

LGBTQ Issues in Education

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LGBTQ Issues in Education

Advancing a Research Agenda

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Background on AERA Initiative

- Gathered information through multiple processes:
 - an extensive literature search and review
 - a broad-based call for ideas to the education research community
 - an intensive small research workshop of scholars
- Edited volume addressing current LGBTQ issues in education research (2015)



What do we know? - Content Areas

- Historical context
- K-12 school experiences
- Higher education and adult achievement
- Social, legal, and policy issues
- Secondary data analysis and field development



Questions Examined

- What is the state of knowledge about LGBTQ issues in Education Research?
- How do we know, what we know?
- What are some of the challenges to doing research on LGBTQ topics?
- Recommendations for developing research on LGBTQ issues in education.



Education Research

- Micro level
 - Study of LGBTQ students, their school experiences
 - Families
 - LGBTQ faculty, staff, and school administrators
- Macro level
 - Education policy
 - Curriculum



How do we know? – Modes and Methods of Research Used

- Quantitative and qualitative research studies
- Case studies – narratives
- Program evaluations
- Large-scale data sets
- Historical research



LGBTQ Status Defined in Research

- Identity
- Behavior
- Attraction
- Household Structure (U.S. Census)



State of Knowledge

- U.S. Census - 600,000 plus same-sex households; 25% are raising children
- History of stigma and discrimination toward LGBTQ students as well as school administrators, faculty, and staff
- School Climate: LGBTQ students facing bullying and harassment
- Homophobia places students at risk for problems – expulsion, dropping out, low student achievement connected with negative school climate



Areas of Support

- Extracurricular activities: Gay-Straight Alliance
- Supportive faculty and school administrators
- Inclusive curriculum with positive representation of LGBTQ people, issues, and history
- Bullying prevention and intervention
- Keeping schools safe for all students
- Promote education and talent development
- Promote equality



The Educational Achievement and Attainment of LGBTQ Students

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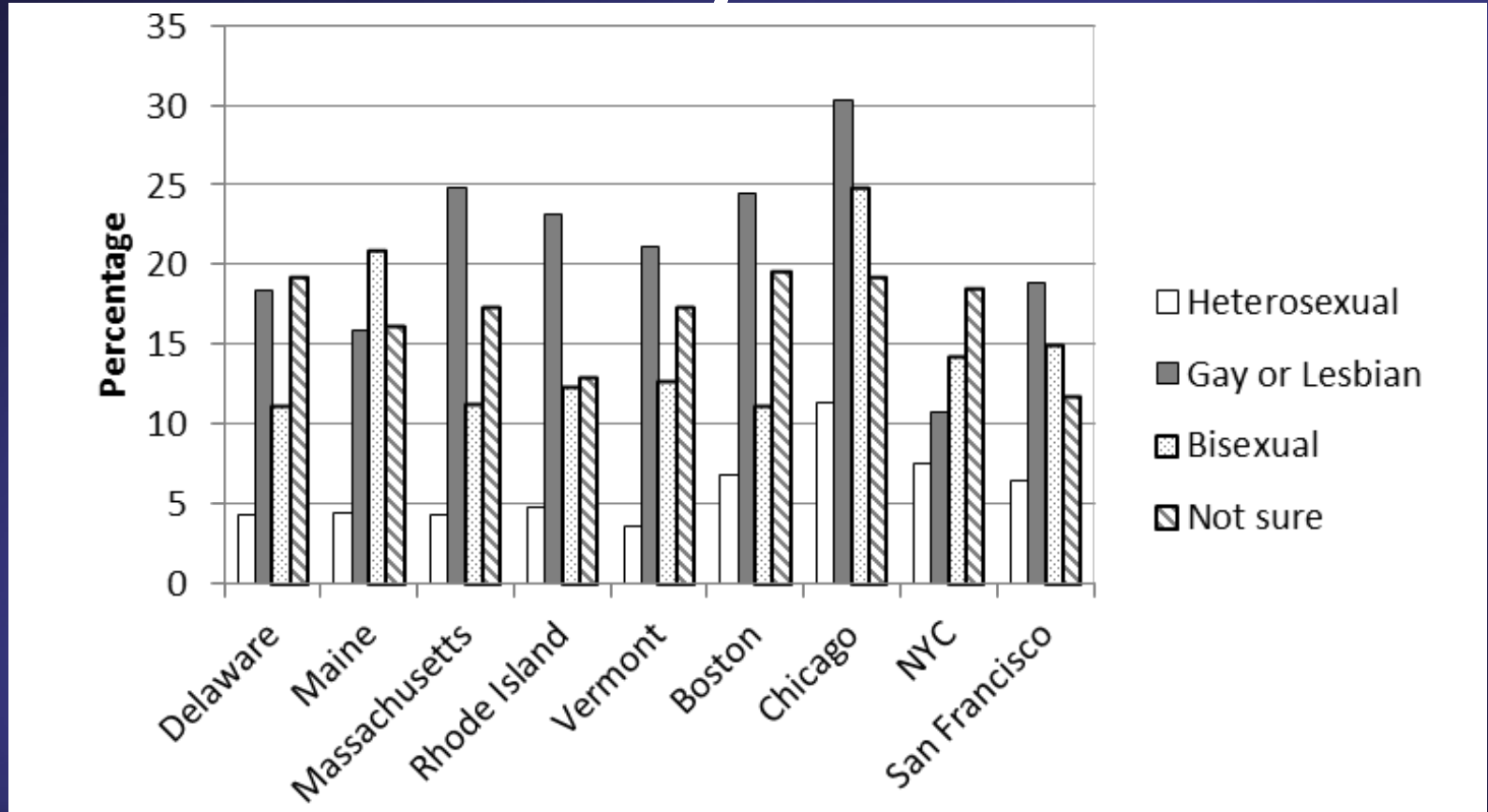


LGBTQ Students' Educational Achievement and Attainment: Research Questions

1. Do LGBTQ students have poorer academic achievement and attainment in middle and high school, relative to non-LGBTQ students?
2. Do LGBTQ students experience a disadvantage in post-secondary attainment, relative to non-LGBTQ students?
3. If LGBTQ students perform more poorly and attain less education, do processes such as victimization, school attachment, and emotional distress help explain this?
4. What school-level factors shape the educational achievement and attainment of LGBTQ students?
5. Are the labor market returns to educational attainment the same for LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ young adults?



YRBS: % of High School Students Who Did Not Go To School For Safety Reasons, by Sexual Identity and Location



Large-Scale Data Sets: Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)

- **The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provide funding for state, territorial, and local education and health agencies to conduct the YRBS survey in order to monitor health risk behaviors among U.S. middle and high school students**
- **Strengths**
 - Some YRBS sites have included questions on same-sex sexual contact and/or sexual identity
 - Survey includes many mediators of LGBTQ status and educational outcomes
 - Potential to be nationally representative and to provide a large sample size
- **Weaknesses**
 - Before 2015, inclusion of questions about sexual orientation was optional; no question about gender identity; does not directly measure educational achievement and attainment
 - Not longitudinal, which makes it difficult to determine causal pathways and processes
 - Questions about sexual orientation only asked on high school survey



GLSEN: Negative School Climate, In-School Supports and Academic Outcomes of LGBTQ Students

- Key Findings:
 - Victimization contributes to lower academic outcomes and lower self-esteem among LGBTQ students
 - School-based supports contribute to lower victimization and better academic outcomes among LGBTQ students
 - Number of teachers or staff supportive of LGBTQ students
 - LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum
 - Presence of a Gay-Straight Alliance
 - Comprehensive anti-bullying/prevention policy



Large-Scale Data Sets: GLSEN's National School Climate Survey

- GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network) has been conducting research on LGBTQ issues in K-12 education since 1999
- The National School Climate Survey documents LGBTQ middle and high school students' experiences with hearing biased language, harassment and assault, anti-LGBTQ discrimination at school, and the availability and impact of LGBTQ supportive resources
- **Strengths**
 - Large, national sample of LGBTQ-identified students (including transgender)
 - One measure of high school achievement: self-reported GPA
 - Rich measures of anti-LGBTQ discrimination, school climate, and policies
- **Weaknesses**
 - Respondents are recruited through LGBTQ youth groups/organizations
 - No non-LGBTQ student comparison group
 - Limited information about educational achievement and attainment
 - Not longitudinal, which makes it difficult to determine causal pathways and processes

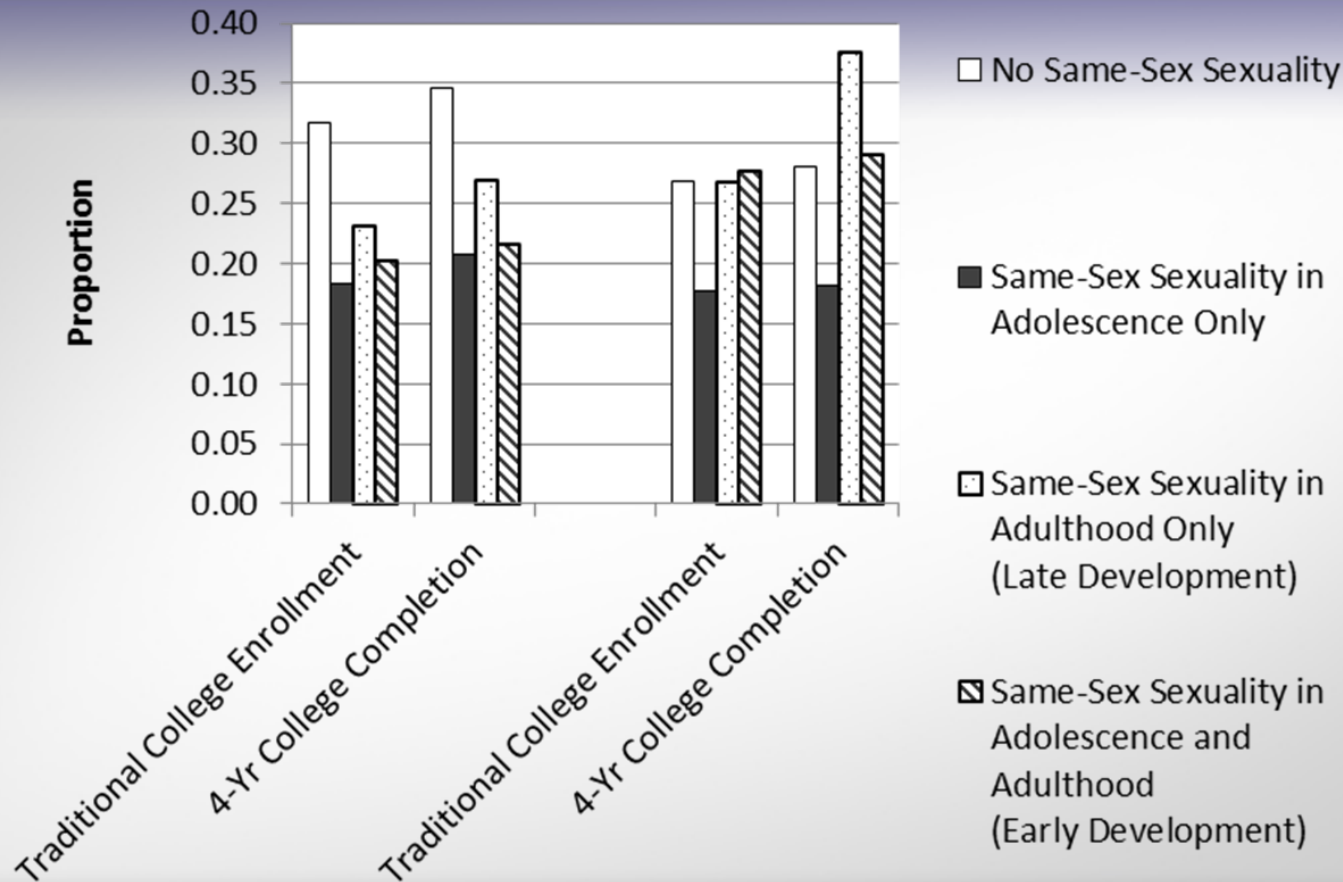


Summary of Findings From Add Health

- **Sexual minority students, relative to their heterosexual peers, have poorer educational achievement in high school and lower high school and college attainment**
 - Lower cumulative GPA
 - More likely to fail a course and less likely to complete college preparatory coursework (e.g., Algebra II, Chemistry)
 - Less likely to receive a high school diploma; more likely to receive GED
 - Less likely to enroll in and complete college
- **Disadvantages vary in important ways by sexual orientation (gay/lesbian vs. bisexual), the timing of same-sex sexuality, gender, and school context**
- **Despite disadvantage, many sexual minorities are resilient in the face of stigma and discrimination**



Add Health: Post-Secondary Outcomes By Timing of Same-Sex Sexuality and Gender



Large-Scale Data Sets: The National Longitudinal study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health)

- Supported by grants from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) with co-funding from 23 other federal agencies and foundations
- Add Health is a school-based study that explores the causes of health-related behaviors of adolescents in grades 7 through 12 and their outcomes in young adulthood
- **Strengths**
 - Nationally representative and longitudinal: adolescents are followed into adulthood
 - Multiple measures of sexual orientation across time
 - Rich education data (NICHD/NSF funded AHAA); measures of labor market outcomes
 - Has measures of social context, including school context
- **Weaknesses**
 - No measure of gender identify or gender non-conformity
 - No measures of LGBTQ specific school-based supports
 - No measures of subject-specific achievement tests or teacher evaluations
 - Is dated – adolescents were first surveyed in 1994-95



Large-Scale Data Sets From the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

- High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSL:2009)
- Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:2002)
 - Both focus on students' trajectories from the beginning of high school into postsecondary education, the workforce, and beyond
 - ELS includes surveys of students, their parents, math and English teachers, and school administrators; includes assessments in math and English and high school transcripts
 - Both provide ability to understand differences in educational trajectories, including STEM trajectories, by gender, race/ethnicity, and social class
- Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS)
 - Provides national data on children's educational experiences and growth through the eighth grade
- NCES data sets do not include information about LGBTQ status



Conclusions

- **LGBTQ students have poorer academic achievement and attainment in high school**
 - Some of this disadvantage is explained by victimization, emotional distress, and school attachment
 - This disadvantage is shaped by school context and school policies/programs
 - Educational disadvantage in high school influences educational disadvantage in college
 - The association between LGBTQ status and educational achievement and attainment is complex given the heterogeneity of the population
- **We need more appropriate data to answer our research questions**
 - More recent longitudinal data that measures LGBTQ status, individual- and school-level processes, AND educational achievement and attainment over time
 - Data that incorporates larger samples of transgender youth and LGBTQ youth of color
 - Adapting current data sets such as those sponsored by NCES and NSF could be most feasible way of accomplishing these goals



BULLYING & K-12 SCHOOLS: CALL FOR RESEARCH

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Bullying in K-12 Schools

- Bullying occurs more frequently among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered (LGBTQ) youth in American schools than among students who identify as heterosexual.
- 84.6% of LGBTQ students reported being verbally harassed, 40.1% reported being physically assaulted at school in the past year because of their sexual orientation.



Homophobic Name-Calling

- Large percentage of bullying among students involves the use of homophobic teasing and slurs.
- The pervasiveness of anti-gay language in schools suggests that most school environments are hostile for LGBTQ students and create negative environments for their heterosexual peers as well.



Homophobic Name-Calling

- Homophobic name-calling is prevalent in middle school.
- Youth who bully resort to homophobic name-calling over the middle school years.
- Bully prevention programs should include a discussion of language that marginalizes gender non-conforming and LGBTQ youth.



Take-Away Message

- Strong longitudinal associations among bullying, homophobic bantering, and sexual harassment perpetration.
- Youth who bully will be more likely to engage in sexual harassment toward other peers if they use homophobic slurs.



LGBTQ Bullying is Driven by Peers

- Adolescent peer groups play a significant role in the formation and maintenance of harmful and aggressive behaviors, particularly homophobic behavior
- Peer influence has to be considered in developing and evaluating prevention/intervention programs
 - Only one bullying prevention program attempts to target and shift peer norms and mentions LGBTQ bullying.
 - Need more research on how to shift peer norms to be more supportive of all youth.



Staff Perceptions of Climate Impacts Student Behavior

When middle school staff....

- report that they have an aggression problem at school, youth are less likely to intervene to help others ($r = -.18, p < .001$).
- report that they are actively addressing bullying and violence, students report less bullying, victimization, and fight less ($r_s = -.20, -.42, -.17, p_s < .001$).
- report that they are intolerant of sexual harassment, youth report less bullying, victimization, homophobic name-calling, and less sexual harassment ($r_s = -.23, -.71, -.40, -.36, p_s < .001$).
- **CONCLUSIONS:** Prevention & intervention need to address school climate through teacher/staff training and school climate improvement efforts.



What reduces victimization?: Meta-Analysis

- **Decreases in rates of *victimization* were associated with the following special program elements:**
 - non-punitive disciplinary methods
 - parent training/meetings
 - use of videos
 - cooperative group work
 - greater duration and intensity of the program
- **However, work with peers (e.g., peer mediation) was associated with an increase in victimization**
- **This unintended consequence is not new. Scholars have argued for a decade that peer mediation is contraindicated for bully prevention.**



What reduces perpetration?: Meta-Analysis

- **Decreases in rates of bully perpetration for programs that included:**
 - parent training/meetings
 - improved playground supervision
 - non-punitive disciplinary methods
 - classroom management & classroom rules
 - teacher training
 - whole-school anti-bullying policy
 - cooperative group work
 - greater number of elements and longer duration of program
- **Programs - less effective in the US and in Canada.**
- **Need research support for the development and evaluation programs for US youth that address the unique needs of rural, urban, and suburban contexts.**
- **None of these studies addressed homophobic name-calling or assessed LGBTQ; need to do more research to see how these programs need to be expanded to address gender-based harassment.**



Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

- SEL focuses on the systematic development of a core set of social and emotional skills that help youth more effectively handle life challenges, make better decisions, and thrive in both their learning and their social environments.
- A meta-analysis of 213 programs found that if a school implements a quality SEL curriculum, they can expect better student behavior and an 11 percentile increase in test scores.
- A recent large scale clinical trial study of a social emotional learning program in 36 middle schools yielded significant reductions in bullying, homophobic name-calling, and sexual harassment, and strongest effects were found when implemented with fidelity.



Recommendations - Educators

- Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs) in schools - associated with an increased sense of safety among LGBTQ youth, as well as improved health and educational outcomes such as reduced truancy, fewer injuries at school, and fewer suicide attempts.
- Teachers of all educational levels (K-12) should be educated about sexual identity & gender diversity in youth, and work to communicate this knowledge and consideration to all students in a developmentally appropriate manner.
- Need more research to develop and evaluate these teacher trainings on school climate and bullying among all youth.



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Research Recommendation

Enhance the content of education research on LGBTQ issues.



Collaborations between Schools and Researchers

- Schools implement programs aimed at addressing LGBTQ issues and concerns
- Research informs program design and implementation



Research Content Enhancements

- Student experiences before high school
- Race and social class distinctions and intersections – specifically, low-income, and people of color
- L – G – B – T differences
- Family structures beyond traditional 2-parents
- How education affects the career and life outcomes of LGBTQ students



Opportunities to Address LGBTQ Issues

- Take existing research to develop new research questions around LGBTQ issues in education
- Maximize use of large-scale data sets (e.g. AddHealth, NCES, YRBS, GLSEN)



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