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Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Students: A Qualitative Study of the Perceived Effects of Bullying in Schools

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LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND QUESTIONING STUDENTS:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE PERCEIVED EFFECTS OF BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

by

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ABSTRACT

Bullying research frequently focuses on incidence and prevalence of bullying in schools, often failing to provide detailed accounts of the experiences and perceived impact of harassment and abuse (Poteat et al., 2009) on victimized lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) students. Further, these studies tend to have small samples of racial and ethnic participants and they fail to address victimization in individuals with multiple oppressed identities (D'Augelli et al., 2002; Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network [GLSEN], 2009). Utilizing a consensual qualitative research (CQR) design, the purpose of this study was to examine the victimization experiences and coping mechanisms utilized by LGBTQ individuals, particularly persons of color, in K-12 school settings. Data collection consisted of fourteen LGBTQ individuals from Southern Virginia participating in 30 minute interviews about their harassment experiences in school. Participants ranged in age from 17-21 years old and 11 (79%) of the 14 study participants identified themselves as racial minorities.

Results indicated that participant conceptualizations of their bullying experiences and responses may have been influenced by a number of confounding factors and/or variables (Mishna, Newman, Daley, & Soloman, 2009) such as sexual identity development, types of bullying, and locations of bullying. When compared to recent LGBTQ literature it would appear that individuals with multiple oppressed identities experienced bullying and harassment in much the same way as individuals without multiple oppressed identities.

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Chapter One

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth make up approximately 5% of America's high school students (Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network [GLSEN], 2008). Of these students, 4 out of 5 have reported hearing homophobic remarks often in their schools. Additionally, 9 out of 10 LGBTQ students reported verbal or physical victimization during their previous year of school, and transgender students reported 30% more experiences of being physically harassed than students that identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (GLSEN, 2008).

Homophobic victimization, also known as homo-prejudice (Logan, 1996) or homophobia (Committee on Adolescence, 1993; Minton, 2008), ranges from verbal to actual physical abuse, and can have long-lasting, negative effects on LGBTQ youth (Cannon, 2005; GLSEN, 2007; Harrison, 2003; O'Higgins-Norman, 2008; Minton, Dahl, O'Moore, & Tuck, 2008; Poteat, Paul, Steven, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009; Rivers, 2000; Williams, Connolly, Peplar, & Craig, 2005). Youth were called "fag" and "queer" and were mistreated because of either perceived or actual sexual orientation. Other gay youth reported that perpetrators drew sexually explicit pictures of them and also wrote homophobic epithets on their property. Similarly, others reported being physically assaulted as a result of perceived or actual sexual orientation (Wertz, 2005).

The harassment that LGBTQ youth endure can be long-term and systematic, placing these youth at risk for greater suicidal ideation, depression, isolation, and fear at school (Elliott & Kirkpatrick, 1994; GLSEN, 2009). In its 2009 National School Climate Survey, GLSEN found that gay students were 7 times more likely than non-

LGBTQ youth to skip school to avoid bullying, with 61% reporting feeling unsafe while at school. Bos, Sandfort, Bruyn, and Hakvoort (2008) found that youth with same sex attractions had more mental health problems as well as school problems when compared to adolescents without same sex attractions. This suggests that disparities in mental health and school performance may be related to discrimination based on sexual orientation.

In a quantitative study about victimization over the lifespan, Balsam, Rothblum, and Beauchaine (2005) found that the risks for LGBTQ individuals did not end in childhood, as same sex relationships and homosexual identity were associated with higher risk for victimization for adult LGBTQ individuals. LGBTQ participants reported higher levels of overall lifetime victimization than their heterosexual counterparts, including psychological, physical, and sexual violence in both childhood and adulthood. The reported effects of victimization included internalized homophobia, abuse, and victimization in adult relationships, trust issues, and a fear of reporting victimization (Balsam et al., 2005).

Similarly, Herek, Gillis, and Cogan (1999) found that hate crime victimization appeared to be associated with greater psychological distress for LGBTQ adults when compared to survivors of non-biased victimization because these individuals reported significantly more symptoms of depression, traumatic stress, anxiety, and anger as a result of being victimized over their life spans. Participants were also more likely to see the world as unsafe, to have a negative view of people, to have a lower sense of self-esteem, and to experience feelings of vulnerability and powerlessness. Herek et al.(1999) reported, however, that many LGBTQ persons were able to deal with their psychological

distress by using coping and resilience strategies such as realistically appraising potentially dangerous situations and participating in therapy.

Coping and resilience are critical to the well-being of LGBTQ individuals as it allows individuals to utilize skills to adjust positively during stressful situations (Gwadz, Clatts, Yi, Leonard, Goldsamt, & Lankenau, 2006). While coping and resilience literature on LGBTQ youth is limited, Szymanski (2009) has identified coping strategies for LGBTQ adults that may also be helpful when working with LGBTQ youth. Szymanski (2009) does, however, acknowledge the need for further research in the areas of coping and resilience for LGBTQ youth.

Interventions that assist with the coping and resilience of LGBTQ students in school are necessary for the success of these students (NEA, 2009). They may feel unsafe in school because of the bullying they endure, thus systemic interventions that address this victimization must be put in place to empower and support LGBTQ students in school (NEA, 2009). Because professional school counselors (PSCs) and school counselors in training work very closely with students and serve as student advocates, these individuals can assist schools in creating interventions that work with the LGBTQ population. These interventions should support LGBTQ students, their family members, and school personnel in dealing with bullying situations (Frank & Cannon, 2009; Smith & Chen-Hayes, 2004). Because LGBTQ people of color experience hate crime victimization as double minorities, more research needs to be done to assess whether PSCs are utilizing interventions that appropriately address the concerns of minority LGBTQ students (Balsam et al., 2005; Herek et al., 1999).

In addressing LGBTQ issues, many of the research studies that have been conducted are quantitative, cross-sectional studies, providing limited information about victimization experiences. Further, these descriptive studies address type and prevalence of victimization, rather than providing detailed information about the experiences and the impact on victims (Poteat et al., 2009). In a study of incidence of sexual orientation victimization, D'Augelli, Pilkington and Hershberger (2002) found that attacks directed at people because of their sexual orientation can have a more negative impact than crimes in general. A limitation of the study was that the design provided limited detailed investigation histories of the victimization of the study participants. Because limited investigation histories omit specific details leaving readers to wonder how these individuals experienced and coped with their victimization, the current research study provides direct participant quotes about their bullying experiences. Studies (e.g., D'Augelli et al., 2002; Hershberger & D'Augelli, 1995; Poteat et al., 2009) acknowledge the need for longitudinal research to explore the impact of victimization on LGBTQ individuals, particularly people of color. These studies address the effects of victimization but are limited in several ways. These studies provide descriptive data, but fail to allow for expanded responses and follow up questioning to understand the relationship between experience/victimization and effects. These studies also do not address coping and intervention strategies.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

Previous studies have failed to provide detailed histories of the experiences and impact of harassment and abuse on victimized LGBTQ students, particularly students of color. The National Education Association (NEA, 2009) suggests that more qualitative

research addressing issues of LGBTQ youth, particularly youth of color, be conducted. Qualitative studies help to provide a richer understanding of the impact of certain compounding factors such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, etcetera, on participants, thus providing a more comprehensive understanding of LGBTQ youth and their experiences at school (NEA, 2009). The primary researcher opted to not include specific questions about persons of color because it was believed that the interview protocol (Appendix B) accurately assessed LGBTQ bullying experiences in school for all individuals. However, the current research study chose to seek out LGBTQ youth, particularly youth of color, to interview in the hopes of giving a voice to LGBTQ individuals of color.

To learn about the victimization experiences and coping mechanisms of LGBTQ students in school, this qualitative study sought to gain the perspectives of LGBTQ participants in order to provide a better understanding of the perceived impact of victimization on LGBTQ students. This study hopes to enhance the current, predominantly quantitative literature by providing detailed histories of experiences as well as potential interventions for PSCs and SCTs working with this unique population.

A social constructivist paradigm was used to explore the reality of the LGBTQ participants in this study. Constructivism begins with the premise that the human world is different from the natural or physical world because it is based on perception and shaped by cultural and linguistic constructs (Patton, 2002). Via social constructivism, or active learning of the individual mind, each participant will have his or her own way of making sense of their experiences. Their knowledge construction, or how they construct

their reality, ultimately influences and is influenced by participant's social interactions and how they function in the world (Patton, 2002).

To gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of LGBTQ youth, a consensual qualitative research (CQR) design was utilized. CQR incorporates elements from phenomenological and grounded theory as well as comprehensive process analysis (Elliott & Kilpatrick, 1994). This method allows researchers to come to consensus about the meanings derived from the recorded experiences of participants. The method further seeks to discover intimate information about smaller groups of people, all the while focusing on individual insight and attending to the voices of participants in regards to thoughts, beliefs and experiences (Patton, 2002). Consensual qualitative research is helpful for conducting in-depth studies that provide insight into the inner experiences of individuals (Hill, Knox, Thompson, Williams, Hess, & Ladany, 2005).

Consensual qualitative researchers carefully define samples and collect data, utilizing the same protocol with each participant, but allow for additional probes to ensure consistency within a homogenous sample. The use of research teams in CQR allows researchers to debate until consensus is reached while also utilizing an auditor(s) to verify work. CQR is also beneficial because from the beginning, researchers code data into topic areas or domains and then further break data the down into core ideas, or the "essence" of what the participant stated. This methodology allows for data to be systematically compared across cases while tabulating and placing data into emerging categories (Hill, Knox, Thompson, & Williams, 1997). Through the use of consistent interview protocols and the encouragement of interviewers to be aware of personal biases, CQR seeks to minimize the impact of the interviewer, allowing the participant to

teach the researcher about the phenomenon of study (Hill et al., 2005). Researcher bias can influence one's understanding of the data, so early disclosure of researcher biases are important to the process. In an effort to be true to the data, CQR researchers strive to carefully summarize participants' words as to not stray away from participant meaning (Hill et al., 2005).

This study may be beneficial for PSCs and SCTs working with LGBTQ students. Through in-depth interviews, the participants may provide linkages between one's conceptualization of bullying and resilience strategies, potentially providing insight into the reported victimization experiences and coping methods that LGBTQ students utilized. The findings can also be helpful in assisting in the development of more LGBTQ-friendly interventions for all students as study participants have already lived through in-school bullying experiences.

Study participants were recruited in Southern Virginia. Areas of recruitment included Richmond, Virginia and the Hampton Roads area. The primary researcher contacted schools and gay organizations as well as friends and associates of research team members to connect with participants. After collecting names of different organizations and individuals, the researcher gathered contact information by searching the phone book for schools and "googleing" gay organizations in the target areas.

The study population included individuals who were 17-21 years old. Inclusion criteria for study participants included individuals who self-identified as LGBTQ and experienced homo-prejudice and/or harassment and bullying while in school. The researcher opted for participants ages 17-21 for several reasons. Based on sexual identity

development (SID) research, individuals may identify as LGBTQ between the ages of 15-17 years old, with the age of disclosure ranging from 16-17.6 years old (GLSEN, 2004; Harrison, 2003). As such, 17 year old participants were included since they may be further along in their SID when compared to younger students. Because retrospective studies of homophobic victimization show that account and recall are usually reliable when recalling information from specific events (Balsam et al., 2005; Rivers, 2001, 2004), the primary researcher opted to interview participants who were recently out of the K-12 setting with a maximum age of 21 years old.

There were two 17-year old participants, one 18-year old participant, one 19-year old participant, six 20-year old participants, and four 21-year old participants who contributed to the study. Eight participants identified their gender as female, 4 identified as male, and 2 identified as transgender. When choosing race/ethnicity, 10 participants identified as African American, 1 as White (Non-Hispanic), 1 as Biracial, and 2 identified as "Other." When choosing sexual orientation, seven participants identified as gay, 6 as lesbian, and 1 participant identified as bisexual. For relationship status, 8 participants were in same sex relationships, while 6 were single. The diverse sample of participants allowed for varied perspectives of LGBTQ bullying experiences.

To effectively address the victimization that LGBTQ youth endure, it is important for PSCs and SCTs to better understand how the bullying behaviors affect students and to assist school personnel in appropriately handling these situations when they arise. It is also important for PSCs, SCTs, and other school personnel to be knowledgeable of the mental health concerns that LGBTQ students may experience as a result of being bullied

or harassed in school (Rivers, 2001; Swearer, Turner, Given & Pollack, 2008; Williams et al., 2005).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were addressed in the study:

1. How have/do LGBTQ individuals experience and respond to bullying within K-12 academic settings?
 - a. What do they identify as physical, psychological, and academic effects of victimization throughout youth and early adolescence?
 - b. What resilience or coping strategies do they identify as helpful in dealing with bullying?
2. What counseling interventions do LGBTQ individuals recommend as helpful for LGBTQ students in K-12 academic settings?

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Bisexual: A term given to people who are attracted sexually/erotically and emotionally to both males and females (GLSEN, 2008).

Bullying: Bullying is harassment, violent assault, and/or exclusion in the school setting (Rivers, 2000). It can be verbal or physical or it can be damage to or theft of a students' property. It includes terrorizing and intimidation of targeted children that takes place in and around the school (GLSEN, 2008).

"Coming out": Coming out is one of the most critical events of sexual identity development for LGBTQ individuals because it discloses their sexual identity (GLSEN, 2008; Human Rights Campaign [HRA], 2010). It is the process in which participants decide to no longer stay "closeted" and choose to disclose their sexual orientation to

others. Sexual identity development models describe coming out in many ways, but most ultimately agree that disclosure is critical to the coming out process (Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1982; Troiden, 1989). The decision to come out can be associated with a great deal of anxiety and concern about others' reactions to the information. After disclosure, participants report periods of unhappiness and a sense of loneliness. Coming out is a part of one's sexual identity development, and the age of disclosure varies from person to person (Cowie & Rivers, 2000).

Gay: A term given to males who are attracted sexually/erotically and emotionally to some other males (GLSEN, 2008). It is also sometimes used as an umbrella term to describe all LGBTQ persons.

Homophobic victimization: A term that refers to the harassment, violent assault, and or exclusion of actual or perceived LGBTQ students. The victimization may be either direct (face-to-face physical or verbal confrontation) or indirect (involving a third party and some form of social ostracism) (Graham & Juvonen, 1998).

Lesbian: A term given to females who are attracted sexually/erotically and emotionally to other females (GLSEN, 2008).

Queer: An umbrella term used to describe anyone whose sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression does not fit the "norm" (GLSEN, 2008).

Questioning: A term that refers to people who are uncertain as to their sexual orientation or gender identity (GLSEN, 2008).

Transgender: An umbrella term used to describe people with non-conforming gender expression and/or gender identity that is different from their birth assigned gender (GLSEN, 2008).

Youth/ Adolescence: For the purposes of this study, a youth/adolescent is a person between the ages of 17-21.

DELIMITATIONS

Study delimitations were used to define the scope of the study and to identify study limitations. This study is delimited to LGBTQ individuals between the ages of 17-21 who are currently in or recently out of the K-12 school setting (within the last four years). It is further delimited because the study only addresses harassment experiences in school settings. The primary researcher chose this population to study because research shows that “there is a great deal of consistency in terms of participants’ recall of key periods in their chronological development” (Rivers, 2001, p. 8). This research study will include only the perspectives of homosexual individuals who agree to be a part of the study and who are willing to talk about harassment experiences during their K-12 schooling. An additional study delimitation is the assumption of the primary researcher that participants were forthcoming with information about their in-school harassment experiences. Because the study sought to explore the perceived in-school experiences and coping strategies of homosexual individuals, participants needed to have already identified as LGBTQ in order to participate in the study. However, because harassment can occur as a result of perceived or actual sexual orientation it was not important for study participants to have been “out” while still in school. A final delimitation of the study is that the primary researcher intentionally sought out LGBTQ persons of color for the study, thus the sampling frame was limited. Because current LGBTQ literature tends to under-represent minorities, this study was interested in the perspectives of this particular group of individuals.

Chapter Two

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are approximately 750,000 LGBTQ students nationwide, which averages out to be at least one lesbian or gay student in every classroom in America (GLSEN, 2008). For many LGBTQ students, school is a dangerous and isolating place where they regularly face anti-LGBTQ verbal and physical attacks. Bullying of LGBTQ students stems largely from perpetrators' discomfort with students who do not conform to traditional gender roles in appearance or behavior (NEA, 2009). As a result of the harassment of gay students in the United States and abroad, more research is being done to transform negative school experiences for these students (NEA, 2009).

Studies of the victimization experiences of LGBTQ youth have shown that abuse has been a large part of their school experiences from a very early age (Rivers, 2000). While existing literature on the victimization experiences of LGBTQ youth in school primarily focuses on the types and prevalence of victimization that these students endure, such research has neglected to discuss how students experience and cope with such victimization (Poteat et al., 2009).

This chapter will offer an overview of models of sexual identity development and its relationship to the coming out process. Additionally, physical, verbal and property offenses and the prevalence with which they are committed against LGBTQ youth is discussed. Coping and resilience strategies of LGBTQ individuals, along with possible interventions for assisting them in school will be described. Next, an overview of about PSCs and SCTs will be given, and finally, a brief discussion of the limitations of existing research on the effects of bullying on LGBTQ youth will be addressed.

Models of Sexual Identity Development

While sexual identity development (SID) is a process experienced by all types of individuals, for the purposes of this research study references to SID will be exclusive to LGBTQ individuals. Models of SID describe sexual identity as a sequential process that begins with one's personal awareness of same-sex attraction and feelings that deviate from the norm (Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1989; Yarhouse, 2001). Some of the earliest models of SID assume that gay males and lesbians have virtually identical developmental processes and experiences (Yarhouse, 2001). The stages of SID for gay and lesbian individuals include testing or exploration, personal acceptance, and finally, public acknowledgment or coming out (Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1989). Sexual identity development and coming out are terms often used interchangeably in the literature, and coming out is often seen as a sign of developmental maturation (Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1982; Troiden, 1989) in gay and lesbian identity models. One of the more popular models of SID used to describe the coming out process of gay and lesbian individuals is Cass's (1979) 6-stage model. According to this model, gay and lesbian identity develops through the following stages: (1) *identity confusion* in which the individual questions his or her identity because of the same sex attraction that deviates from the norm; (2) *identity comparison* in which the individual believes that he or she may be homosexual, but tries to act heterosexual; (3) *identity tolerance* in which the individual assumes that his or her same sex attraction may mean that he or she is gay; (4) *identity acceptance* in which the individual acknowledges that the same sex attraction means that he or she is gay; (5) *identity pride* in which the individual begins to take pride in minority group membership

and forfeits heterosexual privileges; and, (6) *identity synthesis* in which the individual realizes that being gay is a part of who he or she is.

Referencing Cass's (1979) work, Troiden (1989) described a model of gay and lesbian SID. The central difference between Cass' (1979) and Troiden's (1989) models is that Troiden's (1989) stages are age-specific while Cass's are not. Troiden (1989) interviewed 150 gay men and used that research to organize gay male identity development into the following four stages: (1) *sensitization*, or a sense of feeling different from one's peers in childhood and later in adolescence; (2) *dissociation and signification*, or the suspicion that one may be homosexual which causes feeling extrication in regard to identity; (3) *coming out*, or labeling sexual attraction as homosexual which includes self-identification as homosexual, submersion into homosexual subculture, and redefining homosexuality as a viable lifestyle alternative, and (4) *commitment*, or fusion of gay sexuality and emotionality into a meaningful world which occurs when homosexual identity is adopted as a way of life. It is important to keep in mind that each individual develops at different rates and often moves back and forth between stages. McCarn and Fassinger (1996) developed a model of gay and lesbian identity formation that describes both individual and social processes of SID. It is multi-faceted and individuals sometimes simultaneously progress through the four stages. The phases include: (1) *awareness*, or recognition of minority sexual status and questioning of why one is different; (2) *exploration*, or including cognitive and behavioral exploration of same-sex attraction; (3) *deepening and commitment*, or having a deeper understanding of sexual identity and commitment to homosexual identity to include the "coming out" process; and (4) *internalization and synthesis*, or integrating a

positive sense of self within a gay identity and engaging in meaningful same sex relationships. While Cass (1979), Troiden (1989), and McCarn and Fassinger (1996) all address some form of SID awareness in their models (identity confusion, sensitization, awareness), the age of first awareness varies by individual.

GLSEN (2004) reported that the age of first awareness for same-sex attraction is typically lower than the age when one actually begins to identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual. Researchers from recent studies on LGBTQ adolescents suggest that the age of first awareness may range from 8 to 11 years old, the age of identification as LGBTQ may range from 15 to 17 years old, and the age of disclosure may range from 16 to 17.6 years of age (Harrison, 2003; Savin-Williams, 1998). Deciding to hide or to disclose one's sexual preference can be a stressful time for gay individuals.

Coming Out Process

One of the most critical events for sexual minority youth is the disclosure of their sexual identity (GLSEN, 2008; Ben-Ari, 1995). For many, coming out, or acknowledging and accepting one's identity as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender, can be a difficult, ongoing developmental process and because of this, many youth feel pressured to hide their sexuality to avoid rejection from family and friends (Harrison, 2003). As such, first disclosures are often made to someone other than a parent. Oftentimes disclosures are made to a same-age peer to whom the youth feels comfortable disclosing (Harrison, 2003; Savin-Williams, 1998).

Sexual identity development models (SID) describe coming out in many ways with most ultimately agree that disclosure is critical to the coming out process (Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1982; Troiden, 1989). Ben-Ari (1995) stated that it is the very act of

disclosure, or coming out, that actually creates an identity as gay. The extent to which an individual expresses same-sex feelings can also be seen as a measure of adjustment to sexual identity (Dube & Savin-Williams, 1999). Troiden (1989) believed that when individuals go through the stages of SID, they first come out in the homosexual community and then, if at all, in the heterosexual community. Sullivan (1984) proposed that as individuals begin to address their SID, they only begin to deal with the coming out process when they are socially and emotionally ready to handle it. In his SID model, Coleman (1982), much like Cass (1979), believed that in the final stage of SID, that an individual becomes accepting of him or herself as well as his or her sexual identity. They also believed that the individual ultimately creates an integrated homosexual identity for him or herself, but oftentimes that self-acceptance can be hindered by the effects of the coming out process.

Coming out can cause major strain on the psychological resources of LGBTQ youth (Harrison, 2003). After coming out, gay youth described feelings of isolation, shame, anxiety, inner turmoil, and embarrassment, to name a few (Harrison, 2003; Lewis, 1984; Savin-Williams, 1998). Many youth reported that they began to internalize words such as “queer” and “homo,” and they found themselves denying or sublimating their same sex feelings in an attempt to conform (GLSEN, 2009). Other LGBTQ youth stated that they were teased mercilessly, which led to feelings of self-hatred and they ultimately began to wonder what was “wrong” with them (GLSEN, 2009). Disclosure for sexual minorities can also create problems in the home as parents believe that the expectations and goals that they have for their children will be disrupted as a result of their children’s sexual orientations (Harrison, 2003). Some parents described experiencing mourning as

a result of their children's disclosure, and others pressured their children to continue their closeting behaviors (Harrison, 2003). Disclosure can create stressors in LGBTQ youth's home situations, causing them to be developmentally unable to effectively handle pressures to conform in school as well as their heterosexual counterparts (Frank & Cannon, 2009). A need exists for empirical research to better understand the processes and effects of coming out on adolescents (Harrison, 2003; Savin-Williams, 1998). The current study lends support to this research by providing detailed accounts and actual quotes of these processes which allows insight into how homo-prejudice and victimization can potentially effect or even hinder SID development for LGBTQ youth. Providing PSCs and SCTs with LGBTQ perceptions of bullying can potentially assist counselors in creating interventions to use while working with this unique population.

Victimization

Homophobic victimization is harassment, violent assault, and or exclusion of actual or perceived LGBTQ students. The victimization may be either direct (face-to-face physical or verbal confrontation) or indirect (involving a third party and some form of social ostracism) (GLSEN, 2008). The most common types of victimization of gay persons are attacks ranging from verbal harassment to actual physical assaults (Frank & Cannon, 2009; GLSEN, 2009).

The GLSEN (2009) National School Climate Survey assessed the experiences of 7, 261 middle and high school students. Key findings of the survey indicated that 85% of students were verbally harassed and 19% were physically assaulted. LGBTQ students experienced verbal, physical and sexual harassment frequently or often in their schools, with 64% of students reporting being harassed because of their gender expression or the

way they looked or acted. Another 53% reported that they had been harassed or bullied via electronic means, commonly known as cyber bullying. Finally, 61% reported feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, with these students being four times more likely (30%) to have missed a day of school each month.

Comparable studies show similar findings. Hunt and Jensen (2007) suggested that the homophobic victimization of LGBTQ youth is on the rise with a prevalence rate of 37% in the school setting. While most incidences of victimization were perpetrated by peers, some LGBTQ students have also reported being harassed by school staff. Pilkington and D'Augelli (1995) found that 7% of the 194 participants in their study had been verbally insulted or harassed by a teacher.

With 89% of LGBTQ students reporting being distressed due to hearing homophobic remarks in school, violence, bullying, and harassment seem to be the norm for homosexual students (GLSEN, 2009). It is the responsibility of school divisions to create positive climates where children can grow and flourish, and as such schools must effectively address the harassment of LGBTQ students, starting with the identification of how these students are being effected by victimization (Frank & Cannon, 2009; Poteat et al., 2009). The three most common types of victimization committed against LGBTQ youth are verbal, physical, and property victimization (GLSEN, 2009).

Verbal Victimization

Homophobic remarks are one of the most commonly heard types of biased language in schools (GLSEN, 2007). Because our society “upholds norms for what is considered appropriate expression of one’s gender, those who express themselves in an atypical manner may experience criticism, harassment and sometimes violence”

(GLSEN, 2007, p. 38). As such, verbal taunts constantly contribute to the extremely high levels of victimization for LGBTQ youth.

Verbal victimization includes insults, threats, name calling, teasing, and having rumors spread about sexual minority youth. Herek et al. (1999) reported that more than half of their study participants (56%) were verbally harassed, and 19% were threatened with violence. D'Augelli et al. (2002) also found that more than half (59%) of their sample experienced verbal threats in high school, while 24% of participants were threatened with violence and 2% threatened with weapons. Finally, Hershberger and D'Augelli (1995) found that 80% of their sample was verbally assaulted and 44% were threatened with physical attacks. As a result of hearing these homophobic remarks, 89% of students reported being distressed to some degree (GLSEN, 2009).

Physical Victimization

Physical victimization, also known as crimes against the person, is usually much more traumatic than other forms of victimization (Rivers, 2001). Physical victimization includes, but is not limited to, being spat on, having objects thrown at oneself, being hit or kicked, being beaten, physical attacks, assault with a weapon, attempted sexual assault and actual sexual assaults (Herek et al., 1999). In his retrospective study of school violence of LGBTQ youth, Rivers (2001) found significant correlations between incident/event recall and being hit or kicked (.54). Similarly, Herek et al., (1999) found that 17% of their 2,344 participant sample had been physically assaulted. Twelve percent of the sample reported having had objects thrown at them, while another 5% reported being spat on as a result of their actual or perceived sexual orientation. Finally, D'Augelli et al. (2002) found that 11% of participants had objects thrown at them, 11% had been

physically attacked, and 5% were sexually assaulted. Herek et al., (1999) and D'Augelli et al. (2002) found that males were much more likely than females to be victims of physical crimes.

Property Victimization

Property theft and/or damage to property have also been identified as common forms of victimization for LGBTQ youth in school. Rivers (2001) found significant correlations (.58) in relation to recollections of theft for LGBTQ youth. Similarly, Rivers (2000) found that absenteeism was significantly associated with LGBTQ youth having their personal belongings stolen while in school. He further found this event significant because youth reported feigning illness or skipping classes rather than admitting to the loss of books and/or homework. Hershberger and D'Augelli (1995) found that 23% of participants had their property damaged by peers because of the student's perceived or actual sexual orientation. Approximately 54.8% of students reported having property such as their cars, books or clothing intentionally damaged or stolen at school in the past year.

Each of these studies report different findings involving the incidence and prevalence of in-school victimization, but they do not however provide specific accounts of victimization. These studies were quantitative designs that did not allow participants to explain how they were harassed or how their harassment made them feel. Thus, the current research study sought to allow participants to explain how they believed they were impacted by bullying in school.

Impact of Victimization

Research on adult survivors of sexual orientation-based hate crimes shows that homophobic attacks have a more powerful negative impact than crimes in general (D'Augelli et al., 2002). If adults are negatively affected by such crimes, it is reasonable to assume that there will be a lasting negative impact on youth as well since youth are still in the developmental phases of life, often have less support than adults, and may have a fear of being “outed” (D'Augelli et al., 2002; Frank & Cannon, 2009). Increased knowledge of the longitudinal impact of victimization may also have tenets in SID development. Longitudinal research shows that LGBTQ individuals accurately recall unpleasant and significantly emotional life events (Rivers, 2001), and as such, it is possible that as individuals move through the stages of SID, recall of negative, emotional experiences can trigger internalized homophobic feelings, potentially hindering the SID process. For example, the stages of SID include the fusion, or coming together of one's sexuality and emotionality which allows for self-acceptance (Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1989; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996). More longitudinal research on emotional recall and SID would be beneficial to LGBTQ literature. The current research study lends support to longitudinal research in that it utilized recall to examine the effects of LGBTQ bullying with results that seem similar to findings of other studies. This study also allowed participants to describe in specific accounts how they have been impacted by bullying in schools.

Academic Impact

The American education system has been described as “one of the pillars of socialisation in our culture” (Hunter & Schaecher, 1995, p. 1058). LGBTQ youth

continue to remain a hidden minority in the educational system and attempts to educate and promote discussions of diverse sexuality in schools is met with continued outrage (Rivers, 2000). This lack of education allows distinct forms of peer maltreatment that may endure over many school years with possible adverse school adjustment outcomes later emerging (Buhs, Ladd, & Herald, 2006).

While several studies have examined the academic effects of harassment, more research is needed to truly understand the impact of this type of harassment on this population. Research shows that the victimization experiences of LGBTQ youth can lead to truancy, poor academics and social exclusion (D'Augelli et al., 2002), but these studies do not assess how these students feel about those experiences. These same youth reported that witnessing incidences of violence also invoked feelings of anxiety and fear about their own personal safety. As such, many LGBTQ youth reported disliking school, feigning illnesses to avoid school, and having truancy issues related to past memories of victimization and fear of future victimization (D'Augelli et al., 2002; Graham & Juvonen, 1998; Rivers, 2000, 2004). Rivers (2000) similarly found significant associations among three specific types of victimization (psychological intimidation, public ridicule and theft of personal property) and absenteeism from school. Research has also shown that the grades of LGBTQ youth can suffer because of the victimization that these students experience in school (D'Augelli et al. 2002, GLSEN, 2009).

While studying bullying and harassment with LGBTQ high school students, D'Augelli et al. (2002) stated that “the fears of victimization at school cannot help but have a negative impact upon youths’ experiences at school. It is also likely that these fears can interfere with learning and academic achievement” (p.1060). Similarly, Rivers

(2000) wrote that in the long term, students with a record of absenteeism are likely to leave school earlier and to be less qualified than their peers. GLSEN also found that transgender students who experienced high levels of harassment had significantly lower GPAs than those who experienced lower levels of harassment (2007) and also reported more mental health issues.

Psychological Impact

Extended periods of peer maltreatment can have negative effects on the mental health status of LGBTQ students (D'Augelli et al., 2002). They are more prone to posttraumatic stress symptoms (D'Augelli et al., 2002) have a negative sense of self or feelings of self-loathing and worthlessness, also known as internalized homophobia (Herek et al., 1999; Rivers, 2004) and are more prone to have hostility towards others (Rivers & Noret, 2008). Victimized students also deal with issues of social isolation and many consider suicide as a way to escape maltreatment by peers (Smith & Chen-Hayes, 2004)

Social isolation can be devastating for youth who are developing and learning through social interaction. Students report feelings of social isolation at school while many report either having lost friends or worrying about losing friends as a result of their sexual orientation. Many youth are afraid to come out to their friends and worry about threats of being “outed” by their peer victimizers (GLSEN, 2007). Others reported spending most of their time alone in and outside of school because of exclusion by peers. Rivers (2000) found that “school was a solitary experience for many participants, with little social interaction or involvement in recreational group activities during lunch and break times” (p. 16). At the elementary and middle school levels, Carver, Egan and Perry

(2004) found that higher levels of sexual questioning predicted lower perceived social competence throughout the school year.

As a result of dealing with experiences of victimization in school, many students have considered suicide as an option to cope. Many students felt that they were not supported at school or at home and therefore they were not comfortable seeking help. The stressors related to their stigmatized sexual orientation left many students feeling helpless and hopeless with 42% of youth reporting a past suicide attempt (Hershberger & D'Augelli, 1995). In a similar study, D'Augelli et al. (2002) found that when questioned about their lifetime of suicidal thinking, 42% of high school males and 25% of high school females said that they had sometimes thought about suicide while 48% of them reported that that their suicidal thoughts were related to their sexual orientation and 22% stated that their sexual orientation was very related to their suicidal thinking. Some students even reported having suicidal thoughts within the week before participating in the study.

Physical Impact

LGBTQ students are a vulnerable group because of the victimization that they endure (Rivers, 2000, 2004). Rivers (2008) found that LGBTQ students reported using more self-destructive activities such as thoughts of suicide and breaking things to cope with the victimization experienced in school. These behaviors include chemical abuse and unprotected sex which puts students at risk for the contraction of sexually transmitted diseases (Smith & Chen-Hayes, 2004). D'Augelli et al. (2002) found that there were no gender differences among LGBTQ high school students who used drugs to cope with victimization. Over half (54%) reported smoking cigarettes, while three quarters, or 76%

used alcohol. Another 39% reported regular marijuana use while 4% used cocaine, 1% crack, 5% uppers (i.e., stimulants), and 14% hallucinogens. Other coping behaviors by LGBTQ victims include other risk taking behaviors such as sexual recklessness, unsafe sexual practices and self-harming behaviors as noted above (Rivers, 2000, 2004; Rivers & Noret, 2008). The impact that harassment has on LGBTQ youth can have detrimental effects on them academically, psychologically and physically. As such, it is important that they are equipped with resiliency strategies to deal with the stress. Knowledge and awareness of how these youth are impacted by bullying allows supports such as PSCs to provided diversity training within the school as well as promote dialogue about the harassment.

Coping and Resilience

Coping and resilience are crucial to the well-being of LGBTQ individuals. Resilience, or positive adjustment in the face of hardship, and coping, or utilizing skills to address situations, help to improve the negative effects of minority stress (Gwadz et al., 2006). While resilience literature on LGBTQ youth is limited, there are several coping strategies that have been identified as helpful for LGBTQ adults. Social support has been identified as important to the resilience of the LGBTQ population (David & Knight, 2008; Harrison, 2003; Ridge et al., 2006; Szymanski, 2009). This support may come from family, friends, therapists or support and community groups, providing validation of experiences, functioning as a sounding board, and offering a sense of security for minority group members (Szymanski, 2009). David and Knight (2008) noted that active coping can lead to a positive sense of sexual identity which may lead to positive psychological adjustment. It can also lead to increased self-esteem, which has

been identified as an important characteristic of resilient individuals. Self-esteem is an important characteristic of resilient individuals who have thrived in the face of adversity (Szymanski, 2009). In a study of the relationship between perceived homophobic events and psychological distress for a sample of 104 homosexual individuals, Moradi and Subich (2004) found that LGBTQ individuals with higher self-esteem may be able to more easily dismiss oppressive experiences. Other self-management strategies of resilient LGBTQ persons included positive self-talk and journaling about experiences. Additional coping and resilience strategies included exercise, yoga, and making good life choices (Moradi & Subich, 2004). Naturally, when LGBTQ students have positive support systems or allies at school, they will have an increased sense of safety which leads to better academic and psychological adjustment (GLSEN, 2007; Moradi & Subich, 2004; NEA, 2009; Pearson et al., 2007). In the current research study participants were asked to provide actual coping strategies that they either utilized or thought would be helpful for other LGBTQ youth dealing with similar situations. Participants generated four positive or constructive coping strategies in response to this question that can be utilized by school personnel or PSCs working with LGBTQ youth who are having problems dealing with bullying behaviors in school.

Interventions and Advocacy

Advocating for LGBTQ youth is important for the success of these students in school (NEA, 2009). It is imperative for educators to help these students feel safe and a part of the school community regardless of their sexual orientation. Because youth who are exposed to homophobic victimization can be extremely vulnerable and often not able to stand up for themselves (O'Higgins-Norman, 2009), it is important for systemic

interventions to be put into place that are addressed district-wide. Such interventions include providing young people with a safe place to learn, requiring school personnel to foster an ethos of care and cooperation, and ensuring equal opportunities in education for all students (O'Higgins-Norman, 2009; Rivers, 2000). Poteat and Rivers (2001) found that there is a need to address how their culture and climate contribute to the perpetuation of homophobic behaviors. They suggest that school programming should address the beliefs and attitudes about sexual minorities in the hope of re-socialization of the attitudes and behaviors of students and staff (Poteat & Rivers, 2001). In a study of the experiences of LGBTQ youth in Ireland, Minton et al. (2008) found a need to challenge homophobic bullying just as other forms of bullying are challenged. They also found that there should be specific mention of the "unacceptability" of homophobic comments, as well as the consequences of them, in school guidelines that address bullying (p. 187). How bullying is handled by school personnel can also be very important in creating a safe school climate. When confronting bullies, Wright (2003) writes that school personnel should not allow the bully to pull the victim into the discussion. He also writes that bullies should be confronted in private whenever possible to remove the likelihood that the confronted student will 'play to the audience' of classmates, become defiant or non-compliant. Finally, Berger (2007) found that while there are a plethora of programs that address bullying, to be truly effective, these programs must be empirically evaluated.

Most of the research that addresses homophobic victimization in school concurs that in order for the interventions to be effective, it should be addressed by creating curricula, school-based leadership teams, school and district policies, and interventions

for the school community that address support and advocacy for LGBTQ students (Frank & Cannon, 2009; GLSEN, 2007; 2009). Advocates, such as the school counselor, should be included in creating interventions to assist LGBTQ youth in schools.

Professional School Counselors

The professional school counselor has a major role in helping to implement interventions to decrease the victimization of LGBTQ youth in the schools. School counselors work individually with students, staff and families and have an opportunity to advocate for LGBTQ youth during classroom guidance, groups, staff development and parent workshops (Cannon, 2005; Frank & Cannon, 2009). Realizing the role of the PSC in assisting LGBTQ youth, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2007) states that the professional school counselor:

1. Promotes equal opportunity and respect for all individuals regardless of sexual orientation/gender identity,
2. Works to eliminate barriers that impede student development and achievement, and
3. Is committed to the academic, personal/social and career development of all students.

ASCA (2007) further states that PSCs work to create safe school environments for all students that are free of fear, bullying and hostility. This is done by advocating for comprehensive diversity trainings for staff members, LGBTQ-affirming language, counseling, and the development of inclusive school environments (Cannon, 2005; Frank & Cannon, 2009). Leadership and advocacy strategies for LGBTQ youth are not always easy to employ, but professional school counselors must recognize the importance of this

support for LGBTQ students (Cannon, 2005; Frank & Cannon, 2009). PSCs are thought of as leaders in their schools who can provide support for students engaged in the process of recognizing and accepting their own sexual identities (DePaul, Walsh & Dam, 2010; Pollack, 2006). As such, PSCs can promote dialogue about issues of sexual orientation sometimes “anticipating a great deal of resistance at many levels of the educational system” (Smith & Chen-Hayes, 2004, p. 192).

While school counselors are often ideally situated to support LGBTQ students, they seldom have an adequate level of knowledge and understanding to do so (Bieschke, Eberz, Bard, & Crouteau, 1998; Walter & Hayes, 1998). Byrd (2010) reported that properly trained school counselors are more likely to be able to train other school personnel on how to address LGBTQ issues and to promote positive school climates. The current research study can assist PCSs and SCT training programs by providing possible coping strategies and recommending interventions from LGBTQ students who have lived through harassment experiences in schools.

Limitations of Existing Literature

Most research done on LGBTQ experiences are done by means of quantitative methods such as survey research. These self-report measures can be very subjective and usually do not allow for probes to clarify participant information as the current qualitative research study does. Research also shows that participants tend to negatively respond to survey research (Krosnik, 1999). In their study about the incidence and mental health impact of sexual orientation victimization on LGBTQ youths in high school, D’Augelli, et al. (2002) assessed 350 youth about their victimization experiences in school. However, none of the items allowed for participant perceptions of their victimization as

the current research study does. Another limitation of the D'Augelli, et al. (2002) study is that it is a quantitative study that provides cross-sectional information, leaving the data limited and open to diverse interpretations. The current study was a qualitative study that used structured interview questions to collect information that could be expounded upon as necessary by asking participants to further elaborate on their answers. In a 2006 quantitative study, Buhs et al. studied a sample of 380 individuals and their exclusion experiences in school. They found an association between peer rejection and adverse school adjustment outcomes but noted as a study limitation that their findings could also be contributed to "additional factors or processes other than those measured" in their study (p. 13). D'Augelli, et al. (2002) and Buhs et al. (2006) recruited participants from social/recreational groups that underrepresented people of color (16% and 19% minorities, respectively). The current qualitative study hosted 14 participants, 11 (79%) of which were self-identified minorities. It is believed that because LGBTQ people of color experience hate crime victimization with multiple oppressed identities that victimization research done without racial minorities may not be indicative of their experience (Balsam et al., 2005; Herek et al., 1999). Because of the limitations in quantitative studies, qualitative research such as the current study may be able to more accurately offer insight into the experiences that LGBTQ persons endure as a result of their sexual orientation. With research showing that training and specific interventions for working with LGBTQ individuals is limited (Bieschke, Eberz, Bard, & Crouteau, 1998; Walter & Hayes, 1998), this research introduces a start point to increase awareness and knowledge and presents potential interventions for working with LGBTQ students.

Qualitative research and methods offer a unique way to look at complicated phenomena by allowing researchers to explore naturally-occurring phenomena (Patton, 2002). This allows researchers to research, organize and describe phenomena with depth and richness. Qualitative researchers are able to provide vivid, full descriptions of the phenomena being studied (Patton, 2002). When studying the victimization of LGBTQ youth, qualitative research allows the themes of victimization to evolve from the data, allowing researchers to gain a better understanding of it. It also allows researchers to describe individual cases as well as data across several cases (Hill et al., 1997).

Summary

The victimization of LGBTQ youth in school can have devastating, long lasting effects on youth. Some victims never fully recover from the victimization they experience while in school (Hershberger & D'Augelli, 1995). Victimization often places LGBTQ youth at greater risk for absenteeism from school, poor grades, exposure to drugs and alcohol, various health risk behaviors, isolation, depression, suicidal ideation, and many, many more issues, thus effecting the academic, psychological, and physical development of these youth (D'Augelli et al., 2002; Rivers & Noret, 2008). Similarly, Buhs et al. (2006) showed that peer victimization can begin having long standing effects in children as early as kindergarten. They found that early peer rejection can be a precursor for later maltreatment such as peer exclusion, peer abuse, lack of classroom participation, and poor academic achievement for victims. Because of the victimization that has either been seen or experienced, many LGBTQ youth report feeling unsafe in their school environments (Elliott & Kilpatrick, 1994). While 31.1% of students reported

incidents to school personnel, many indicated that staff simply ignored their complaints (GLSEN, 2007).

Understanding LGBTQ issues is difficult because there is no definitive model of ‘normative’ development for lesbian, gay and bisexual males and females (D’Augelli, 1994). Much of the information and research that has been previously acquired focuses primarily on the implications of discrimination and victimization of sexual minorities rather than the impact of it.

Utilizing the current literature, this study sought to identify how LGBTQ individuals experienced and coped with bullying in school. Based on their perceptions of their bullying experiences, participants were then asked to identify interventions that they believed would be beneficial to use with LGBTQ individuals in schools. This information can be beneficial for school personnel and PSCs in particular, to use when addressing bullying situations in school.

Chapter Three

METHODOLOGY

Chapter three addresses the methodological procedures of the current research study. This chapter discusses qualitative research in general and the design elements of consensual qualitative research (CQR) in particular. The research team is discussed and specific details are provided about the primary researcher. The chapter also addresses recruitment methods, participant selection, and sample size. Data collection procedures are outlined, and finally, the limitations of the CQR research design are provided. The present study sought to investigate the phenomenon of victimization of LGBTQ youth in school and to describe the meanings behind the experiences of these youth to provide implications for school personnel in assisting victimized LGBTQ youth in schools.

Consensual Qualitative Research Design

Because qualitative research often stresses the importance of emerging concepts within data, it often emphasizes description over explanation. Qualitative research also utilizes rigorous data collection and methods analysis to ensure trustworthiness of the research. The present study will be conducted using a CQR design (Patton, 2003).

CQR integrates elements of both the phenomenological and grounded theory traditions. CQR also carefully defines the sample and collection of data, utilizing the same protocol to ensure consistency. The use of research teams in CQR allows for team member consensus while utilizing auditors to verify work. It is also a beneficial method because data is initially coded into topic areas or domains and then further broken down into core ideas of what the participant said. It allows for data to be systematically compared across cases while tabulating and placing data into emerging categories (Hill et

al., 2005). Consensual qualitative research is beneficial because it allows the researcher to “stay closer to the explicit level of meaning of participant statements rather than interpreting the implicit meaning of events” (Hill et al., 1997, p. 521).

Trustworthiness strategies of CQR include rigorous methods of triangulation, member checking, and data analysis. The CQR method allows the researchers to come to a consensus about the meaning derived from the recorded experiences of participants. It further seeks to discover intimate information about smaller groups of persons while focusing on participant insight (Patton, 2003). Consensual qualitative research has several essential components that helped to strengthen this study. The components include (a) open-ended questions while interviewing, which allows for more consistent data and in-depth examination of individual experiences; (b) several reviewers to foster multiple perspectives of the data; (c) consensus of data interpretation; (d) an auditor(s) to help minimize researcher bias; and (e) domains, core ideas, and cross analyses during data analysis (Patton, 2003). Consensual qualitative research appropriately attends to the voices of participants in regards to their thoughts, beliefs, values, and experiences of victimization. The interview process is handled in a way as to further facilitate a forum of interpersonal warmth and non-judgmental exploration between the interviewer and informant which also assists in increasing the comfort of the participant while further providing trustworthiness (Hill et al., 1997). To further assist with trustworthiness, the following three general steps of CQR were utilized during data collection and analysis (p. 523):

1. Responses to open ended questions from questionnaires or interviews for each individual case are divided into domains (i.e., topic areas).

2. Core ideas (i.e., abstracts or brief summaries) are constructed for all the material within each domain for each individual case.
3. A cross-analysis which involves developing categories to describe consistencies in the core ideas within domains across cases was conducted.

Finally, the frequencies of domains were computed and charted to visually depict the data (Hill et al., 2005).

Because of the amount of subjectivity in qualitative research, there is a need for researchers to show that their methodological procedures can be trusted. To show that the results of a research study “are worth paying attention to” the four issues of trustworthiness in qualitative research that demand attention are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.290).

Credibility is the evaluation of whether or not the research findings represent a credible conceptual interpretation of the data based on participant information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To address credibility, the primary researcher enlisted the assistance of a peer in the doctoral program at Old Dominion University as well as an external auditor to assist with the research study. The peer served as a member of the research team she and the auditor had previously completed the Qualitative Research course. They assisted the research study by reviewing and then providing feedback on the adequacy of interview questions. The research team worked together to reach consensus on the data, and they posed questions and suggestions throughout the research process. Member checking of participants was also used to address credibility (Linclon & Guba, 1985).

To show that the findings are applicable in other settings, or transferability, (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), a paper trail is available to other researchers to provide an

opportunity to transfer the conclusions of this research study to other research projects. The primary researcher also included thick description of the data by collecting detailed descriptions of the data during interviews. She further reported the data in sufficient detail including detailed participant quotes. Finally, all data analysis documents are also available upon request from the primary researcher.

To show dependability, or demonstrate that the findings of this study are consistent and can be repeated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the primary researcher included an audit trail of the study. The audit trail shows that team members utilized stepwise replication as they individually worked with data sources and then came together to debate to consensus. The primary researcher also enlisted the help of an external auditor to thoroughly examine the audit trail which consists of the original transcripts, data analysis documentation, field notes and member checking comments. To show confirmability, or demonstrate that the findings were shaped by the data and not researcher bias, all raw data such as audio taped interviews and written field notes were included in the audit trail. The audit trail also contains data reconstruction and synthesis products such as the development of themes and findings. To further address the issue of confirmability, the research team identified and discussed biases before and throughout the study. These procedures address trustworthiness issues in the study, serve as a document check for the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and demonstrate careful monitoring of data procedures and data analysis (Hill et al., 1997).

Research Team

Consensual qualitative research design recommends that researchers report expectations and biases so that the readers have an opportunity to effectively evaluate the

findings with this knowledge in mind (Hill et al., 2005). The research team, which included myself, the primary researcher, another counseling doctoral student and an external auditor. All three individuals had previously taken the qualitative research course at Old Dominion University. The primary researcher is a doctoral student of Counselor Education, attending a southeastern university. She currently holds an Ed.S. and a master's degree in Counseling Education, and a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice. She is a middle-class, African American female, in a heterosexual marriage with eight years of school counseling experience. With regard to biases, the primary investigator has a propensity to believe that sexuality is but a portion of an individual and only partially defines who one truly is. Working as a school counselor for eight years, the primary researcher has had the opportunity to work with LGBTQ students and parents. Through interactions with LGBTQ youth and parents, the primary researcher has witnessed bias against, and the victimization of, non-heterosexual persons. Working with and advocating for these persons has allowed the primary researcher to see the need for change in how LGBTQ issues are addressed in school systems. The primary researcher is also interested in researching how individuals with multiple oppressed identities experience victimization.

The secondary research team member is also a doctoral student of Counselor Education, attending a southeastern university. She currently holds a master's degree in Counseling and a bachelor's degree in Government with a minor in Sociology. She is a middle class, divorced, African American female with 15 years of educational experience, with the last 10 of those in school counseling. With regard to biases, the secondary researcher reports that her first-hand experience working with students in

general has allowed her to witness students who have been targeted by bullies for various reasons. She also shared that she has a distaste for injustice and believes herself to be an advocate for the underdog. She further shared that working with students has allowed her to keep an open mind and not to become overly attached while still advocating for them. When asked about biases specifically related to working with LGBTQ youth, she stated that she knows from her personal research and the media that the complexities that surround LGBTQ youth in school often sets these youth up for more harassment than their heterosexual counterparts leading many to thoughts of suicidal ideation.

The external auditor is an African American female who is an Assistant Professor at a Midwestern university. She currently holds a Ph.D. in Counselor Education, a master's in Counseling and a bachelor's in Psychology. She is a middle class, African American female in a heterosexual marriage with seven years of school counseling experience. She has experience with qualitative research and CQR specifically, as she has taken the qualitative research course and is herself a qualitative researcher. She also conducted her own qualitative research study as a doctoral student while in her Ph.D. program. As an assistant professor, she currently teaches a research course. She was chosen as auditor because of her seven years of experience as a school counselor which provides her expertise in working with LGBTQ students and bullying situations in school, the phenomenon being studied.

The primary investigator oversaw all aspects of the study, including the development of the research questions, structuring the research team, selecting the target population, recruiting participants, designing an interview protocol based on literature, collecting data, and functioning as a part of a team of judges and auditors. In addition,

the primary investigator also provided training of CQR coding methods to the second research team member.

The backgrounds of the research team helped to facilitate consensus of the data interpretation, which is imperative to the CQR method (Patton, 2003). Hill et al. (2005) strongly encourages team members to recognize that biases are a natural part of the process and if not properly addressed, biases can potentially influence data analysis. Participants also have a role in minimizing bias through member checking (Hill et al., 2005). Accordingly, CQR relies on respect and equal involvement, thus diversifying viewpoints among research team members and participants were valued and honored (Hill et al., 2005). Before data collection began, the research team discussed their expectations and biases. These discussions should include personal experiences that could possibly interfere with objectivity to the data. These biases were discussed by the team before data collection began and as needed during the study, and then again after the completion of the study. While acknowledging experiences beforehand does not provide objectivity, it may help to make team members more aware of their biases (Hill et al., 2005). The primary researcher was given the opportunity to explore the secondary team member's thoughts, beliefs, and feelings regarding the researched phenomenon and the design of the study. Team members were encouraged to be mindful of biases and assumptions while agreeing to point them out in a respectful manner throughout the study. This method helped to monitor biases throughout the coding process. The subtle meanings that were conveyed through the interview process allowed for a variety of viewpoints and experiences among team members which were beneficial in unraveling the ambiguities of the retrieved data (Patton, 2003). The primary researcher conducted all

interviews and transcribed all data and the research team assisted with data analysis and coding. The auditor maintained checks on the status of the research to ensure that appropriate decisions were being made. Baxter and Eyles (1997) stated that auditors should be familiar with qualitative research and should also have knowledge of LGBTQ victimization. Team member and auditor edits were kept to include in an audit trail to show how and why certain decisions were made throughout the process (Baxter & Eyles, 1997).

The research team followed an outline of five general stages of consensus which included: (a) participant selection, (b) interviewing participants, (c) transcribing interviews, (d) data analysis, and (e) review and consultation between auditor(s) and team members (Hill et al., 1997). These stages will be discussed after study contextual information is provided.

Study Context

The Office of Justice Programs (OJP) reports national yearly crime victimization statistics. According to a 2010 study, there were a total of 8, 336 national hate crime offenses committed in 2009 with 1,482 of those crimes reportedly committed due to sexual orientation bias. The OJP further reported that 18 sexual orientation based crimes were committed in Virginia, with 6 (33%) of those crimes committed in the Hampton Roads or Richmond areas (OJP, 2010). The findings of the 2009 GLSEN National School Climate Survey reported that Virginia schools were not safe for many LGBTQ students at the secondary level. Nearly all (6, 241) GLSEN study participants reported commonly hearing homophobic, negative remarks about gender expression (e.g., “that’s so gay”) in school and 23% reported that they regularly heard school staff making

homophobic remarks. GLSEN (2009) also reported that and there were no comprehensive bullying policies in place to protect gay students and that many LGBTQ students in Virginia did not have access to school resources, such as Gay/Straight Alliances.

Participant Selection

Criterion sampling, procedures were utilized to recruit 14 self-identified LGBTQ individuals. Participant ages ranged from 17-21 with 11 (79%) participants identifying as racial minorities and 1 identifying as White. Patton (2002) recommends using maximum variation of the sample and research methods to avoid one-sided representation of a particular topic. While adhering to the interview protocol, the interviewer used probes and clarifying questions to prevent getting limited answers from study participants. Maximum variation was used to maximize the diversity relevant to the research questions since there were a smaller number of cases selected for the study, and the variation procedures further assisted the researcher in understanding how the phenomenon was seen and understood among different people, in different settings, at different times. Participants provided current and retrospective accounts of the bullying that they experienced in school and explained how, if at all, those experiences still affect them today. Research shows that individual retrospective accounts of homophobic victimization are usually accurate and participant recall is reliable (Balsam et al., 2005; Rivers, 2001, 2004).

After approval from Old Dominion University's Internal Review Board (IRB), study participants were recruited in Southern Virginia. Areas of recruitment included Richmond, Virginia and the Hampton Roads area. The primary researcher was born

and raised in the Hampton Roads area and lived in Richmond for seven years. As such, the primary researcher has had prolonged engagement with individuals in these contexts. The researcher's background as a resident of both Richmond and the Hampton Roads area serves as a strength to the study.

Participants that met the stated criteria were recruited via local gay organizations, schools and through friends and associates of the research team members, particularly friends who worked in schools. To connect with the organizations and schools, the primary researcher met with friends who have knowledge and experience of gay organizations and who know gay individuals. After being provided with names of different organizations and individuals, the researcher gathered contact information by searching the phone book for schools and "googleing" gay organizations in the target areas. After calling several organizations and utilizing associates to connect with contact persons who agreed to distribute the study information, the researcher emailed and faxed the informed consent/solicitation letter (Appendix C) and study information to be distributed. The primary researcher followed up with contacts after each organization's scheduled meeting dates to be sure that all information had been distributed. Once she received confirmation that all information was distributed, the researcher waited for participant calls. All study participants completed a demographic sheet (Appendix A) that assessed 11 items to include age, gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation.

Prospective participants were provided with a solicitation letter and written informed consent (Appendix C) that provided an explanation of the present study outlining its purpose. Interested participants were asked to complete the enclosed

demographic worksheet (Appendix A) and return the form to the primary researcher before their interviews. After initial contact was made and potential applicants were selected, the primary researcher contacted participants and scheduled interviews.

The study sample included a diverse group of individuals ages 17-21 to allow for maximum variation. Although participants were in a limited age range, they came from diverse backgrounds with distinctive home and life experiences that they drew on during their interviews. Inclusion criteria for study participants included individuals who self-identified as LGBTQ and experienced homo-prejudice and/or harassment and bullying while in school. There were two 17-year old participants, one 18-year old participant, one 19-year old participant, six 20-year old participants, and four 21-year old participants who contributed to the study. Eight participants identified their gender as female, 4 identified as male, and 2 identified as transgender. When choosing race/ethnicity, 10 participants identified as African American, 1 as White, 1 as Biracial and 2 identified as "Other". When choosing sexual orientation, seven participants identified as gay, six as lesbian, and one participant identified as bisexual. For relationship status, eight participants were in same sex relationships, while six were single. Table I displays the demographic profiles of each participant.

Because individuals who experience harassment sometimes consider themselves victims, study participants were sampled to find out what, if any, they believed were the various perceived effects and experiences related to being a sexual minority. Participants provided varied experiences of victimization and because of the lack of research conducted with minority LGBTQ persons, the research team was particularly interested in interviewing people of color.

Table I

Participant Profiles

Participant Number	Ethnicity	Age	Gender	Sexual Orientation	Relationship Status
1	White	17	Male	Gay	Same Sex
2	African American	20	Transgender	Gay	Single
3	African American	21	Female	Lesbian	Same Sex
4	African American	21	Female	Gay	Same Sex
5	African American	17	Transgender	Gay	Single
6	African American	21	Male	Gay	Single
7	African American	20	Female	Lesbian	Same Sex
8	African American	20	Female	Lesbian	Same Sex
9	African American	21	Male	Gay	Single
10	Other	19	Female	Lesbian	Same Sex
11	African American	20	Male	Bisexual	Single
12	African American	20	Female	Lesbian	Same Sex
13	Other	18	Female	Gay	Single
14	Other (Biracial)	20	Female	Lesbian	Same Sex

Interviewing Participants

The primary researcher did face to face interviews with participants in settings that were most comfortable for them using the interview protocol created by the research team. Questions addressed sexuality, past harassment/bullying experiences, effects of harassment in school and possible interventions.

Data were compiled through the use of an initial protocol created by the primary researcher (Appendix B). To reach consensus about the interview protocol, research team members reviewed and offered suggestions for changes and/or potential questions. Interview questions addressed experiences of harassment in school and the effects of that victimization, if any, over the years. Because an individual's behavior becomes meaningful when placed in context with the lives of those around them (Patton, 2002), this descriptive 8-item, 30 minute interview protocol assisted participants in reporting their experiences in school as members of a minority group.

The research team assisted in checking the adequacy of interview questions (Hill et al., 2005). Both team members read through questions and offered opinions about the effectiveness of potential questions. After all information was compiled, the primary researcher decided on the following interview questions that assessed sexual identity development experiences, the coming out process, victimization/bullying, effects and coping experiences, and potential school interventions for working with LGBTQ youth in schools (Appendix B). Some of the interview questions were:

1. At what age did you “come out”?
2. Tell me about your experiences with being bullied or harassed.
3. What role, if any, did the school counselor have in assisting you?
4. What did you do to cope with the bullying?
5. How, if at all, has the bullying (in the K-12 years) affected you since leaving school?

Transcribing Interviews

After each interview was completed, the primary researcher promptly typed all data to ensure the accuracy of participant data. While transcribing interviews, the primary researcher was able to incorporate noted behaviors or gestures into the transcripts from each of the participants. While interviewing, the interviewer was further able to review information and to clarify ambiguities by asking additional questions or allowing participants to offer additional relevant information.

All participants were contacted for member checking after all data were transcribed. Member checking ensures that transcribed information is precise and consistent with the intended meaning of the participant (Hill et al., 1997). Participants were presented with their transcripts and asked to verify whether or not the data presented fully described their experiences. They were also given an opportunity to correct or add anything that they believed was important to their story (Hill, et al., 1997). Although participants were contacted three times, only four actually reviewed their transcripts and responded accordingly. While all four participants expressed satisfaction with their transcripts and preliminary study findings, only one participant (7) provided additional information. Participant 7 shared that she believed her information was accurately portrayed and that she thought that this was a worth-while study. She further stated that she hoped that more studies of LGBTQ individuals would be done. The information was transcribed and reviewed, but the research team did not find that it added to data, and therefore it was not included in the study data. The other nine participants did not reply to the researcher's requests for member checking. Participants were given five days for

each attempt for a total of 15 days to review data and return to the primary researcher in the envelopes that were provided.

Data Analysis

The data that were collected reflected participant thoughts about their sexual orientation and the perceived effect that it had on how they were treated in their K-12 schooling. Participant transcripts consisted of open ended data that the research team used to divide the data and then debate to consensus to create domains. The domains were then further analyzed and used to create core ideas that further divided the interview data within domains. To maintain the integrity of the data in the core ideas, research team members independently formatted participant words into concise words that would be comparable across cases. During cross analysis, team members also independently created categories and met as a group for discussion. Team members discussed their rationales and came to an agreement on the wording of the different categories as well as the placement of core ideas into each of the categories.

The research team worked individually and then came together to create domains and core ideas. Rather than depend on preconceived ideas from the interview protocol, the team members first created “start lists” which allowed them to review the transcripts and develop domains from the data (Hill et al., 2005). After team members independently segmented the data into domains, they came together and worked to consensus on the first five cases to create an initial codebook. Team members independently used the codebook to code the remainder of the transcripts as well as to review the first five transcripts that were used to create the initial codebook. Finally, the team came together to further discuss the data and debate to consensus. After the draft of

the cross analysis was completed, the primary researcher returned to the raw data several times to combine or create new categories or domains. Each time revisions were made, the team met to discuss the changes and the researchers were able to settle on a final version of domains. The data was then used to segment data into core ideas.

Core ideas were constructed utilizing the “editing” process outlined by Hill et al., (2005). This process allowed team members to format participant data into concise, comparable cases, eliminating repetitions and non-relevant aspects of the interview data. The research team was further able to refine the data to reflect the basic core of what the participants actually said. In the process of developing core ideas, team members deeply immersed themselves in each case, helping to edit the core ideas to make them as clear, accurate and contextually based as possible by reviewing, challenging, and then finally agreeing on the core ideas that were created (Hill et al., 2005).

Cross analysis was done to further abstract the data. While analyzing the data, the team members individually generated categories and then brought the possible categories together as a group for discussion (Hill et al., 2005). Team members came together to agree on the wording of the categories as well as the placement of core ideas into the categories. To characterize the frequency of occurrence of the categories to allow for comparison across studies (Hill et al., 1997) the primary researcher assigned frequency labels to the data. A *general* label includes all or all but one of the cases which allowed researchers to discuss findings that applied to all, or almost all, of the sample. *Typical* includes more than half of the cases up to the cutoff for general in cases where half is atypical. Finally, *variant* includes at least two cases up to the cutoff for typical. As suggested in Hill et al. (2005) findings that emerged from single cases were not reported

in the data analysis. The cross analysis was then forwarded to the external auditor for feedback.

Use of Auditor

Auditor review and consultation were an active and continuous process during this research study. The primary researcher kept in contact with the external auditor via telephone and forwarding of the data for review. The auditor assisted the primary researcher by providing detailed feedback at each stage of the analysis process. The auditor checked to determine if raw material was placed in the correct domains and that the domains were an honest representation of the material, thus capturing the essence of the raw data and allowing the cross analysis to faithfully represent the data (Hill et al., 2005). Because the primary researcher chose to use an external auditor who could provide a perspective on the data that was not influenced by the research team, the auditor was able to question and critique the data, providing alternative ways of conceptualizing it (Hill et al., 2005). The research team reviewed the auditor's feedback and looked for evidence in the transcripts to justify incorporating the changes suggested by the auditor. The primary researcher resubmitted revisions to the auditor as necessary to be sure that the core ideas succinctly captured the essence of the data (Hill et al., 2005). This process further ensured the trustworthiness of the study.

Trustworthiness Strategies

Trustworthiness is the "degree to which the results of the study can be trusted" (Hill et al., 1997, p. 556). Because of the amount of subjectivity in qualitative research, there is a need for researchers to show that their methodological procedures can be trusted. To show that the results of a research study "are worth paying attention to" the

four issues of trustworthiness in qualitative research that demand attention are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.290).

Credibility is the evaluation of whether or not the research findings represent a credible conceptual interpretation of the data based on participant information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To address credibility, the primary researcher enlisted the assistance of a peer in the doctoral program at Old Dominion University as well as an external auditor to assist with the research study. They each assisted the research study by reviewing and then providing feedback on the adequacy of interview questions. The research team worked together to reach consensus on the data, and they posed questions and suggestions throughout the research process. Member checking of participants was also used to address credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

To show that the findings are applicable in other settings, or transferability, (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), a paper trail is available to other researchers to provide an opportunity to transfer the conclusions of this research study to other research projects. The primary researcher also included thick description of the data by collecting detailed descriptions of the data during interviews. She further reported the data in sufficient detail including detailed participant quotes. Finally, all data analysis documents are also available upon request from the primary researcher.

To show dependability, or demonstrate that the findings of this study are consistent and can be repeated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the primary researcher kept an audit trail of the study. The audit trail shows that team members utilized stepwise replication as they individually worked with data sources and then came together to debate to consensus. The primary researcher also enlisted the help of an external auditor

to thoroughly examine the audit trail which consists of the original transcripts, data analysis documentation, field notes and member checking comments. To show confirmability, or demonstrate that the findings were shaped by the data and not researcher bias, all raw data such as audio taped interviews and written field notes were included in the audit trail. The audit trail also contains data reconstruction and synthesis products such as the development of themes and findings. To further address the issue of confirmability, the research team identified and discussed biases before and throughout the study. These procedures address trustworthiness issues in the study, serve as a document check for the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and demonstrate careful monitoring of data procedures and data analysis (Hill et al., 1997).

Summary

The findings of this study can enhance current literature that addresses the bullying and harassment of LGBTQ individuals in school. It contributes to the research by providing insight into and suggestions on possible interventions as posed by LGBTQ youth who have lived through their bullying experiences. The information can be used to assist PSCs and SCTs in acquiring the awareness and knowledge necessary to face provide support for sexual minority students. The perceptual information of study participants can be used to create interventions that support schools in creating positive school climates as well as providing information that may equip school personnel in understanding the unique needs of this population. The creation of support systems may also promote success for LGBTQ students, and supportive relationships may improve the quality of life for these individuals.

Chapter Four

RESULTS

This chapter discusses the results of the current research study. It includes domains, core ideas and themes that were used to construct commonalities across cases. Participant examples from the interview transcripts are also included to illustrate the categories within the text (Hill et al., 2005).

During the consensus process, the research team worked to create domains, core ideas and themes, or categories. The data analysis process began with the research team using interview transcript data to develop domains, or topics to cluster the data. Team members first created “start lists” which allowed them to review the transcripts and develop domains from the data (Hill et al., 2005). After team members independently segmented the data into domains, they came together and worked to consensus on the first five cases to create an initial codebook. Team members independently used the codebook to code the remainder of the transcripts as well as to review the first five transcripts that were used to create the initial codebook. Finally, the team came together to further discuss the data and debate to consensus. After the draft of the cross analysis was completed, the primary researcher returned to the raw data several times to combine or create new categories or domains. Each time revisions were made, the team met to discuss the changes and the researcher was able to settle on a final version of domains. The data was then used to further segment data into core ideas.

Core ideas were constructed utilizing the “editing” process outlined by Hill et al., (2005). This process allowed team members to format participant data into concise, comparable cases, eliminating repetitions and non-relevant aspects of the interview data.

Cross analysis was done to further abstract the data. While analyzing the data, team members individually generated categories and then brought the possible categories together as a group for discussion (Hill et al., 2005). Team members came together to agree on the wording of the categories as well as the placement of core ideas into the categories. To characterize the frequency of occurrence of the categories to allow for comparison across studies (Hill et al., 1997) the primary researcher assigned frequency labels to the data. This process allowed the research team to provide a synopsis of the data within the cases. The cross analysis was then forwarded to the external auditor for feedback.

Use of Auditor

An external auditor reviewed the codes that were created in the initial and final codebooks. After the first codebook was created by the research team, it was sent to the auditor for feedback. In the initial codebook, the auditor suggested that the codebook be further reviewed by the research team and that more codes be collapsed. In the final codebook, the auditor suggested that more quotes be added to support the data. The research team reviewed and discussed the auditor feedback and then came to consensus on the best way to incorporate the auditor's suggestions. The following research questions guided the data collection process:

1. How have/do LGBTQ individuals experience and respond to bullying within K-12 academic settings?
 - a. What do they identify as physical, psychological, and academic effects of victimization throughout youth and early adulthood?

- b. What resilience or coping strategies do they identify as helpful in dealing with bullying?
2. What counseling interventions do LGBTQ individuals recommend as helpful for LGBTQ students in K-12 academic settings?

The data that were collected reflected participant thoughts about their sexual orientation, bullying, and the effect that it had on how they were treated in their K-12 schooling as well as suggestions for school interventions. Each of the participant's transcripts consisted of data that was used to create domains. The domains were then further analyzed and used to create core ideas that were used to divide the interview data within domains. To maintain the integrity of the data in the core ideas, research team members independently formatted participant words into concise words that would be comparable across cases. Team members worked independently throughout the data analysis process and then met as a group for discussion after creating domains, core ideas and cross analysis. Team members discussed their rationales for specific domains, core ideas and cross analysis, coming to an agreement on the best wording of the different categories as well as the placement of core ideas into each of the categories.

Domains were separated into two categories to remain consistent with the previously mentioned research questions (Hill et al., 2005): LGBTQ Experience/Response and Interventions. The Experience/Response category incorporates reported experiences and responses of harassment by participants while Recommended Interventions includes interventions that were generated by participants. The incorporation of some of the recommended interventions could potentially assist LGBTQ students dealing with in-school harassment by changing the climate of their

schools. To differentiate the frequency of occurrence of the categories (Hill et al., 2005), frequency labels were applied to the emergent categories based on participant responses (see Table II). Results that applied to 12-14 cases were labeled *general*, *typical* refers to a category identified in 8-11 participants and *variant* described results that were identified in 2-7 cases (Hill et al., 2005). Categories endorsed by only 1 participant were considered rare and the research team ultimately decided that the rare results did not significantly enhance the study.

Table II

LGBTQ Experience, Response and Intervention Frequency Labels

Bullying Domains Variant	General	Typical
SID Experiences	X	
Locations of Bullying		X
Types of Bullying		X
Effects of Bullying		X
Constructive Coping Strategies	X	
Destructive Coping Strategies		X
Avoidant Coping Strategies		X
Recommended Interventions		X

Note. N=14. General= a case endorsed by 12-14 participants; typical= a case endorsed by 8-11 participants; variant= a case endorsed by 2-7 participants

Examination of data revealed the following eight core domains: sexual identity development experiences, locations of bullying, types of bullying, effects of bullying,

constructive coping strategies, destructive coping strategies, avoidant coping strategies and interventions. Based on the two primary research questions that address experience/response and intervention, sexual identity development experiences, locations of bullying, types of bullying, effects of bullying and coping strategies were all listed under the Experience/Response category, while the Recommended Interventions category includes interventions that were suggested by participants. Core ideas included under SID experiences are same sex attraction, gender expression, nature versus nurture ideas about homosexuality, and the coming out process.

Bullying in structured and unstructured areas in schools such as cafeterias, classrooms, locker rooms, etcetera are included in the locations of bullying domain. Core ideas identified under the types of bullying domain includes participants who say that they were not bullied/ harassed, and verbal and/or physical harassment, while academic, social and/or emotional affects are included under the effects of bullying domain. Constructive coping strategies consists of the core ideas talking about bullying issues and concerns, standing up for self and/or others, self-acceptance, and active participation in school and extracurricular activities. Cutting, overeating, substance use, being insincere, suicidal ideation, and retaliation are included under the destructive coping domain, while ignoring the bully and the bullying and avoiding areas of school and home fall under the avoidant domain. Finally, the incorporation of clubs, a tolerance curriculum, an education of bullying curriculum and viewing LGBTQ individuals as “normal” are core ideas of the recommended intervention domain (see Table III).

Table III

Categories with Frequencies, Subcategories and Themes

Category Frequencies	Subcategories	Themes
SID Experiences 14	Same sex attractions	- Attractions to same sex at early ages; Acting on it
	Gender experiences	- Having mannerisms of opposite sex; Dress
	Nature/Nurture	- Sexual orientation not a choice; Gay lifestyle chosen
	Coming out	- Confided in; Age; Voluntary vs coerced
Locations 6	Structured areas	- Classrooms; Groups
	Unstructured areas	- Hallways; locker rooms; cafeterias; buses
Types 9	Not bullied	- Reported they were not bullied
	Verbal	- Name calling; heard negative statements; threatened
	Physical	- Hit; kicked; punched
Effects 8	Academic	- Failed class, stop going to class
	Social	- Isolated; problems building relationships
	Emotional	- Suicidal ideation; distress
Constructive Coping 12	Talking	- Mothers; friends; siblings
	Standing up	- Reporting harassment; standing up for self/others
	Self acceptance	- Accepting self; acknowledging sexual orientation
	Extracurricular act.	- Choir, drama, sports
Destructive Coping 6	Harming behaviors	- Cutting; overeating; substance abuse; insincere
	Retaliation	- Fighting; comments; gestures
Avoidant Coping 4	Ignore bully/bullying	- Act as if nothing happened; ignore harassers
	Avoid areas	- Find new ways to class/home; avoid areas
Recommended Interventions 9	Clubs	- Gay Straight Alliances; Teens Against Violence
	Tolerance Curriculum	- Education of tolerance; teach daily
	Education Curriculum	- Effects of bullying; human beings
	Viewed as "Normal"	- Fair treatment; nothing wrong

After domains and core ideas were established and the research team came to consensus with regards to each, the next step in data analysis was theory development.

Through analysis and organization of the data, the primary researcher was able to create a preliminary theory. The theoretical model was discussed among the research team and debated to consensus. A description of each domain and a cross analysis of domains, categories, and frequencies will be presented. The relationships among categories and across domains will also be presented.

Sexual Identity Development Experiences

The sexual identity development domain was present for all 14 (100%) participants. This domain was categorized as *general* as all of the participants reported experiencing this category. Participants discussed homosexual identity development experiences and behaviors that helped them to identify as being different from other little boys and girls. The subcategories in this domain include: same sex attraction, gender expression, nature versus nurture ideas about homosexuality, and the coming out process.

Twelve (86%) participants (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14) shared stories of same sex attractions and experiences while growing up. When probed about her same sex feelings of attractions as a component of her sexual identity, one participant stated:

Um, I don't know how to explain it. I was really, really, really young. Really, really, really young and I remember that I was in a bunk bed with another girl and we just started to get on top of each other. I mean I didn't understand the whole concept, but I knew that I was attracted to females, but I dated a lot of boys.

Participants 10 and 12 shared about their same sex attractions. Participant 12 said, 'It was just a feeling I had. I only liked girls,' and "I was attracted to girls probably at age 12, or probably younger than that. I was basically attracted when I seen girls. I was like a boy, Ewww!"

When discussing gender expression, or how one chooses to communicate his or her gender identity to others, 3 (21%) participants (2, 5, 9) in this category shared that they believed that they have always possessed feminine characteristics. Five (36%) participants (2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 14) expressed a desire to dress more like the opposite sex. When further probed, those five participants shared being uncomfortable in traditional clothing, but expressed being very comfortable in clothing of the opposite sex. Participant 14 stated about her gender expression:

A stud is basically someone who is like me. I'm a stud 'cause I don't feel comfortable in a woman's clothes. I don't feel comfortable in women's clothes. Like, I would run from a dress in a minute. I like dressing like a boy, since I can remember, but every now and then, I dress like a girl. Only on special occasions.

Participant 9 talked about how he dressed at school stating:

I was going to a pep rally or something. I had on a really gay outfit and I remember somebody saying something 'homosexual' that's all I heard, but my outfit was a short sleeved shirt, like really, really, short sleeves and it had rhinestones on it. It was really cute. The shirt was green, it had blue and yellow rhinestones and I had some of the sleeves you pull up your arm. The one on this side (pointing to the right arm) was blue and it cut off and then I had a blue one here (pointing to the left arm) that went from my wrist to my elbow. At first in school, I was really masculine and then when I really came out and I was in the open with my gayness, I was feminine with my clothing.

While further discussing SID, 9 (64%) participants (1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14) addressed the nature versus nature debate of homosexuality. These participants shared

that they have always felt different and that they believe that gay individuals do not choose to be gay. They further expressed that some individuals do however choose to live “gay lifestyles” for various reasons such as being “fed up” with members of the opposite sex and feeling that partners of the same sex better understand and meet the needs and wants of gay individuals. When asked about her thoughts on homosexuality, participant 13 stated:

Boys would come at me like why’d you go gay and why you did this, why you did that. Or they’d be like, oh I could turn you back.... It’s not about turning a person back, once their mind is changed, it’s changed. It’s not like a side, or like a thing you just pick. Oh, I like chocolate ice cream, I like vanilla...no. If you’re gay, you’re gay.

Similarly, participant 4 shared about the origins of homosexuality:

Like it’s just a feeling...I just think you are (gay). Like me, when I was younger I didn’t know what gay was, so I didn’t say nothing about it. I didn’t think nothing about it. I just thought it was a feeling, but I just think some people are just born like that.

Participant 10 shared that she believes that some people choose to live a gay lifestyle because of their pasts. She shared that she knows friends who “just got fed up with boys. It’s like you know, same old stuff.” Participant 12 agreed stating, “Some girls be curious...they wanna see what’s on the other side.” Whether participants believed that homosexuality was genetic or a choice based on past experiences, all fourteen experienced and shared their coming out processes.

Coming out is one of the most critical events of sexual identity development for LGBTQ individuals because it discloses their sexual identity (GLSEN, 2008; Human Rights Campaign [HRA], 2010). Sexual identity development models describe coming out in many ways but most ultimately agree that disclosure is critical to the coming out process (Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1982; Troiden, 1989). The decision to come out can be associated with a great deal of anxiety and concern about others' reactions to the information and can cause periods of unhappiness and loneliness for LGBTQ individuals (Cowie & Rivers, 2001).

All fourteen (100%) study participants reported varied coming out experiences that the research team deemed critical in the coming out process. Each of the participants shared information about who they came out to, how they came out, whether or not they verbally communicated or chose to use actions to express their sexual orientation, whether they voluntarily shared or were coerced, and finally the age that they came out. When talking about how emotional his coming out process was, participant 6 stated:

I broke down crying and she said, "What's wrong?" and blah, blah, blah and I told her what happened. I mean I told her. I've been holding this in for so long that it's already become a problem in my life because I became, not rebellious, but more of like an angry person. I just wasn't happy at all. It upset me, so being able to tell her was like a huge weight off my shoulders and she was just, you know, happy, ecstatic. She was like "I knew, but I just had to wait for you (laughs) to tell me." She's a beautiful woman.

While 8 (57%) participants (1, 3, 4, 6, 10, 12, 13, 14) verbally communicated their coming out, others expressed themselves in different ways. Participant 3 who

identifies as transgender and lives as a woman felt that his self-expression was his coming out tool. When asked if he remembers verbally expressing himself, he stated, “I don’t know if I actually said those words, but I’m sure that my actions said it.” When asked about his coming out process, participant 9 said, “I actually...when I came out, I came out on MySpace. I changed my orientation from straight to gay and all my cousins and my friends was on MySpace, so they found out first.”

Discussion of the coming out process resulted in 9 (64%) of the fourteen participants (1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14) reporting that they voluntarily came out to confidants such as their mothers, sisters or friends, while 3 (21%) participants (2, 7, 8) reported being coerced or forced to reveal their sexual orientation. Participant 7 expressed her coming out as having been coerced when she shared:

Um, (laughs) Lord. It wasn’t really voluntary. It wasn’t voluntary. Well what happened was my mom thought she was my best friend, which she was, so she would spend the night at the house and everything. When my mom heard, she got really, really pissed and she went and asked my sister do you know that Brittany is doing this and this and this. My mom, I mean my sister was like she didn’t even know what to say so she came and asked me and I was like “Yeah, well it’s true.” She was like “Under my house!” I think she was more upset that I didn’t come to her first and tell her.”

While some participants came out in their youth and had to deal with their guardian’s disapproval, others came out as adults. The average age that the study participants came out was 16 which is consistent with coming out research (Harrison, 2003, Savin-Williams, 1998). Four (33%) participants (6, 12, 13, 14) reported that they

came out as adults (ages 18-21) and the other 10 (71%) participants reported that they came out in their youth (ages 13-17) with several (3, 5, 7) reporting that they “always knew” that they were attracted to the opposite sex. When asked about her coming out age participant 3 said, “So in my junior year of high school, I came out. I was dating a female, so I guess you can say my junior year I came out. I was sixteen.”

Locations of Bullying

Six (43%) of fourteen participants (1, 3, 5, 6, 9, 11) reported that there were various locations in school where bullying occurred, thus this domain was categorized as *variant*. Categories under this domain included bullying that occurred in structured versus unstructured areas throughout the school building. These six participants reported that they were bullied in unstructured locations to include cafeterias, locker rooms, hallways and school buses while 3 (50%) of the six (1, 9, 11) reported that they were bullied in unstructured and structured areas such as the classroom. While sharing his bullying experiences, participant 3 said that he was often harassed in unstructured areas:

It (bullying) happened a lot in PE because I wasn't comfortable around the other guys so I would wear my uniform under my clothes and they would wonder like why are you wearing clothes under your clothes. So I got a lot of comments in the locker room. Hallways usually, in the cafeteria, not as much, but hallways was like when they walked by they would say something or they would put something on my locker and stuff like that. Like they wrote faggot on my locker one day. Yeah. Being the person that I am, I erased it and kept moving, but it hurt because it's like you don't know who I am. Don't knock me down.

While discussing his experiences in class, a structured area, participant 9 shared, “I actually got more comments in my Spanish class in high school. I didn't really get a whole lot of comments walking up and down the hall. Maybe like 1 or 2 that I really remember in the hallway. Most of the time it was from Spanish class.” Similarly participant 11 said about being bullied in class, “Well, if we were in class and you know we had talk time, everybody got in their little group of friends, they would always crack a joke about me being the gay guy or something.” Just as the locations where participants were bullied varied by participants, how participants were bullied also varied.

Types of Bullying

Participants reported many different in-school bullying experiences with 5 (36%) participants (1, 2, 3, 4, 7) originally reporting that they had not been bullied despite being called names or being hit. After being further probed about in-school experiences, it was discovered that they had actually experienced bullying at different times during their schooling. Nine (64%) of the 14 participants (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12) reported that they had actually been bullied, and thus the bullying domain was categorized as *typical*. This domain included verbal and/or physical harassment of participants. Participants were called derogatory names such as “faggot,” “dyke,” “homo,” or “queer.” In addition to being called names, negative statements were made to and about participants. When probed about verbal harassment, the nine participants shared that they had been verbally bullied in school. While describing his harassment experiences in school, participant 6 shared:

Yeah, they called you a faggot and they called you queer. I was called homo.

‘Don’t get close to him, you might get gay. Look at the faggot’. They would just

point and be like, ‘Oh yeah, look at the faggot’. You know, stuff like that, just stereotypical demeaning, derogatory statements.”

Similarly, participant 1 stated:

“Um, it actually occurred a lot in middle school. But it was just because of my voice that I kind of sounded like I'd be gay. So students actually surrounded me at one point and were making fun of me until I cried.

Participant 5 shared that he was threatened in school. He said that he was told by a student, “I’ll beat you up faggot!’ All that type stuff.” He then shared that he couldn’t tell me everything that was said because it was “too much cursing to repeat.”

While 9 (64%) participants were verbally harassed, 3 (33%) of nine participants (1, 3, 5) reported that they had also actually been physically assaulted as a result of their perceived or actual sexual orientation. These three participants reported having had objects thrown at them, they were forced to protect themselves by fighting, and some were hit or punched. While explaining what happened to him in the hallways at school, participant 5, who identifies as transgender shared:

I’m usually listening to my music in one ear, but I can hear out the other ear. I think some people play around with it. Like I can be walking down the hallway and one boy will push another boy into me. Then he’ll be like ‘I’m not f-ing playing with you! Don’t do that shit to me!’”

Similarly, participant 11 shared “Um, I’ve had my eye split.” Participant 9 stated about his harasser:

He was like, ‘Oh I heard you’, ah what did he say, ‘I heard you wanna fight me and this, that, and the third’. And like, he was trying to fight me. And he kept

calling me gay and he kept calling me a faggot. All of the participants shared that the harassment that they endured affected them in some way.

Effects of Bullying

Research shows that bullying can have devastating effects on youth (D'Augelli et al., 2002). While interviewing participants, there were several effects that were identified as detrimental to participants being successful in school. This domain was categorized as *typical* because 8 (57%) participants (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11) reported experiencing academic, social and/or emotional impact as a result of the things that were said or done to them in school.

While discussing the academic effects of bullying 2 (25%) of the 8 participants (9, 11) reported a decrease in grades due to them not wanting to be in school to endure the bullying. Participant 9 stated:

Spanish class I actually stopped going to. That's how fed up with that I was. And I didn't really feel like telling anybody about it or whatever, so I just started skipping Spanish class. I skipped Spanish class for that entire year. I didn't start back going to Spanish til like the very last month or two of school. I had like a straight F in Spanish. It was maybe like a 10% and I had a B when I went to Spanish. When I was going to Spanish I had...it was a borderline A/B, but it fell to an F.

While bullying academically affected some participants others were socially affected.

When discussing the social effects of bullying, 3 (38%) of the 8 participants (1, 2, 3) reported that their social lives were negatively affected. Some reported strained relationships with family members and friends, while others were unable to relate to a

specific gender. When participant 3 was asked how bullying had affected him socially he reported:

I'd say it actually had a pretty big impact because at that point I was kind of scared of not fitting in so I was more of the time working on my social life than school. My first few years of high school were like that.

When asked if bullying had had an impact on his social life, participant 2 stated:

Yes. Socially because I would want to get to know guys as friends and stuff like that, but they would automatically assume that 'Oh, you just tryna get on me' and stuff like that. So, I have maybe, to this day like five male friends. The majority are female because we can relate and connect and stuff like that. So it does impact me socially because there are some things that you do need that guy connection for.

While some study participants reported academic and social effects, 5 (63%) of the 8 (1, 3, 6, 7, 11) reported that they were mentally and emotionally affected by bullying.

Participant 6 expressed his emotional turmoil by saying:

Probably being distant from people affected me on a mental level. Um, like there was a period in my time, in my life, excuse me, where like I said I wanted to go away, but it did become a point where I was like contemplating suicide."

The academic, social, and emotional effects of bullying on LGBTQ students may follow them indefinitely as they continue to experience psychological distress and flashbacks when recalling their schooling (Rivers, 2004). How LGBTQ students are assisted in and

taught to cope with in-school harassment can be imperative determining factors in student success.

Constructive Coping Strategies

Constructive coping can lead to a positive sense of sexual identity and self-esteem, which are important characteristics of resilient individuals who have thrived in the face of adversity (Szymanski, 2009). Constructive coping strategies include positive self-talk, journaling, exercise, good life choices, and social support, all of which can lead to higher self-esteem (David & Knight, 2008; Harrison, 2003; Ridge et al., 2006; Szymanski, 2009). Moradi and Subich, (2004) found that minority group members with higher self-esteem may be able to more easily dismiss oppressive experiences.

Twelve (86%) participants (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14) reported that they used constructive coping strategies to deal with bullying, thus it was categorized as *general*. Constructive coping strategies identified by participants included 9 (75%) of the 12 participants (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11) talking about bullying issues and concerns, 2 (16%) of the 12 (1, 5) standing up for self and/or others, 6 (50%) choosing self-acceptance (1, 2, 4, 6, 13, 14) and 4 (33%) of the 12 (6, 7, 8, 11) actively participating in school and extracurricular activities. When asked about the role of school personnel, particularly the school counselor, only 2 (16%) participants (1, 2) considered the school counselor as someone they could go and talk to about bullying concerns, although neither of them reported doing so. After being further probed about whether or not they ever discussed their sexuality with the school counselor, both participants said that they had not and that they only went to the school counselor to discuss academics. They shared that school personnel, including PSCs wanted them to sit down and talk to their bullies,

which the participants believed was not helpful. They reported that confronting bullies usually made the situation worse and sometimes ended in the bully retaliating against the victim. As such, participants preferred talking to friends about bullying incidences. When asked to share how he coped with bullying, participant 2 said he confided in friends. He stated:

Basically when I had a bad day, I would just talk to my other girls. My lesbians, or my friends that's gay now. I would talk to them and have a conversation and stuff. They would tell me their, what they want. I would tell them what I had to tell them and they would just give me feedback. I would just have to take it and run with it.

Participant 1 coped by standing up to the bullies and/or telling school personnel what occurred. He said, "I know one of my friends, actually my boyfriend had the same [bullying] issue, and I actually voiced it to one of my teachers and she actually went up and talked to the boys and everything and it had gotten better." Also utilizing constructive coping strategies, four (29%) participants (6, 7, 8, 11) chose to engage in school and extracurricular activities rather than to take on their bullies. Participant 11 shared during his interview, "I mean, certain activities in school I clinged more towards because they were more accepting. Like um, choir or the drama department or band or something," while participant 6 stated, "I was mostly at school or doing something, more so in to books, into something to keep my mind off of it. So I guess you can say it affected me in a positive way." Despite the fact that most of the study participants chose to use constructive coping, some others utilized destructive coping strategies.

Destructive Coping Strategies

Some study participants chose to deal with in-school bullying in destructive, or negative ways. This domain was categorized as *variant* as six (43%) participants (1, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11) admitted to using negative coping strategies. Participants 1, 6, 7 and 11 coped with bullying by using self-destructive coping strategies such as cutting, overeating, substance use, not being authentic, and suicidal ideation. Three (50%) of the six participants (5, 9, 11) chose to retaliate against their harassers through negative comments, gestures and physical attacks. When asked about her self-destructive coping mechanism, cutting, participant 7 said, “Yeah, my outlet personally...that was just the one thing that I could control. Like I could control the deepness of the cut and the length of it and how much I wanted to bleed,” while participant 11 said about using food to cope, “Socially and emotionally, I ate a lot as a kid, because it was just an emotional thing. So my thing to do with my emotions was to eat.” When discussing coping strategies further, participant 1 shared that he tried to hide who he was hoping that it would stop the harassment. He stated, “At the time I was trying to hide who I am so I couldn’t let them get to me because if I respond, they’re going to think it’s true. That’s how I was thinking of it.” Finally, three (50%) of the six (5, 9, 11) also reported retaliating against their bullies. Participant 11 reported, “I was outted. This one guy told a couple of his friends and I retaliated by beating him up.” Similarly, participant 9 stated:

If anybody ever did anything I honestly started picking on them a little bit. Like if ever somebody gave me a funny look or something I’ll blow kisses at them or I’d start licking my lips or something and that would make them not even want to look my direction.

A third coping strategy identified in the study was avoidant coping.

Avoidant Coping Strategies

Avoidant, or escape coping was utilized by four (29%) participants (1, 4, 7, 10), thus this domain was categorized as *variant*. All four (100%) participants reported ignoring the bully and the bullying, and three (75%) of the four participants (1, 7, 10) also avoided certain areas of school and home. These three participants believed it easier to avoid certain areas and people rather than to allow the stress of the harassment get to them. When sharing how he avoided bullies in school, participant 1 said, “Most times I would just run to class quickly, well I didn't run I would walk very fast, from class to class. It was kind of like a catch me when you can type thing.” Participant 4 stated about the bullying, “I don’t pay attention to all that. If anything is said, I just walk on by.” Whether LGBTQ students use constructive, destructive or avoidant coping strategies, positive support systems at school will assist them in having an increased sense of safety which leads to better academic and psychological adjustment (GLSEN, 2007; Moradi & Subich, 2004; NEA, 2009; Pearson et al., 2007).

Recommended Interventions

Advocating in school for LGBTQ youth is important to the success of these students (NEA, 2009). It is imperative for educators to help these students feel safe and a part of the school community regardless of their sexual orientation. Because youth who are exposed to homophobic victimization can be extremely vulnerable and often not able to stand up for themselves, it is important for systemic interventions to be put into place that are addressed district-wide (O’Higgins-Norman, 2009; Rivers, 2001). Because school climate can contribute to the perpetuation of homophobic behaviors, school

counselors need to continue to work with LGBTQ allies to utilize and create intervention that support the LGBTQ population (Rivers & Noret, 2008; Smith & Chen-Hayes, 2004).

Based on their experiences in school, participants were asked to suggest interventions that they believed could be effective in addressing LGBTQ bullying in schools. Nine participants (64%) (1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11) participated in this domain, and thus it was categorized as *typical*. Three (33%) participants (1, 2, 4) suggested student interventions such as clubs (Teens Against Violence, Gay/ Straight Alliances), three (33%) participants (4, 5, 7) suggested teaching tolerance in schools, and three (33%) participants (1, 9, 11) suggested courses to educate faculty and students on the effects of bullying to help alleviate some of the pressure that LGBTQ students endure in school. While discussing possible interventions, participant 1 shared:

Well I think that at least in the high school maybe middle school, I think that there should maybe be some kind of clubs. There are a few clubs at our school like Teens Against Violence club. But I think because of everything and how big the issue is currently, I think that maybe it needs a little more personal attention and I think that teachers need to be made aware of how bad it really is.

Similarly, participant 2 said, “I would like to come together and have clubs or sessions that could help students top get through the day.” Other interventions included teaching tolerance in schools. When participant 4 was probed as to what to say to bullies if given an opportunity she said:

Me, I would be like why are you picking on them? Like they are the same as you. They just like the opposite thing, the opposite. I would just tell them to leave them alone. Why are you picking with them? They’re just like you. What if that was

your mama somebody was picking on? You wouldn't feel right. I guess they would learn from that.

When asked if they had additional information they wanted to share, all nine (100%) participants reported that it is important for people to know that homosexual people are normal people, just people with unique sexual preferences. In a discussion with a heterosexual male about being a lesbian and potentially wanting to be a mother, participant 7 stated:

I feel like there's so much ignorance and so much close mindedness that people can't grow from it. He tells me 'You're not going to have kids! How are you going to have kids and you're gay!?' (laughs) Artificial insemination, I can do it the old fashion way, turkey baster (laughs). I can adopt. There are so many unwanted children. I don't personally have to have them, but it's possible. I can still raise kids. I'm not incapable, there's nothing wrong with me.

Similarly, participant 9 shared about how her father questioned her about being bi-sexual. She said, "He was like, 'How long has this been going on and who else knows? And what have you done and all these other questions. He's like we'll help you'. I'm like, what are you talking about? I was like ok cause he tried to make it seem like something was wrong with me. That's why we're not even as close as we used to be." Ultimately, the interventions that were recommended have the potential to assist schools in working with LGBTQ students.

To answer question 1 of how LGBTQ individuals experienced and responded to harassment, locations of bullying, types of bullying, effects of bullying and coping strategies were utilized. Nine of the fourteen participants experienced verbal and

physical harassment in structured and unstructured areas in their schools. As a result of this victimization, seven participants reported that they experienced academic, social, and emotional effects while dealing with harassment. Twelve participants reported using positive coping strategies to address bullying, while six admitted to negative coping with four admitting to utilizing avoidant coping strategies. To answer research question 2, the recommendation interventions were observed. Participants pulled from their experiences in schools and suggested the following interventions to use with LGBTQ youth in schools. Interventions included the incorporation of gay clubs that provided support systems for LGBTQ students, the incorporation of a tolerance curriculum in schools, as well as the incorporation of a curriculum to educate students and faculty about the effects of bullying on LGBTQ youth. A final recommended intervention was that LGBTQ youth should be accepted as normal human beings rather than being thought of as deviant. Because many schools do not have support systems in place to address LGBTQ harassment in schools (Frank & Cannon, 2009), the suggested interventions of this study can be used as a start point to begin the implementation of school interventions to assist these students.

Theoretical Explanation for Findings

Participant responses were used to develop a theoretical framework of their conceptualizations of their bullying experiences and responses as well as the identification of school interventions. Research (Mishna, Newman, Daley, & Soloman, 2009) found that many variables such as societal factors and family may contribute to the victimization experiences of LGBTQ students. They further suggest that bullying be examined across multiple levels of LGBTQ youth's social ecologies to get a better

understanding of how they experience it (Mishna et al., 2009). Similarly, as a result of cross analysis procedures, the current research study found potential emergent relationships between categories suggesting that how participants experienced and responded to their harassment in school may have been influenced by confounding variables and factors (Figure 1). Figure 1 shows that SID, locations of bullying, and types of bullying may work together to influence how participants experienced and were affected by bullying. It further shows that the same variables may have influenced how participants conceptualized and coped with bullying. Also, participant conceptualizations of their bullying experiences and how they coped with it may have also influenced the interventions that they recommended during the current research study. Finally, the interventions that were utilized while participants were in school may have also impacted how they conceptualized bullying and how they chose to cope with it.

Discussions of SID experiences included same sex attractions, gender expression, feelings about the origins of homosexuality and the coming out process. Where individuals were in the SID process, particularly coming out, may have influenced how participants felt about themselves and their offenders. All participants were out at the time of their interviews for the current study, but several of them reported that they were not out while in school. Participants 1 and 6 reported being unsure about their sexual orientation in school which may have further exacerbated the harassment that they experienced. They stated that they did not report their bullies for fear of possibly having to address their sexuality or fear that nothing would be done to their offenders.

Where participants were bullied and how they were bullied further seemed to affect how they experienced and coped with bullying. The six participants who were

bullied in unstructured areas reported that they were less likely to tell on their offender for fear of being labeled a snitch as well as a fear of retaliation. When harassment occurred out in the open, participants may have been more likely to talk about it, but only if the discussion was initiated by school personnel. It also seemed as though verbal bullying may have been less likely to get reported and may have even been ignored in comparison to physical assaults. Finally, eight participants seemed to be more emotionally and socially affected than academically affected by victimization as only two participants reported academic affects while five reported emotional stress and the other three reporting social stress. This effect may also be reflected in the coping styles that these participants utilized.

Participants reported utilizing constructive, or positive coping, destructive, or negative coping, and avoidant, or escape coping strategies to deal with harassment in school. A constructive coping strategy that was used by all fourteen participants was talking about or discussing harassment. Talking was the most used coping strategy among participants and all participants believed that it was important to have someone or some type of support system to talk about bullying situations.

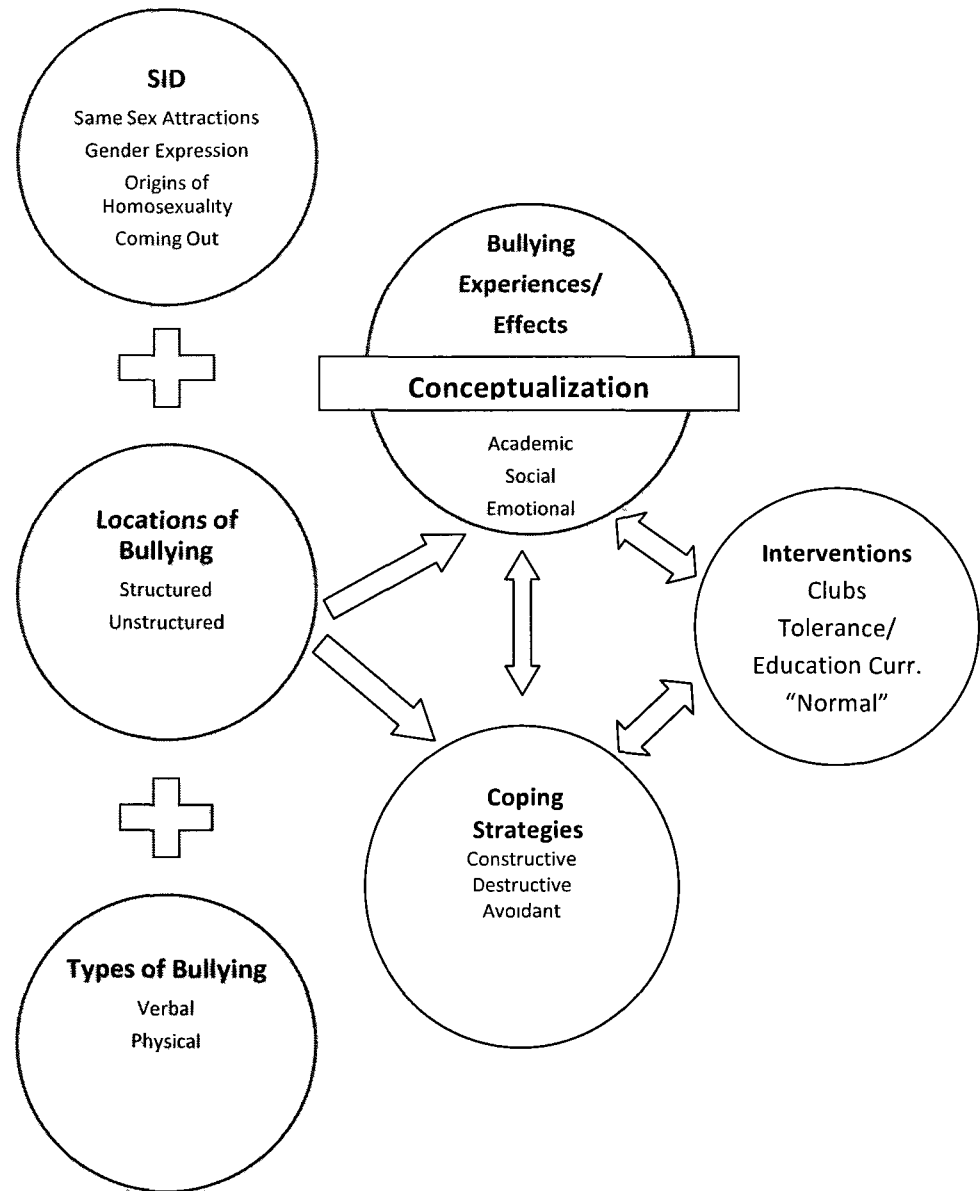
Participants shared bullying experiences and coping strategies that would be helpful to research with LGBTQ youth in schools. Three participants suggested student clubs that support LGBTQ students and three suggested the introduction of a tolerance curriculum. Three recommended a curriculum to educate students and personnel about the effects of bullying while nine participants reported that LGBTQ individuals are normal human beings and stated that they believe that people should view them as such. Based on their personal experiences in school, the nine participants shared interventions

that can be used as a start point for introducing conversation and lessons in school about sexuality.

Figure 1

Concept Map

LGBTQ Experience and Response to Bullying



domains were discussed including core ideas and themes that were used to construct commonalities across cases (Figure 1). Participant examples from interview transcripts were included to illustrate the categories within the text (Hill et al., 2005). Finally, a theoretical explanation of findings was presented.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Chapter 5 provides a statement of the purpose of this study and a summary of methodological procedures and results. It also includes a delineation of a proposed theoretical model of the effects of victimization and coping methods of LGBTQ students in school. Study limitations and implications for professional school counselors (PSCs) and school counselors in training (SCTs) are also discussed. Finally, suggestions for future research are discussed.

In order to investigate how LGBTQ individuals feel about and are impacted by bullying events, this qualitative study allowed fourteen LGBTQ individuals to share and conceptualize their in-school bullying experiences. After analysis and consensus of the data, eight domains were created: Sexual Identity Development Experiences, Locations of Bullying, Types of Bullying, Effects of Bullying, Constructive Coping Strategies, Destructive Coping Strategies, Avoidant Coping Strategies, and Recommended Interventions. Each of these dimensions work together to provide an explicit picture of the bullying experiences of LGBTQ youth in school.

To answer question 1 of how LGBTQ individuals experienced and responded to harassment, locations of bullying, types of bullying, effects of bullying and coping strategies were utilized. Nine of the fourteen participants experienced verbal and physical harassment in structured and unstructured areas in their schools. As a result of this victimization, seven participants reported that they experienced academic, social, and emotional effects while dealing with the harassment. Twelve participants reported using positive coping strategies to address bullying, while six admitted to negative coping with

four admitting to utilizing avoidant coping strategies. To answer research question 2, the recommendation interventions were observed. Participants pulled from their experiences in schools and suggested the following interventions to use with LGBTQ youth in schools. Interventions included the incorporation of gay clubs that provided support systems for LGBTQ students, the incorporation of a tolerance curriculum in schools, as well as the incorporation of a curriculum to educate students and faculty about the effects of bullying on LGBTQ youth. A final recommended intervention was that LGBTQ youth should be accepted as normal human beings rather than being thought of as deviant. Because many schools do not have support systems in place to address LGBTQ harassment in schools (Frank & Cannon, 2009), the suggested interventions of this study can be used as a start point to begin the implementation of school interventions to assist these students.

Research shows that nearly 9 out of 10 (90%) homosexual youth experience harassment in school settings with nearly two-thirds of these students also feeling unsafe in school (GLSEN, 2009). When comparing the variables for minority LGBTQ youth from the current study and similar studies, the results are similar. The GLSEN National School Climate Study (2009) study found that sixty four percent of their participants were verbally harassed, D'Augelli et al. (2002) found that 59% were harassed, and Herek et al. (1999) found that 56% of their participants had been verbally harassed because of actual or perceived sexual orientation compared to 57% of the minority participants in the current study. Thirty three percent of GLSEN (2009) participants were physically assaulted and 17% of Herek et al. (1999) participants were physically assaulted because of actual or perceived sexual orientation compared to 22% of the minority participants in

the current study. Similarly, Buhs, Ladd and Herald (2006) found that their study participants had adverse school adjustment outcomes compared to 25% of the minority participants in the current study who were academically affected. The current study found that 50% of its minority participants experienced emotional effects of bullying compared to the GLSEN (2007) that stated that their participants experienced suicidal ideation due to bullying. Finally, 25% of the current studies minority participants were involved in activities that were deemed physically abusive while Rivers and Noret (2008) found that their participants were involved in self destructive, self harming behaviors. The findings of this study suggest that how the LGBTQ individuals of color in the current study experienced victimization was very similar to other LGBTQ research.

This research study offers an in-depth description of the experiences of a small sample of LGBTQ individuals, limiting the scope of implications. The results of this study should be recognized as offering a significant empirical foundation for outlining the bullying experiences of homosexual students in school. Additional empirical research studying how intervening variables affect the relationship between homophobic victimization and distress could also be beneficial to the impact of victimization on LGBTQ individuals as well as to schools. This data lends support to the current study's emergent developmental model that states that confounding factors may play a pivotal role in how gay youth experience and respond to victimization. These findings have implications for school personnel and professional school counselor preparation as well as future research.

Sexual Identity Development Experiences

Sexual identity development (SID) is the sequential process that begins with one's personal awareness of same-sex attraction and feelings that deviate from the norm (Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1989; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996). The SID experiences of study participants included accounts of same sex attractions, gender expression, thoughts about the roles of nature and nurture and homosexuality as well as the coming out process.

Coming out is one of the most critical events of sexual identity development for LGBTQ individuals because it discloses their sexual identity (GLSEN, 2008; Human Rights Campaign [HRA], 2010). Sexual identity development models describe coming out in many ways but most ultimately agree that disclosure is critical to the coming out process (Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1982; Troiden, 1989). Study participants reported varied coming out experiences.

All participants described their coming out experiences by reporting who they came out to, how they came out, whether or not they verbally communicated it or chose to use actions to express their sexual orientation, whether they voluntarily shared or were coerced to come out, and how old they were when they came out. They also discussed their discovery ages, or the ages that they first realized that they were attracted to members of the opposite sex. The coming out process created strained relationships for LGBTQ participants whether they came out as youth or adults. The average discovery age reported by study participants was 12.6 with the four participants reporting that they have always known they were attracted to the opposite sex, knew at a really young age, or knew as early as fifth or sixth grade. The average age that study participants came out

was 16, which is consistent with coming out research (Harrison, 2003 & Savin-Williams, 1998).

Bullying

Rivers (2001) found that individuals have a great deal of consistency when recalling information from key periods in their lives. As such, study participants were asked questions about any bullying experiences that they may have had while in school in the K-12 setting. Interview questions allowed participants to provide information about locations, types, and effects of bullying in school.

Locations of Bullying

Six participants reported that there were various locations in school where bullying occurred. Categories under this domain included bullying that occurred in structured versus unstructured areas throughout the school building. Participants reported being bullied in cafeterias, locker rooms, hallways, school buses and classrooms. One participant who had derogatory words written on his locker reported that he had to clean it off, and the incident was never addressed by school personnel which is consistent with research that says that school personnel are not properly trained to address LGBTQ bullying in school (GLSEN, 2009; NEA, 2009)

Types of Bullying

Nine participants reported many different in-school bullying experiences ranging from verbal to physical harassment of participants. Participants were called negative names and spoken to and about in demeaning ways as well as being physically assaulted. It is important however to note that although participants were called derogatory names such as faggot, dyke, homo or queer, 5 (36%) participants said that they had not been

bullied in school when initially asked by the primary researcher. The five participants who reported having had objects thrown at them, being forced to protect themselves by fighting, and being hit or punched said that it was “typical gay stuff.” They did however admit that they were affected by it in some way describing the harassment as stereotypical and demeaning.

Effects of Bullying

Research shows that bullying can have devastating effects on youth (D’Augelli et al., 2002). While interviewing participants, there were several effects that were identified as detrimental to participants’ success in school. This domain includes the academic, social and/or emotional effects of harassment in school. Two (14%) participants reported decreases in grades due to truancy because they were unable to deal with abuse from upper grade students with one participant dropping three letter grades, which has also been found in LGBTQ literature. Rivers (2000) reported that fear and anxiety of being bullied can negatively affect the grades of LGBTQ youth. Social effects of bullying included strained relationships with family members and friends as well as reports of being and feeling disconnected from specific genders. These experiences often led to emotional strain for study participants. Six participants reported feeling distant from their peers and family members which eventually lead to hardened demeanors, self harm, and suicidal ideation.

The academic, social, and emotional effects of bullying on LGBTQ students can follow them indefinitely as they continue to experience psychological distress and flashbacks when recalling their school experiences (Rivers, 2004). These students must be equipped with appropriate coping strategies to deal with these daily stressors.

Coping and Resilience

Coping and resilience are crucial to the well being of LGBTQ individuals (Gwadz et al., 2006). Coping, or utilizing skills to address situations, and resilience, or positive adjustment in the face of hardship, can help minorities to improve the negative effects of stress (Gwadz et al., 2006). These findings can be important because coping literature of LGBTQ youth is limited (Gwadz et al., 2006) and there is not much literature to describe what coping strategies work best for LGBTQ youth. Coping strategies can be constructive (positive), destructive (negative), or avoidant (escape avoidance), but it is in the best interest of LGBTQ students to identify constructive coping strategies to use when dealing with the stressful situations (Nicholson & Long, 1990). The strategies described in the current research study can enhance the literature.

Constructive Coping Strategies

Constructive coping can lead to a positive sense of sexual identity and self-esteem, which are important characteristics of resilient individuals who thrive in the face of adversity (Szymanski, 2009). Constructive coping strategies include positive self-talk, journaling, exercise, good life choices, and social support, all of which can lead to higher self-esteem (David & Knight, 2008; Harrison, 2003; Ridge et al., 2006; Szymanski, 2009). Moradi and Subich, (2004) found that individuals with higher self-esteem may be able to more easily dismiss oppressive experiences.

Constructive coping strategies identified by 12 (86%) participants included talking about bullying issues and concerns, standing up for self and/or others, self-acceptance and active participation in school and extracurricular activities. Nine (75%) participants reported talking to friends, teachers and family members about the issues that

had in school. Four (29%) participants also reported being more engaged in school and extracurricular activities to cope with harassment. The GLSEN (2009) National School Climate survey found that students who were in schools with extracurricular activities such as clubs were 10.5% less likely to experience victimization because of sexual orientation. Similarly, Frank and Cannon (2009) reported that school-wide interventions that include extracurricular activities can assist in minimizing bullying of LGBTQ youth because students are occupied and are a part of a support system. School activities like choir, drama and team sports seemed to help study participants to feel a part of the school and allowed some distraction from the bullying. Despite the fact that most of the study participants chose to use constructive coping, some also utilized destructive coping strategies.

Destructive Coping Strategies

Study participants reported dealing with harassment in destructive, or negative ways. Six participants admitted to behaviors such as cutting, overeating, substance use, being insincere to themselves, and having thoughts of suicidal ideation to cope with bullying. They also reported retaliating against their harassers with negative comments and gestures, and physical attacks as well as utilizing bible verses in the hopes of becoming “normal.” The six participants reported that destructive behaviors allowed them to have control, something that they felt they did not have in other areas of their lives. In final attempts to stop the harassment, some participants used avoidant coping by ignoring or trying to stay away from bullies.

Avoidant Coping Strategies

Avoidant, or escape coping was also utilized to deal with bullying. Avoidant coping included four (29%) participants ignoring bullies and bullying as well as certain areas of school and home. The four participants believed it easier to avoid people and places than to deal with the stress of bullying. One participant shared that he played a game of cat and mouse with his bullies and tried to avoid areas where he knew the aggressors would be. Another participant said that he ignored the negative comments and kids bumping into him by acting as if it did not happen. Whether LGBTQ students used constructive, destructive or avoidant coping strategies, positive support systems at school are necessary to create safe environments where learning can occur and where students have an increased sense of safety which leads to better academic and psychological adjustment (GLSEN, 2007; Moradi & Subich, 2004; NEA, 2009; Pearson et al., 2007).

Recommended Interventions

Advocating in school for LGBTQ youth is important to the success of these students (NEA, 2009). It is imperative for educators to help these students feel safe and a part of the school community regardless of sexual orientation. Because youth who are exposed to homophobic victimization can be extremely vulnerable and often not able to stand up for themselves, it is important for systemic interventions to be put into place district-wide (O'Higgins-Norman, 2009; Rivers, 2001). Negative school climates can contribute to the perpetuation of homophobic behaviors and interventions that create positive school climates and that support the LGBTQ population must be put in place (Rivers & Noret, 2008; Smith & Chen-Hayes, 2004).

Based on their school experiences, participants were asked to suggest interventions that they believe could be effective in addressing LGBTQ bullying in schools. Three participants suggested the creation of student clubs such as Teens Against Violence, or Gay Straight Alliances, three suggested the inclusion of a tolerance curriculum in schools, and three suggested the integration of courses to educate faculty and students about the effects of bullying to help alleviate some of the pressure that LGBTQ students endure in school. They believed that faculty and student education was necessary to express how major LGBTQ harassment in school has become. Every participant expressed the importance of in-school support systems for LGBTQ youth and stressed that having an advocate at school can be important to student success. This is consistent with the ASCA (2007) national model that says that PSCS are advocates for all students despite their sexual orientation.

Implications for Counselors

The bullying of LGBTQ students has been a hot topic in the media. How have counselors, particularly school counselors, been taught to address the concerns that LGBTQ students present on a daily basis? How are school counselors-in-training being taught to address bullying issues within the school setting? Research shows that school counselors are not being properly prepared to address the concerns of LGBTQ youth in schools (Cannon, 2005). To be properly prepared to address such issues, SCTs must be encouraged to change their attitudes, enhance their knowledge, and increase awareness of how to deal with bullying and how to appropriately address bullying situations with LGBTQ students and their perpetrators (Byrd, 2010).

The findings of this study are promising in that they can provide insight into LGBTQ individuals' experiences. Because eleven (79%) participants in the current study described themselves as racial minorities when completing the demographics sheet, the results can be compared to similar studies of LGBTQ youth. It provides helpful tools to use when assisting LGBTQ students with bullying in the school setting. The study findings may suggest that individuals with multiple oppressed identities experience bullying with outside contextual factors and variables just as majority LGBTQ youth do (Mishna et al., 2009).

Some of the more conclusive findings of this study suggest that LGBTQ youth may not be comfortable going to school counselors or school personnel when dealing with bullying issues because they feel like it will make their situations worse or that nothing would be done to assist them. This information is consistent with current literature. Two (14%) study participants endorsed the idea of the school counselor as an advocate although neither actually utilized their school counselors to assist them with their bullying issues. This suggests that school counselors must work harder to be more visible and more approachable in the school setting. It also suggests that school counselors must communicate to students that they are student advocates and are there to assist all students with their needs.

Because eight of the fourteen study participants were academically, socially and/or emotionally affected by the bullying they endured while in school, it is imperative that school counselors are properly trained and supplied the skills to address the emotional needs of this group of adolescents. The presented theoretical model proposes that many variables and factors may influence how LGBTQ participants experience and

respond to victimization. According to study participants, school counselors consistently missed the mark when it came to assisting them with concerns regarding SID development and bullying although they never sought out their PSC for help. PSCs have to be more diligent in being visible and accessible to students as this lack of an in-school support system may have left students feeling isolated and alone. Educating professional school counselors on how to spark discussions about bullying, the effects of bullying, and the appropriate ways to handle these situations can provide school counselors with more positive attitudes concerning LGBTQ students as well as create school environments where LGBTQ youth can as one participant stated, “learn and not have to be in fear or be scared or have any defenses at all.”

Implications for Research

To further support the findings of the study, more qualitative research on coping strategies and counseling interventions for LGBTQ students need to be done to outline more effective strategies for working with this population. In addition to the qualitative research, quantitative research design instruments that measure LGBTQ attitudes towards school counseling interventions and effective strategies for professional school counselors working with students affected by bullying would also be advantageous since none of the participants sought out the school counselor to assist them with bullying. Additionally, qualitative and quantitative research measures aimed at investigating the importance of properly training school counselors-in-training to be able to deal with the effects of bullying is also necessary.

The current study utilized eleven (79%) self-identified LGBTQ minorities and found that the results are similar to LGBTQ literature. Further research on individuals

with multiple oppressed identities is needed to better understand how they are affected by bullying in school and how confounding factors may play a role in their experiences so that they can be better represented in the literature. While the results of this research study offer a glimpse into the thoughts and experiences of these LGBTQ youth who have lived to tell their stories about bullying in schools, there is much more research to be done around this topic because other students are losing their lives. Five participants were unable to recognize bullying behaviors when asked about their experiences in school. Although they were called names, socially isolated, picked on and/or hit or kicked, they initially reported that they had not been bullied when asked about their experiences. This suggests that a more definitive definition of bullying may also need to be established so that it is able to be more easily identified when it occurs.

Study Limitations

Qualitative research, like quantitative research, has its limitations. Qualitative studies by design often have a limited number of cases from which to gather information about the phenomena being studied (Patton, 2003). It is the job of the qualitative researcher to figure out how to get the most information of greatest utility to the research study. Limitations of this research study include issues related to (a) researcher's bias, (b) researcher's lack of experience, (c) participant selection, and (d) data collection.

Researcher Bias

The main instrument for data collection in qualitative research is the researcher (Patton, 2003). Because interview data limitations include possibly distorted responses due to a number of issues such as biases or emotions (Patton, 2003) it was important that I was fully cognizant of any biases that I, or my research team member may have had

around this topic. So that we were aware of our biases, the research team had a discussion of biases prior to the start of the study and as needed throughout. As the primary researcher, I worked to keep my biases from influencing the data. This was done by jotting down my thoughts about the research study and participants so that I could use them facilitate discussion with my team member, and I encouraged her to do the same. Discussion about the study allowed me to stay focused on the data ensuring that it was reflective of the participants' experiences. I also attempted to use member checking to verify participant information, but only got responses back from 4 (29%) participants.

Researcher's Lack of Experience

One of the most obvious study limitations is my lack of experience with qualitative methods and research. Because this was my first full-fledged qualitative study, initially it was very difficult for me to move from the structured interview questions to more probing questions. Journaling about my experiences, discussion with my team member and the experience of each interview eventually provided me with the courage ask more intense and probing questions as necessary. As a support system, I was also able to rely on my team member who has taken a qualitative studies course and served on a couple qualitative committees and my auditor, who is a qualitative researcher currently teaching a research course.

Participant Selection

Participant selection was limited to LGBTQ individuals from a limited geographic area between the ages of 17-21 who were willing to participate in the study. Since participants were expected to discuss in-school bullying experiences, there was an expectation that they had either been bullied or knew someone who had. The sample size

of 14 participants was small, with 11 (79%) participants identifying as minorities. While the study participants may not be representative of the LGBTQ population as a whole, much of the data that emerged was consistent with the literature. Further, while having participation from 11 minorities may be seen as a limitation of this study, research on LGBTQ minorities can enhance homosexual literature (Balsam et al., 2005; Harrison, 2003, Poteat et al., 2009; Savin-Williams, 1998). A detailed description of participant selection was included so that study results can be replicated.

Data Collection

To collect data, the primary researcher conducted one 30 minute interview with study participants in the hope of utilizing member checking methods. The primary researcher contacted all 14 participants on three separate occasions for member checking. A limitation of the member checking is that the researcher only gave participants five days, each attempt, to contact her with member checking information. Only four (29%) participants (1, 2, 6 & 11) responded back with member checking information. Those four participants, however, were able to verify that their information was accurately portrayed. Also, data was collected from 14 participants, which is on the higher end of the recommended range of 8-15 participants (Hill et al., 2005). Because of the time it takes to do data analysis, Hill et al. (2005) recommends 8-15 participants for studies with one or two interviews per participant, noting that studies with smaller sample sizes tended to have more interviews per person. Another limitation is the lack of specific questions that address LGBTQ experience in persons of color. The primary researcher believed that recruiting minorities would sufficiently address minority needs, but specific interview questions about multiple oppressed minorities would have been beneficial. A

final limitation was having two heterosexual research team members. Although precautions were taken to try to avoid biases from influencing data (recording biases, discussing biases, debating to consensus) it is possible that having two heterosexual team members influenced participant responses.

Summary

The results of this qualitative research study indicate that LGBTQ youth are experiencing verbal and physical harassment that may negatively affect their academics, as well as their social and emotional health. More specifically, how they conceptualize and respond to their experiences is influenced by a number of confounding variables. The cross analysis of domains regarding LGBTQ victimization were arranged in a meaningful way and debated to consensus to develop and propose this developmental and multidimensional model that addresses the impact of bullying on LGBTQ individuals. Based on the data from this study and the presented multidimensional model, it is fair to assume that additional factors such as SID, locations and types of bullying, and support or lack of support may also influence one's conceptualization of and response to bullying experiences.

The primary researcher initially assumed that bullying would only produce negative effects for participants, but study results showed that at least 2 (14%) participants chose to utilize positive coping strategies despite their bullying experiences. Participants shared that while they may have been negatively socially and emotionally affected by harassment, they focused their energy into school and extracurricular activities which were actually beneficial to them. Being part of activities such as band, choir or sports teams allowed the participants to make friends which eventually served as

the participants' support systems. Conversely, interventions that were thought to be helpful in working with LGBTQ students were perceived as not helpful by study participants. Participants believed that the involvement of school personnel in bullying situations would make the bullying worse so only a few participants reported incidents to school personnel. Initially the research team also believed that discussing the harassment with both parties could be an effective intervention to assist LGBTQ youth who are being bullied. Results of the current study show that participants felt that conferencing about harassment can have negative implications for the individual being bullied. When confronting a bully in school, Wright (2003) writes that school personnel should not allow the bully pull the victim into the discussion and says that bullies should be confronted in private whenever possible to remove the likelihood that the confronted student will 'play to the audience' of classmates, become defiant or non-compliant. Similarly study participants explained that bullying conferences can cause the bully to become upset, causing them to retaliate against the victim. It can also cause the victim to be labeled a "snitch" creating more problems for the person being bullied.

This information can be useful to PSCs and SCTs when creating and implementing interventions for use with LGBTQ students. It can also be helpful to future research studying the effects of victimization on LGBTQ students and in creating a definitive definition of bullying.

Chapter 6

Manuscript

Abstract

Bullying research frequently focuses on incidence and prevalence of bullying in schools, often failing to provide detailed accounts of the experiences and perceived impact of harassment and abuse on victimized LGBTQ students. Utilizing a consensual qualitative research design, the purpose of this study was to examine victimization experiences and coping mechanisms utilized by LGBTQ students in K-12 settings. A developmental model that suggests that confounding factors play a pivotal role in these youth's experiences and responses to bullying was created from interview data with 14 LGBTQ individuals. This study provides detailed accounts of LGBTQ experiences and coping mechanisms as well as potential interventions for professional school counselors and school counselors in training working with this unique population.

Advocating for the Misunderstood:

Perceptions of LGBTQ Bullying Experiences in School

Bullying in American schools is an endemic problem and students are being victimized because of actual and/or perceived sexual orientation (GLSEN, 2009). To address such issues, professional school counselors (PSCs) and school counselors in training (SCTs) are charged with promoting equal opportunities and respect for all students regardless of their sexual orientation. They are also expected to support students by eliminating barriers and implementing resilience strategies that impede academic, personal/social and career development (American School Counselor Association, 2007).

In their position statement on PSCs and LGBTQ youth, ASCA (2007) asserts that PSCs are aware of their own personal beliefs around sexual orientation and gender identity, knowledgeable of the negative effects of stereotyping individuals into gender roles, and committed to the affirmation of youth of all sexual orientations and identities. Research shows that personal prejudice, ignorance, and fear often result in negligible intervention by teachers, professional school counselors and administrators when homophobic attacks occur (Uribe & Harbeck, 1991) and GLSEN (2009) reported that 62.4% of students who were harassed or assaulted in school did not report the incident to school staff, believing little to no action would be taken or the situation could become worse if reported. Making matters worse, research shows that many PSCs have negative feelings about diverse sexual orientations (Beischke & Matthews, 1996; Doherty & Simmons, 1996; Eliason, 2000) and that graduates of counseling training programs feel unprepared to work with and/or address sexual minority concerns (Phillips & Fischer, 1998; Stone, 2003). While (ASCA, 2007) has outlined its mission to protect sexual

minority students, research shows that LGBTQ youth do not feel that they are being properly advocated for and supported in schools by professional school counselors (GLSEN, 2009; Frank & Cannon, 2009; Rivers, 2004; Smith & Chen-Hayes, 2004; Swearer et al., 2008).

Victimization of LGBTQ Students

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth make up approximately 5% of America's high school students (Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network [GLSEN], 2008). Of these students, 4 out of 5 have reported hearing homophobic remarks often in their schools. Additionally, 9 out of 10 LGBTQ students reported verbal or physical victimization during their previous year of school, while transgender students reported being physically harassed 30% more than students that identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (GLSEN, 2008).

Homophobic victimization, also known as homo-prejudice (Logan, 1996) or homophobia (Committee on Adolescence, 1993; Minton, 2008) ranges from verbal to actual physical abuse, and can have long-lasting, negative effects on LGBTQ youth (Cannon, 2005; GLSEN, 2007; Harrison, 2003; O'Higgins-Norman, 2008; Minton, Dahl, O'Moore & Tuck, 2008; Poteat, Paul, Steven, Espelage, & Koenig., 2009; Rivers, 2000; Williams, Connolly, Peplar & Craig., 2005). LGBTQ youth were called "fag" and "queer" and were mistreated because of either perceived or actual sexual orientation. Other gay youth reported that perpetrators drew sexually explicit pictures of them and also wrote homophobic epithets on their property. Similarly, others reported being physically assaulted as a result of their perceived or actual sexual orientation (Wertz, 2005).

The harassment that LGBTQ youth endure can be long-term and systematic, placing these youth at risk for greater suicidal ideation, depression, isolation, and fear at school (Elliott & Kirkpatrick, 1994; GLSEN, 2009). In its 2009 National School Climate Survey, GLSEN found that homosexual students are 7 times more likely than non-LGBTQ youth to skip school to avoid bullying, with 61% reporting feeling unsafe while at school (GLSEN, 2009). When compared to adolescents without same sex attraction, Bos, Sandfort, Bruyn, and Hakvoort, (2008) found that youth with same sex attractions had more mental health problems as well as school problems. This suggests that disparities in mental health and school performance may be related to discrimination based on sexual orientation.

In a quantitative study of victimization over the lifespan, Balsam, Rothblum, and Beauchaine (2005) found that the risks for LGBTQ individuals do not end in childhood, as same sex behaviors and homosexual identity were associated with higher risk for victimization for adult LGBTQ individuals. LGBTQ participants reported higher levels of overall lifetime victimization than their heterosexual counterpart to include psychological, physical, and sexual violence in both childhood and adulthood. This study lends support to the idea that LGBTQ youth who are bullied in school are also likely to be victimized as adults and reliving many of the same experiences that they did in their youth. The reported effects of victimization include internalized homophobia, abuse, and victimization in adult relationships, trust issues, and a fear of reporting victimization (Balsam et al., 2005).

Similarly, Herek, Gillis, and Cogan (1999) found that hate crime victimization appears to be associated with greater psychological distress for LGBTQ adults because

these individuals reported significantly more symptoms of depression, traumatic stress, anxiety, and anger as a result of being victimized over their life spans. Participants were also more likely to see the world as unsafe, to have a negative view of people, to have a lower sense of self esteem, and to experience feelings of vulnerability and powerlessness. Herek et al. reported, however, that many LGBTQ persons were able to deal with their psychological distress by using coping and resilience strategies such as realistically identifying potentially dangerous situations and therapy.

Coping and Resilience

Coping and resilience are critical to the well being of LGBTQ individuals as it allows individuals to utilize skills that create a positive adjustment during stressful situations (Gwadz, Clatts, Yi, Leonard, Goldsamt, & Lankenau, 2006). While coping and resilience literature on LGBTQ youth is limited, Szymanski (2009) has identified coping strategies for LGBTQ adults that may also be helpful when working with LGBTQ youth. Szymanski (2009) does however acknowledge the need for further research in the areas of coping and resilience for LGBTQ youth.

Interventions that assist with the coping and resilience of LGBTQ students in school are necessary for the success of these students (NEA, 2009). Since these students may feel unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation, it is important for systemic interventions that address victimization be put in place to empower and support LGBTQ students (NEA, 2009). Professional school counselors (PSCs) and school counselors in training (SCTs) serve as student advocates and should be included in implementing interventions that support LGBTQ students, their family members and school personnel in dealing with bullying situations (Frank & Cannon, 2009; Smith & Chen-Hayes, 2004).

Because LGBTQ people of color experience hate crime victimization as double minorities, more research needs to be done to be sure that PSCs are utilizing interventions that appropriately address the concerns of minority LGBTQ students (Balsam et al., 2005; Herek et al., 1999). To learn about the victimization experiences and coping mechanisms of LGBTQ students in school, this qualitative utilized a social constructivist paradigm to gain insight into the minds of LGBTQ participants to gain a better understanding of the perceived impact of victimization on LGBTQ students. This study hopes to enhance the current, predominantly quantitative literature by providing detailed accounts their experiences as well as potential interventions for PSCs and SCTs working with this unique population.

Professional School Counselors

The professional school counselor has a major role in helping to implement interventions to decrease the victimization of LGBTQ youth in the schools. School counselors work individually with students, staff and families and have an opportunity to advocate for LGBTQ youth during classroom guidance, groups, staff development and parent workshops (Cannon, 2005; Frank & Cannon, 2009). Realizing the role of the PSC in assisting LGBTQ youth, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2007) states that the professional school counselor:

1. Promotes equal opportunity and respect for all individuals regardless of sexual orientation/gender identity,
2. Works to eliminate barriers that impede student development and achievement,
3. Is committed to the academic, personal/social and career development of all students.

ASCA (2007) further states that PSCs work to create safe school environments for all students that are free of fear, bullying and hostility. This is done by advocating for comprehensive diversity trainings for staff members, LGBTQ-affirming language, counseling, and the development of inclusive school environments (Cannon, 2005; Frank & Cannon, 2009). Leadership and advocacy strategies for LGBTQ youth are not always easy to employ, but professional school counselors must recognize the importance of this support for LGBTQ students (Cannon, 2005; Frank & Cannon, 2009). PSCs are thought of as leaders in their schools who can provide support for students engaged in the process of recognizing and accepting their own sexual identities (DePaul, Walsh & Dam, 2010; Pollack, 2006). As such, PSCs can promote dialogue about issues of sexual orientation sometimes “anticipating a great deal of resistance at many levels of the educational system” (Smith & Chen-Hayes, 2004, p. 192).

While school counselors are often ideally situated to support LGBTQ students, they seldom have an adequate level of knowledge and understanding to do so (Bieschke, Eberz, Bard, & Crouteau, 1998; Walter & Hayes, 1998). Byrd (2010) reported that properly trained school counselors are more likely to be able to train other school personnel on how to address LGBTQ issues and to promote positive school climates. The current research study can assist PCSs and SCT training programs by providing possible coping strategies and recommending interventions from LGBTQ students who have lived through harassment experiences in schools.

Method Participant Selection

Criterion sampling, procedures were utilized to recruit 14 self-identified LGBTQ individuals. Participant ages ranged from 17-21 with 11 (79%) participants

identifying as racial minorities and 1 identifying as White. Patton (2002) recommends using maximum variation of the sample and research methods to avoid one-sided representation of a particular topic. While adhering to the interview protocol, the interviewer used probes and clarifying questions to prevent getting limited answers from study participants. Maximum variation was used to maximize the diversity relevant to the research questions since there were a smaller number of cases selected for the study, and the variation procedures further assisted the researcher in understanding how the phenomenon was seen and understood among different people, in different settings, at different times. Participants provided current and retrospective accounts of the bullying that they experienced in school and explained how, if at all, those experiences still affect them today. Research shows that individual retrospective accounts of homophobic victimization are usually accurate and participant recall is reliable (Balsam et al., 2005; Rivers, 2001, 2004).

After approval from Old Dominion University's Internal Review Board (IRB), study participants were recruited in Southern Virginia. Areas of recruitment included Richmond, Virginia and the Hampton Roads area. The primary researcher was born and raised in the Hampton Roads area and lived in Richmond for seven years. As such, the primary researcher has had prolonged engagement with individuals in these contexts. The researcher's background as a resident of both Richmond and the Hampton Roads area serves as a strength to the study.

Participants that met the stated criteria were recruited via local gay organizations, schools and through friends and associates of the research team members, particularly friends who worked in schools. To connect with the

organizations and schools, the primary researcher met with friends who have knowledge and experience of gay organizations and who know gay individuals. After being provided with names of different organizations and individuals, the researcher gathered contact information by searching the phone book for schools and “googleing” gay organizations in the target areas. After calling several organizations and utilizing associates to connect with contact persons who agreed to distribute the study information, the researcher emailed and faxed the informed consent/solicitation letter (Appendix C) and study information to be distributed. The primary researcher followed up with contacts after each organization’s scheduled meeting dates to be sure that all information had been distributed. Once she received confirmation that all information was distributed, the researcher waited for participant calls. All study participants completed a demographic sheet (Appendix A) that assessed 11 items to include age, gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation.

Prospective participants were provided with a solicitation letter and written informed consent (Appendix C) that provided an explanation of the present study outlining its purpose. Interested participants were asked to complete the enclosed demographic worksheet (Appendix A) and return the form to the primary researcher before their interviews. After initial contact was made and potential applicants were selected, the primary researcher contacted participants and scheduled interviews.

The study sample included a diverse group of individuals ages 17-21 to allow for maximum variation. Although participants were in a limited age range, they came from diverse backgrounds with distinctive home and life experiences that they drew on during their interviews. Inclusion criteria for study participants included individuals who self-

identified as LGBTQ and experienced homo-prejudice and/or harassment and bullying while in school. There were two 17-year old participants, one 18-year old participant, one 19-year old participant, six 20-year old participants, and four 21-year old participants who contributed to the study. Eight participants identified their gender as female, 4 identified as male, and 2 identified as transgender. When choosing race/ethnicity, 10 participants identified as African American, 1 as White, 1 as Biracial and 2 identified as “Other”. When choosing sexual orientation, seven participants identified as gay, six as lesbian, and one participant identified as bisexual. For relationship status, eight participants were in same sex relationships, while six were single. Table I displays the demographic profiles of each participant.

Because individuals who experience harassment sometimes consider themselves victims, study participants were sampled to find out what, if any, they believed were the various perceived effects and experiences related to being a sexual minority. Participants provided varied experiences of victimization and because of the lack of research conducted with minority LGBTQ persons, the research team was particularly interested in interviewing people of color.

Table I

Participant Profiles

Participant Number	Ethnicity	Age	Gender	Sexual Orientation	Relationship Status
1	White	17	Male	Gay	Same Sex
2	African American	20	Transgender	Gay	Single
3	African American	21	Female	Lesbian	Same Sex
4	African American	21	Female	Gay	Same Sex
5	African American	17	Transgender	Gay	Single
6	African American	21	Male	Gay	Single
7	African American	20	Female	Lesbian	Same Sex
8	African American	20	Female	Lesbian	Same Sex
9	African American	21	Male	Gay	Single
10	Other	19	Female	Lesbian	Same Sex
11	African American	20	Male	Bisexual	Single
12	African American	20	Female	Lesbian	Same Sex
13	Other	18	Female	Gay	Single
14	Other (Biracial)	20	Female	Lesbian	Same Sex

Data Collection

The primary researcher did face to face interviews with participants in settings that were most comfortable for them using the interview protocol created by the research team. Questions addressed sexuality, past harassment/bullying experiences, effects of harassment in school and possible interventions.

Data were compiled through the use of an initial protocol created by the primary researcher (Appendix B). To reach consensus about the interview protocol, research team members reviewed and offered suggestions for changes and/or potential questions. Interview questions addressed experiences of harassment in school and the effects of that victimization, if any, over the years. Because an individual's behavior becomes meaningful when placed in context with the lives of those around them (Patton, 2002), this descriptive 8-item, 30 minute interview protocol assisted participants in reporting their experiences in school as members of a minority group.

The research team assisted in checking the adequacy of interview questions (Hill et al., 2005). Both team members read through questions and offered opinions about the effectiveness of potential questions. After all information was compiled, the primary researcher decided on the following interview questions that assessed sexual identity development experiences, the coming out process, victimization/bullying, effects and coping experiences, and potential school interventions for working with LGBTQ youth in schools (Appendix B). Some of the interview questions were:

3. At what age did you “come out”?
4. Tell me about your experiences with being bullied or harassed.
3. What role, if any, did the school counselor have in assisting you?

4. What did you do to cope with the bullying?
5. How, if at all, has the bullying (in the K-12 years) affected you since leaving school?

Transcribing Interviews

After each interview was completed, the primary researcher promptly typed all data to ensure the accuracy of participant data. While transcribing interviews, the primary researcher was able to incorporate noted behaviors or gestures into the transcripts from each of the participants. While interviewing, the interviewer was further able to review information and to clarify ambiguities by asking additional questions or allowing participants to offer additional relevant information.

All participants were contacted for member checking after all data were transcribed. Member checking ensures that transcribed information is precise and consistent with the intended meaning of the participant (Hill et al., 1997). Participants were presented with their transcripts and asked to verify whether or not the data presented fully described their experiences. They were also given an opportunity to correct or add anything that they believed was important to their story (Hill, et al., 1997). Although participants were contacted three times, only four actually reviewed their transcripts and responded accordingly. While all four participants expressed satisfaction with their transcripts and preliminary study findings, only one participant (7) provided additional information. Participant 7 shared that she believed her information was accurately portrayed and that she thought that this was a worth-while study. She further stated that she hoped that more studies of LGBTQ individuals would be done. The information was transcribed and reviewed, but the research team did not find that it added to data, and

therefore it was not included in the study data. The other nine participants did not reply to the researcher's requests for member checking. Participants were given five days for each attempt for a total of 15 days to review data and return to the primary researcher in the envelopes that were provided.

Data Analysis

The data that were collected reflected participant thoughts about their sexual orientation and the perceived effect that it had on how they were treated in their K-12 schooling. Participant transcripts consisted of open ended data that the research team used to divide the data and then debate to consensus to create domains. The domains were then further analyzed and used to create core ideas that further divided the interview data within domains. To maintain the integrity of the data in the core ideas, research team members independently formatted participant words into concise words that would be comparable across cases. During cross analysis, team members also independently created categories and met as a group for discussion. Team members discussed their rationales and came to an agreement on the wording of the different categories as well as the placement of core ideas into each of the categories.

The research team worked individually and then came together to create domains and core ideas. Rather than depend on preconceived ideas from the interview protocol, the team members first created "start lists" which allowed them to review the transcripts and develop domains from the data (Hill et al., 2005). After team members independently segmented the data into domains, they came together and worked to consensus on the first five cases to create an initial codebook. Team members independently used the codebook to code the remainder of the transcripts as well as to

review the first five transcripts that were used to create the initial codebook. Finally, the team came together to further discuss the data and debate to consensus. After the draft of the cross analysis was completed, the primary researcher returned to the raw data several times to combine or create new categories or domains. Each time revisions were made, the team met to discuss the changes and the researchers was able to settle on a final version of domains. The data was then used to segment data into core ideas.

Core ideas were constructed utilizing the “editing” process outlined by Hill et al., (2005). This process allowed team members to format participant data into concise, comparable cases, eliminating repetitions and non-relevant aspects of the interview data. The research team was further able to refine the data to reflect the basic core of what the participants actually said. In the process of developing core ideas, team members deeply immersed themselves in each case, helping to edit the core ideas to make them as clear, accurate and contextually based as possible by reviewing, challenging, and then finally agreeing on the core ideas that were created (Hill et al., 2005).

Cross analysis was done to further abstract the data. While analyzing the data, the team members individually generated categories and then brought the possible categories together as a group for discussion (Hill et al., 2005). Team members came together to agree on the wording of the categories as well as the placement of core ideas into the categories. To characterize the frequency of occurrence of the categories to allow for comparison across studies (Hill et al., 1997) the primary researcher assigned frequency labels to the data. A *general* label includes all or all but one of the cases which allowed researchers to discuss findings that applied to all, or almost all, of the sample. *Typical* includes more than half of the cases up to the cutoff for general in cases where half is

atypical. Finally, *variant* includes at least two cases up to the cutoff for typical. As suggested in Hill et al. (2005) findings that emerged from single cases were not reported in the data analysis. The cross analysis was then forwarded to the external auditor for feedback.

Auditor review and consultation were an active and continuous process during this research study. The primary researcher kept in contact with the external auditor via telephone and forwarding of the data for review. The auditor assisted the primary researcher by providing detailed feedback at each stage of the analysis process. The auditor checked to determine if raw material was placed in the correct domains and that the domains were an honest representation of the material, thus capturing the essence of the raw data and allowing the cross analysis to faithfully represent the data (Hill et al., 2005). Because the primary researcher chose to use an external auditor who could provide a perspective on the data that was not influenced by the research team, the auditor was able to question and critique the data, providing alternative ways of conceptualizing it (Hill et al., 2005). The research team reviewed the auditor's feedback and looked for evidence in the transcripts to justify incorporating the changes suggested by the auditor. The primary researcher resubmitted revisions to the auditor as necessary to be sure that the core ideas succinctly captured the essence of the data (Hill et al., 2005). This process further ensured the trustworthiness of the study.

Trustworthiness Strategies

Trustworthiness is the "degree to which the results of the study can be trusted" (Hill et al., 1997, p. 556). Because of the amount of subjectivity in qualitative research, there is a need for researchers to show that their methodological procedures can

be trusted. To show that the results of a research study “are worth paying attention to” the four issues of trustworthiness in qualitative research that demand attention are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.290).

Credibility is the evaluation of whether or not the research findings represent a credible conceptual interpretation of the data based on participant information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To address credibility, the primary researcher enlisted the assistance of a peer in the doctoral program at Old Dominion University as well as an external auditor to assist with the research study. They each assisted the research study by reviewing and then providing feedback on the adequacy of interview questions. The research team worked together to reach consensus on the data, and they posed questions and suggestions throughout the research process. Member checking of participants was also used to address credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

To show that the findings are applicable in other settings, or transferability, (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), a paper trail is available to other researchers to provide an opportunity to transfer the conclusions of this research study to other research projects. The primary researcher also included thick description of the data by collecting detailed descriptions of the data during interviews. She further reported the data in sufficient detail including detailed participant quotes. Finally, all data analysis documents are also available upon request from the primary researcher.

To show dependability, or demonstrate that the findings of this study are consistent and can be repeated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the primary researcher kept an audit trail of the study. The audit trail shows that team members utilized stepwise replication as they individually worked with data sources and then came together to

debate to consensus. The primary researcher also enlisted the help of an external auditor to thoroughly examine the audit trail which consists of the original transcripts, data analysis documentation, field notes and member checking comments. To show confirmability, or demonstrate that the findings were shaped by the data and not researcher bias, all raw data such as audio taped interviews and written field notes were included in the audit trail. The audit trail also contains data reconstruction and synthesis products such as the development of themes and findings. To further address the issue of confirmability, the research team identified and discussed biases before and throughout the study. These procedures address trustworthiness issues in the study, serve as a document check for the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and demonstrate careful monitoring of data procedures and data analysis (Hill et al., 1997).

Use of Auditor

An external auditor reviewed the codes that were created in the initial and final codebooks. After the first codebook was created by the research team, it was sent to the auditor for feedback. In the initial codebook, the auditor suggested that the codebook be further reviewed by the research team and that more codes be collapsed. In the final codebook, the auditor suggested that more quotes be added to support the data. The research team reviewed and discussed the auditor feedback and then came to consensus on the best way to incorporate the auditor's suggestions. The following research questions guided the data collection process:

1. How have/do LGBTQ individuals experience and respond to bullying within K-12 academic settings?

- a. What do they identify as physical, psychological, and academic effects of victimization throughout youth and early adulthood?
 - b. What resilience or coping strategies do they identify as helpful in dealing with bullying?
2. What counseling interventions do LGBTQ individuals recommend as helpful for LGBTQ students in K-12 academic settings?

The data that were collected reflected participant thoughts about their sexual orientation, bullying, and the effect that it had on how they were treated in their K-12 schooling as well as suggestions for school interventions. Each of the participant's transcripts consisted of data that was used to create domains. The domains were then further analyzed and used to create core ideas that were used to divide the interview data within domains. To maintain the integrity of the data in the core ideas, research team members independently formatted participant words into concise words that would be comparable across cases. Team members worked independently throughout the data analysis process and then met as a group for discussion after creating domains, core ideas and cross analysis. Team members discussed their rationales for specific domains, core ideas and cross analysis, coming to an agreement on the best wording of the different categories as well as the placement of core ideas into each of the categories.

Findings

During the consensus process, the research team worked to create domains, core ideas and themes, or categories. The data analysis process began with the research team using interview transcript data to develop domains, or topics to cluster the data. Team members first created "start lists" which allowed them to review the transcripts and

develop domains from the data (Hill et al., 2005). After team members independently segmented the data into domains, they came together and worked to consensus on the first five cases to create an initial codebook. Team members independently used the codebook to code the remainder of the transcripts as well as to review the first five transcripts that were used to create the initial codebook. Finally, the team came together to further discuss the data and debate to consensus. After the draft of the cross analysis was completed, the primary researcher returned to the raw data several times to combine or create new categories or domains. Each time revisions were made, the team met to discuss the changes and the researcher was able to settle on a final version of domains. The data was then used to further segment data into core ideas.

Core ideas were constructed utilizing the “editing” process outlined by Hill et al., (2005). This process allowed team members to format participant data into concise, comparable cases, eliminating repetitions and non-relevant aspects of the interview data.

Cross analysis was done to further abstract the data. While analyzing the data, team members individually generated categories and then brought the possible categories together as a group for discussion (Hill et al., 2005). Team members came together to agree on the wording of the categories as well as the placement of core ideas into the categories. To characterize the frequency of occurrence of the categories to allow for comparison across studies (Hill et al., 1997) the primary researcher assigned frequency labels to the data. This process allowed the research team to provide a synopsis of the data within the cases. The cross analysis was then forwarded to the external auditor for feedback.

Domains were separated into two categories to remain consistent with the previously mentioned research questions (Hill et al., 2005): LGBTQ Experience/Response and Interventions. The Experience/Response category incorporates reported experiences and responses of harassment by participants while Recommended Interventions includes interventions that were generated by participants. The incorporation of some of the recommended interventions could potentially assist LGBTQ students dealing with in-school harassment by changing the climate of their schools. To differentiate the frequency of occurrence of the categories (Hill et al., 2005), frequency labels were applied to the emergent categories based on participant responses (see Table II). Results that applied to 12-14 cases were labeled *general*, *typical* refers to a category identified in 8-11 participants and *variant* described results that were identified in 2-7 cases (Hill et al., 2005). Categories endorsed by only 1 participant were considered rare and the research team ultimately decided that the rare results did not significantly enhance the study.

Table II

LGBTQ Experience, Response and Intervention Frequency Labels

Bullying Domains Variant	General	Typical
SID Experiences	X	
Locations of Bullying		X
Types of Bullying		X
Effects of Bullying		X
Constructive Coping Strategies	X	
Destructive Coping Strategies		X
Avoidant Coping Strategies		X
Recommended Interventions		X

Note. N=14. General= a case endorsed by 12-14 participants; typical= a case endorsed by 8-11 participants; variant= a case endorsed by 2-7 participants

Examination of data revealed the following eight core domains: sexual identity development experiences, locations of bullying, types of bullying, effects of bullying, constructive coping strategies, destructive coping strategies, avoidant coping strategies and interventions. Based on the two primary research questions that address experience/response and intervention, sexual identity development experiences, locations of bullying, types of bullying, effects of bullying and coping strategies were all listed under the Experience/Response category, while the Recommended Interventions category includes interventions that were suggested by participants. Core ideas included under SID experiences are same sex attraction, gender expression, nature versus nurture ideas about homosexuality, and the coming out process.

Table III

Categories with Frequencies, Subcategories and Themes

Category Frequencies	Subcategories	Themes
SID Experiences 14	Same sex attractions	- Attractions to same sex at early ages; Acting on it
	Gender experiences	- Having mannerisms of opposite sex; Dress
	Nature/Nurture	- Sexual orientation not a choice; Gay lifestyle chosen
	Coming out	- Confided in; Age; Voluntary vs coerced
Locations 6	Structured areas	- Classrooms; Groups
	Unstructured areas	- Hallways; locker rooms; cafeterias; buses
Types 9	Not bullied	- Reported they were not bullied
	Verbal	- Name calling; heard negative statements; threatened
	Physical	- Hit; kicked; punched
Effects 8	Academic	- Failed class, stop going to class
	Social	- Isolated; problems building relationships
	Emotional	- Suicidal ideation; distress
Constructive Coping 12	Talking	- Mothers; friends; siblings
	Standing up	- Reporting harassment; standing up for self/others
	Self acceptance	- Accepting self; acknowledging sexual orientation
	Extracurricular act.	- Choir, drama, sports
Destructive Coping 6	Harming behaviors	- Cutting; overeating; substance abuse; insincere
	Retaliation	- Fighting; comments; gestures
Avoidant Coping 4	Ignore bully/bullying	- Act as if nothing happened; ignore harassers
	Avoid areas	- Find new ways to class/home; avoid areas
Recommended Interventions 9	Clubs	- Gay Straight Alliances; Teens Against Violence
	Tolerance Curriculum	- Education of tolerance; teach daily
	Education Curriculum	- Effects of bullying; human beings
	Viewed as "Normal"	- Fair treatment; nothing wrong

Bullying in structured and unstructured areas in schools such as cafeterias, classrooms, locker rooms, etcetera are included in the locations of bullying domain. Core ideas identified under the types of bullying domain includes participants who say that they were not bullied/ harassed, and verbal and/or physical harassment, while academic, social and/or emotional affects are included under the effects of bullying domain. Constructive coping strategies consists of the core ideas talking about bullying issues and concerns, standing up for self and/or others, self-acceptance, and active participation in school and extracurricular activities. Cutting, overeating, substance use, being insincere, suicidal ideation, and retaliation are included under the destructive coping domain, while ignoring the bully and the bullying and avoiding areas of school and home fall under the avoidant domain. Finally, the incorporation of clubs, a tolerance curriculum, an education of bullying curriculum and viewing LGBTQ individuals as “normal” are core ideas of the recommended intervention domain.

After domains and core ideas were established and the research team came to consensus with regards to each, the next step in data analysis was theory development. Through analysis and organization of the data, the primary researcher was able to create a preliminary theory. The theoretical model was discussed among the research team and debated to consensus. A description of each domain and a cross analysis of domains, categories, and frequencies will be presented. The relationships among categories and across domains will also be presented (see Figure 1).

Sexual Identity Development Experiences

The sexual identity development domain was present for all 14 (100%) participants. This domain was categorized as *general* as all of the participants reported

experiencing this category. Participants discussed homosexual identity development experiences and behaviors that helped them to identify as being different from other little boys and girls. The subcategories in this domain include: same sex attraction, gender expression, nature versus nurture ideas about homosexuality, and the coming out process.

Twelve (86%) participants (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14) shared stories of same sex attractions and experiences while growing up. When probed about her same sex feelings of attractions as a component of her sexual identity, one participant stated:

Um, I don't know how to explain it. I was really, really, really young. Really, really, really young and I remember that I was in a bunk bed with another girl and we just started to get on top of each other. I mean I didn't understand the whole concept, but I knew that I was attracted to females, but I dated a lot of boys.

Participants 10 and 12 shared about their same sex attractions. Participant 12 said, 'It was just a feeling I had. I only liked girls,' and "I was attracted to girls probably at age 12, or probably younger than that. I was basically attracted when I seen girls. I was like a boy, Ewww!"

When discussing gender expression, or how one chooses to communicate his or her gender identity to others, 3 (21%) participants (2, 5, 9) in this category shared that they believed that they have always possessed feminine characteristics. Five (36%) participants (2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 14) expressed a desire to dress more like the opposite sex. When further probed, those five participants shared being uncomfortable in traditional clothing, but expressed being very comfortable in clothing of the opposite sex. Participant 14 stated about her gender expression:

A stud is basically someone who is like me. I'm a stud 'cause I don't feel comfortable in a woman's clothes. I don't feel comfortable in women's clothes. Like, I would run from a dress in a minute. I like dressing like a boy, since I can remember, but every now and then, I dress like a girl. Only on special occasions.

Participant 9 talked about how he dressed at school stating:

I was going to a pep rally or something. I had on a really gay outfit and I remember somebody saying something 'homosexual' that's all I heard, but my outfit was a short sleeved shirt, like really, really, short sleeves and it had rhinestones on it. It was really cute. The shirt was green, it had blue and yellow rhinestones and I had some of the sleeves you pull up your arm. The one on this side (pointing to the right arm) was blue and it cut off and then I had a blue one here (pointing to the left arm) that went from my wrist to my elbow. At first in school, I was really masculine and then when I really came out and I was in the open with my gayness, I was feminine with my clothing.

While further discussing SID, 9 (64%) participants (1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14) addressed the nature versus nature debate of homosexuality. These participants shared that they have always felt different and that they believe that gay individuals do not choose to be gay. They further expressed that some individuals do however choose to live "gay lifestyles" for various reasons such as being "fed up" with members of the opposite sex and feeling that partners of the same sex better understand and meet the needs and wants of gay individuals. When asked about her thoughts on homosexuality, participant 13 stated:

Boys would come at me like why'd you go gay and why you did this, why you did that. Or they'd be like, oh I could turn you back.... It's not about turning a person back, once their mind is changed, it's changed. It's not like a side, or like a thing you just pick. Oh, I like chocolate ice cream, I like vanilla...no. If you're gay, you're gay.

Similarly, participant 4 shared about the origins of homosexuality:

Like it's just a feeling...I just think you are (gay). Like me, when I was younger I didn't know what gay was, so I didn't say nothing about it. I didn't think nothing about it. I just thought it was a feeling, but I just think some people are just born like that.

Participant 10 shared that she believes that some people choose to live a gay lifestyle because of their pasts. She shared that she knows friends who “just got fed up with boys. It's like you know, same old stuff.” Participant 12 agreed stating, “Some girls be curious...they wanna see what's on the other side.” Whether participants believed that homosexuality was genetic or a choice based on past experiences, all fourteen experienced and shared their coming out processes.

Coming out is one of the most critical events of sexual identity development for LGBTQ individuals because it discloses their sexual identity (GLSEN, 2008; Human Rights Campaign [HRA], 2010). Sexual identity development models describe coming out in many ways but most ultimately agree that disclosure is critical to the coming out process (Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1982; Troiden, 1989). The decision to come out can be associated with a great deal of anxiety and concern about others' reactions to the

information and can cause periods of unhappiness and loneliness for LGBTQ individuals (Cowie & Rivers, 2001).

All fourteen (100%) study participants reported varied coming out experiences that the research team deemed critical in the coming out process. Each of the participants shared information about who they came out to, how they came out, whether or not they verbally communicated or chose to use actions to express their sexual orientation, whether they voluntarily shared or were coerced, and finally the age that they came out. When talking about how emotional his coming out process was, participant 6 stated:

I broke down crying and she said, “What’s wrong?” and blah, blah, blah and I told her what happened. I mean I told her. I’ve been holding this in for so long that it’s already become a problem in my life because I became, not rebellious, but more of like an angry person. I just wasn’t happy at all. It upset me, so being able to tell her was like a huge weight off my shoulders and she was just, you know, happy, ecstatic. She was like “I knew, but I just had to wait for you (laughs) to tell me.” She’s a beautiful woman.

While 8 (57%) participants (1, 3, 4, 6, 10, 12, 13, 14) verbally communicated their coming out, others expressed themselves in different ways. Participant 3 who identifies as transgender and lives as a woman felt that his self-expression was his coming out tool. When asked if he remembers verbally expressing himself, he stated, “I don’t know if I actually said those words, but I’m sure that my actions said it.” When asked about his coming out process, participant 9 said, “I actually...when I came out, I came out on MySpace. I changed my orientation from straight to gay and all my cousins and my friends was on MySpace, so they found out first.”

Discussion of the coming out process resulted in 9 (64%) of the fourteen participants (1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14) reporting that they voluntarily came out to confidants such as their mothers, sisters or friends, while 3 (21%) participants (2, 7, 8) reported being coerced or forced to reveal their sexual orientation. Participant 7 expressed her coming out as having been coerced when she shared:

Um, (laughs) Lord. It wasn't really voluntary. It wasn't voluntary. Well what happened was my mom thought she was my best friend, which she was, so she would spend the night at the house and everything. When my mom heard, she got really, really pissed and she went and asked my sister do you know that Brittany is doing this and this and this. My mom, I mean my sister was like she didn't even know what to say so she came and asked me and I was like "Yeah, well it's true." She was like "Under my house!" I think she was more upset that I didn't come to her first and tell her."

While some participants came out in their youth and had to deal with their guardian's disapproval, others came out as adults. The average age that the study participants came out was 16 which is consistent with coming out research (Harrison, 2003, Savin-Williams, 1998). Four (33%) participants (6, 12, 13, 14) reported that they came out as adults (ages 18-21) and the other 10 (71%) participants reported that they came out in their youth (ages 13-17) with several (3, 5, 7) reporting that they "always knew" that they were attracted to the opposite sex. When asked about her coming out age participant 3 said, "So in my junior year of high school, I came out. I was dating a female, so I guess you can say my junior year I came out. I was sixteen."

Locations of Bullying

Six (43%) of fourteen participants (1, 3, 5, 6, 9, 11) reported that there were various locations in school where bullying occurred, thus this domain was categorized as *variant*. Categories under this domain included bullying that occurred in structured versus unstructured areas throughout the school building. These six participants reported that they were bullied in unstructured locations to include cafeterias, locker rooms, hallways and school buses while 3 (50%) of the six (1, 9, 11) reported that they were bullied in unstructured and structured areas such as the classroom. While sharing his bullying experiences, participant 3 said that he was often harassed in unstructured areas:

It (bullying) happened a lot in PE because I wasn't comfortable around the other guys so I would wear my uniform under my clothes and they would wonder like why are you wearing clothes under your clothes. So I got a lot of comments in the locker room. Hallways usually, in the cafeteria, not as much, but hallways was like when they walked by they would say something or they would put something on my locker and stuff like that. Like they wrote faggot on my locker one day.

Yeah. Being the person that I am, I erased it and kept moving, but it hurt because it's like you don't know who I am. Don't knock me down.

While discussing his experiences in class, a structured area, participant 9 shared, "I actually got more comments in my Spanish class in high school. I didn't really get a whole lot of comments walking up and down the hall. Maybe like 1 or 2 that I really remember in the hallway. Most of the time it was from Spanish class." Similarly participant 11 said about being bullied in class, "Well, if we were in class and you know we had talk time, everybody got in their little group of friends, they would always crack a

joke about me being the gay guy or something.” Just as the locations where participants were bullied varied by participants, how participants were bullied also varied.

Types of Bullying

Participants reported many different in-school bullying experiences with 5 (36%) participants (1, 2, 3, 4, 7) originally reporting that they had not been bullied despite being called names or being hit. After being further probed about in-school experiences, it was discovered that they had actually experienced bullying at different times during their schooling. Nine (64%) of the 14 participants (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12) reported that they had actually been bullied, and thus the bullying domain was categorized as *typical*. This domain included verbal and/or physical harassment of participants. Participants were called derogatory names such as “faggot,” “dyke,” “homo,” or “queer.” In addition to being called names, negative statements were made to and about participants. When probed about verbal harassment, the nine participants shared that they had been verbally bullied in school. While describing his harassment experiences in school, participant 6 shared:

Yeah, they called you a faggot and they called you queer. I was called homo.

‘Don’t get close to him, you might get gay. Look at the faggot’. They would just point and be like, ‘Oh yeah, look at the faggot’. You know, stuff like that, just stereotypical demeaning, derogatory statements.”

Similarly, participant 1 stated:

“Um, it actually occurred a lot in middle school. But it was just because of my voice that I kind of sounded like I'd be gay. So students actually surrounded me at one point and were making fun of me until I cried.

Participant 5 shared that he was threatened in school. He said that he was told by a student, “I’ll beat you up faggot!” All that type stuff.” He then shared that he couldn’t tell me everything that was said because it was “too much cursing to repeat.”

While 9 (64%) participants were verbally harassed, 3 (33%) of nine participants (1, 3, 5) reported that they had also actually been physically assaulted as a result of their perceived or actual sexual orientation. These three participants reported having had objects thrown at them, they were forced to protect themselves by fighting, and some were hit or punched. While explaining what happened to him in the hallways at school, participant 5, who identifies as transgender shared:

I’m usually listening to my music in one ear, but I can hear out the other ear. I think some people play around with it. Like I can be walking down the hallway and one boy will push another boy into me. Then he’ll be like ‘I’m not f-ing playing with you! Don’t do that shit to me!’”

Similarly, participant 11 shared “Um, I’ve had my eye split.” Participant 9 stated about his harasser:

He was like, ‘Oh I heard you’, ah what did he say, ‘I heard you wanna fight me and this, that, and the third’. And like, he was trying to fight me. And he kept calling me gay and he kept calling me a faggot. All of the participants shared that the harassment that they endured affected them in some way.

Effects of Bullying

Research shows that bullying can have devastating effects on youth (D’Augelli et al., 2002). While interviewing participants, there were several effects that were identified as detrimental to participants being successful in school. This domain was categorized as

typical because 8 (57%) participants (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11) reported experiencing academic, social and/or emotional impact as a result of the things that were said or done to them in school.

While discussing the academic effects of bullying 2 (25%) of the 8 participants (9, 11) reported a decrease in grades due to them not wanting to be in school to endure the bullying. Participant 9 stated:

Spanish class I actually stopped going to. That's how fed up with that I was. And I didn't really feel like telling anybody about it or whatever, so I just started skipping Spanish class. I skipped Spanish class for that entire year. I didn't start back going to Spanish til like the very last month or two of school. I had like a straight F in Spanish. It was maybe like a 10%-and I had a B when I went to Spanish. When I was going to Spanish I had...it was a borderline A/B, but it fell to an F.

While bullying academically affected some participants others were socially affected.

When discussing the social effects of bullying, 3 (38%) of the 8 participants (1, 2, 3) reported that their social lives were negatively affected. Some reported strained relationships with family members and friends, while others were unable to relate to a specific gender. When participant 3 was asked how bullying had affected him socially he reported:

I'd say it actually had a pretty big impact because at that point I was kind of scared of not fitting in so I was more of the time working on my social life than school. My first few years of high school were like that.

When asked if bullying had had an impact on his social life, participant 2 stated:

Yes. Socially because I would want to get to know guys as friends and stuff like that, but they would automatically assume that ‘Oh, you just tryna get on me’ and stuff like that. So, I have maybe, to this day like five male friends. The majority are female because we can relate and connect and stuff like that. So it does impact me socially because there are some things that you do need that guy connection for.

While some study participants reported academic and social effects, 5 (63%) of the 8 (1, 3, 6, 7, 11) reported that they were mentally and emotionally affected by bullying.

Participant 6 expressed his emotional turmoil by saying:

Probably being distant from people affected me on a mental level. Um, like there was a period in my time, in my life, excuse me, where like I said I wanted to go away, but it did become a point where I was like contemplating suicide.”

The academic, social, and emotional effects of bullying on LGBTQ students may follow them indefinitely as they continue to experience psychological distress and flashbacks when recalling their schooling (Rivers, 2004). How LGBTQ students are assisted in and taught to cope with in-school harassment can be imperative determining factors in student success.

Constructive Coping Strategies

Constructive coping can lead to a positive sense of sexual identity and self-esteem, which are important characteristics of resilient individuals who have thrived in the face of adversity (Szymanski, 2009). Constructive coping strategies include positive

self-talk, journaling, exercise, good life choices, and social support, all of which can lead to higher self-esteem (David & Knight, 2008; Harrison, 2003; Ridge et al., 2006; Szymanski, 2009). Moradi and Subich, (2004) found that minority group members with higher self-esteem may be able to more easily dismiss oppressive experiences.

Twelve (86%) participants (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14) reported that they used constructive coping strategies to deal with bullying, thus it was categorized as *general*. Constructive coping strategies identified by participants included 9 (75%) of the 12 participants (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11) talking about bullying issues and concerns, 2 (16%) of the 12 (1, 5) standing up for self and/or others, 6 (50%) choosing self-acceptance (1, 2, 4, 6, 13, 14) and 4 (33%) of the 12 (6, 7, 8, 11) actively participating in school and extracurricular activities. When asked about the role of school personnel, particularly the school counselor, only 2 (16%) participants (1, 2) considered the school counselor as someone they could go and talk to about bullying concerns, although neither of them reported doing so. After being further probed about whether or not they ever discussed their sexuality with the school counselor, both participants said that they had not and that they only went to the school counselor to discuss academics. They shared that school personnel, including PSCs wanted them to sit down and talk to their bullies, which the participants believed was not helpful. They reported that confronting bullies usually made the situation worse and sometimes ended in the bully retaliating against the victim. As such, participants preferred talking to friends about bullying incidences. When asked to share how he coped with bullying, participant 2 said he confided in friends. He stated:

Basically when I had a bad day, I would just talk to my other girls. My lesbians, or my friends that's gay now. I would talk to them and have a conversation and stuff. They would tell me their, what they want. I would tell them what I had to tell them and they would just give me feedback. I would just have to take it and run with it.

Participant 1 coped by standing up to the bullies and/or telling school personnel what occurred. He said, "I know one of my friends, actually my boyfriend had the same [bullying] issue, and I actually voiced it to one of my teachers and she actually went up and talked to the boys and everything and it had gotten better." Also utilizing constructive coping strategies, four (29%) participants (6, 7, 8, 11) chose to engage in school and extracurricular activities rather than to take on their bullies. Participant 11 shared during his interview, "I mean, certain activities in school I clinged more towards because they were more accepting. Like um, choir or the drama department or band or something," while participant 6 stated, "I was mostly at school or doing something, more so in to books, into something to keep my mind off of it. So I guess you can say it affected me in a positive way." Despite the fact that most of the study participants chose to use constructive coping, some others utilized destructive coping strategies.

Destructive Coping Strategies

Some study participants chose to deal with in-school bullying in destructive, or negative ways. This domain was categorized as *variant* as six (43%) participants (1, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11) admitted to using negative coping strategies. Participants 1, 6, 7 and 11 coped with bullying by using self-destructive coping strategies such as cutting, overeating, substance use, not being authentic, and suicidal ideation. Three (50%) of the six

participants (5, 9, 11) chose to retaliate against their harassers through negative comments, gestures and physical attacks. When asked about her self-destructive coping mechanism, cutting, participant 7 said, “Yeah, my outlet personally...that was just the one thing that I could control. Like I could control the deepness of the cut and the length of it and how much I wanted to bleed,” while participant 11 said about using food to cope, “Socially and emotionally, I ate a lot as a kid, because it was just an emotional thing. So my thing to do with my emotions was to eat.” When discussing coping strategies further, participant 1 shared that he tried to hide who he was hoping that it would stop the harassment. He stated, “At the time I was trying to hide who I am so I couldn’t let them get to me because if I respond, they’re going to think it’s true. That’s how I was thinking of it.” Finally, three (50%) of the six (5, 9, 11) also reported retaliating against their bullies. Participant 11 reported, “I was outted. This one guy told a couple of his friends and I retaliated by beating him up.” Similarly, participant 9 stated:

If anybody ever did anything I honestly started picking on them a little bit. Like if ever somebody gave me a funny look or something I’ll blow kisses at them or I’d start licking my lips or something and that would make them not even want to look my direction.

A third coping strategy identified in the study was avoidant coping.

Avoidant Coping Strategies

Avoidant, or escape coping was utilized by four (29%) participants (1, 4, 7, 10), thus this domain was categorized as *variant*. All four (100%) participants reported ignoring the bully and the bullying, and three (75%) of the four participants (1, 7, 10) also avoided certain areas of school and home. These three participants believed it easier

to avoid certain areas and people rather than to allow the stress of the harassment get to them. When sharing how he avoided bullies in school, participant 1 said, “Most times I would just run to class quickly, well I didn't run I would walk very fast, from class to class. It was kind of like a catch me when you can type thing.” Participant 4 stated about the bullying, “I don’t pay attention to all that. If anything is said, I just walk on by.” Whether LGBTQ students use constructive, destructive or avoidant coping strategies, positive support systems at school will assist them in having an increased sense of safety which leads to better academic and psychological adjustment (GLSEN, 2007; Moradi & Subich, 2004; NEA, 2009; Pearson et al., 2007).

Recommended Interventions

Advocating in school for LGBTQ youth is important to the success of these students (NEA, 2009). It is imperative for educators to help these students feel safe and a part of the school community regardless of their sexual orientation. Because youth who are exposed to homophobic victimization can be extremely vulnerable and often not able to stand up for themselves, it is important for systemic interventions to be put into place that are addressed district-wide (O’Higgins-Norman, 2009; Rivers, 2001). Because school climate can contribute to the perpetuation of homophobic behaviors, school counselors need to continue to work with LGBTQ allies to utilize and create intervention that support the LGBTQ population (Rivers & Noret, 2008; Smith & Chen-Hayes, 2004).

Based on their experiences in school, participants were asked to suggest interventions that they believed could be effective in addressing LGBTQ bullying in schools. Nine participants (64%) (1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11) participated in this domain, and thus it was categorized as *typical*. Three (33%) participants (1, 2, 4) suggested

student interventions such as clubs (Teens Against Violence, Gay/ Straight Alliances), three (33%) participants (4, 5, 7) suggested teaching tolerance in schools, and three (33%) participants (1, 9, 11) suggested courses to educate faculty and students on the effects of bullying to help alleviate some of the pressure that LGBTQ students endure in school. While discussing possible interventions, participant 1 shared:

Well I think that at least in the high school maybe middle school, I think that there should maybe be some kind of clubs. There are a few clubs at our school like Teens Against Violence club. But I think because of everything and how big the issue is currently, I think that maybe it needs a little more personal attention and I think that teachers need to be made aware of how bad it really is.

Similarly, participant 2 said, “I would like to come together and have clubs or sessions that could help students top get through the day.” Other interventions included teaching tolerance in schools. When participant 4 was probed as to what to say to bullies if given an opportunity she said:

Me, I would be like why are you picking on them? Like they are the same as you. They just like the opposite thing, the opposite. I would just tell them to leave them alone. Why are you picking with them? They’re just like you. What if that was your mama somebody was picking on? You wouldn't feel right. I guess they would learn from that.

When asked if they had additional information they wanted to share, all nine (100%) participants reported that it is important for people to know that homosexual people are normal people, just people with unique sexual preferences. In a discussion with a

heterosexual male about being a lesbian and potentially wanting to be a mother, participant 7 stated:

I feel like there's so much ignorance and so much close mindedness that people can't grow from it. He tells me 'You're not going to have kids! How are you going to have kids and you're gay!?' (laughs) Artificial insemination, I can do it the old fashion way, turkey baster (laughs). I can adopt. There are so many unwanted children. I don't personally have to have them, but it's possible. I can still raise kids. I'm not incapable, there's nothing wrong with me.

Similarly, participant 9 shared about how her father questioned her about being bi-sexual. She said, "He was like, 'How long has this been going on and who else knows? And what have you done and all these other questions. He's like we'll help you'. I'm like, what are you talking about? I was like ok cause he tried to make it seem like something was wrong with me. That's why we're not even as close as we used to be." Ultimately, the interventions that were recommended have the potential to assist schools in working with LGBTQ students.

Theoretical Explanation for Findings

Participant responses were used to develop a theoretical framework of their conceptualizations of their bullying experiences and responses as well as the identification of school interventions. Research (Mishna, Newman, Daley, & Soloman, 2009) found that many variables such as societal factors may contribute to the victimization experiences of LGBTQ students. They further suggest that bullying be examined across multiple levels of LGBTQ youth's social ecologies to get a better understanding of it (Mishna et al., 2009). Similarly, as a result of cross analysis

procedures, the current research study found potential emergent relationships between categories suggesting that how participants experienced and responded to their harassment in school may have been influenced by confounding variables and factors (see Figure 1). Figure 1 shows that SID, locations of bullying, and types of bullying may work together to influence how participants experienced and were affected by bullying. It further shows that the same variables may have influenced how participants conceptualized and coped with bullying. Finally, it appears that participant conceptualizations of their bullying experiences and how they coped with it may have also influenced the interventions that they recommended during the current research study.

Discussions of SID experiences included same sex attractions, gender expression, feelings about the origins of homosexuality and the coming out process. Where individuals were in the SID process, particularly coming out, may have influenced how participants felt about themselves and their offenders. All participants were out at the time of their interviews for the current study, but several of them reported that they were not out while in school. Participants 1 and 6 reported being unsure about their sexual orientation in school, which may have further exacerbated the harassment that they experienced. They stated that they did not report their bullies for fear of possibly having to address their sexuality or fear that nothing would be done to their offenders.

Where participants were bullied and how they were bullied further seemed to affect how they experienced and coped with bullying. The six participants who were bullied in unstructured areas reported that they were less likely to tell on their offender for fear of being labeled a snitch as well as a fear of retaliation. When harassment

occurred out in the open, participants may have been more likely to talk about it, but only if the discussion was initiated by school personnel. It also seemed as though verbal bullying may have been less likely to get reported and may have even been ignored in comparison to physical assaults. Finally, eight participants seemed to be more emotionally and socially affected than academically affected by victimization as only two participants reported academic affects while five reported emotional stress and the other three reporting social stress. This effect may also be reflected in the coping styles that these participants utilized.

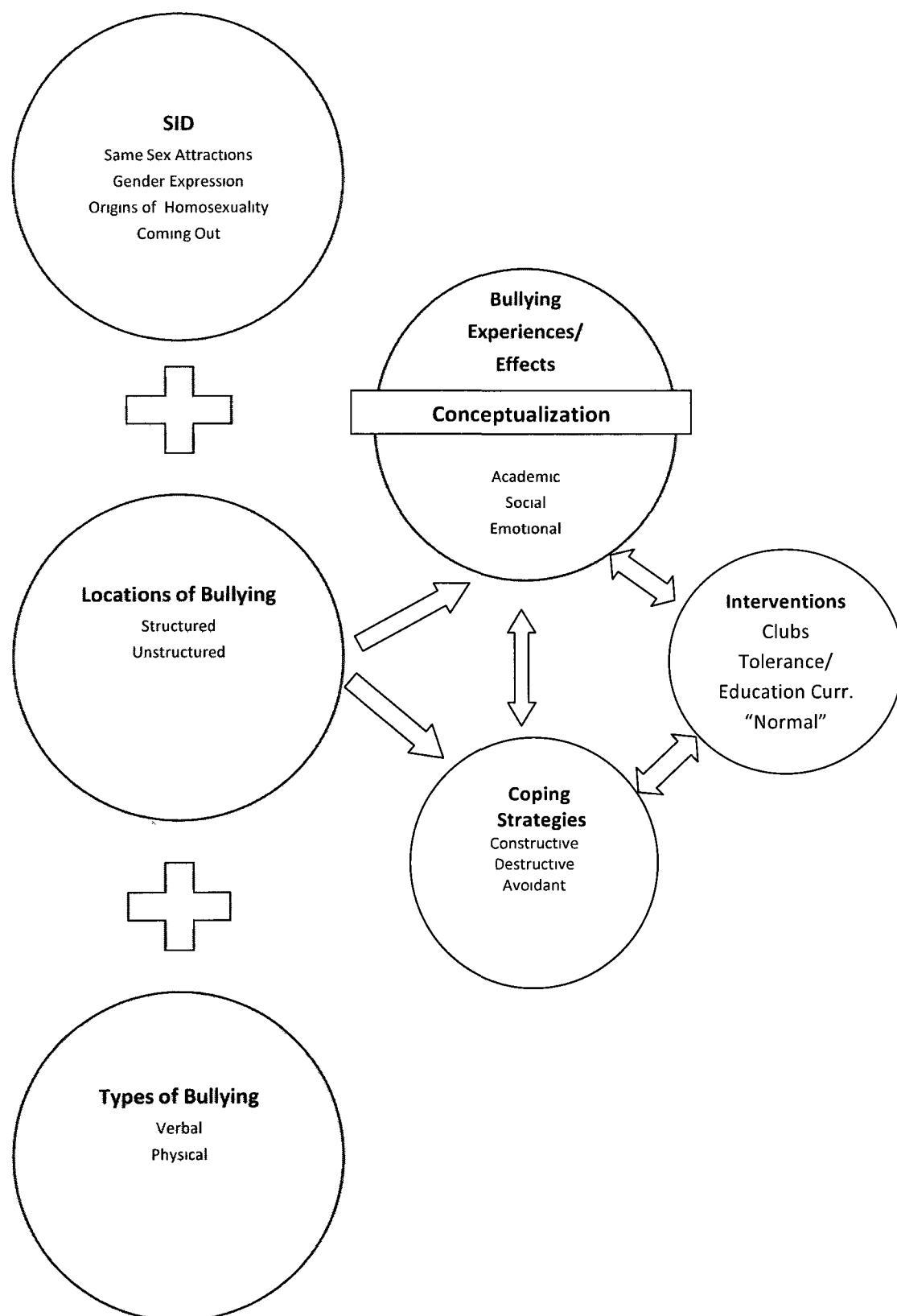
Participants reported utilizing constructive, or positive coping, destructive, or negative coping, and avoidant, or escape coping strategies to deal with harassment in school. A constructive coping strategy that was used by all fourteen participants was talking about or discussing harassment. Talking was the most used coping strategy among participants and all participants believed that it was important to have someone or some type of support system to talk about bullying situations.

Participants shared bullying experiences and coping strategies that would be helpful to research with LGBTQ youth in schools. Three participants suggested student clubs that support LGBTQ students and three suggested the introduction of a tolerance curriculum. Three recommended a curriculum to educate students and personnel about the effects of bullying while nine participants reported that LGBTQ individuals are normal human beings and stated that they believe that people should view them as such. Based on their personal experiences in school, the nine participants shared interventions that can be used as a start point for introducing conversation and lessons in school about sexuality.

Figure 1

Concept Map

LGBTQ Experience and Response to Victimization



The bullying of LGBTQ students has been a hot topic in the media. How have counselors, particularly school counselors, been taught to address the concerns that LGBTQ students present on a daily basis? How are school counselors-in-training being taught to address bullying issues within the school setting? Research shows that school counselors are not being properly prepared to address the concerns of LGBTQ youth in schools (Cannon, 2005). To be properly prepared to address such issues, SCTs must be encouraged to change their attitudes, enhance their knowledge, and increase awareness of how to deal with bullying and how to appropriately address bullying situations with LGBTQ students and their perpetrators (Byrd, 2010).

The findings of this study are promising in that they can provide insight into LGBTQ individuals' experiences. Because eleven (79%) participants in the current study described themselves as racial minorities when completing the demographics sheet, the results can be compared to similar studies of LGBTQ youth. It provides helpful tools to use when assisting LGBTQ students with bullying in the school setting. The study findings may suggest that individuals with multiple oppressed identities experience bullying with outside contextual factors and variables just as majority LGBTQ youth do (Mishna et al., 2009).

Some of the more conclusive findings of this study suggest that LGBTQ youth may not be comfortable going to school counselors or school personnel when dealing with bullying issues because they feel like it will make their situations worse or that nothing would be done to assist them. This information is consistent with current literature. Two (14%) study participants endorsed the idea of the school counselor as an advocate although neither actually utilized their school counselors to assist them with

their bullying issues. This suggests that school counselors must work harder to be more visible and more approachable in the school setting. It also suggests that school counselors must communicate to students that they are student advocates and are there to assist all students with their needs.

Implications for Professional School Counselors

Because eight of the fourteen study participants were academically, socially and/or emotionally affected by the bullying they endured while in school, it is imperative that school counselors are properly trained and supplied the skills to address the emotional needs of this group of adolescents. The presented theoretical model proposes that many variables and factors may influence how LGBTQ participants experience and respond to victimization. According to study participants, school counselors consistently missed the mark when it came to assisting them with concerns regarding SID development and bullying although they never sought out their PSC for help. PSCs have to be more diligent in being visible and accessible to students as this lack of an in-school support system may have left students feeling isolated and alone. Educating professional school counselors on how to spark discussions about bullying, the effects of bullying, and the appropriate ways to handle these situations can provide school counselors with more positive attitudes concerning LGBTQ students as well as create school environments where LGBTQ youth can as one participant stated, “learn and not have to be in fear or be scared or have any defenses at all.”

Implications for Research

To further support the findings of the study, more qualitative research on coping strategies and counseling interventions for LGBTQ students need to be done to outline

more effective strategies for working with this population. In addition to the qualitative research, quantitative research design instruments that measure LGBTQ attitudes towards school counseling interventions and effective strategies for professional school counselors working with students affected by bullying would also be advantageous since none of the participants sought out the school counselor to assist them with bullying. Additionally, qualitative and quantitative research measures aimed at investigating the importance of properly training school counselors-in-training to be able to deal with the effects of bullying is also necessary.

The current study utilized eleven (79%) self-identified LGBTQ minorities and found that the results are similar to LGBTQ literature. Further research on individuals with multiple oppressed identities is needed to better understand how they are affected by bullying in school and how confounding factors may play a role in their experiences so that they can be better represented in the literature. While the results of this research study offer a glimpse into the thoughts and experiences of these LGBTQ youth who have lived to tell their stories about bullying in schools, there is much more research to be done around this topic because other students are losing their lives. Five participants were unable to recognize bullying behaviors when asked about their experiences in school. Although they were called names, socially isolated, picked on and/or hit or kicked, they initially reported that they had not been bullied when asked about their experiences. This suggests that a more definitive definition of bullying may also need to be established so that it is able to be more easily identified when it occurs.

Study Limitations

Qualitative research, like quantitative research, has its limitations. Qualitative studies by design often have a limited number of cases from which to gather information about the phenomena being studied (Patton, 2003). It is the job of the qualitative researcher to figure out how to get the most information of greatest utility to the research study. Limitations of this research study include issues related to (a) researcher's bias, (b) researcher's lack of experience, (c) participant selection, and (d) data collection.

Researcher Bias

The main instrument for data collection in qualitative research is the researcher (Patton, 2003). Because interview data limitations include possibly distorted responses due to a number of issues such as biases or emotions (Patton, 2003) it was important that I was fully cognizant of any biases that I, or my research team member may have had around this topic. So that we were aware of our biases, the research team had a discussion of biases prior to the start of the study and as needed throughout. As the primary researcher, I worked to keep my biases from influencing the data. This was done by jotting down my thoughts about the research study and participants so that I could use them facilitate discussion with my team member, and I encouraged her to do the same. Discussion about the study allowed me to stay focused on the data ensuring that it was reflective of the participants' experiences. I also attempted to use member checking to verify participant information, but only got responses back from 4 (29%) participants.

Researcher's Lack of Experience

One of the most obvious study limitations is my lack of experience with qualitative methods and research. Because this was my first full-fledged qualitative

study, initially it was very difficult for me to move from the structured interview questions to more probing questions. Journaling about my experiences, discussion with my team member and the experience of each interview eventually provided me with the courage ask more intense and probing questions as necessary. As a support system, I was also able to rely on my team member who has taken a qualitative studies course and served on a couple qualitative committees and my auditor, who is a qualitative researcher currently teaching a research course.

Participant Selection

Participant selection was limited to LGBTQ individuals from a limited geographic area between the ages of 17-21 who were willing to participate in the study. Since participants were expected to discuss in-school bullying experiences, there was an expectation that they had either been bullied or knew someone who had. The sample size of 14 participants was small, with 11 (79%) participants identifying as minorities. While the study participants may not be representative of the LGBTQ population as a whole, much of the data that emerged was consistent with the literature. Further, while having participation from 11 minorities may be seen as a limitation of this study, research on LGBTQ minorities can enhance homosexual literature (Balsam et al., 2005; Harrison, 2003, Poteat et al., 2009; Savin-Williams, 1998). A detailed description of participant selection was included so that study results can be replicated.

Data Collection

To collect data, the primary researcher conducted one 30 minute interview with study participants in the hope of utilizing member checking methods. The primary researcher contacted all 14 participants on three separate occasions for member checking.

A limitation of the member checking is that the researcher only gave participants five days, each attempt, to contact her with member checking information. Only four (29%) participants (001, 002, 006 & 011) responded back with member checking information. Those four participants, however, were able to verify that their information was accurately portrayed. Also, data was collected from 14 participants, which is on the higher end of the recommended range of 8-15 participants (Hill et al., 2005). Because of the time it takes to do data analysis, Hill et al. (2005) recommends 8-15 participants for studies with one or two interviews per participant, noting that studies with smaller sample sizes tended to have more interviews per person. Another limitation is the lack of specific questions that address LGBTQ experience in persons of color. The primary researcher believed that recruiting minorities would sufficiently address minority needs, but specific interview questions about multiple oppressed minorities would have been beneficial. A final limitation was having two heterosexual research team members. Although precautions were taken to try to avoid biases from influencing data (recording biases, discussing biases, debating to consensus) it is possible that having two heterosexual team members influenced participant responses.

Summary

The results of this qualitative research study indicate that LGBTQ youth are experiencing verbal and physical harassment that may negatively affect their academics, as well as their social and emotional health. More specifically, how they conceptualize and respond to their experiences is influenced by a number of confounding variables. The cross analysis of domains regarding LGBTQ victimization were arranged in a meaningful way and debated to consensus to develop and propose this developmental

and multidimensional model that addresses the impact of bullying on LGBTQ individuals. Based on the data from this study and the presented multidimensional model, it is fair to assume that additional factors such as SID, locations and types of bullying, and support or lack of support may also influence one's conceptualization of and response to bullying experiences.

The primary researcher initially assumed that bullying would only produce negative effects for participants, but study results showed that at least 2 (14%) participants chose to utilize positive coping strategies despite their bullying experiences. Participants shared that while they may have been negatively socially and emotionally affected by harassment, they focused their energy into school and extracurricular activities which were actually beneficial to them. Being part of activities such as band, choir or sports teams allowed the participants to make friends which eventually served as the participants' support systems. Conversely, interventions that were thought to be helpful in working with LGBTQ students were perceived as not helpful by study participants. Participants believed that the involvement of school personnel in bullying situations would make the bullying worse so only a few participants reported incidents to school personnel. Initially the research team also believed that discussing the harassment with both parties could be an effective intervention to assist LGBTQ youth who are being bullied. Results of the current study show that participants felt that conferencing about harassment can have negative implications for the individual being bullied. When confronting a bully in school, Wright (2003) writes that school personnel should not allow the bully pull the victim into the discussion and says that bullies should be confronted in private whenever possible to remove the likelihood that the confronted

student will ‘play to the audience’ of classmates, become defiant or non-compliant.

Similarly study participants explained that bullying conferences can cause the bully to become upset, causing them to retaliate against the victim. It can also cause the victim to be labeled a “snitch” creating more problems for the person being bullied.

This information can be useful to PSCs and SCTs when creating and implementing interventions for use with LGBTQ students. It can also be helpful to future research studying the effects of victimization on LGBTQ students and in creating a definitive definition of bullying.

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Appendix A

Research Participant Demographic Worksheet

Contact Information

Name: _____ **Phone:** _____

Email: _____ **Age:** _____ **Gender:** Male Female Transgender

Race/Ethnicity

_____ Black/African American
 _____ White (Not Hispanic)
 _____ Hispanic Origin
 _____ American Indian
 _____ Asian and/or Pacific Islander
 _____ Other: Not Specified

Sexual Orientation

_____ Lesbian
 _____ Gay
 _____ Bisexual
 _____ Questioning
 _____ Other: Not Specified

Current Relationship Status

_____ Same Sex Relationship
 _____ Opposite Sex Relationship
 _____ Single

Education Background

_____ GED
 _____ High School Diploma
 _____ Some College
 _____ Other

Participation Interest

_____ Very interested (please contact me)
 _____ Somewhat Interested (need more info)
 _____ Not interested at all

What is the best way to contact you?

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

These are the (tentative) questions that will be asked of participants.

1. At what age did you know you were LGBTQ and how did you know?
2. At what age did you “come out”?
 - a. To whom did you first “come out” and how did you do it?
3. Tell me about any experiences that you may have had with being bullied or harassed.
 - a. How were you bullied?
 - b. How long did the bullying take place?
 - c. Where in the school did it take place?
 - d. How did the experience(s) make you feel?
 - e. How did this affect you academically? Socially? Other ways?
4. Which school personnel, if any, were helpful?
 - a. What role, if any, did the school counselor have in assisting you?
 - b. What was done that was helpful?
 - c. What was done that wasn’t helpful?
 - d. What was the climate of the school? Positives and negatives?
5. What did you do to cope with the bullying?
6. How, if at all, has the bullying (in the K-12 years) affected you since leaving school?
7. What things can school personnel do to help LGBTQ students (victims)?
 - a. What might you include in a classroom guidance lesson to educate students about the effects of LGBTQ bullying on the victims?
8. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Appendix C

Informed Consent Document/ Solicitation Letter

Old Dominion University

Dear Sir or Madam,

You are cordially invited to participate in a research study exploring experiences of LGBTQ youth in schools.

The purposes of this form are to give you information that may affect your decision whether to say YES or NO to participating in this research and to record the consent of those who say YES. If you are interested in participating in the research project, your completion of the attached demographic sheet will serve as record of your consent. You may keep this form for your records.

The primary investigator of this study is Brandy Kelly Richeson, Ed.S, a doctoral student in the Department of Counseling and Human Services in the College of Education at Old Dominion University. The primary investigator will be assisted by a research team consisting of other fellow doctoral students. These research team members will primarily aid in the data collection and analysis.

The purposes of this study are (1) to explore the treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning students in schools and (2) how that treatment affects them psychologically, emotionally and developmentally. While other quantitative studies have attempted to research this population, that research has yet to fully capture the effects of victimization on these youth. Results of this study seek to assist in increasing school counselors' knowledge and effectiveness in working with this minority group.

Literature review, data collection and data analyses will occur between _____ tentatively. You are being asked to participate in a two phase research project to include: (1) participation in an interview, and (2) assisting researchers in checking for accuracy of interviews and interpretations by reviewing transcripts of the interviews. If you

decide to participate, you will be asked to: (a) complete a participant demographic sheet; (b) respond to interview questions about your school experiences in a 30-35 minute interview and; (c) review the transcripts from your interviews to verify that your comments were accurately recorded. You may provide as little or as much information as you choose in the interviews. You may also provide additional information or further explain any aspect of the interview at any time during this research study. For the purpose of the study all interviews will be audio-taped. Audio taped interviews will be transcribed by the interviewer and destroyed immediately thereafter. The primary investigator will be the only one to have knowledge of your identity, and any written materials will contain no identifying information about you.

Mental health risks associated with this project will be alleviated by offering participants counseling referrals and resources. All information obtained about you in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications, but the researchers will NOT provide any identification of the participants.

The primary investigator wants your decision about participating in this study to be absolutely voluntary. It is OK for you to say NO. Even if you say YES now, you are free to say NO later, and walk away or withdraw from this study at any time. If you say YES, your consent in this document does not waive any of your legal rights. However, in the event of harm arising from this study, neither Old Dominion University nor the researchers are able to give you any money, insurance coverage, free medical care, or any compensation for such injury. In the event you suffer injury as a result of participation in this research project, you may contact Brandy Kelly Richeson at 757.218.5057 who will be glad to review the matter with you.

If the researcher finds any new information during this study that would reasonably change your decision about participating, then that information will be shared with you immediately.

By completing the attached participant demographic sheet, you are saying several things. You are saying that you have read this form or have had it read to you, that you are satisfied that you understand this form, the research study, and its risks and benefits. The researchers should have answered any questions you may have had about the research. If you have any questions later on, please contact the primary investigator, Brandy Kelly Richeson at 757.218.5057.

If you are willing to participate in this study voluntarily, acknowledging receipt of this documentation, and would like to be contacted for participation, please complete the enclosed demographic worksheet. Please return the original copy of the demographic worksheet in the pre-stamped envelope provided.

I would like to thank you in advance for your time and participation regarding this matter.
Sincerely,

Brandy Kelly Richeson, Ed.S

Doctoral Student

Old Dominion University

Department of Educational Leadership & Counseling

Bkell018@odu.edu

******If you are interested in receiving a final copy of the manuscript please provide your mailing information at the end of your essay and we will send you a copy via standard mail.***

Appendix D

INFORMED ASSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH

**Project Title: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Questioning Students and
Bullying in School**

What is a research study?

- A research study is a way to find out new information about something. Children do not need to be in a research study if they don't want to.

Why are you being asked to be part of this research study?

- You are being asked to take part in this research study because we are trying to learn more about the bullying experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning students in the K-12 setting. We are inviting you to be in the study because we feel that your experiences may be beneficial to this research. Approximately 15-20 people will be in this study.

If you join the study what will happen to you?

- You will be asked to answer questions about your experience(s) with bullies while in school.

Will any part of the study hurt?

- The study will not cause you any physical pain. You may feel uncomfortable answering some of the questions, but please remember that you may stop the interview or decline to answer any questions at any time.

Will the study help you?

- The study may be helpful to you because you will get to share your experiences with bullying in school.

Will the study help others?

- This study might find out things that will help school personnel to help other children who are dealing with bullying issues in school.

Do your parents know about this study?

- This study was explained to your parent(s) and they said that we could ask you if you want to be in it. You can talk this over with them before you decide.

Who will see the information collected about you?

- The information collected about you during this study is confidential and will be kept locked up in a safe place. It will be in a locked room on a password protected computer. Nobody will see it except the people doing the research. Participant information will be assigned codes and any identifying information will be removed from documents. After the study is complete, all recordings will be destroyed.

What do you get for being in the study?

- There is no compensation for participating and the study is completely voluntary.

Do you have to be in the study?

- You do not have to be in the study. No one will be upset if you don't want to do this study. If you don't want to be in this study, you just have to tell us. It's up to you.
- You can also take more time to think about being in the study.

What if you have any questions?

- You can ask any questions that you may have about the study. If you have a question later that you didn't think of earlier, either you can call or have your parents call the primary researcher, Brandy Richeson at 757-218-5057.
- You can also take more time to think about being in the study and also talk some more with your parents about being in the study.

Other information about the study.

- If you decide to be in the study, please write your name below.
- You can change your mind and stop being part of it at any time. All you have to do is say so. It's okay. Neither the researchers nor your parents will be upset.
- You will be given a copy of this paper to keep.

I/my parent or legal guardian have read the previous page(s) of the consent form and the researcher has explained the details of the study. I/my parent or legal guardian understand that I am free to ask additional questions.

I/my parent or legal guardian understand that if I/my parent or legal guardian wish additional information regarding this research study and my rights as a participant or wish for counseling resources as a result of the study, we may contact the primary researcher, Brandy Richeson at 757-218-5057

I/my parent or legal guardian understand that I/my parent or legal guardian may be contacted by the researcher, Brandy Richeson during or after my participation in this study as part of its efforts to monitor the experience of participants.

I/my parent or guardian understand that participation in this study is voluntary and I/my parent or legal guardian may refuse to participate or may discontinue participation at any time.

I/my parent or legal guardian, acknowledge that I agree to participate in the study and have been given a copy of this form.

STUDY PARTICIPANT (*minor*)

DATE

PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN

DATE

The participant has been given the opportunity to read a description of the research, to ask questions before signing, and has been given a copy of this form.

PRINT RESEARCHER'S NAME

DATE

RESEARCHER

SIGN

VITA

Brandy Kelly Richeson graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University in 1999 with a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice. She earned her master's degree in Counseling with a concentration in School Counseling from Hampton University in 2003 and her Ed.S. in Counseling from Old Dominion University in 2009.

Brandy is a licensed professional school counselor who has worked for Newport News Public Schools for eight years. In her capacity as a school counselor, Brandy has presented over twenty times at national, regional and state counseling conferences. Currently, she is the President Elect of the Peninsula Counselors Association, a local chapter of the Virginia Counselors Association (VCA). Brandy is a member of the Association of Counselor Education and Supervision, the Southern Association of Counselor Education and Supervision, the American School Counselors Association, VCA, PCA and several other counseling organizations.

Brandy has also worked as an adjunct professor at Hampton University teaching a community health counseling course in the graduate counseling program. To date, she has published two articles and a book chapter and is currently working on another school counseling project.