2003; Sumara & Davis, 1999). For the purposes of this paper we utilize a definition of heteronormativity similar to Berlant and Warner (1998) who state that it is the 'institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent – that is, organized as a sexuality – but also privileged' (548f). Since the 1920s, the climate for LGBT educators has been structured through court cases, cultural shifts and backlashes, and public debates about morality and sexual orientation.

School climate has been defined in a variety of ways. One of the most useful definitions for this study comes from Ellis (1988) who defined climate as "the aggregate of indicators, both subjective and objective, that convey the overall feeling or impression one gets about a school" (p.1). Understanding the climate of a school allows for a comprehensive understanding of the overall atmosphere which then impacts students' and teachers' experiences. According to GLSEN (2005), school climate is

shaped by student, teacher and staff attitudes and behaviors.

Research Studies on Contemporary LGBT Educators

Even though Juul & Repa (1993) do not use the word "climate" in their terminology, their findings contributed to our understanding of factors influencing professional experiences among LGBT educators. They examined the relationship between levels of job satisfaction and stress of LGBT educators and levels of "outness" they had to others within the school setting. Their subjects varied in gender, geographic location, race, ethnicity, and teaching experience, and they gathered them through the snowballing technique. These two researchers used multiple surveys to measure job satisfaction, level of job stress, and level of outness.

Juul & Repa (1993) found that LGBT educators who rated themselves as more "out" had higher scores on the job satisfaction survey. Also, teachers who rated themselves as more "out" to administrators scored higher on the job satisfaction survey and were more comfortable being acknowledged for successful performance within their jobs. Finally, Juul & Repa concluded that teachers who rated themselves as more "out" felt more engaged in the social and interpersonal role of being an educator. This study, however, did not address the climate factors that influenced "outness" or reasons for comfort levels.

Jackson's nine LGBT participants (2007) identified support (especially from administrators) as a major factor that impacted their level of outness in the workplace. Through this research, Jackson identified a theory of development for LGBT educators. They progressed from not believing they could teach (due to not identifying as heterosexual) through a closeted teacher phase to finally the authentic phase, when the

educators were open about their sexuality to their school communities. All of Jackson's participants agreed that being out and reaching the authentic teacher phase benefited them and their students because they were able to bring their authentic selves to the classroom and curriculum. Other qualitative studies (Jennings, 2005; Leithwood & McAdie, 2007; Melillo, 2003; McCarthy, 2003; Rensenbrink, 1996) also supported the finding that LGBT educators being "out" contributed to a better environment for themselves and their students. In addition, participants identified many factors that impacted their feelings on the climate for LGBT educators, including personal characteristics, race, religion, age, level of gender conformity, family status and professional experiences. Finally, Jackson (2007) found that all participants believed that it was not the experience of being gay or lesbian that made being an educator difficult at times but being so in the context of a heteronormative society (Melillo, 2003).

McCarthy (2003) identified an important dichotomy that exists for LGBT educators in schools. On one hand, schools are clearly institutions in which traditional gender roles and "gender presentation" (p. 182) have been passed from one generation to the next. On the other hand, schools also have been sites where these gender roles have been challenged (Rensenbrink, 1996). The extant literature suggests that LGBT educators need to be open with their communities about their orientations to best serve their students as positive role models and feel empowered as people and educators.

Many LGBT educators, however, still do not reveal their orientations. Researchers have identified several reasons why these educators may feel wary about being completely open. According to the Human Rights Campaign (2005), twenty-three states did not include sexual orientation or gender identity within their non-discrimination

laws, which makes coming out quite risky. This means that individuals were not protected from discrimination in terms of their employment by these laws and/or by district policies (Lugg, 2006). This contributes to a complex climate for LGBT educators; they experience dissonance, because they want to protect and be role models for the LGBT youth without risking their employment status (Griffin, 1992; Litton, 1999). Even if laws are in place to protect them, other factors may make the workplace uncomfortable, because it is clear that some LGBT educators have experienced covert discrimination, such as unpleasant assignments and negative gossip (Harbeck, 1997).

Researchers also have identified gender role polarization (Blount, 1996, 2000) and heteronormativity (Melillo, 2003, Sumara & Davis, 1999; Jackson, 2007) as factors that impact the workplace environment for LGBT educators. Others have found that having heterosexual allies who will speak out and support acceptance (Ferfolja, 1998; Jennings, 2005; Woods & Harbeck, 1992), seeing LGBT issues and heroes as visible in the curriculum (Ferfolja, 1998) and participating in a LGBT educators support group (Griffin, 1992) also impacted how LGBT educators perceived the environment for themselves.

Furthermore, some LGBT educators worry about the ramifications of their sexuality to the extent that they put their health at risk either from the levels of stress or guilt associated with balancing being open about one's sexuality, modeling acceptance of one's gender identity and sexual orientation and distancing themselves for safety (Ferfolja, 1998; Khayatt, 1992; Woods & Harbeck, 1992; Yared, 1997). Finally, many LGBT educators fear a complete and outright rejection by their students as a consequence of their sexual orientations (Kissen, 1996). Pat McCart, a lesbian

principal, in a speech given in 1989 said the following:

We (educators) are probably the most deeply closeted group in the gay community. You all know the BIG RULE for Being Out (in general society): "It's okay as long as you DON'T FLAUNT IT." For us, there is a different rule: "It's not okay. You are not fit to teach children. You are fired!" (Jennings, 1994, p. 55)

Many would agree (e.g., Jennings, 2005) that the climate for LGBT educators has improved since Ms. McCart made this statement. Anecdotes they share with researchers, indicate some LGBT educators have expressed a sense of empowerment and energy from being open about their orientations (Jennings, 2005; Woog, 1995).

Studies about the climate for LGBT educators, to date, have relied on data from a small group of educators and employed qualitative methods. No major quantitative research study has evaluated professional climates for LGBT educators. This study provides information to understand how many LGBT educators are "out" at their schools and what makes them comfortable to be forthcoming about their sexuality or not (Juil & Repa, 1993), what factors contribute to their comfort levels at schools (Jackson, 2007), and how administrators and colleagues can encourage and support LGBT educators, since administrative support has been found in studies to be crucial for a positive environment (Ferfolja, 1998; Griffin, 1992; Kissen, 1996; Litton, 1999; McCarthy, 2003; Rensenbrink, 1996). Finally, this research provides important information on how to create climates where all educators feel safe, protected and valued within their schools.

Purpose for Research

Ultimately, students will not excel to their full potential if all of their teachers do not feel

safe and fully supported by their workplace environments. LGBT educators need then to work in as supportive a school climate as heterosexual educators. It is suspected they do not, but little quantitative evidence exists in the literature to know whether this is true. This study sought to fill this gap.

METHODS

The GLSEN School Climate Survey studies from the past ten years are recognized by practitioners, academics and activists as highly important in efforts to support youth, inform those who influence education, and facilitate change in our society. As such, we modeled our survey of LGBT education professionals upon GLSEN's. . The 2007 National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) K-12 Educators Survey (Smith, Esposito, Wright, & Reilly, 2006) was designed to collect information on LGBT educators' perceptions of their current workplace climate. The objectives of the instrument are:

1: To determine LGBT teachers', counselors' and specialists' perceptions of their K-12 workplace (school) climate in terms of various forms of prejudice:

- a) homophobia
 1. harassment/punishment/personal safety
 2. level of support/response to identity-related forms of prejudice among fellow teachers, administrators, students, and parent/local community members
 3. outness: visibility/voice/representation
 4. heterosexism as demonstrated by isolation/ostracism/exclusion and absence or negative representation in curricula

- d) racism
- d) sexism/chauvinism
- e) transphobia

2: To determine LGBT teachers', counselors' and specialists' perceptions of their K-12 workplace (school) climate in terms of objective 1 based on age, race, religion, gender, sex, sexuality, gender identity and/or performance.

3: To determine LGBT teachers', counselors' and specialists' perceptions of objectives 1 & 2 in terms of a variety of demographic and school characteristics (rural/urban/suburban, school size, geography/state, policies, relevant professional development, curricula).

In 2006, the team of researchers developed the instrument collaboratively, identifying areas of concern and interest drawing on the GLSEN survey, topics identified in the literature, suggestions from LGBT/Q teachers and personal experience. The survey items were written, revised and formatted using "Survey Monkey" software for survey design, as well as for data collection and analysis. Next, three local LGBT teachers read the survey and suggested revisions for clarity. The survey was then validated by six educational professionals ranking each item's contribution towards the goal of collecting LGBT educators' perceptions of their climate in the workplace using a Likert scale. The online survey consisted of 165 items. Two items at the end provided respondents the opportunity to comment, identify concerns, describe items that were difficult to answer and suggest ways to improve the survey. Care was taken to allow respondents to self identify for the demographic items and to discern

differences between issues and items related to sexuality, gender and race. Items were developed to ascertain LGBT teachers' perceptions of the existence of homophobia, racism, sexism and gender bias in their workplace as well as how they are affected by it. Items also determined who, according to their perceptions, contributes to homophobia, racism, sexism and gender bias in their workplace as well as what is done about them. Demographic items allow for analysis by school characteristics, location, years of teaching experience and the degree to which one is out, etc.

A random sample was impossible for this study. In *Doing Survey Research: A Guide to Quantitative Research*, Nardi (2006) sites gays and lesbians as an example population appropriate for snowball sampling. To pilot the survey in 2006, we initiated snowball sampling of teachers with whom we had personal contacts in school districts across five states. The researchers collected responses from thirty teachers representing elementary, middle and high schools; the researchers made revisions as needed to the survey instrument in preparation for data collection with a national sample.

The final survey was posted on Survey Monkey between April 1 and June 30, 2007, to represent the perceptions of LGBT educators' experiences during the 2006-2007 school year. The researchers used multiple approaches to build a data set using snowball sampling that would represent all geographic areas, races, cultures, genders and different types of K-12 settings. They contacted NEA members through the NEA LGBT Caucus as well as NEA state and local affiliate websites and telephoned chapters in states that had few survey participants. The researchers posted notices soliciting participants through GLSEN chapters, PFLAG chapters, ASCD chapters, the Safe

Schools Coalition, women's studies faculty at universities and AERA special interest groups (SIG's). Flyers were posted at the 2006 National AERA conference and were distributed at LGBT Pride Festivals. Known liberal faith organizations from across the country, such as Unitarian Universalist churches, Metropolitan Community Churches and United Church(es) of Christ were invited to post announcements to their congregations and other local organizations to solicit participants. Researchers contacted Human Rights Commissions, especially in states with minimal survey participants. Dogpile.com, a metasearch engine, was used to access other organizations across the country that might lead to more participants, particularly to acquire a diverse sample.

The 514 survey participants represented teachers in all disciplines and instructional levels, counselors and librarians in all fifty states and Washington, D.C. Of those participants who reported a racial or ethnic identity (268), the majority were European-American (82%). The remaining 18% of the sample included 9 African-American, 6 Native American, 6 Asian-American, 6 Hispanic or Latino educators, 1 Jamaican, 1 Greek, 1 Puerto Rican-Irish American, 1 Peloponesian-Celtic, 1 Cajun, and 1 South Asian-White and (18%). The 272 participants who indicated a self-identified gender included 140 females, 87 males, 10 genderqueer, 3 transgender, 1 androgynous and 1 who does not identify as a particular gender. The 242 who chose to self-identify their sexual orientation included: 88 lesbian, 81 gay, 28 bisexual, 18 queer, 2 pansexuals, 1 questioning, 1 transexual, 1 gay woman, 1 two spirit, 1 bisexual in a lesbian relationship, 1 married MTF heterosexual who declines label use, 1 happily married heterosexual who moves along the sexual continuum, and 1 who "does not

Deleted: of

Deleted: Christ c

require a label". The sample included educators from all grade levels in public, charter, private, parochial and technical schools throughout urban, suburban and rural settings with the majority of participants employed in public middle and high schools.

Respondents were split almost evenly between those with ten or fewer years experience and those with eleven to forty years experience. 58% of respondents were teachers under 42 years old.

RESULTS

The initial finding comes from the data collection process. As mentioned above, extensive effort was made to reach LGBT educators through snowballing, email, letters, websites, attendance at conferences and phone calls. The occurrences as part of that process make the data collection process itself a source of findings. The major finding based on the data collection process is that many LGBT educators in this study demonstrated a high degree of mistrust and fear. For example, numerous emails were received asking for more explanation about who was doing the research and what they were planning to do with the results. The messages came from union offices, intermediate unit personnel and individuals. Even with assurance of the safety of their identities, no doubt, some did not complete the survey, but many who did complete the survey provided no identifying information, even the state in which they live. The fact that our findings are based on variations in the sample size for different items is a result to a large extent, we believe, of this phenomenon. The variation in sample size is sometimes, of course, a result of the number to which the item is applicable. Another reason for different sample size for the size of N for some items, may be the length of

the survey, although this was not reported to be a problem in the pilot.

In an effort to represent participants from across the nation, extraordinary effort was made toward the end of the data collection period to contact LGBT educators from states from which no one had indicated they lived: North Dakota, Louisiana, Mississippi, West Virginia, South Carolina and Vermont. Perhaps lower population explains the reason no one had indicated they lived in North Dakota prior to the final week of data collection, but it is possible no one in North Dakota had responded or they had not indicated their state. We were surprised that there were no respondents from Vermont so close to the end of the data collection period. With the legal recognition of civil unions, we thought anxiety about completing the survey would be lessened for Vermont respondents. Also, we had been contacted by several individuals stating they were from Vermont, representing others who had also received the survey and requesting additional information about the researchers and the purpose of the study. The lack of participants from the Southern states seemed to be straightforward cases of anxiety of disclosure because of perceived consequences from conservative communities, although that seems somewhat less likely for Louisiana if for no other reason than the known presence of gays and lesbians in New Orleans. The finding of mistrust and fear of disclosure by LGBT educators throughout the country was strongly indicated by the data collection process.

Findings of LGBT educators' perceptions of their workplace climate based on an analysis of quantitative data, using SPSS Chi Square and Frequencies program, include:

A Troubling School Climate

86% of LGBT educators hear comments in school they consider homophobic.

This is a significant difference in the number who report hearing homophobic comments and those who do not. (N= 514, $p < .01$)

LGBT educators consider hearing homophobic comments in their workplace troubling. There is a significant difference in the number of respondents who find these comments troubling and those who do not (98%, N=447, $p < .01$).

There is no significant difference in the responses to homophobic comments by LGBT educators self-identified as males or females. (N = 228 , $p > .05$)

100% of the respondents who self-identified as African-American or Black, Hispanic or Latino/Latina, Asian or Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, Native American, or Multiracial reported hearing homophobic comments at school.

96% of those who have heard homophobic comments at school have heard students make homophobic remarks (N=447). There is a significant difference in the number who report hearing students make homophobic comments and those who do not ($p < .01$).

58% of those who have heard homophobic comments at school have heard other educational professionals make homophobic remarks. (N=438, $p < .01$)

20% have heard administrators make homophobic comments (N=418)

LGBT educators report hearing comments they consider racist (80%, N=486, $p < .01$), sexist (80%, N=459, $p < .01$) and transphobic (74%): masculine (67%, N=426, $p < .01$) feminine (55%, N=426, $p < .01$).

An Unsafe School Climate

35% of the respondents felt unsafe at school based on their sexual orientation. (N=185)

42% felt that the attitude of the immediate community of the school was unsafe for LGBT people. (N=326)

73% have had rumors spread about them at school. (N=223, $p < .01$)

27% of participants experienced harassment during the 06-07 year (N=377).

59% of respondents who had been harassed did not report it. 66% of those who did report being harassed experienced some level of satisfaction with the result. (N=86)

35% had property stolen or deliberately damaged (N=222).

The civil rights of most LGBT respondents (N = 242) are not protected by state law (51% not protected or don't know), union contract (62% not protected or don't know) or local ordinance (72% not protected or don't know).

An Unsupportive School Climate

Intervention by other teachers and administrators when LGBT educators hear homophobic remarks has been intermittent at best.

88% of respondents have observed none to only a few teachers intervene when students use homophobic remarks. (N=427, $p < .01$)

31% have heard homophobic comments made in the presence of administrators. (N=442) 60% reported that the administrator never or rarely intervened compared to 40% who reported that an administrator frequently or sometimes intervened. There was a significant difference in the expected distribution of this variable (N=165, $p < .05$)

35% fear losing their job if outed to an administrator (N=378)

53% fear losing their job if they are outed to students (N=377).

63% have experienced negative consequences as a result of being out (N=211)

LGBT individuals are not represented in the curriculum in over 75% of these teachers' schools.

Almost 37% of respondents felt somewhat or very uncomfortable talking with their supervisors about LGBT issues, but 26% feel uncomfortable talking with a colleague about LGBT issues (N=244).

Domestic partner benefits are unavailable to most of the respondents.

66% of respondents have not received professional development

related to LGBTQ students (N=326, $p < .01$).

85% of respondents have not received professional development related to LGBT professionals (N=326, $p < .01$)

Survival Skills

86% of the LGBT teachers who participated in this study were comfortable being out to someone in school, but 14% were not out to anyone where they work. 28% reported being out to everyone at their school; 28% reported being out to most people at their school; and 31% reported being out to only a few people at their school. There was a significant difference in the expected distribution of responses (N=243, $p < .01$).

Out LGBT educators report positive consequence(s) resulting from being out (68%, N=207)

Self respect was reported as the most positive consequence of being out (25%, N=130). Second most often reported positive consequence of being out was feeling more comfortable at work (20%, N=100)

The majority of LGBT educators, 52%, reported being supportive of out or questioning LGBT students (N=243).

LGBT educators reported that they intervened 94% (N=387) of the time when racism was exhibited, 92% (N=369) of the time when sexism was exhibited, 89% (N=427) of the time when homophobia was exhibited, 85% (N=263) of the time when gender non-conformity bias was exhibited.

When it comes to other school personnel, respondents reported that they are out to "none" or "one" of the following specified groups: 31% reported this about their principals (N = 207, $p < .01$), 40% reported this about their assistant principals (N = 207, $p < .01$), 45% reported this about central office administrators (N = 207, $p < .01$), 33% reported this about school office staff members (N = 207, $p < .01$), 68% reported this about food service workers (N = 205, $p < .01$), and 63% reported this about maintenance workers, (N = 205, $p < .01$),

44% stated that they are out to “none” or “one” parent/guardian (N = 207, $p < .01$), and 43% reported they are out to “none” or “one” student (N = 207, $p < .01$).

51% of respondents (N= 210) report being out to at least some, if not most or all of their teacher colleagues.

88% of respondents (N = 209) reported that the level of support from colleagues to whom they were out was supportive or very supportive, which was significantly ($p < .01$) higher than the expected distribution.

The Professionally Responsible School Climate for LGBT Educators

While most LGBT educators work in schools in which they perceive that the school climate is troubling, unsafe, and unsupportive, there are some LGBT educators who indicated in one or more ways that they work in a school with dimensions of a professionally responsible climate. The following list can serve as a barometer for the school climate professionally desirable for every LGBT educator:

There are LGBT educators who work in a school in which they feel safe.

There are LGBT educators who work in a school in which they hear no homophobic, racist, sexist or transphobic language.

There are LGBT educators who work in a school in which they feel supported by their colleagues and principal.

There are LGBT educators who work in a school in which the principal and colleagues intervene if they hear homophobic, racist, sexist or transphobic language.

There are LGBT educators who work in a school with a policy for reporting harassment.

There are LGBT educators who work in a school in which they have received professional development related to LGBTQ students.

There are LGBT educators who work in a school in which they can use school computers to access LGBTQ related websites.

There are LGBT educators who work in a school in which there is a GSA.

There are LGBT educators who work in a school in which the library has LGBT inclusive or related books.

There are LGBT educators who work in a school in which the curricula are inclusive of LGBT issues.

There are LGBT educators who work in a school in which their life events are celebrated similarly to how their heterosexual colleagues' life events are celebrated.

There are LGBT educators who work in a school in which they have domestic partner benefits.

There are LGBT educators who work in a school in which they feel comfortable being out to colleagues, parents, and students.

Conclusions

Research has shown that when the school climate allows students to feel safe within the school environment they tend to achieve at a higher level (GLSEN 2003). Innovative programs have been developed within schools to support all students. Likewise, research also has begun to demonstrate a correlation between teacher efficacy and student achievement. Many factors can contribute to this efficacy, including self-confidence, feelings of shared-decision making, and relationships with colleagues and administrators. LGBT educators have struggled throughout the years to feel comfortable in their workplace environments. According to Harbeck (1997), there are at least 2,787,000 LGBT educators in the United States, if one uses the theory that 10% of the population is LGBT, while even low estimates suggest numerous education professionals have an LGBT identity. These LGBT educators impact the lives of millions of students each year. According to Jackson (2007), the impact of the principal's attitude about many climate issues

(including homosexuality) was a huge component of the comfort level for LGBT educators. School leaders dedicated to the success of all students need to support, therefore, LGBT educators to the same extent that they support heterosexual educators in order to achieve the mission of their schools.

The LGBT teachers, counselors and specialists in this study reported that they perceive their workplace climate as troubling, unsafe and unsupportive. They perceived the climate in their workplace as homophobic, racist, sexist and transphobic. While these findings cannot be generalized to the population of LGBT teachers, counselors and specialists, the findings suggest a workplace climate perceived by most LGBT educator participants in this study on a skewed continuum with the largest number ranging between hostile to tolerant on one end of the continuum with a small number at the supportive end. Their schools, by and large, are difficult places to work if you identify as LGBT. In their schools, LGBT educators hear homophobic comments by students and other teachers and there is little intervention by other teachers or principals to stop these remarks. Nearly half report that they feel unsafe at work because of their identities as LGBT. Many have been harassed, had rumors spread about them and many of them work with no civil protections and very few receive benefits equal to their heterosexual colleagues. LGBT people, concerns, history, health and accomplishments are invisible in the curriculum and some educators are barred from accessing salient information on their school computers. They perceive that their significant life events are not likely to be recognized or celebrated similarly to the life events of their heterosexual colleagues. Most are not comfortable speaking with their colleagues about LGBT matters in general, although most are out to some of their

colleagues. A consequence of being out to any degree at school is perceived by many of them as causing them an increase in anxiety and stress, nevertheless, some report an increase in self respect and comfort level at work as positive consequences of coming out. Overall, those who were out found it to be positive.

The findings also suggest that there are schools in which a minority of LGBT educators perceive some dimension(s) of a professionally responsible school climate. They feel comfortable, safe, and supported. The responses from these participants hold promise for the future.

The 2007 data serves as a baseline for future research to monitor the workplace climate for LGBT teachers, counselors and specialists. Revisions need to be made to the survey to improve consistency in the number of responses per item, to shorten the length of the survey and to change the order of the topics in future studies. The quantitative methods of this project fill a gap in the research literature because of a lack of these studies and because this methodology can offer breadth, scope and numbers that are needed to understand more fully the issue of workplace climate for LGBT educators documented by many qualitative studies. This quantitative study adds significantly to already existing work, stands to bring a significant data set to issues that desperately need attention from researchers in a post-No Child Left Behind world and speaks to policy makers in a useful way. LGBT teachers and their allies need this evidence to work for change. School leaders need an understanding of these faculty members in order to facilitate their professional development and workplace environment in which they work without fear of job loss based on their identity. Teacher educators can use the study results to better prepare pre-service educators. Ultimately,

LGBT teachers and their allies can better serve LGBT youth (and *all* youth) as learners if LGBT teachers are safe being out. In other words, making school climate conducive to the work of all teachers, counselors, and specialists is a call to “civic” action to support the goal of advancing the well-being of the entire school community.

References

- Anderson, J.D. (1997, April). Supporting the invisible minority. *Educational Leadership*, 54, 65 – 68.
- Berlant, L., & Warner, M. (1998) Sex in public. *Critical Inquiry*, 24 547-66.
- Blount, J.M. (1996, Summer). Manly men and womanly women: Deviance, gender role polarization and the shift in women's school employment, 1900 – 1976. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(2), 318 – 338.
- Blount, J.M. (2000, Spring). Spinsters, bachelors, and other gender transgressors in school employment, 1850 – 1990. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(1), 83 – 101.
- Blount, J.M. (2005). *Fit to teach: Same-sex desire, gender, and school work in the twentieth century*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Bluestein, J. (2000, Summer). Create a caring classroom. *Instructor*, 110(2), 35 - 37.
- Carter, J. (2003). Vancouver, Canada: Gay and lesbian educators of British Columbia. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education*, 1(1), 101 – 103.
- Clark, C. (2007). *Queer issues in education*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.
- Ellis, T.I. (1988). School climate. *Research Roundup*, 4(2), 1.
- Evans, K. (2002). *Negotiating the self: Identity, sexuality, and emotion in learning to teach*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Ferfolja, T. (1998). Australian lesbian teachers: A reflection of homophobic harassment of high school teachers in New South Wales government schools. *Gender and Education*, 10(4), 401 – 415.

- Fisher, R. & Ury, W. (1991). *Getting to yes: Negotiating agreement without giving in* (2nd ed.). New York: Penguin Books.
- First Amendment Center and BridgeBuilders. (2006). *Public schools and sexual orientation: A first amendment framework for finding common ground*. Retrieved March 15, 2006 from <http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/PDF/sexual.orientation.guidelines.PDF>.
- French, M. (2002, March). In defense of gay and lesbian educators. *Principal*, 81(4), 66.
- French, M. (2002, October). Respecting diversity for fairer, saner schools. *The Education Digest*, 68(2), 41 – 42.
- Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network. (2005). *From teasing to torment: School climate in America: A survey of students and teachers*. New York: New York.
- Griffin, P. (1992). From hiding out to coming out: Empowering gay and lesbian educators. In K.M. Harbeck (Ed.), *Coming out of the classroom closet: Gay and lesbian students, teachers and curricula* (pp. 141 – 166). Binghamton, NY: Haworth.
- Griffin, P. & Ouellett, P. (2003). From silence to safety and beyond: Historical trends in addressing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender issues in k-12 schools. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 36, 106 – 114.
- Harbeck, K. M. (1997). *Gay and lesbian educators: Personal freedoms, public constraints*. Malden, MA: Amethyst Press and Productions.
- Human Rights Campaign. (2005). *Statewide anti-discrimination laws & policies*. Retrieved November 26, 2005, from

http://www.hrc.org/Template.cfm?Section=Your_Community&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=8471.

Jackson, J. (2007). *Unmasking identities: An exploration of the lives of gay and lesbian teachers*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Jennings, K. (Ed.) (1992). *One teacher in 10: Gay and lesbian educators tell their stories*. Los Angeles, CA: Alyson Publications.

Jennings, K. (Ed.). (2005). *One teacher in 10: LGBT educators share their stories* (2nd ed.). London: Alyson Publications.

Juul, T., & Repa, T. (1993). *A survey to examine the relationship of the openness of self-identified lesbian, gay male, and bisexual public school teachers to job stress and job satisfaction*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Atlanta, GA.

Khayatt, M. D. (1992). *Lesbian teachers: An invisible presence*. New York: State of University of New York.

Kissen, R. M. (1996). *The last closet: The real lives of lesbian and gay teachers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Larrabee, T. G., & Morehead, P. (2007). *Prospective teachers' reflections: Hearing a call for LGBT-inclusive classrooms*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.

Leithwood, K., & McAdie, P. (2007). Teacher working conditions that matter. *Education Canada, 47*(2): 42-45.

Litton, E. F. (1999). *Stories of courage and hope: Gay and lesbian catholic elementary school teachers*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American

Educational Research Association, Montreal, Canada.

- Lugg, C. A. (2006). Thinking about sodomy: Public schools, legal panopticons, and queers. *Educational Policy*, 20 (1): 35-58.
- Markow, D., & Fein, J. (2005). *From teasing to torment: School climate in America a survey of students and teachers*. New York: Harris Interactive, Inc. & Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network.
- McCarthy, L. (2003). Wearing my identity: A transgender teacher in the classroom. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 36, 170 – 183.
- Melillo, S. M. (2003). *Heteronormativity and teaching: A phenomenological study of lesbian teachers*. Paper presented at the Annual AERA National Conference, Chicago, IL.
- Morrow, J. (2004, Fall). Safety and excellence. *Educational Horizons*, 83(1), 19 – 32.
- Nardi, P. M. (2005). *Doing Survey Research: A Guide to Quantitative Research*, 2nd Ed. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon
- Rasmussen, M. L. (2004, Spring). The problem of coming out. *Theory into Practice*, 43(2), 144 – 150.
- Rensenbrink, C. W. (1996, Summer). What difference does it make? The story of a lesbian teacher. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(2), 257 – 270.
- Rottman, C. (2006). Queering educational leadership from the inside out. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 9 (1), 1-10.
- Russell, V. (2006). Equity undone: The impact of the conservative Ontario government's education reform on the triangle program. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education*, 3 (4), 45-57.

- Samuels, C. A. (2006). Guidelines urge a dialogue on gay issues in schools. *Education Week*, 25(27), 5,14.
- Sherwood, G., & Jennings, T. (2007). *Sexual orientation curriculum in educational administration programs*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.
- Smith, N. J., Esposito, J., Wright, T., & Reilly, C. (2007). LGBT teachers school climate survey. Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.
- SurveyMonkey.com (1999). 815 NW 13th Ave. Suite D Portland , OR 97209, <http://www.surveymonkey.com>.
- Sumara, D., & Davis, B. (1999, Summer). Interrupting heteronormativity: Toward a queer curriculum theory. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 29(2), 191 – 209.
- Woods, S. E., & Harbeck, K. M. (1992). Living in two worlds: The identity management strategies used by lesbian physical educators. In K. M. Harbeck (Ed.), *Coming out of the classroom closet: Gay and lesbian students, teachers and curricula* (pp. 141 – 166). Binghamton, NY: Haworth.
- Woog, D. (1995). *School's Out: The Impact of Gay and Lesbian Issues on America's Schools* (pp. 109 – 115). Boston, MA: Alyson Publications.
- Yared, C. (1997, Summer). Where are the civil rights for gay and lesbian teachers? *Journal of the Section of Individual Rights & Responsibilities*, 24(3), 22 – 24.