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Supporting Personal, Social & Cultural Acceptance

Creating a Culture of Kindness: Strategies for Preventing Bullying of Sexual/Gender Minority Youth

Ana Damme, M.A.   **Raul Palacios, Ed.S.**

Susan M. Swearer, Ph.D.

Professor of School Psychology, Co-Director, Bullying Research Network

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Our Mission

The nonprofit Empowerment Initiative supports translational research designed to foster positive, accepting communities free from bullying and other negative behaviors.

Disclaimer

- We don't provide consultation, recommendations, or information on individual cases—a full evaluation is necessary for data-based decision making

- Any anti-bullying initiatives/outreach services or resources discussed are presented for informational purposes

- Typically we cannot distribute our PowerPoint slides but are making an exception for you

The opinions or points of view expressed in this Presentation are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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➢ Twitter: @Empowerment_UNL @Dr.SueSwearer @Bully_Research

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Presentation Goals

In this presentation, we will discuss:

1. the importance of focusing on bullying and sexual/gender minority youth's bullying experiences

2. the effects of bullying and victimization on sexual/gender minority youth

3. the factors that contribute to the bullying of sexual/gender minority youth

4. strategies for promoting resilience, creating safe schools and accepting environments for sexual/gender minority youth

5. anti-bullying initiatives, outreach services, and available book/online resources

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Why Focus on Bullying?

➢ <u>Bullying has become a major public health concern</u>

- Bullying at age 14 predicted violent convictions between ages 15 and 20, drug use at ages 27-32, and an unsuccessful life at age 48 (Farrington & Ttofi, 2011)

- Victims and bully-victims are more depressed and have lower self-esteem than non-victimized youth (Olweus, 1993; Swearer et al., 2001)

- Bullying has been connected to both homicidal and suicidal behavior; however, *greater variance is explained by depression*

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Why Focus on Bullying?

➢ <u>Bullying is expensive – dropout, suicide, litigation</u>

• Bullying:
  – Negatively impacts 3 out of 4 students during their school years
  – Is a **mental health problem** (there are psychological consequences)
  – Contributes to a negative school climate, which is related to lower academic functioning

➢ One common problem is that students and adults often do not know how to effectively respond

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Definition of Bullying

- Why is it important to discuss a bullying definition?

- A consistent definition helps to monitor the incidence/magnitude of youth violence, examine trends over time, and inform prevention and intervention efforts

Definition of Bullying

- Bullying includes 3 criteria:

    1. Unwanted aggressive behavior that is <u>purposeful</u>

    2. Is <u>repeated</u> or has the potential to be repeated over time

    3. Involves an <u>imbalance of power</u> that is observed or perceived
   (can be physical, social, or intellectual)

(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014)

- Bullying includes making threats (*verbal)*, spreading rumors or excluding someone from a group (*relational*), attacking someone physically or verbally (*physical*), and can be done *electronically* (i.e., cell phone, computer, gaming)

Bully/Victim Continuum

❑ Bully Perpetrator– reports bullying others

❑ Victim/Target – reports being bullied by others

❑ Bully-Victim – reports bullying others & being bullied

❑ Bystander – reports observing others being bullied

❑ No Status/Not involved – does not report any involvement with bullying

➢ These roles are NOT fixed

A Social-Ecological Model of Bullying
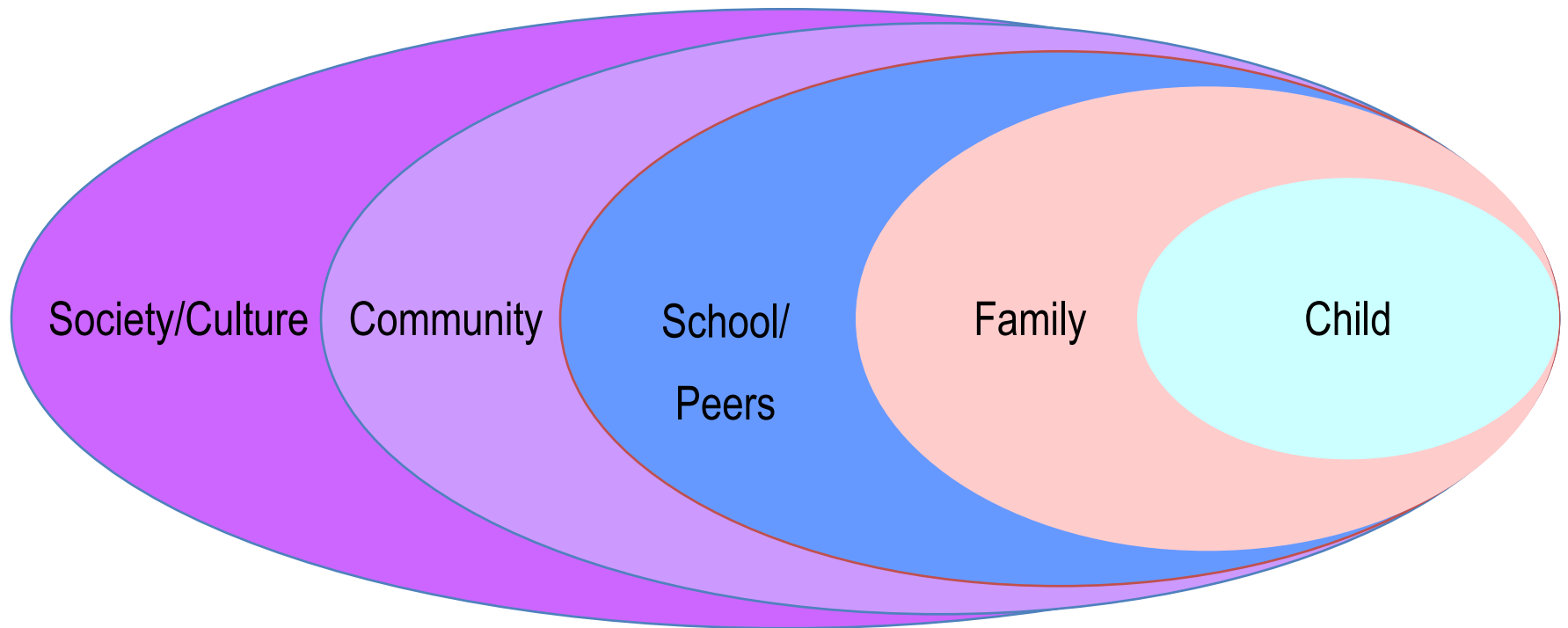
(Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Orpinas & Horne; 2006; Swearer & Espelage, 2004)

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Why Focus on Sexual/Gender Minority Youth?

> *Let's address the topic surrounding different sexual orientations and gender identities*

- For parsimony, we will use the term <u>sexual/gender minority youth</u> to be inclusive of individuals except when reporting information from research studies

Current Research on Asexuality

- Research on Asexuality within the bullying dynamic is limited

Pinto, 2014 Article:

- Human asexuality has garnered little attention from the academic community.

- Asexuality is one of the most under-researched, misunderstood, underrepresented sexual identities of the 21st century

- Many asexual persons identify their relationships as conventional and do not identify themselves as "queer."

- As a small, invisible minority group, the importance of allies to this community **cannot be overstated**

- The existence of informed, empowered allies will help the asexual community to become more understood and accepted. It will also help individuals who may be asexual, or a variation thereof, to accept themselves for who they truly are

For more information: http://www.asexuality.org

Why Focus on Sexual/Gender Minority Youth?

- These youth are targets for <u>homophobic bullying</u>, which at times is described as <u>sexual harassment</u> because bullying and verbal harassment towards sexual/gender minority youth is often sexual in nature (Mitchell, Ybarra, & Korchmaros, 2013)

- Let's define these two terms

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Why Focus on Sexual/Gender Minority Youth's Bullying Experiences

- <u>Homophobic bullying</u> (in-person or online) is a biased-based form of bullying that includes:
    - Name-calling, rumor-spreading, homophobic insults and slurs, physical harassment and assault (Rivers, 2001)
    - Gender differences: boys call and get called homophobic slurs more often than girls (Poteat & Espelage, 2005)
    - Perpetrators are typically groups of peers, not individuals (Rivers, 2001)

- <u>Sexual harassment</u> (in-person or online) is a form of victimization that includes:
    - Unwanted sexual advances, sexual jokes, sexual comments, or requests for sexual favors (Mitchell et al., 2013)

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Why Focus on Sexual/Gender Minority Youth's Bullying Experiences

➢ **BOTH** sexual/gender minority youth and heterosexual youth experience homophobic bullying
  - Boys who were called "gay" experienced more negative effects than boys who were bullied for other reasons (Swearer, Turner, Givens, & Pollack, 2008)

- **However**, LGB youth experience this bias-based bullying more frequently than heterosexual youth (Berlan et al., 2010; Poteat et al., 2009)

- A meta-analysis found that LGB youth are more likely to have experienced sexual harassment than heterosexual youth (Katz-Wise & Hyde, 2012)

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GLSEN 2013 National School Climate Survey

- Let's review the data from the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) 2013 National School Climate Survey that assessed middle and high school students' across the country for their experiences at school

- GLSEN is a leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students

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GLSEN 2013 National School Climate Survey

- Of the 7,898 surveyed 13-21 year old students
  - 71.4% heard "gay" used frequently at school in a negative way
  - 51.4% heard homophobic comments from teachers
  - 55.5% felt unsafe at school due to their sexual orientation
  - 16.5% were physically harassed
  - 30.3% missed at least one school day in the past month because a lack of perceived safety
  - Those who reported more frequent levels of victimization had lower GPAs, higher levels of depression, and lower levels of self-esteem
  - Each of these percentages is down from the 2011 survey

(http://www.glsen.org/nscs)

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CDC 2015 Report Findings

- First Nationwide study to ask 15,600 high school students (ages 14 – 17) across the country about their sexuality
- 8% of identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual (approx. 1.3 million students)
  - Results found this population to be at a greater risk for depression, bullying, and other forms of violence than straight peers
    - Being physically forced to have sex (18% LGB vs. 5% heterosexual)
    - Experiencing sexual dating violence (23% LGB vs. 9% heterosexual)
    - Experiencing physical dating violence (18% LGB vs. 8% heterosexual)
    - Being bullied at school or online (at school: 34% LGB vs. 19% heterosexual; online: 28% LGB vs. 14% heterosexual)

(http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/disparities/smy.htm)

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CDC 2015 Report Findings

LGB students are:

- 3x more likely than straight students to have been raped
- 5x more likely than others to report using illegal drugs

- 40% of LGB students considered suicide
  - 29 attempted in the past year prior to taking survey
- 60% of LGB students reported having been so sad or hopeless they stopped doing some of their usual activities
- More than 1 in 10 LGB students reported missing school during the past 30 days due to safety concerns
- Questions regarding transgender or asexual youth did not appear, but are currently being created for future CDC survey

(http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/disparities/smy.htm)

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CDC 2015 Report Recommendations

- **Develop policies and practices** that support the establishment of safe and supportive environments for all students, including LGB students
  - LGB students need to feel socially, emotionally, and physically safe and supported
- **Raise awareness of mental health implications** among federal agencies, national nongovernmental organizations, and state and local departments of education, health and social services
- **Facilitate access** to education, health care, and evidence-based interventions designed to address priority health-risk behaviors among LGB students
- **Implement programs and provide training** for those who work with LGB students to better understand needs and services
- **Summarize and apply research** to increase the effectiveness of interventions and programs for LGB teens
- **Provide funding and technical assistance** to develop, implement, and evaluate interventions that reduce health risk behaviors and promote healthy practices among LGB students
- **Monitor** the impact of broad policy and programmatic interventions on the health-related behaviors of LGB students

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Impact of Homophobic Bullying

- More intensive victimization experiences

- Feeling fearful and unsafe at school (Mitchell et al., 2013)

- More likely to experience emotional distress (Robinson, Espelage, & Rivers, 2013)

- As an individual's problem(s) persist, sexual/gender minority youth may feel more socially isolated and are at increased risk for negative mental health and academic outcomes such as:

  - Depression, drug use, truancy, lower grades, and long term-risk for post-traumatic stress as an adult (Poteat & Espelage, 2007; Poteat et al., 2011)

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Impact of Homophobic Bullying

- Discrimination and bullying **due to minority status** (diverse cultural backgrounds) and **sexual/gender minority status** face increased risk of:
  - Discrimination, negative mental health and academic outcomes (Poteat et al., 2011b; Russell et al., 2009a; Wong et al, 2010)
  - More specifically, discrimination from school staff was associated with lower grades
  - Peer discrimination associated with maladjustment (Benner & Graham, 2012)

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Impact of Homophobic Bullying

- There is one paradox
- LGBTQQ youth are more likely than non-LGBTQQ youth to have online friends and rate these friendships as more supportive than their in-person friendships, **however…**

- LGBTQQ youth are more likely to be victims of online peer victimization
- This suggests that social media could provide individuals with support, but also with increased risk for victimization

(Ybarra, Mitchell, Palmer, & Reisner, 2015)

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How Come Homophobic Bullying Occurs?

- Social forces of stigma and marginalization may contribute (e.g., Minority stress models; Ybarra et al., 2015)

- "For youth, these social forces can include exposure to peers who [may] have a developmentally naïve perspective on diversity and [may] lack empathy for youth who are different" (Ybarra et al., 2015, p. 131)

- Enforcing gender norms and traditional masculinity
  - Boys act as "gender police" when other boys behave less than "traditionally masculine" (Kimmel, 2008)

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We need to ask the right question:

- "How can we change the conditions that allow homophobic bullying behaviors to occur?"
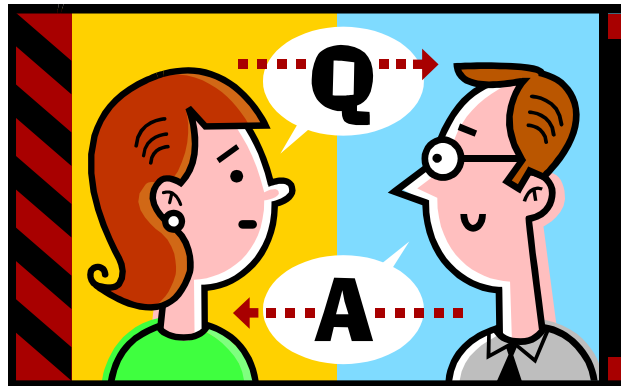
Research on School Factors in Bullying
(not an exhaustive list)

- Teacher attitudes: When teachers ignore bullying, higher rates of bullying exist (Holt et al., 2011)
- Teacher responses: Teachers have less empathy for victims of relational bullying and are less likely to intervene (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006)
- Classroom characteristics: Classrooms that have negative peer friendships, poor teacher-student relationships, lack of self-control, and poor problem solving have higher levels of bullying (Doll et al., 2011)
- Academic Engagement: Schools with lower levels of bullying have higher levels of academic achievement (Twemlow et al., 2001)
- School climate: Negative and punitive school climate is associated with higher levels of bullying (Cornell, 2006; Elias, 2011; Kasen et al., 2011)
- Sense of school belonging: Students who feel connected to school are less likely to be involved in bullying (Swearer et al., 2013)

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Research on Community and Societal Factors in Bullying (not an exhaustive list)

- Less research exists on examining community and societal influences on bullying and victimization because this work is complex and expensive.

- <u>Neighborhoods</u>: Unsafe, violent, and disorganized neighborhoods are risk factors for bullying (Cook et al., 2010; Youngblade et al., 2007)

- <u>Media</u>: Meta-analysis of media violence and aggressive behavior suggests a relationship between violent content and aggressive behavior (Gentile, 2003); playing mature video games predicted bullying in middle school students (Olson et al., 2009)

- <u>Youth Engagement</u>: Youth who are positively engaged in their communities are less likely to be involved in bullying (Slee, 2001; The P.E.A.C.E. Pack)

- **<u>Intolerance</u>**: Homophobia, sexism, classism, racism, etc. all create conditions for bullying

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Promote Resilience

- Resilience – the capacity to strive or recover in the face of adversity and to spring back and re-claim one's self

Resilience
The Courage to Come Back

Promote Resilience at Different Levels of the Socio-Ecological Model

- Research has shown several factors that can help support and buffer LGBTQQ victims of bullying from negative outcomes

  ➢ (*Individual level*) High <u>self-esteem</u> is critical for positive well-being (Mitchell et al., 2013)

  ➢ (*Family/School/Peers level*) High levels of family, peer and teacher <u>social support/acceptance</u> (Mitchell et al., 2013)

  ➢ (*Community/Society/Culture level*) <u>Other factors to consider</u>? Access to education, income, mental health care, the view of identity within society (Wong, 2015)

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Practical Strategies to Create Safe Schools for Sexual/Gender Minority Youth

➤ Advocate for protective or nondiscriminatory and anti-bullying policies that incorporate and support youth regardless of sexual or gender identity… WHY?

– Acceptance for all students
– Increased accountability for enforcing the standards
– All school staff know how to consistently react

➤ Incorporate teacher and student trainings to help educate and develop a more supportive environment… WHY?

– Increased awareness to sexual/gender minority issues
– Spark positive change

(National Association of School Psychologists Position Statement, 2011; Ollis, 2013)

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Practical Strategies to Create Safe Schools for Sexual/Gender Minority Youth

➢ Prevention & Intervention: implement at an early age and support youth… WHY?

– Students may feel more safe and respected

➢ Create, start or join a Gay-Straight Alliance… WHY?

– Let's discuss that next

(National Association of School Psychologists Position Statement, 2011)

The Importance of Gay-Straight Alliances (GSA)

- Why focus on GSA's?
  - Youth in schools with GSA's report greater well-being and safer climates than without GSA's

    (Kosciw, Diaz, Greytak, & Bartkiewicz, 2010; Poteat, Sinclair, DiGiovanni, Koenig, & Russell, 2013; Poteat et al., 2015)

- Similarly in the GLSEN 2013 National School Climate Survey Students with a GSA
  - Reported less victimization, less homophobic remarks, higher feelings of safety and school connectedness, and more responsive staff

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The Importance of Gay-Straight Alliances (GSA)

- What are the active ingredients of GSA's that contribute to positive effects?
  - Attendance is linked with feelings of greater mastery
  - There are positive effects regardless of position (leadership or not)
  - Advisors with longer services led to higher positive youth development

- What do GSA's provide?
  - Emotional support
  - Opportunities for advocacy
  - Safe environment for all students to converse
  - Work together to address issues concerning sexual/gender orientation

(Poteat et al., 2015)

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The Role of Adults in Schools

- Adults refers to both school personnel and parents

- Spear-head an anti-bullying committee to determine what policies and procedures are in place to deal with bullying
  - Take a leadership role
  - Document examples of bullying that have occurred in your school (are there any patterns?)

Anti-Bullying Initiatives and Outreach

Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)

- GLSEN works with educators, policy makers, community leaders and students on the urgent need to address anti-LGBT behavior and bias in schools

- GLSEN strives to protect students from bullying and harassment, to advance comprehensive safe schools laws and policies, to empower principals to make their schools safer, and to build the skills of educators to teach respect for all people

- www.glsen.org

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GLSEN Day of Silence

- The Day of Silence is a student-led national event that brings attention to anti-LGBTQ name-calling, bullying and harassment in schools

- Students from middle school to college take a vow of silence in an effort to encourage schools and classmates to address the problem of anti-LGBTQ behavior by illustrating the silencing effect of bullying and harassment on LGBTQ students and those perceived to be LGBTQ.

- http://www.glsen.org/participate/programs/day-of-silence

- Day of Silence: April 21st, 2017

The Trevor Project

- The Trevor Project offers life-saving and life-affirming resources for LGBTQ youth; and to create safe, accepting and inclusive environments for all young people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Crisis Interventions are available over the phone, online and through text (Trevor Lifeline, TrevorChat, TrevorText)

- www.thetrevorproject.org

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Born This Way Foundation

Mission

Born This Way Foundation is committed to supporting the wellness of young people, and empowering them to create a kinder and braver world. We achieve this by shining a light on real people, quality research and authentic partnerships.

- The BTWF officially launched on February 29th, 2012.
- Lady Gaga and her mother, Born This Way Foundation President and co-founder Cynthia Germanotta, kicked off their campaign to create a kinder and braver world at Harvard University's Sanders Theatre.

- www.bornthiswayfoundation.org

Born This Way Foundation

ChannelKindness.org

Channel Kindness will launch with a corps of youth reporters, trained to use their ears, eyes and hearts to find, recognize and share the everyday and heroic acts of kindness that fill our daily lives and shape our communities. Channel Kindness is a force for good, powered by the passion and purpose of young people.

Born Brave Experiences Study, v3.0

The Born Brave Experiences Research is a series of studies focused on improving our understanding of the factors that influence youth engagement, mental health, and emotional wellbeing. Grounded in existing psychological research, the studies are designed to identify the conditions that empower young people to live their best lives and to improve the services and resources available to them online and offline. Working with partners around the country and with youth themselves, the research is used to promote kindness and bravery in schools, homes, and communities.

https://bornthisway.foundation/born-brave-experiences-survey

BBE Research Findings

BTWF

Sexual Orientation and Body Image Perceptions (Gonzalez et al., 2016)

Given that sexual orientation is one aspect of identify that may intersect with body image, the purpose of this study examined youth and young adults' body image satisfaction within the context of their sexual identities.

Findings

- We found that participants who self-identified as questioning their sexual identify had lower body image satisfaction scores than participants who identified as heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual/queer.

- This finding was most robust when compared to heterosexual participants. This research suggests that sexual orientation, particularly for individuals identifying as questioning, has significant and often unrecognized influence on self-perceptions of body image. https://bornthisway.foundation/born-brave-experiences-survey

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BBE Research Findings

BT
WF

Cyberbullying: A Moving Target (Myers, Swearer, & Howell-Smith, 2016)

- Examined how reported cyberbullying involvement, either as a perpetrator or victim, related to face-to-face bullying involvement (e.g., verbal, physical). In addition, we examined how specific groups of youth and young adults (e.g., sexual and gender minority individuals) reported cyberbullying victimization.

Findings

- The majority of participants who reported involvement in cyberbullying, either as a victim or perpetrator, reported being involved in the same role in face-to-face bullying.

- For example, nearly 80% of those who reported having been cyberbullied within the last year also reported being bullied in-person.

- Participants who identified as transgender were more likely to report cyberbullying victimization than were both males and females.

https://bornthisway.foundation/born-brave-experiences-survey

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BBE Research Findings
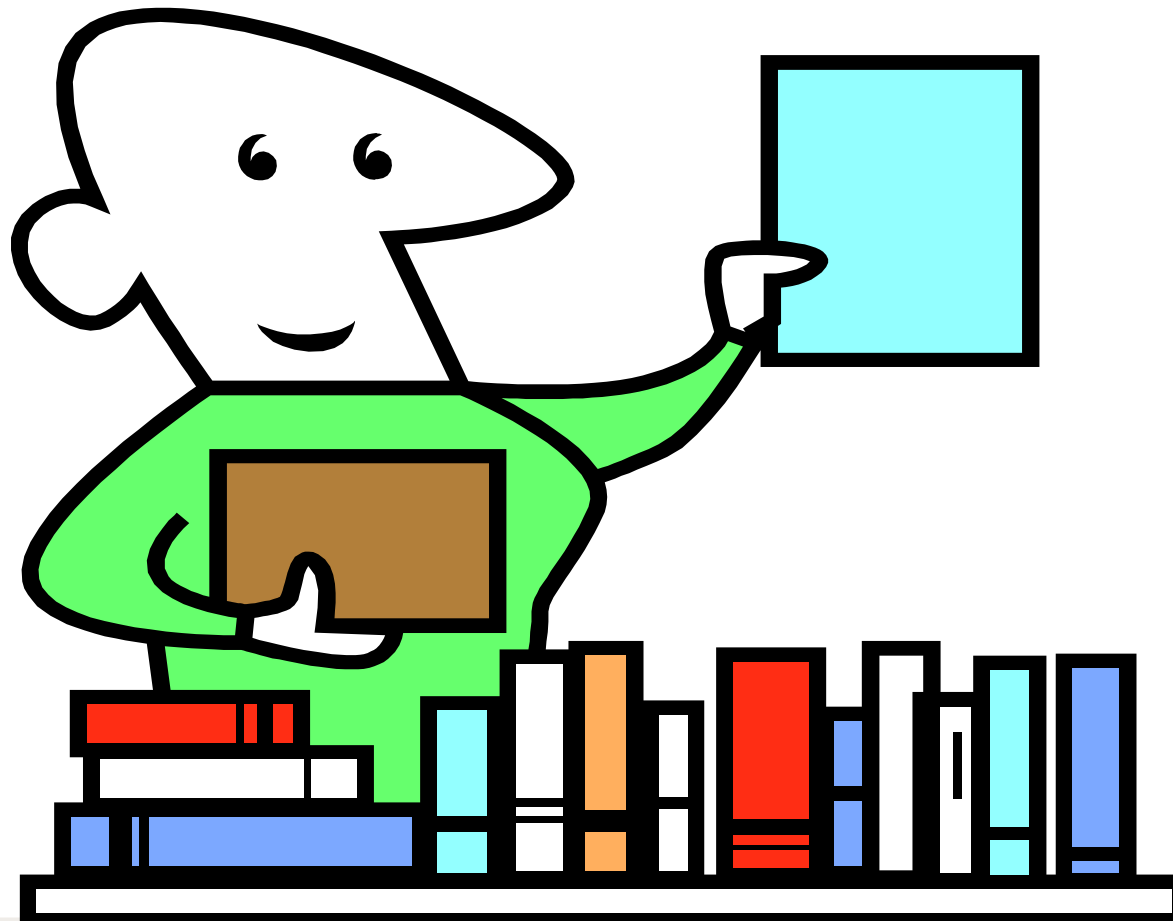
Questioning Youth (Palacios et al., 2016)

The purpose of this study was to identify demographic and psychosocial characteristics of questioning youth (ages 13 – 18) and young adults (ages 19 – 25) who report questioning their sexual orientation.

Findings

- Youth and young adults (ages 13 – 25) who identify as **questioning** are **more likely to be younger** and **identify as female**.

- Questioning youth showed a **lack of hope** compared to those who identify as heterosexual or homosexual.

https://bornthisway.foundation/born-brave-experiences-survey

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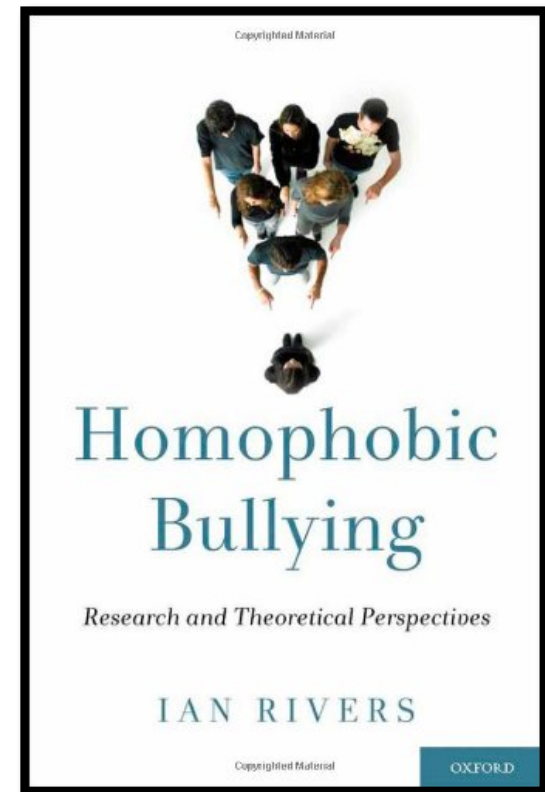# Resources

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Jack Andraka "Breakthrough"

- Breakdown to Breakthrough

- Jack's story is about overcoming depression and homophobic bullying and finding the resilience to persevere and come out.

- At age 15, he used a four-cent strip of paper that was capable of detecting pancreatic, ovarian, and lung cancers four hundred times more effectively than the previous standard.

- "Anyone can achieve anything if you put your mind to it" – Jack
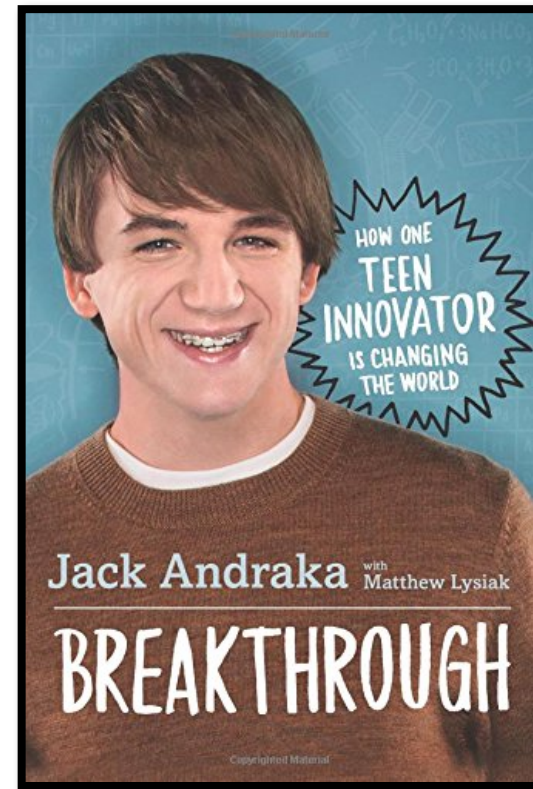
Ian River's book on Homophobic Bullying (2011)

- Ian Rivers is one of the foremost global researchers on homophobic bullying and its potential harm to LGBTQ children and adolescents

- Let's reflect on his idea of a "postgay" era
  - *"… where we no longer view lesbian, gay and bisexual, transgender people as potentially damaged or particularly vulnerable when compared to heterosexual youth, but rather accept them as self-actualized"* (Rivers, 2011, p. 191)

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Book Resources

- Dr. Susan M. Swearer is a professor of school psychology at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and co-director of the Bullying Research Network, and chair of the Research Advisory Board for The Born This Way Foundation

- Dr. Swearer has authored more than 100 book chapters and articles on the topics of bullying, depression and anxiety in school-aged youth.

- She has co-authored "Bullying Prevention and Intervention: Realistic Strategies for Schools" and co-edited "Bullying in North American Schools (2nd Edition)" and "Handbook of Bullying in Schools: An International Perspective."

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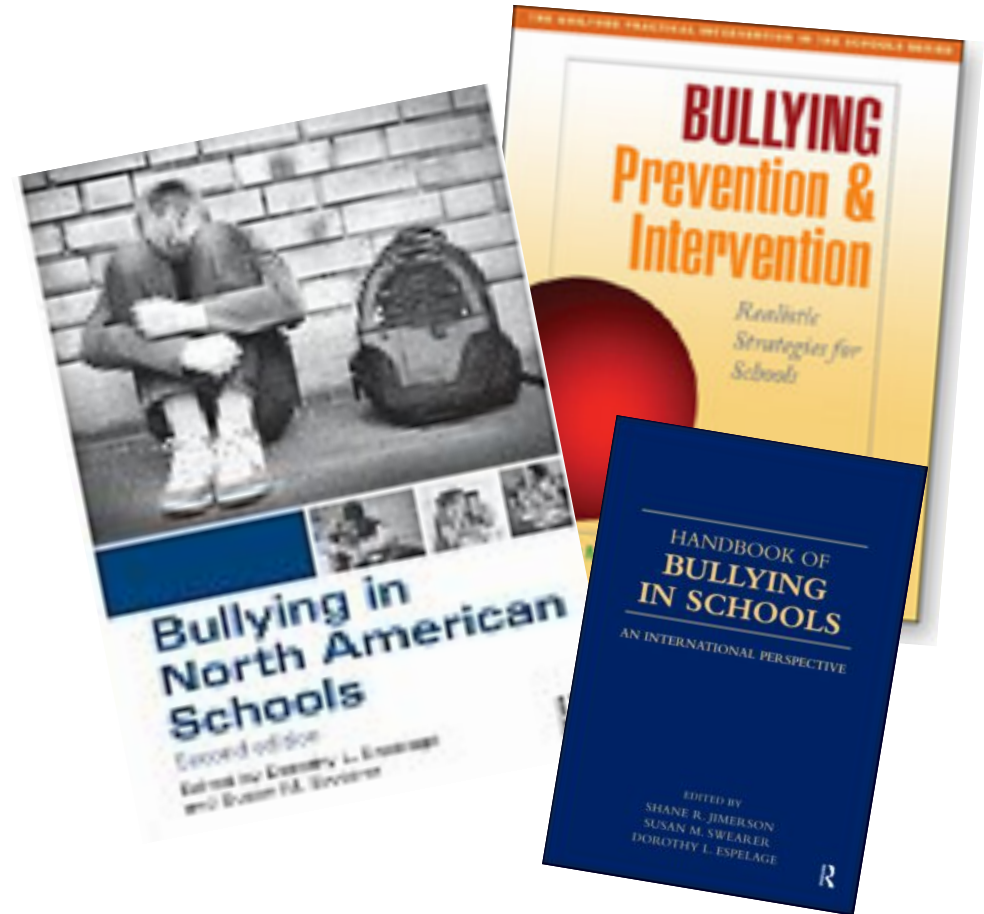
Website Resources

- Some helpful information can be found at our website **http://empowerment.unl.edu** *Select Resources Tab on the home page* (e.g., Books, Presentations, Press, Related Links, Therapeutic services)

- Here are four additional websites:

http://www.education.com

http://www.cyberbullying.us

http://www.stopbullying.gov

http://www.nasponline.org/advocacy/glbresources.aspx

Hastings College / UNL Resources

- Hastings College: Peer-Education Umbrella Network (P.U.N) promotes several groups including a Gay Straight Alliance
  - Stop by the Campus Health Center

- UNL: LGBTQA Resource Center at 346 Nebraska Union
  - They work to help create safe spaces
  - A commitment of equitable access to services

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Summary

- Sexual/Gender minority youth face increased levels of bullying victimization due to their sexual identity
- Sexual/Gender minority youth face multiple negative mental health, academic, and social outcomes due to homophobic bullying victimization
- There are strategies for promoting resilience, creating safe schools and accepting environments for Sexual/Gender minority youth
- Parents, youth, and school staff all must be involved to change the school environment
- We challenge everyone to **be bold, be brave, and be the change you wish to see in the world**
- A commitment to change is **on-going and never ends**.

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For more information contact:

- Susan M. Swearer, Ph.D.

- sswearer@unl.edu

- http://empowerment.unl.edu

- http://brnet.unl.edu

➤ Facebook: (The Empowerment Initiative) (Bullying Research Network)

➤ Twitter: @Empowerment_UNL @Dr.SueSwearer @Bully_Research

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- Any questions just ask!

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