EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ROLE IN PROMOTING A POSITIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT FOR GLBTQ STUDENTS

by

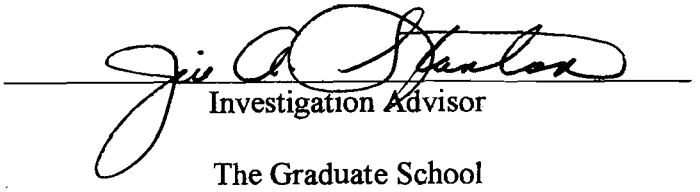
Heather Russell

A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Master of Science Degree
With a Major in

Guidance and Counseling

Approved: 2 Semester Credits



Investigation Advisor

The Graduate School
University of Wisconsin-Stout
August, 2006

EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ROLE IN PROMOTING A POSITIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT FOR GLBTQ STUDENTS

by

Heather Russell

A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Master of Science Degree
With a Major in

Guidance and Counseling

Approved: 2 Semester Credits

Investigation Advisor

The Graduate School
University of Wisconsin-Stout
August, 2006

The Graduate School
University of Wisconsin Stout
Menomonie, WI

Author: **Russell, Heather L.**

Title: ***Educators' Perceptions of Their Role in Promoting a Positive School Environment for GLBTQ Students***

Graduate Degree/ Major: MS Guidance and Counseling

Research Adviser: **Jill Stanton**

Month/Year: **August, 2006**

Number of Pages: **53**

Style Manual Used: **American Psychological Association, 5th edition**

ABSTRACT

Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (GLBTQ) youth often encounter stress and turmoil due to rejection, isolation, harassment, and violence that may be occurring either at home or in school. As educators spend a considerable amount of time with this population of individuals, they are prime candidates to support GLBTQ students. Educators from a small school district in Northern Wisconsin were invited to participate in a study. The purpose of this study was to determine what educators perceive as their role in promoting a positive school environment for GLBTQ students.

Participants completed a survey consisting of open-ended, Likert scale, yes/no, and multiple-choice questions. Results from this research suggest educators need additional training pertaining to working with students who are GLBTQ. Furthermore, the findings indicate that while most educators surveyed make some efforts to protect sexual minority students from homophobic language, only about half of educators can be

counted on to be proactive in addressing the potential harassment of students who are GLBTQ. These findings point to a need for further instruction and training for educators regarding how they can promote a positive school environment for GLBTQ students. Recommendations for further research include an inquiry of educators as to what form additional training should take.

Acknowledgements

A research endeavor such as this could not have materialized without the help, guidance, and support of many individuals. This study would never have taken place if a school district had not been open to me coming into their town to survey their educators. Thank you to this school district for giving me this opportunity. Furthermore, thank you to my thesis advisor Jill Stanton for guiding me through this research process.

To my family, your confidence in my ability to succeed has always shown through in your support and love. I am appreciative of the encouragement you all have given me throughout the years. Thank you.

To Jamie, you are a driving and motivating force in my life. There are no words to express gratitude for how you enrich every day. Thank you for all that you have personally sacrificed to help me make my way through school. Your support and love have been a tremendous factor in my success.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Among researchers there is often argument regarding the percentage of the population who identify as being homosexual. Despite their disagreements, researchers contend that between 2% and 10% of the U.S. population is homosexual (McFarland, 2001). Due to this broad range of percentages, Ginsberg (1998) suggested using the midpoint number of 6% to represent the U. S. homosexual population. McFarland (2001) used this percentage and determined that there are about 15,000,000 gay and lesbian individuals and 2,610,515 gay and lesbian students living in the U.S. Breaking this number down even further, Ginsberg (1998) estimates that about one in 20 adolescents in public school is homosexual. Consequently, both middle and high school teachers will average one or more gay or lesbian students in each class.

Research indicates that homosexual youth notice their same-sex attraction between the ages of 10 to 12 years old. At around the age of 15 they begin identifying as being a sexual minority, and will generally "come out" or reveal their sexual orientation at approximately the age of 16 (Tharinger & Wells, 2000). Researchers stress that the ages at which sexual minority youth go through these stages are unique to each individual. However, gay and lesbian youths are identifying as being homosexual and disclosing their sexual identities at younger ages than previous age groups (Beaty, 1999; Tharinger & Wells, 2000).

For most individuals adolescence is a time of change, discovery, and turmoil. The sexual minority youth must also think about when and to whom they will disclose their sexual identity. Consequently, they must also consider how these individuals may react to

this disclosure. Fears of rejection, isolation, violence, and harassment place sexual minorities at a greater risk for a variety of psychological and developmental issues (Marinoble, 1998; Tharinger & Wells, 2000). Homosexual youth report feeling anxiety and fear related to disclosing their sexual identity to family, friends, school, and religious organizations (Russell & Joyner, 2001). Unfortunately, their fears are not unfounded. In fact, often when homosexual adolescents "come out" and disclose their sexual orientation, they are met with rejection and can experience family discord. It is also common for gay and lesbian adolescents to feel as though they have failed the people they are close to (D'Augelli, Hershberger, & Pilkington, 1998).

The consequences of homosexual adolescents experiencing rejection, isolation, violence, and harassment at such a critical and awkward time in their life can increase the risk of depression, substance abuse, and suicide. Using national data, Russell and Joyner (2001) found that homosexual adolescents report more substance abuse, depression, and victimization than their heterosexual peers. Additionally, gay and lesbian adolescents have a greater incidence of running away or being thrown out of their home. Perhaps this tendency to be forced out or voluntarily leave home is explained by data reporting 26% of fathers, 10% of mothers, and 15% of siblings rejected homosexual family members when they "came out" (D'Augelli, Hershberger, & Pilkington, 1998).

Further, homosexual youth are at a much higher risk to commit suicide. Russell and Joyner (2001) report that homosexual students are more than twice as likely to attempt suicide as their heterosexual counterparts. According to McFarland (1998), "...gay and lesbian adolescents were two to three times more likely than peers to attempt suicide and account for as many as 30% of completed youth suicides each year" (¶ 7).

Not only do gay and lesbian adolescents attempt suicide more often than heterosexual adolescents, but research also shows that that their suicide attempts are more serious and lethal (McFarland, 1998). Some researchers argue that the suicide rate for homosexual adolescents may actually be higher than statistics show due to an underreporting in this area. Additionally, there is often an inability to know if completed suicides were due to homosexuality or homosexual issues (Bagley & Tremblay, 2000; Kitts, 2005). Bagley and Tremblay argued that gay, lesbian, and bisexual adolescents have suicide rates that are at least four times those of heterosexual adolescents.

Many of the issues plaguing homosexual youth are areas in which educators can be supportive and guiding. According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) and the *Ethical Standards for School Counselors* (2004), school counselors have a professional responsibility to make sure that,

> ... each person has the right to be respected, be treated with dignity and have access to a comprehensive school counseling program that advocates and affirms all students from diverse populations regardless of ethnic/racial status, age economic status, special needs, English as a second language or other language group, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity/expression, family type, religious/spiritual identity, and appearance. (¶2)

In addition to professional codes of ethics, school counselors have a legal responsibility to help create a positive and safe school environment for sexual minority students. A failure to protect gay or lesbian students from harm and harassment can result in legal ramifications (Stone, 2003).

These legal consequences can be applied to the school district and school personnel who are determined to have discriminated against students based on sexual orientation. In Nabozny v. Podlesney (1996), the court determined that certain school personnel and the school district were liable for over $900,000 for a repeated failure to protect a student from harm because of his sexual orientation. The courts held that this was in violation of the students' Fourteenth Amendment rights and therefore unconstitutional.

Current rates of homosexual youth depression, suicide, harassment, and violence point to a need for intervention by schools and school personnel. Educators are in a unique position to help and support GLBTQ (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning) youth because they have access to this population of individuals on a daily basis. In fact, Tharinger and Wells (2000) remark, "young people spend more time in schools than in any other non-home setting" (p. 167). Consequently, educators have the opportunity to make an impact in these students' lives. One way in which they can do this is by creating a positive school environment for GLBTQ students.

Statement of the Problem

Adolescence is a difficult time for many students. It is a time of physical and emotional change, as well as a time to form identity. For GLBTQ students, there is often additional stress and turmoil because of rejection, isolation, harassment, and violence that may be occurring either at home or in school.

The purpose of this study is to document the perceptions of some educators in Wisconsin about their role in the implementation of school policy, curriculum, support services, and staff development to promote a positive school environment for GLBTQ

students. Data was collected through a survey distributed to educators at the elementary, middle, and high school of a Northern Wisconsin school district in May of 2006.

Research Objectives

There are three research objectives this research wishes to address. They are:

1. To determine how educators are prepared/trained to work with GLBTQ students.
2. To determine how educators address both potential and occurring harassment of students who are GLBTQ.
3. To determine educators' opinion of their role in creating a positive school environment for students who are GLBTQ.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study the following terms will be defined for clarity and understanding.

Bisexual: A person sexually attracted to both sexes.

Educator: A person involved in the educational process. This includes staff such as principals, vice principals, school counselors, school psychologists, and teachers.

Gay: An individual with a sexual orientation toward the same sex or a male with a sexual orientation toward men.

Homophobia: fear of or discrimination against homosexuality or homosexuals.

Homosexual: An individual with a sexual orientation toward the same sex.

Lesbian: A female with a sexual orientation toward women.

Sexual Minority: Members of sex groups that do not fall into the majority category of heterosexual, such as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.

Transgender: Displaying the appearance and behavioral characteristics of the opposite sex or having undergone surgery to become a member of the opposite sex.

Questioning: Those who are questioning their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Assumptions

There are four assumptions related to this research study. This study assumes that distributing surveys to educators in a Northern Wisconsin school district will yield a representative sample of educators in Wisconsin. Furthermore, since subjects will complete and submit the survey at their convenience, the study assumes this will occur as planned. Additionally, this study assumes the survey designed by the researcher will adequately measure perceptions of educators. It also assumes that participants will complete the survey with both sincerity and honesty.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations associated with this research study. The data collected will be from individuals in a limited geographical area. These individuals may not represent the "average" educator. Consequently, the findings of this study may not be generalizable to all educators. Further, due to the sensitive nature of the survey, participants may not complete the survey honestly, letting knowledge of what the "correct" answers are guide their responses. Finally, the survey developed by the researcher may not be an adequate tool to measure educator perceptions.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter will begin with a discussion of the difficulties often experienced by gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (GLBTQ) youth. It will be followed by information regarding educators and their awareness of issues concerning GLBTQ youth. In addition, the concept of educators as an advocate for GLBTQ students will be addressed. The chapter will conclude with research concerning areas to enhance the school environment for GLBTQ students.

Difficulties Experienced by GLBTQ Youth

Research indicates that many homosexual individuals "come out" to friends and family between the ages of 15 and 19 years of age (Beaty, 1999). These particular years of development are often wrought with emotion and turmoil for all youth. When one adds the additional stress of dealing with the minority status of being GLBTQ, it is no surprise that these youth can experience many difficulties both internally and externally during adolescence. One way in which these teens struggle is with their identity. Gay and lesbian children usually grow up in a heterosexually dominated environment that often lacks positive homosexual role models. For homosexual adolescents this can lead to "...a sense of being somehow different than the world expects them to be, and this is a source of considerable identity conflict for most homosexual students" (Marinoble, 1998, ¶ 5).

In addition to identity conflict, homosexual youth often exhibit feelings of isolation and stigmatization. GLBTQ students often receive negative attention from classmates. Teasing, name-calling, and isolation are common experiences for homosexual

students. In many cases teachers, counselors, and other school personnel do not punish students who are the instigators of this harassment. The literature also reports that school employees often fail to reprimand students who make derogatory comments regarding homosexuality (Marinoble, 1998). Consequently, research indicates that homosexual students tend to feel isolated and alone, especially in the school environment (Stone, 2003). This type of isolation has been linked to suicide in homosexual teens. Statistics show that one in three suicides completed by adolescents can be linked to sexual-identity issues (Fontaine, 1998). Further, suicide in gay and lesbian individuals has been linked to being publicly homosexual in a homophobic environment (Bagley & Tremblay, 2000).

GLBTQ students have also been reported to demonstrate difficulties with peer relationships. Often these youths are afraid to become close to their peers for fear of others finding out about their sexual orientation. Additionally, they may not be able to identify with the interests of their heterosexual peers (Marinoble, 1998). In a study exploring friendship patterns among homosexual adolescents, Schneider and Witherspoon (2000) found that gay and lesbian youth friendships were "significantly different" from those of heterosexual youth (p. 244). In this study it was concluded that homosexual individuals have to work harder to establish friendships. The study also identified that these persons have to look for longer periods of time before meeting individuals who will become a close friend and have to travel longer distances to see these friends.

Family discord is another common difficulty experienced by gay and lesbian adolescents. Marinoble (1998) stated the following:

> Some homosexual students find considerable acceptance from their families. Frequently, however, the suspicion or confirmation that a child in the family has a homosexual orientation is met with negative responses ranging from mild panic to total rejection. (¶ 12)

According to Beaty (1999), fear of rejection by family members is a common fear held by homosexual youth. These individuals are not able to gauge how their parents or relatives will react to the disclosure of their homosexuality. Consequently, the coming out process can be stressful and scary.

Educators and Issues Concerning GLBTQ Youth

Invariably, educators will both come into contact and directly work with a student who identifies as being GLBTQ. Research estimates that between 2% and 10% of the U.S. population is homosexual and about one in 20 adolescents in public school identify as being homosexual (Ginsberg 1998; MacFarland, 2001). Despite being a significant population in the school community, some researchers suggest that GLBTQ students are a "blind spot in the school mirror" (Marinoble, 1998, ¶ 1). In other words, when schools pretend gay and lesbian students don't exist, they fail to recognize this significant population. As a result, they are training students who are homosexual to ignore this part of themselves.

Further, schools have been documented to be places where high levels of harassment and violence are directed toward homosexual students. In fact, some researchers argue that they are "...among the most homophobic institutions in America" (Fontaine, 1998, ¶ 4). In a study of high schools in North Carolina almost two-thirds (64%) of students reported hearing homophobic comments such as "faggot," "dyke," or

"queer" frequently or often. Additionally, 69% of respondents reported hearing expressions such as "that's so gay" or "you're so gay" frequently or often. In one study, teachers who overheard these comments responded to them frequently or often 26% of the time and rarely or never 47% of the time (Phoenix, et al., 2006). This is particularity unfortunate as teachers are the school personnel who spend the most amount of time with students. Their failure to respond to harassment and violence directed at GLBTQ youth could be attributed to an insufficient amount of training to handle these situations. Another reason could be that they just do not see a need for intervention (Tharinger & Wells, 2000). When students do not receive the support or guidance they are seeking from teachers, they can choose to confide in a school counselor instead.

Findings from a survey distributed to school counselors in Pennsylvania indicated that 93% of the high school counselors and 21% of elementary counselors reported having contact with a student having sexual identity issues. Further, 42% of respondents reported working directly with a homosexual student (Fontaine, 1998). Unfortunately, school counselors may not be educated in issues relating to homosexuality and sexual identity.

For example, Fontaine (1998) found that school counselors are not aware of the truth regarding some of the common myths concerning homosexuality. In this study school counselors held a belief that homosexual individuals choose a homosexual lifestyle. While there is still no definitive research as to the cause of homosexuality, this logic implies that a gay or lesbian student could possibly be counseled or persuaded into making a choice to become heterosexual instead. The surveyed counselors were also unaware of statistics regarding the number of homosexual individuals in the schools.

Surveyed school counselors in this same study, by a majority of 55%, reported only about 1% to 5% of their students were homosexual, underestimating current statistics reported in this area. Moreover, 11% of respondents revealed believing no homosexual students were in attendance at their school (Fontaine, 1998).

Educators as an Advocate for GLBTQ Students

Despite evidence showing there are significant numbers of homosexual students in U.S. schools, researchers find there is little support for these students within school walls. This lack of support is illustrated by schools failing to provide policies protecting sexual minorities (McFarland, 2001; Stone, 2003). Additionally, many forms of harassment directed toward homosexual students are tolerated in public schools. While Fontaine's (1998) surveyed school counselors reported 66% of the schools they work in provide racial minority antiharassment policies, only 44% of these schools had policies implemented to protect sexual minorities from harassment.

In addition to failing to provide adequate antiharassment policies, schools have been charged with tolerating the harassment of sexual minority students (Stone, 2003). Fontaine (1998) reported that, "the content of this harassment took the form of such benign activities as name calling, teasing, ridicule, and exclusion by fellow students to more severe forms such as physical intimidation, pushing, hitting, and shoving" (¶ 35). Regardless of the form of harassment, students experiencing this type of bullying and persecution go through emotional turmoil on a daily basis.

One such example of a student being harassed because of his sexual orientation involved a boy named Jamie Nabozny who went to school in a relatively small northern Wisconsin school district. This adolescent realized in the seventh grade that he was gay

and from that point forward did not hide his homosexuality. For this, Nabozny endured both physical and verbal abuse from classmates (*Nabozny v. Podlesny,* 1996). Throughout the duration of this harassment and abuse, Nabozny sought help from a number of individuals, including his principal, Mary Podlesny. She took no action against Nabozny's harassers and told him that if he was "going to be so openly gay," he should "expect" this behavior from his classmates (Simpson, 1997, ¶11). Nabozny continued to be harassed in various forms throughout middle school and into high school. In the tenth grade he was beaten so badly in the school hallway that he later collapsed from internal bleeding (*Nabozny v. Podlesny,* 1996).

On February 6, 1995 Nabozny filed suit against the school district and certain school officials. In November of 1996 after a two-day trial, a federal jury found the school officials liable under both of Nabozny's equal protection claims in the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution. From this judgment he received a settlement of over $900,000 from the school district (McFarland, 2001; Simpson, 1997). Researchers consider this case to be a landmark for the protection of GLBTQ students in schools (Jones, 2000; McFarland, 2001; Simpson 1997).

Consequently, this court ruling indicates that school officials are required by the constitution to stop the harassment of homosexual students. Penalties from proven failure to do so can mean being sued in the federal courts for money (Simpson, 1997). Further, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) includes sexual orientation in their nondiscrimination clause (Wisconsin DPI, 2006). Unfortunately, many schools are still lacking specific programming meant to address the acceptance of homosexual students (Marinoble, 1998). Much of this lack of programming is due to opposition from

individuals who feel that homosexuality is morally wrong. When schools try to create programs, policies, and curriculum that protect homosexual students, they are met with community, parent, student, and even school personnel disapproval (Stone, 2003).

The decision resulting from Nabozny v. Podlesny in 1996 set new rules for the treatment of sexual minority students in the schools. The guidelines set forth by this ruling are a step toward creating a more positive school environment where students are protected from harassment and harm regardless of their sexual identity (McFarland, 2001). Although all educators need to be aware of the legal issues regarding the protection of students who are GLBTQ, school counselors must also consider the ethical obligations of their profession. The *Ethical Standards for School Counselors* contends that school counselors must provide a guidance program that advocates for all students in a school. This means that each individual student must be respected, regardless of sexual orientation, gender, or sexual identity (American School Counselors Association, 2004). Consequently, school counselors have a legal and ethical responsibility for the positive growth and development of their sexual minority students.

Enhancing the School Environment for GLBTQ Students

It is a fact that for most American youth, most of the waking day is spent in the classroom (Tharinger & Wells, 2000). Consequently, educators are the people who spend the most quality time with our youth. They are the people who daily make an impact in the lives of our students. Tapping educators as a resource to help and support our GLBTQ youth is a concept essential to creating a positive school environment for these individuals.

Many ideas, theories, and suggestions have been offered up by researchers to enhance the school environment for GLBTQ students. One very prominent theme emerging is that of schools being encouraged to create a school policy protecting all students from sexual harassment (McFarland, 2001; Roffman, 2000; Stone, 2003). Most importantly in this is the idea that a "zero tolerance" stance should be held on this issue with procedures in place to deal with complaints (Stone, 2003).

Other researchers suggest a critical way educators can enhance the school environment for GLBTQ students is by being educated about GLBTQ individuals through staff and professional development (Marinoble, 1998; McFarland, 2000; Stone, 2003). Staff development in schools is not only required, but often provided by the school during school hours. Schools can take advantage of in-service days to educate staff about GLBTQ issues.

Marinoble (1998) suggests a number of ways staff development can be used to enhance the school environment for GLBT students. The first is to conduct in-services that are "...designed to inform all staff members about homosexuality, to reduce/eliminate homophobia, and to provide ideas for working with gay/lesbian students" (¶ 21). It is important to challenge all staff members to confront homophobia or prejudices surrounding homosexuality so they may be better equipped to work with these students (Black & Underwood, 1998). The second way staff development can be used to enhance the school environment for GLBTQ students involves providing in-depth training for a few select staff members who can then be used by other staff members as a resource. Another suggestion urges schools to encourage and support gay or lesbian staff members to come forward as role models to students. Finally, an emphasis is placed upon

teachers and other school staff to go to community agencies and organizations that serve or support GLBTQ youth. In doing this they will become educated about services available to GLBTQ students (Marinoble, 1998).

Enhancing the school environment for GLBTQ students can be done in a number of ways. In addition to proactively creating school policy and training staff regarding this issue, Stone (2003) advises educators to prominently display a pink triangle, rainbow or any other support stickers in office windows or classroom doors. Displays such as these imply to all students that the educator residing within this room is an "ally." In particular, school counselors, nurses, and school psychologists, as well as other support staff may be called upon to work directly with students who are struggling with the stressors of being a sexual minority. They can help GLBTQ students cope, as well as be a resource of information (McFarland, 2001).

Another critical component to creating a positive and supportive school environment for GLBTQ students involves implementing information regarding homosexuality into school curriculum (Black & Underwood, 1998; Marinoble, 1998; McFarland, 2001; Stone, 2003). This can be done by employing texts into curriculums that depict gay/lesbian history and culture truthfully (Black & Underwood, 1998; Marinoble, 1998; Stone, 2003). More specifically, curriculums should be inclusive in nature in reference to readings, discussions, and presentations done in the classroom. Including materials in school libraries that address sexual diversity, homosexuality, sexual identity, and homophobia as well as books that portray people who are homosexual in a positive light is another way in which a school can show it's support of students who are GLBTQ. Further, access to these materials may encourage students to

learn about sexual diversity (Black & Underwood, 1998). School counselors can provide information in their developmental guidance curriculum that educates students about the history, myths, struggle for legal rights, and challenges surrounding homosexuality (McFarland, 2001).

Any time schools try to incorporate change they can be met with opposition. Ideally, schools would implement these strategies and students, parents, and communities would be receptive of them, greeting them with open arms. However, this is not often going to be the case. When met with resistance, schools must argue that it is their role to create an educational environment for all students to learn and grow (Black & Underwood, 1998; McFarland, 2001). Schools were created to meet the needs of young people and prepare them to be productive members of society. Our schools can provide an environment where students can learn to understand, accept, and possibly appreciate diversity in sexual orientation (Black & Underwood 1998). Advocacy in this area will perhaps promote and encourage a more compassionate society where the ideals of equality, respect, and citizenship can emerge (Black & Underwood, 1998; McFarland, 2001).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter will begin with an overview of the subject selection process with a description of the participants. It will be followed by information regarding construction of the survey. In addition, data collection procedures will be described, followed by a review of data analysis techniques. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the limitations in the methodology of the research conducted.

Selection of Sample

Educators of a Northern Wisconsin school district were invited to participate in this study. The researcher felt this setting was representative of a "typical" school district in Wisconsin and would be a suitable location for the distribution of the survey. This population of individuals varied in gender, age, education, experience, and role as an educator. Additionally, the participants came from varying school settings, such as elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Instrumentation

To adequately measure what the study intended to, the researcher decided to create an instrument to suit her purposes. This survey was made after a search of the surveys out in current use in this subject area. Additionally, the researcher used insight from the viewing of many research instruments to create an eclectic survey to measure educators' perceptions and to answer each of the research questions.

The survey begins with a consent statement which then leads into the demographics section of the survey [A copy of the consent statement is included in

Appendix A]. In this section the researcher asks the participants to disclose their gender, age, years of experience, employment setting, and school size. Following the demographic questions the researcher asks four questions, one of which requires a yes/no response. These questions were designed to inquire about educator knowledge and perceptions of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (GLBTQ) issues.

The next section of the survey consists of five questions using a five-point Likert scale. In this section respondents rate their responses from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The final two questions are open-ended inquiring as to how respondents proactively address the harassment of students who are GLBTQ. Further, they inquire about educators' opinions of their role in creating a positive school environment for these students. The researcher estimated that the survey created would take about 10 minutes to complete. The survey instrument was created entirely and exclusively for the purposes of this study, therefore there are limits to any reliability and validity measures that can be reported [A copy of the survey is included in Appendix B].

Data Collection

For the purposes of distributing this survey to educators in a small school district in Northern Wisconsin, the researcher obtained permission from the superintendent of this school district. The researcher intended to present the survey to elementary, middle, and high school educators at a staff meeting where she could introduce and discuss the nature of the study. However, because the survey was conducted at the end of the school year, this was not a feasible option at the elementary and high school. Consequently, for these two schools the researcher created a cover letter introducing herself and the survey.

Further, the letter provided instruction as to how to complete the survey and where to turn it in [A copy of the cover letter is included in Appendix C].

Each educator received a consent form and the survey. Middle school educators completed and turned in their surveys to the researcher at the staff meeting where it was introduced. High school participants were given one week to complete the survey. Submission included bringing the completed survey to the school office and placing it in an envelope. After the week was done, the researcher picked up the surveys from the office. Middle school participants were given a day to complete the survey. Submission included bringing the completed survey to the school office and placing it in an envelope. At the end of the day the envelope was sealed and mailed to the researcher.

Data Analysis

The data was subjected to statistical analysis in a move to understand the data collected. Christine Ness, statistical consultant at the University of Wisconsin – Stout, conducted data analysis using a statistical computer program. Much of the information obtained as a result of the survey was ordinal in nature and as such was analyzed using all appropriate descriptive statistics. Additionally, demographic information regarding participants of the study was included in the data analysis and as such was subjected to cross tabulations and comparisons to determine differences between different demographic groups.

Limitations

There are a number of methodological limitations to this research study in sample selection, data collection, and instrumentation. One such limitation involves the sample selection process of the study. The participants involved in the study were chosen in a

way that is not random and in fact, it can be argued that individuals who are educators at a small Wisconsin school district are not representative of educators in Wisconsin. Consequently, the results taken from this study may indicate different results than if the survey were given to a randomized sampling of educators in Wisconsin.

Furthermore, the data collection procedures used in this study lend to additional limitations. For example, elementary and high school participants in the study were asked to return their completed survey to the school office. The burden of having to do this and the time lapse of a week may have influenced some individuals to fail to complete and turn in the survey. Additionally, although the study informs participants that the involvement in the study is anonymous, individuals may have failed to complete the survey in an honest manner. Finally, the research instrument used in this study has neither a measure of reliability or validity because it was created by the researcher for this particular study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter will present the results of this study. First, demographic information regarding participants will be analyzed. Next the chapter will offer an item analysis of survey items four through seven. This will be followed by an item analysis for the Likert survey items eight through twelve. The chapter will conclude with a presentation of answers given by respondents for the open-ended questions thirteen and fourteen.

Demographic Information

Surveys where distributed to the elementary, middle, and high school of a small school district in Northern Wisconsin. The population for this study included principals, vice principals, school counselors, school psychologists, and teachers for a total of about 90 people. Of the distributed surveys, 41 were returned. The survey instrument posed several demographic questions to the respondents. The following will be a discussion of this demographic information.

Of the 41 participants who returned surveys, 12 individuals (29.3%) were male and 29 (70.7%) were female. Data was collected regarding the age of participants. Thirty-eight individuals (92.7%) responded to this question. The participants were asked how many years they had worked in education. The following table (Table 1) indicates the responses to this question.

Table 1: Respondents Years Working in Education

	Frequency	Percent
0 - 5 years	4	10.4
6 - 10 years	11	28.9
11 - 20 years	8	21.1
21+ years	15	39.3

The results in Table 1 indicate that the lowest amount of respondents (10.4%) have been in education for five or less years. About sixty percent of respondents have been working in education for more than 10 years and almost 90% for more than 5 years.

For the survey item asking participants to indicate age, 38 (92.7%) out of 41 participants responded. Of them 19 individuals (50%) indicated they were 44 or younger and 19 individuals (50%) indicated they were 45 or older. Breaking this category down even further, 11 (28.9%) reported being 25 - 35 years old, 16 (42.1%) stated being 36-50 years old, and 11 (28.9%) reported being 51 or older.

Next, educators were posed a question asking them to indicate in which grade levels they are currently employed. Of the 41 respondents (100%) to this question, 7 (17.1%) indicated they are currently employed at an elementary school with students kindergarten through fifth grade, 17 (41.5%) reported they currently working at the middle school with students grades six through eight, 14 (34.1%) indicated that they work with high school students in grades nine through twelve, three (7.3%) stated they currently work with students from multiple schools. In the last question of the demographic section, educators were asked how many students attend the school they teach. A majority of respondents (n=36, 87.8%) indicated they taught at a school with 251-500 students.

Item Analysis: Survey Items Four Through Seven

The following is a discussion of the frequency counts and percentages that were run on survey items four through seven. Responses to survey item four – *Have you had any specific training pertaining to working with gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (GLBTQ) students?* – provides insight into the first research objective – *To determine how educators are prepared/trained to work with GLBTQ students.* Almost 88% (n=36) of respondents indicated that they have not had any specific training pertaining to working with students who are GLBTQ. For the five respondents (12%) who had received training, they report obtaining this training from graduate college courses, undergraduate college courses, school in-services, workshops or seminars, and educational conventions.

Further, cross tabulations were made between survey item four and the demographic items age, gender, and grade level. Cross tabulations between item four and "age" revealed similar results. Of respondents who were 44 or younger, 84.2% (n=16) had not received any training for working with GLBTQ students. Of respondents who were 45 or older, 89.5% (n=17) had not received any training for working with GLBTQ students. Cross tabulations between survey item four and "gender" showed 83.3% (n=10) of males and 89.7% (n=26) of females had not received any training to prepare them for working with GLBTQ students. Finally, cross tabulations made between survey item four and "grade level" revealed no elementary educators (0%), one middle school educator (5.9%), and three high school educators (21.4%) had received training pertaining to working with GLBTQ students.

Thirty-eight of the 41 participants (92.7%) responded to survey item five – *Estimate the percentage of the student body at your school who are GLBTQ.* The results for this question are shown in the following Table 2.

Table 2: Estimated Percentage of Student Body Who Are GLBTQ

	Frequency	Percent
1% - 2%	20	52.6
3% - 5%	11	28.9
6% - 10%	5	13.2
No GLBTQ Students	2	5.3

The results in Table 2 indicate a little more than half of respondents think 1% - 2% of the school's student body is GLBTQ while about 5% of respondents think there are no students who are GLBTQ at their school.

Next, participants responded to survey question six – *In one day, how many times do you hear students refer to someone or something being "gay"?*. Thirty-nine of the 41 participants (95.1%) responded to this survey question. The results for this question are shown in the following Table 3.

Table 3: Number of Times Daily Educators Hear Student Use the Term "Gay"

	Frequency	Percent
0 - 5	31	79.5
6 - 10	4	10.3
11 - 15	3	7.7
16 Times or More	1	2.6

The results in Table 3 show 31 respondents (79.5%) hear the term "gay" zero to five times daily. Four respondents (10.3%) reported hearing this term six to ten times daily,

while another four educators (10.3%) reported hearing this term over ten times a day. Forty of the 41 participants (97.6%) responded to survey item seven – *I am aware that the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation*. One hundred percent of the educators responded yes to this survey item.

Item Analysis: Survey Items Eight Through Twelve

The following is a discussion of the frequency counts and percentages that were run on survey items eight through twelve. All of these are five-point Likert scale question items. Survey items eight through twelve present insights into the research objective – *To determine how educators address both potential and occurring harassment of students who are GLBTQ.*

Survey item eight – *I allow students I work with to use words like faggot or dyke.* – was answered by 100% of participants. Thirty-eight educators (92.7%) reported strongly disagreeing, one educator (2.4%) stated disagreeing, and two educators (4.9%) reported strongly agreeing with this statement. Cross tabulations were done on survey item eight and demographic items gender and age. Cross tabulations between survey item eight and "gender" indicated 100% (n=12) of males and 93.1% (n=27) of females either strongly disagree or disagree with allowing students to use words like faggot or dyke. Cross tabulations between survey item eight and "age" reveal 94.7% (n=18) of both respondents 44 or younger and 44 or older either strongly disagree or disagree with allowing students to use words like faggot or dyke.

Survey item nine – *I intervene when I hear students use words like faggot, dyke, or gay.* – was also answered by 100% of participants. Six (14.6%) respondents reported

strongly disagreeing with this statement. Thirty-five (85.4%) respondents reported either agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement. Cross tabulations were done on survey item nine and the demographic items gender and age. Cross tabulations done with "gender" revealed 83.3% (n=10) of males and 86.2% (n=25) of females either agree or strongly agree that they intervene when they hear students use words like faggot, dyke, or gay. Cross tabulations with "age" uncovered 89.5% (n=17) of respondents 44 or younger and 79% (n=15) of respondents 45 or older either strongly agree or agree with survey item nine.

All 41 participants responded to survey item ten – *My school has a policy that protects sexual minority students against harassment.* The results for this question are shown in the following Table 4.

Table 4: My School Has a Policy Protecting Sexual Minority Students

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	5	12.2
Disagree	1	2.4
Uncertain	5	12.2
Agree	8	19.5
Strongly Agree	22	53.7

The results in Table 4 show 30 educators (73.2%) reported either agreeing or strongly agreeing that their school has a policy to protect sexual minority students from harassment. Only 14.6% (n=6) of educators reported either strongly disagreeing or agreeing with this statement.

Forty of 41 participants (97.6%) responded to survey item eleven – *I proactively address potential harassment of students who are GLBTQ.* A little over half of

respondents (55%, n=22) reported either strongly agreeing or agreeing with this statement. Nine respondents (22.5%) were uncertain and nine respondents (22.5%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed. Further, cross tabulations were made between survey item eleven and the demographic items age, gender, and grade level. The following table (Table 5) indicates the cross tabulation of this data.

Table 5: Cross Tabulation of Survey Item Eleven with Age, Gender, and Grade Level

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
44 or Younger	5.6%	5.6%	27.8%	22.2%	38.9%
	n=1	n=1	n=5	n=4	n=7
45 or Older	21.4%	10.5%	15.8%	10.5%	42.1%
	n=4	n=2	n=3	n=2	n=8
Male	16.7%	16.7%	25.0%	25.0%	16.7%
	n=2	n=2	n=3	n=3	n=2
Female	14.3%	3.6%	21.4%	14.3%	46.4%
	n=4	n=1	n=6	n=4	n=13
K - 5	28.6%	28.6%	14.3%	0%	28.6%
	n=2	n=2	n=1	n=0	n=2
6 - 8	6.3%	0%	25.0%	6.3%	62.5%
	n=1	n=0	n=4	n=1	n=10
9 - 12	21.4%	7.1%	28.6%	28.6%	14.3%
	n=3	n=1	n=4	n=4	n=2

The results in Table 5 show 11.2% (n=2) of educators 44 or younger and 31.9% (n=6) of educators 45 or older either disagree or strongly disagree that they proactively address the harassment of GLBTQ students. Further, they illustrate 41.7% of male respondents and 60.7% or female respondents reported either strongly agreeing or agreeing that they take

proactive steps to address this issue. Finally, the table shows 28.8% (n=2) of elementary school educators, 68.8% (n=11) of middle school educators, and 42.9% (n=6) of high school educators revealed either strongly agreeing or agreeing with this issue.

All 41 participants (100%) responded to survey item twelve – *I use preventative measures as a person working in education to assure that all students I come into contact with feel safe and can learn.* A majority of respondents (90.3%, n=37) indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. One respondent (2.4%) was uncertain and three respondents (7.3%) strongly disagreed with this statement.

Further, cross tabulations were made between survey item twelve and the demographic items age, gender, and grade level. Cross tabulations between item twelve and "age" revealed 94.7% (n=18) of respondents who were 44 or younger and 84.2% (n=16) of respondents who were 45 or older either agree or strongly agree that they use preventative measures to make sure students feel safe and can learn. Cross tabulations between survey item twelve and "gender" showed 91.6% (n=11) of males and 89.7% (n=26) of females also agree or strongly agree with this statement. Finally, cross tabulations were made between survey item twelve and "grade level" of the participant. This analysis revealed 85.7% (n=6) elementary educators, 100% (n=17) of middle school educators, and 78.6% (n=11) of high school educators either agree or strongly agree with survey item twelve.

Item Analysis: Survey Items Thirteen and Fourteen

The final two survey items thirteen and fourteen required open-ended responses. Survey item thirteen asked respondents to – *Please describe the ways in which you proactively address potential harassment of students who are GLBTQ.* The answers to

this survey item directly present insight into the research objective – *To determine how educators address both potential and occurring harassment of students who are GLBTQ.* Of the 41 respondents, 32 (78%) answered this survey item. Some of the responses are as follows:

- "I do not allow put downs. I explain why I do not want to hear words like 'gay' used in conversation."
- "Expect respect and responsible behavior at all times."
- "I've never had any issues."
- "I often question the usage of the word 'gay.' I make sure kids understand the context they are using it in and how it may be offensive to others."
- "Promote ideas of tolerance."
- "Intervene immediately at the first sign of harassment and follow up."
- "We use restorative justice policy and homeroom to prevent this type of behavior. We promote tolerance of all people!"
- "Whenever there is a discussion regarding differences between people, I point out that these differences are natural. All of us are different. We often have very little control over how we are different. We need to embrace difference, not fear it. We need to accept people for who they are not what they appear to be. We need to treat people with equality."

Survey item fourteen asked respondents – *What is your opinion of the educators' role in promoting a positive school environment for students who are GLBTQ?.* The answers to this question directly provide insight into the research objective – *To determine educators' opinion of their role in creating a positive school environment for students*

who are GLBTQ. Thirty-seven of the 41 respondents (90.4%) answered this question. Some of the responses are as follows:

- "All students should be safe!"
- "Educators need to provide a positive environment for all students."
- "All students should be treated fairly no matter what. I want to promote a safe school environment in my room and make sure that all are treated equally."
- "We must model the behavior we expect from students."
- "Important – but at the same time limited. This can be [a] moral/ethics value issue, such as religious beliefs, and must be handled carefully."
- "I don't agree with harassment, but I'm not for giving them any more protection or right! I don't agree with that lifestyle!"
- "I believe that sexual orientation is a private matter. I don't believe that the school should teach homosexuality as an acceptable alternative lifestyle. To do so would undermine the Judeo-Christian values that many parents are trying to instill in their children. Should a school desire to teach such a curriculum it should be an 'opt in' parental choice."

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter will begin with a discussion of the results of the study. Following this will be a summary of conclusions drawn from the research. The chapter will conclude with recommendations for further research in this area.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate most educators receive very little training specifically pertaining to working with gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (GLBTQ) students with 88% receiving no training. Of the five respondents who indicated receiving training, two had done so entirely through undergraduate college courses and two had done so entirely through graduate college courses. The last respondent reported receiving training through multiple sources such as undergraduate college courses, school in-services, workshops or seminars, and educational conventions. Cross tabulations between "training received" and "grade level" revealed high school educators had received the most training with 21% of high school respondents indicating having had some sort of training.

When asked to estimate the percentage of their student body who are GLBTQ a little over half (53%) of respondents indicated this number to be 1% - 2%, 29% reported 3% - 5%, and 13% stated 6% - 10%. Ginsberg (1998) suggests that between 2% and 10% of the U. S. population is homosexual. McFarland (2001) contends that because researchers seem to disagree upon the exact number, using a midpoint number of 6% may be a good alternative. As 53% of respondents indicated their GLBTQ student population

to be 1% - 2% and 5% of respondents reporting this population as nonexistent in their school, educators in this school district may be under identifying their GLBTQ population compared to what researchers suggest is the actual number. However, the use of elementary educators in the current study, may account for this disparity as well.

In their 2005 study, Harris Interactive and the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) reported 52% of junior and high school teachers hear students use the expressions "that's so gay" or "you're so gay" very often or often. Similarly, Phoenix et al. (2006) reported 55% of high school teachers hear the expression "that's so gay" or "you're so gay" frequently or often. These statistics vary substantially from the present study where only 21% of educators indicated hearing students refer to someone or something as being "gay" six or more times daily.

In their study Harris Interactive and GLSEN (2005) found that 69% of teachers or staff reported intervening very often or often and 31% reported never or infrequently intervening when hearing a homophobic remark. While teachers reported intervening a substantial amount of time in these circumstances, students surveyed regarding this issue indicated different results. Students reported that teachers intervened frequently or often 26% and never or rarely 47% of the time to homophobic remarks (Phoenix, et al., 2006). More educators in the present study self-reported intervening when hearing homophobic remarks compared to teachers in the previously mentioned studies. Ninety-five percent of educators in the present study indicated either strongly disagreeing or disagreeing that they allow students to use words like faggot or dyke. However, only 85% of respondents indicated agreeing or strongly agreeing that they intervene when hearing students use words like faggot, dyke, or gay.

In the present study 73% of respondents indicated either agreeing or strongly agreeing that their school has a policy to protect sexual minority students against harassment. This number is significantly higher than the results of the Harris Interactive and GLSEN (2005) survey where 51% if teachers reported their school having a harassment policy mentioning sexual orientation. In the present study only 15% of respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement while 12% of respondents were uncertain regarding school policy protecting sexual minority students.

When asked about proactively addressing the harassment of students who are GLBTQ, a little over half of respondents (55%) reported either strongly agreeing or agreeing with this statement. Cross tabulations of this survey item with "age" revealed that educators 44 or younger were more likely at 61% than the educators 45 or older at 53% to agree or strongly agree with this statement. Further cross tabulations between this survey item and "gender" indicated males were less likely at 42% than females at 61% to report either strongly agreeing or agreeing that they take proactive steps to address this issue. A majority of respondents (90%) stated they use preventative measures to assure that all students they come into contact with feel safe and can learn.

When participants were asked to respond to the survey item – *Please describe the ways in which you proactively address potential harassment of students who are GLBTQ.* – a few themes emerged. One theme involved teachers creating classroom rules where put-downs were not allowed and ideas of tolerance were promoted. Additionally, rules required students to respect one another and use responsible behavior. Finally, teachers reported immediate intervention when occurrences happen through classroom discussion and a restorative justice program. These findings indicate teachers use some proactive

measures in their classroom to prevent and address the harassment of students who are GLBTQ. Moreover, responses to this item revealed educators not only proactively addressed the harassment of GLBTQ students, but also react to harassment as it occurs in the classroom.

Participants were asked to respond to the question – *What is your opinion of the educators' role in promoting a positive school environment for students who are GLBTQ?*. Responses to this question took on a few major themes. One type of response indicated that all students should be able to learn in a safe environment. According to respondents, this environment should be positive, where all individuals are treated fairly and accepted with educators modeling this behavior as well. Most responses took on this sort of theme indicating all students should be protected, safe, encouraged, and accepted. However, there was another small group of responses expressing a different sentiment. This type of response suggested that although harassment of students who are GLBTQ should not be tolerated, either personal values concerning homosexuality or fear of offending the religious or moral values of others can come into play, limiting the extent to which educators feel they can be involved in promoting a positive school environment for GLBTQ students.

Conclusions

Several conclusions can be summarized from the data yielded by this survey. The results indicated a majority of educators from this sample had not received any training that prepared them to work with students who are GLBTQ. However, because the sample used in this study was only from one school district, results are not easily generalizable to other school districts across the United States or even within Wisconsin. Nevertheless,

these findings point to a need for universities and other teacher training programs to incorporate a component in their programs to address working with students who are GLBTQ. Additionally, school districts can fill this void in training by providing staff with opportunities for further education regarding sexual identity and sexual minority students. This could be done in the form of workshops, in-services, or other training experiences.

Furthermore, the data revealed a majority of educators from this school district do not allow students to use homophobic language like "faggot" or "dyke" and will often intervene when they hear students use these words. However, only about half of participants stated they proactively address the potential harassment of students who are GLBTQ. These findings indicate that although most educators make some efforts to protect sexual minority students from homophobic language, only about half of educators can be counted on to be proactive in addressing the potential harassment of students who are GLBTQ. The findings again point to the need for education and training for educators regarding how they can promote a positive school environment for these students.

Finally, the data showed educators overwhelmingly reported using preventative measures to assure that all students they come into contact with feel safe and can learn. Educators in this study perceived their role in creating a positive school environment for students who are GLBTQ in a number of ways. They expressed seeing themselves as role models to students showing them to respect and tolerate others. Finally, they reported school should be safe for all students.

Recommendations

Results from this study provided some insight into educators' perceptions of their role in promoting a positive school environment for GLBTQ students. However, there are ways in which this research could be supplemented by future investigators. First, only a small sampling of educators was used in this research. Educators from one small school district in Wisconsin were sampled, yielding results that are not necessarily generalizable. Sampling educators across Wisconsin or perhaps across the county would create a more representative sample of educators.

Further, the data collection procedures in this survey varied from each school creating a disparity in the number of participants representing each school. The response rate of middle and high school educators was higher than that of the elementary school educators because of the short amount of time elementary educators had to complete the survey. Further, elementary educators, more than middle or high school educators, might not see the relevance of the issue for them. Future surveys can take steps to ensure all individuals have the same amount of time to complete the survey.

Moreover, participants in this survey were asked what kind of training they had received pertaining to working with students who are GLBTQ. However, to better understand and obtain a picture of educators' perceptions of their role in creating a positive school environment for GLBTQ students, it may be beneficial to inquire further into this topic. A survey item assessing their perceptions regarding needing additional training to work with students who are GLBTQ may be beneficial. Furthermore, it may be helpful to ask them what kind of training (i.e. role-plays, videos, speakers, books, classes, etc.) would be most valuable to them. Obtaining answers to these questions can

let schools know if teachers feel they need training to better work with students who are GLBTQ as well as let them know how to present the information to educators.

Finally, this survey asked individuals to be open and honest in assessing their attitudes, perceptions, and actions in promoting a positive school environment for GLBTQ students. Self-assessments are not always the most accurate technique to complete a research study. Future researchers attempting to measure this area may consider creating an assessment were educators are asked to assess each other instead. This may create a more realistic picture of educator attitudes and school environments.

References

American School Counselor Association. (2004). *Ethical standards for school counselors.* Retrieved January 31, 2005, from: http://www.schoolcounselor.org

Bagley, C., & Tremblay, P. (2000). Elevated rates of suicidal behavior in gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth [Electronic version]. *Crisis, 21,* 111-117.

Beaty, L. A. (1999). Identity development of homosexual youth and parental and familial influences on the coming out process [Electronic version]. *Adolescence, 34,* 597-601.

Black, J., & Underwood, J. (1998). Lesbian students and the school environment. *Professional School Counseling, 1.* Retrieved April 2, 2006, from: EBSCOhost database.

D'Augelli, A., Hershberger, S., & Pilkington, N. (1998). Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth and their families: Disclosure of sexual orientation and its consequences [Electronic version]. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 68,* 361-371.

Fontaine, J. H. (1998). Evidencing a need: School counselors' experiences with gay and lesbian students. *Professional School Counseling, 1.* Retrieved March 9, 2005, from: EBSCOhost database.

Ginsberg, R. W. (1998). Silenced voices inside our schools [Electronic version]. *Initiatives, 58,* 1-15.

Harris Interactive & Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (2005). *From teasing to torment: School climate in America, A survey of students and teachers.* New York: GLSEN. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED486343)

Jones, R. (2000). The new minority to protect under Title IX [Electronic version]. *The American School Board Journal, 186,* 20-26.

Kitts, R. L. (2005). Gay adolescents and suicide: Understanding the association [Electronic version]. *Adolescence, 40,* 621-628.

Marinoble, R. M. (1998). Homosexuality: A blind spot in the school mirror. *Professional School Counseling, 1.* Retrieved March 9, 2005, from: EBSCOhost database.

McFarland, W. P. (1998). Gay, lesbian, and bisexual suicide. *Professional School Counseling, 1.* Retrieved October 9, 2005, from: EBSCOhost database.

McFarland, W. P. (2001). The legal duty to protect gay and lesbian students from violence in school. *Professional School Counseling, 4.* Retrieved October 9, 2005, from: EBSCOhost database.

Nabozny v. Podlesny, 92 F.3d 446 (7th Cir. 1996).

Phoenix, T. L., Hall, W. J., Weiss, M. M., Kemp, J. M., Wells, R. E., & Chan, A. W. (2006). *Homophobic language and verbal harassment in North Carolina high schools.* Chapel Hill, NC: Safe Schools NC. (ERIC Document Reproduction No. ED491454)

Roffman, D. M. (2000). A model for helping schools address policy options regarding gay and lesbian youth. [Electronic version]. *Journal of Sex Education and Therapy, 25,* 130-136.

Russell, S., & Joyner, K. (2001). Adolescent sexual orientation and suicide risk: Evidence from a national study [Electronic version]. *American Journal of Public Heath 91,* 1276-1281.

Schneider M. S., & Witherspoon, J. J. (2000). Friendship patterns among lesbian and gay youth: An exploratory study [Electronic version]. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality, 9,* 239-246.

Simpson, M. D. (1997). Gay student battles bashers. *NEA Today, 16.* Retrieved April 6, 2005, from: EBSCOhost database.

Stone, C. B. (2003). Counselors as advocates for gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth: A call of equity and action [Electronic version]. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 31,*143-155.

Tharinger, D., & Wells, G. (2000). An attachment perspective on the developmental challenges of gay and lesbian adolescents: The need for continuity of caregiving from family and schools [Electronic version]. *School Psychology Review, 29,* 158-172.

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. *Official DPI Nondiscrimination Clause.* (2006). Retrieved April 1, 2006, from: http://www.dpi.wi.gov/dpi-nondiscr.html

APPENDIX A

Consent Statement

UW – Stout Implied Consent Statement
For Research Involving Human Subjects

Consent to Participate In UW – Stout Approved Research

Title: Educators' Perceptions of their Role in Promoting a Positive School Environment for GLBTQ Students

Investigator:
Heather Russell
dunnh@uwstout.edu

Research Sponsor:
Jill Stanton
420 McCalmont Hall
UW – Stout
Menomonie, WI 54751
715-232-1622
stantonj@uwstout.edu

Description: This study endeavors to find how and if educators create a positive school environment for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (GLBTQ) youth. Research indicates that school atmosphere is often hostile for students who are sexual minorities. Results of this study will indicate how educators respond to both potential and actual harassment of homosexual students.

Risks and Benefits: The risks in this study are minimal due to confidentiality of participants. However, it is possible that reporting your perceptions of creating a positive school environment for GLBTQ students may cause you feelings of discomfort. Benefits associated with this study include contributing information for ongoing research in the area regarding GLBTQ students.

Confidentiality: All efforts will be made to ensure your participation in this survey is confidential. Your name and school district will not be included on any documents. We do not believe that you can be identified from any of this information.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate without any adverse consequences. However, should you choose to participate and later wish to withdraw from the study, there will be no way to identify your anonymous document after it has been turned into the investigator.

IRB Approval: This study has been reviewed and approved by The University of Wisconsin-Stout's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and University policies. If you have questions or concerns regarding this study please contact the Investigator or Advisor. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator.

Investigator:
Heather Russell
715-834-3540
dunnh@uwstout.edu

Advisor:
Jill Stanton
715-232-1622
stantonj@uwstout.edu

IRB Administrator:
Sue Foxwell, Director, Research Services
152 Vocational Rehabilitation Bldg.
UW – Stout
Menomonie, WI 54751
715-232-2477
foxwells@uwstout.edu

Statement of Consent: By completing the following survey I agree to participate in the project entitled, *Educators' Perceptions of their Role in Promoting a Positive School Environment for GLBTQ Students.*

APPENDIX B

Survey

UW – Stout Research Survey
Heather Russell – School Guidance and Counseling
May, 2006
Educators' perceptions of their role in promoting a positive school environment for GLBTQ students.

This research has been approved by the UW – Stout IRB as required by the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46.

1. Please write in the following information:
   _____ Gender
   _____ Years working in education
   _____ Age

2. What grade level are you currently employed?
   _____ K-5
   _____ 6-8
   _____ 9-12

3. How many students are at your school?
   _____ 0-75 _____ 251-500
   _____ 76-250 _____ 501-800

DIRECTIONS: Please mark one for the following questions.

4. Have you had any specific training pertaining working with gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (GLBTQ) students?
   _____ No
   _____ Yes
   If yes, check all that apply.
   _____ graduate college courses _____ workshops or seminars
   _____ undergraduate college courses _____ educational conventions
   _____ school in-services _____ other

5. Estimate the percentage of the student body at your school who are GLBTQ.
   _____ 1%-2% _____ 6%-10%
   _____ 3%-5% _____ 11%-15%
   _____ There are no GLBTQ students at my school.

6. In one day, how many times do you hear students refer to someone or something being "gay"?
   _____ 0-5 _____ 11-15
   _____ 6-10 _____ 16 or more

7. I am aware that the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation.
   _____ Yes
   _____ No

DIRECTIONS: For items 8 through 12 please circle the appropriate number that indicates the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement.

Strongly Disagree = 1 Disagree = 2 Uncertain = 3 Agree = 4 Strongly Agree = 5

8. I allow students I work with to use words like faggot or dyke.	**1 2 3 4 5**
9. I intervene when I hear students use words like faggot, dyke, or gay.	**1 2 3 4 5**
10. My school has a policy that protects sexual minority students against harassment.	**1 2 3 4 5**
11. I proactively address potential harassment of students who are GLBTQ.	**1 2 3 4 5**
12. I use preventative measures as a person working in education to assure that all students I come into contact with feel safe and can learn.	**1 2 3 4 5**

---

13. Please describe the ways in which you proactively address potential harassment of students who are GLBTQ.

14. What is your opinion of the educators' role in promoting a positive school environment for students who are GLBTQ?

APPENDIX C

Cover Letter

Attention Educators:

My name is Heather Russell and I am a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. During the third quarter of this year I was at [redacted] doing my secondary school counseling practicum with [redacted]. This quarter I am in [redacted] at two elementary schools learning what it's like to be an elementary school counselor.

I am now in the process of doing research on educators' perceptions of their role in promoting a positive school environment for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questions (GLBTQ) students. Attached is a survey that addresses your experiences concerning this matter. The survey should take about 3-5 minutes to complete. Please return the completed surveys to the school office by 4:00 on Wednesday, May 22. Responses to these surveys will remain anonymous and confidential. Thank you so very much for your time and participation in my research!

Sincerely,

Heather Russell