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Growing Up Gay and Latino

By

Sharon Wyatt Saxton

Claremont Graduate University

2019

## APPROVAL OF THE REVIEW COMMITTEE

This dissertation has been duly read, reviewed, and critiqued by the Committee listed below, which hereby approves the manuscript of Sharon W. Saxton as fulfilling the scope and quality requirements for meriting the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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## **Abstract**

Growing Up Gay and Latino

By

Sharon Wyatt Saxton

Claremont Graduate University: 2019

This dissertation examines the experiences of LGBT students attending high school in a predominantly Latino area to determine if their experiences are different in a Latino-inflected environment than those of students in a predominantly Anglo environment. Although the experiences of LGBT students are well documented in academic journals and popular press, this dissertation insinuates that those experiences are inflected by the Anglo setting in which students attend school. This study investigates the experiences using a multiple choice and open-ended survey and a personal interview with the investigator. Certain experiences appear to be common among LGBT students who attend Anglo-inflected high schools whether those students are Latino Black, Pacific Islander. The unique character of this school allows the investigator to make certain claims about culture and its impact on individuals who attend there.

This phenomenological study approaches students after they have graduated from high school to see what impact their high school experiences of bullying and inclusion have had on their success in high school and higher education. This work contributes to the literature by demonstrating that the cultural atmosphere of a school and community produce differing results for the LGBT students who spend their teenage years in that environment. This study also insinuates that students in a Latino environment tend to make more mature decisions about how to deal with their interactions among their peers. Whether their experiences are influenced by personal resilience or grit, expectations of the community, religious or social norms is for other

researchers to determine. I believe that the strength of the Latino family contributes to grittiness of these young people. The character traits expected by the family and the culture may also contribute to their tenacity. But the results of this research indicate that fewer instances of threats and bullying occur and that those LGBT students find other means of deflecting the damage to their ability to complete their educations and continue into adulthood relatively unscathed.

## **Dedication**

**Nothing of value is ever created alone. My special thanks for all of your help and support:**

Dr. Heidi Rae Cooley, who was there to start this journey together.

Ilga Jansons, for research help par excellence.

Hunter Charles Hughes and Sierra Annette Hughes for providing a reason to complete what I  
started.

Dr. Linda Perkins who in role of mentor became a friend.

To all of my former students, eternal thanks.

**Table of Contents**

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION. . . . . 1

    Purpose of the Study. . . . . 2

    Significance of the Study. . . . . 3

    School Demographic. . . . . 3

    Background . . . . . 5

    Researcher Positionality. . . . . 8

    Definition of Terms. . . . . 9

    Organization of the Dissertation. . . . . 13

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE. . . . . 14

    Bullying. . . . . 14

    GSAs and More. . . . . 22

    Resiliency. . . . . 29

    Religion as Part of Resilience. . . . . 32

    Conclusion. . . . . 33

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY. . . . . 36

    Study Sampling . . . . . 36

        Interviews . . . . . 37

        Ethical Issues. . . . . 37

        Sample Size. . . . . 38

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS. . . . . 39

    Question 1 . . . . . 39

    Figure 1: . . . . . 40

Question 2. . . . .	40
Question 3. . . . .	40
Figure 2: Years you were a student. . . . .	41
Question 4. . . . .	41
Figure 3: When did you know you were gay?. . . . .	42
Question 5 . . . . .	43
Figure 4: Who else knew?. . . . .	43
Question 6. . . . .	44
Question 7 . . . . .	45
Figure 6: Did anyone bully you?. . . . .	45
Question 8. . . . .	46
Figure 7: How did you handle it? . . . . .	46
Question 9. . . . .	47
Figure 8: Worried about coming out?. . . . .	47
Question 10. . . . .	47
Question 11. . . . .	47
Question 12 . . . . .	48
Figure 10: Did you have someone to support/advise you?. . . . .	48
Question 13 . . . . .	48
Question 14 . . . . .	49
Figure 11: Contributions of Gays to Culture. . . . .	49
Question 15 . . . . .	49
Figure 12: Gay role models. . . . .	50



Question 16 . . . . .	50
Question 17 . . . . .	51
Question 18. . . . .	51
Figure 14: Whom did you admire?. . . . .	52
Question 19 . . . . .	52
Question 20. . . . .	52
Figure 15: Highest level of academic achievement. . . . .	53
Phone Interviews . . . . .	53
Question 1 and 2. . . . .	53
Question 3. . . . .	54
Question 4, 5, 6. . . . .	54
Question 7. . . . .	54
Question 8. . . . .	57
Question 9 . . . . .	57
After question 9 . . . . .	59
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS. . . . .	64
Significant Patterns in Bullying. . . . .	65
Parents and Teachers Are Stumbling Blocks. . . . .	67
GSAs. . . . .	69
Religion Might Not Contribute to Resiliency. . . . .	70
Implications for Further Research. . . . .	71
Personal Reflections. . . . .	72
REFERENCES. . . . .	75

Appendix A: Request posted on Facebook. . . . .	82
Appendix B: Survey. . . . .	83
Appendix C: Agreement to Participate. . . . .	86

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, (LGBT) teens have been overwhelmingly characterized in media and scholarship as depressive, bullied, abused, underperforming, often suicidal, estranged from other teens, their parents and families (Ahmed et al 2004; Almeida et al, 2008; Brown, 2009; Chesir-Teran et al, 2008; Holmes et al, 2004; Howard, 2007; Klein, 2013; Minton et al, 2008; Robinson, 2011; Toomey et al, 2010). Teen suicides are too often related to the depression brought on by dealing with bullying, either cyber-bullying or in person. The percentage of homeless LGBT youth surpasses other demographics as young people are rejected by families who for reasons of religion or cultural beliefs cannot support their children's revelations of their gay identities. Schools struggle to keep students and teachers from bullying or permitting bullying of their LGBT students. Churches and houses of worship of several denominations make clear their repugnance at the presence of LGBT congregants. LGBT teens often try to avoid the aggressive behaviors of their classmates and teachers by skipping school, transferring to different schools, underperforming, or dropping out.

This bleak picture of teen LGBT students cannot, however, constitute the entire picture of the experiences and responses of students who will continue on to college where research indicates they will flourish (Christiansen and Evans, 2005; Grothaus, 2004; Smith and Gray, 2009). More recent studies, therefore, have focused on resilience demonstrated by those bullied and underperforming students (Christiansen and Evans, 2005; Duarte-Valez, Bernal and Bonilla, 2010; Grothaus, 2004; Smith and Gray, 2009). The high school years remain, however, the most conflicted for the LGBT student and the high school grounds the most dangerous and/or contested space for gender non-conforming students. Researchers include students of color in

their studies, however, the number of Anglo students in the school always exceeds 50%, inflecting the environment with Anglo values and behaviors. But this study contends students of color, in particular Latino students, are inhibited by the environments in which their studies take place. As a consequence, it is fair to assume that the culture in which research was conducted can best be described as an Anglo culture regardless of the ethnicity of the participants. This dissertation posits that a school in the United States with a population of more than half non-white students will affect the culture of the school enough to alter the experiences of the LGBT students who attend. This dissertation seeks to challenge how race and culture also factor into the discussion of LGBT experiences. It is from a Latino-inflected school that the respondents for this study were selected. If the results of the LGBT population are different, it can be inferred that something to do with the Latino culture either at the school or through their families has altered the treatment of LGBT kids and the response of those students to their treatment during high school. This study intends to open up discussion of culture and race in regards to outcomes for LGBT students during their high school years.

### **Purpose of the Study**

It is, therefore, the purpose of this study to investigate a high school with a predominantly Latino population and its impact on the LGBT students who attend there. Using items from the literature that have characterized LGBT students in Anglo-inflected schools, I queried students who had graduated from a high school in California. I wanted to answer some of the following questions:

1. Did you know you were LGBT when you were in high school?
2. Did you share this information with a friend, family member, religious leader or school personnel?

3. Was there anyone who was able to support you as an LGBT student?
4. Were you bullied for being LGBT?
5. What was your response to this bullying?
6. Did bullying affect your academic success?

I wanted to compare the responses of these particular Latino students in this particular school to the students represented in the literature on LGBT high school students. If those responses prove to be different, future research on improving school environment for LGBT students would benefit from pursuing how ethnicity affects environment. It is not possible to generalize the results of this inquiry to cover all LGBT students of color or even all Latino LGBT students. But the results may cause others to inquire into other locations where Anglos do not dominate.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is unique because the research focused on the ethnicity of the environment and not the individuals in the environment. My study will add to the literature in discussion of race in a new direction as policy makers, educators, and researchers look for ways to improve the social conditions for the LGBT population.

### **School Demographic**

This school, and the 6 high schools in the district, has been predominantly Latino for upwards of 35 years. Throughout that time, the racial/ethnic percentage has remained stable at 97%. Having taught there for more than four decades I knew of only one student who succumbed to suicide because of LGBT bullying. He was among the brightest and most capable of the students I ever taught, and his loss touched me deeply. But other students in the many years that followed did not commit suicide. In fact, many have gone on to live admirable lives, reach the highest of educational goals, and enter a variety of professions. It is to these students I turned to ask the question about their

high school years as LGBT students to view the kinds of experiences that formed them in their Latino environment that may or may not have differed from their Anglo, Black, Asian, and Pacific Islander cohorts who attended schools in predominantly Anglo environments. With the increasing number of immigrant and particularly Latino students in United State schools, their contribution to scholarly understanding of gender issues provides a more nuanced view of what life for LGBT students is or could be.

The school, a short distance from a major urban center, was established in 1889, the first high school in the county. Before the 1980s with the influx of Latino students, the district graduated an astronaut, several Oscar-winning movie stars, a Rock and Roll Hall of Famer, and an Olympic gold medalist, none of them Latino. It is also the largest school in the county serving between 2,600 to almost 4,000 students during the time the participants to this study were enrolled. During those same years, 800 students matriculated as freshmen while fewer than 600 graduated at the end of 4 years. Between the sophomore and junior year the largest number of students failed to return to school. Nonetheless, 25% of the graduating seniors enrolled in college with the preponderance enrolling in a community college. Graduation from college rates are not available, however.

The school is identified as a Title I school meaning that because of the large concentration of low-income students, the school receives special funds to assist students by providing several meals a day, sometimes a change of clothes, language support, tutoring for high school classes, and tutoring for college entrance exams. Since the number of students who qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch prices is so large, the school no longer identifies individual low income students but gives all students the benefit of a free lunch. Free Lunch support began in the early 1990's and persisted during the time these students attended the school.

During the years these students attended this high school, the school had a full Advanced Placement program of 4-6 English Literature classes, 4-6 English language classes, 6 Spanish language classes, 2 French classes, 2 physics classes, 1 advanced math class, 2-4 American History classes, 2 Economics classes. Students were offered courses in orchestra, band, and Mariachi, and choir. An active and varied dance program complemented the many athletic programs. Theater classes were offered all day. No courses in the manual arts had been offered for ten years or more. Students were encouraged to take 3 or more AP courses in preparation for college work.

### **Background**

In order to assess one's experiences of being LGBT in high school, students needed to remember whether they themselves knew they were gay when in high school. Many young people do not begin to question their sexuality until they are college age and so pass undetected through their high school years (Abes and Kasch, 2007; Almeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar, Azrael, 2008; Holmes and Cahill, 2004; Howard, Stevens, 2007; Robinson, 2011; Zubernis, Snyder, 2007). Others know or suspect they are LGBT while still in high school. But whether or not a student is aware of her/his own sexuality, the other students are sensitized to search out those who do not appear to be gender-conforming. Judith Butler (1990) labels this "gender policing" meaning that young people are empowered to bully other students who do not seem to fit the limited definitions of gender acceptability as a means of bringing them back into clearly defined lines of male and female behavior. Often these bullies feel they will not be admonished for their behavior because they are representing the beliefs of their parents, school personnel or their religious leaders. For students of color, high school confronts their suspicions about their sexuality while they deal with a minority ethnic status as well. The impact of LGBT bullying places an even heavier burden on the individual as they deal with the stressors of color as well as gender identity (Abes and Kasch, 2007; Ahmed and Braithwaite, 2004; Almeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar, Azrael, 2008; D'Esposito, Blake, Riccio, 2011; Duarte, Bernal, Bonilla, 2010; Howard, Stevens, 2007; Klein,

2012; O'Donnell, Meyer, Schwartz, 2011; Zubernis, Snyder, 2007). High schools either consciously or unconsciously support heteronormativity through the literature, science, history they choose to teach and the silences when the stories relating to LGBT students fail to be expressed (Chesir-Tehan and Hughes, 2008; Toomey, McGuire, and Russell, 2012). Sex education classes are particularly confounding to the LGBT students as their sexuality and health-related issues are either dismissed or relegated to AIDS only discussion. In places where students are encouraged to wait to have sex until marriage, the LGBT individual feels isolated because they are less likely to be able to marry in those locations. Since in the past they were unable to marry, they may have asked, is it ok for them to have sex at all? (Elia, Eliason, 2010; Fisher, 2009). Certainly the information shared in the class would have been irrelevant at best.

If students knew they were gay in high school they may or may not have come out to their families or friends. Sanlo (2004) makes the interesting point that if parents have an ethnically different child, the parents can support them because they share the same ethnicity/ies. But with the LGBT child, the parents do not share this identity and often don't understand what their children face in school. A few may have had someone in the family or at school to whom they could confide. Others may have feared social isolation or bullying if their true sexual identities were known and so they speak to no one, get advice and direction from no one. (Almeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar, Azrael, 2008; Brown, 2009; Coloroso, 2008; Duarte, Bernal, Bonilla, 2010; Elia, Elianson, 2010; Fisher, 2009; Robinson, 2011). To avoid negative attention at school, many instances of LGBT students skipping school are reported. Bullying combined with social isolation also often results in increased risk of suicide by the LGBT student (O'Donnell, Meyer, Schwartz, 2011; Robinson, 2011). The state of New York was so concerned about the emotional and physical welfare of their LGBT students they created an optional school in 2001 for students who identified as gay in the hopes students would thrive in a gay-centric atmosphere (May, 2003). The school was established in 2002. Some churches and other religious orders continue to stigmatize the LGBT individual, cutting off students from the support of their parents as well as their religion. Although this may alienate the LGBT individual from any religious observance, others find



religious orders that do not stigmatize them but rather welcome LGBT people to their communities (Howard, Stevens, 2007; Kubicek, McDavitt, Carpineto, Weiss, Iverson, Kipke, 2009; Walton, 2008).

In an effort to ameliorate the social environment for LGBT students, many schools have implemented Gay-Straight Alliances, a school club with the goal of bringing together all kinds of students with interest in sexuality. Although each school's GSA may perform differently, the intent is to bring students together in a supportive and safe space to discuss issues surrounding gender (Allen, 12/05/18; Donnon, 2009; Friedman-Nimz, Altman, Cain, Korn, Karger, Witsch, Muffly, Weiss, 2006). There is increasing evidence that the mere presence of a GSA on campus improves school climate for LGBT students and other students as well (Eveleth, 2014). When a GSA appears on the school campus, even those students who do not identify as LGBT fare better. The suicide rate for them drops as well. No clear evidence indicates that these suicide-prone students were being harassed just like the LGBT students, but in general, the numbers support the statement that all benefit from the presence of the GSA. LGBT students in rural areas, like Maine, Missouri and Kansas, where the resources for LGBT GSAs and other mentoring do not exist, all students are impacted. (Troutman, 2019; Williams, 2019) The suicide rate for all students increases. But even as the evidence mounts that GSAs improve the school experience for all students, one school in Indiana has recently permitted a club to be formed along the lines of a Gay-Straight Alliance as long as the word "gay" is never used in association with the club (Taylor, 2018). How effective this GSA will be in improving school climate is problematic.

Although implementing the GSA seems to be the most effective means of empowering the LGBT students, other forms of intervention are also showing effective results. Several researchers ascribe genetics to the form of resilience that takes students through the rigors of bullying in high school to leadership in their colleges (Beaver, Mancini, DeLisi, Vaughn, 2010; Prince-Embury, Courville, 2008; Prince-Embury, 2011). Other researchers are looking for more personality traits that support resilience as students navigate a hostile high school environment (Christiansen, Evans, 2005; D'Esposito, Blake, Riccio, 2011; Donnon, 2009; Meyer, 2010). Yet other researchers work backwards from resilience as an untapped resource among gay men (Herrick, Lim, Wei, Smith, Guadamuz, Friedman, Stall, 2011).

Schools are experimenting with various anti-bullying initiatives to improve campus environment (Beightol, Jeverton, Gray, Carter, Gass, 2009). Some schools are able to offer mentoring for the LGBT student having difficulty (Brown, 2004). Some researchers working with depressed Latino LGBT youth used a combination of sexual, spiritual, and family identity therapy (Duarte, Bernal, Bonilla, 2010). Although some religious groups still stigmatize LGBT people, some religious LGBT youth reason that “God made me gay,” and therefore, there must be a reason (Kubicek, McDavitt, Carpineto, Weiss, Iverson, Kipke, 2009). They are able to use their religious beliefs to support their identities rather than focus on the negativity directed at them by other religions. Where the schools have someone to work with students on poetic expression, LGBT are able to use their artistic leanings as an outlet (Hall, 2007). Yet other schools have staff who encourage students in political activism within the school. For example, one way to build LGBT self confidence is to get students to arrange for a Day of Silence in recognition of how silenced LGBT people have been treated throughout history (Grothaus, 2004).

This study proposes to test the assumptions of previous studies that queried students in what can be defined as an Anglo environment because of the density of Anglo students and staff in the school. Because these students attend a school with a different proportion of Latino students, the experiences of LGBT students in this environment may be different.

### **Researcher Positionality**

In the spirit of full disclosure, I admit to having taught at the school in this study. Although my entire career was spent in this district, I spent the largest part of my years at this particular high school from which the responders come. It would not have made much difference from which high school in this district I had served as they are all and have been since the early 1980s predominantly Latino. All but 2 of the 13 students in the study had been students in my classes. All of them in Advanced Placement classes where the editing process of their writing would have created a closer relationship than might have been expected in other courses. In addition, a number of them were also students when they were seniors. What this indicates is that I would have read their applications for college admittance, again fostering a closer relationship. Although I am white, I have dark hair and skin which caused many students to

assume I was Latina myself. Although I identify as LGBT, I was not out during my career because of the obvious homophobia in the District. In fact, once my principal learned I was a lesbian, he fired me as department chair, barring me from any leadership role in the District. In my classes, I used the writing of LGBT authors, mentioned the Shakespeare poems written to a “dark lady” who was evidently a young man, and did what I could to diminish the use of anti-gay pejorative remarks among students. As department chair, I sat on committees which selected the reading material at all levels of the high school. Each year, I was able to add more writings by people of color, particularly women of color. I also saw it as my responsibility to add another gay or lesbian writer to the list of required readings for all students. Many of my colleagues did not notice or did not oppose these readings by LGBT authors because they agreed with the philosophy that our students needed to read beyond the experiences of white American and British writers.

Several times in recent years teachers attempted to start a Gay Straight Alliance. One was an out lesbian, the other the mother of an out lesbian student teacher. Because of the principal’s antipathy to anything LGBT, they were not able to announce over the loudspeaker or to post on flyers around the school any mention of the words gay or lesbian in their bulletins. As a result, even I did not know when these meetings were scheduled. The club did not have a name but only advertised itself as a place for students to come to talk about their high school experiences, a very nebulous description that did not notify the students who needed to be approached. And soon the groups fizzled as a result of inactivity.

My interest in this research is a result of all of those years I was silent. I am finally bearing witness and making apology to all of the students I could have helped had I not feared for my job. Because I was chair of the English department and the department for the Gifted, I held a powerful place in the school. Many LGBT students could have benefited by my mentoring or just by my example. It is with deep shame I use this research as finally a voice I should have used earlier to shape events. That opportunity missed, I offer this research in exchange.

### **Definition of Terms**

**LGBT:** Jonathan Rauch in his article on the use of the term LGBTQ reports the history beginning in the 1980's when "gay" and "lesbian" were the only terms used to define homosexuals. In the 1990's the term LGBT came into use to identify any person who considered themselves "lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender," the only gender non-conforming labels recognized at that time., according to Lilian Faderman. In deference to her insistence upon using LGBT for its historical value, I will use it here as well. Since that time when gender differences were first labeled LGBT, many other categories of gender nonconformity have appeared swelling the manageable LGBT to many other letters. Although I will use LGBT in this study, there is no intention of discrediting other groups who have swelled the acronym to LGBTQIAAP to include those who identify as Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Allies, and Pansexual. (Faderman, 2015). New identities appear as people struggle to find a term that aptly expresses how they feel about their sexuality. For example, Jill Soloway, producer, director and writer for such television shows as *Transparent*, and Hannah Gadsby, Emmy, Peabody and many other award-winning Australian comedian, claim to be 'nonbinary claiming to identify as neither male nor female (Soloway, 2018). Shedding the hair and make-up and clothing options of the feminine for the more liberating shorter hair, no make-up, and simpler clothes, they feel more empowered in their actions. But the cumbersome terms or "alphabet soup designation for sexual minorities has become a synecdoche for the excesses of identity politics. — excesses that have helped empower the likes of Donald Trump." (Rauch, 16) Rauch wants to destabilize identity politics, to simplify it to make it easier to assert that "gay rights are human rights" on a political stage. He would prefer to refer to all people in the alphabet soup as simply Q. One may think of it as meaning "queer" but without the negative associations from the past. Or one can assume it refers to anything at all. Sympathetic as I am to this one letter referent for all sexual minority

people, I have not selected to use it for the purposes of this research. In the interests of keeping the acronym manageable for readers, the term LGBT will be used in this research to include all individuals who consider themselves outside of the rigorously defined straight sexual attraction of one sex for the other.

**Bullying:** On the interview form students were asked about bullying (Ahmed and Braithwaite, 2004; Anagnostopoulos, Buchanan, Pereira, Lichty, 2008; Beightol, Jeverton, Gray, Carter and Gass, 2009; Brown, 2009; Chesir-Teran and Hughes, 2008; Coloroso, 2008; Donnon, 2009; Klein, 2012; Minton, Dahl, O'Moore, Schwartz, 2011; Swearer, Turner, Given, Pollack, 2009; Toomey, Ryan, Diaz, Card, Russell, 2010; Toomey, McGuire, Russell, 2012). I did not define for them what I considered bullying or micro aggressions or any form of negative attention drawn to them being gay. It is too late now to go back and define these terms. By inference, one can see some of the students defined it as a form of physical threat. For others, bullying could have included making snide or comical remarks about those who are gay but with no implied threat involved. Yet others may have felt that even micro aggressions constituted bullying. It was my intent to include the entire spectrum of bullying and for students to define what for them was the extent to the way they were treated as LGBT students because whatever they remember as bullying made an impact on them in their high school years, whether threat was implied or not.

**Latino:** The use of the term "Latino" refers to the many different origins of the students in this study. Although some of the students were what used to be called "Chicanos," meaning people of Latin American descent who were born in the United States, most of the students were immigrants, about 97% of the entire school population. This demographic held steady over many years. Many of the students were of Mexican origin, many only recently arrived.

However, a percentage of the student population came from further south than that, from Guatemala, San Salvador, Honduras. The term “Latino” will be used so as not to require exact identification of the country of origin of the respondents.

**Out:** Another term that requires some discussion is “out.” Although we may all think we know this means that an individual is visibly LGBT, there are many different ways of being out and several different forms of visibility. Out can be simply that the individual tells his friends, family and anyone who asks that she/he/they are gay. Some out LGBT individuals may assume a dress or hairstyle that speaks more to her/his/their gender identity. For example, young men may assume longer hair styles, buzz cuts or a combination of the two. Young women may shave their heads entirely or partially with a disheveled top piece. Clothing may signal to others that this person identifies as LGBT. Presence or lack of make-up may also identify one as LGBT. These styles change frequently and with the persona one may want to manifest. Some lesbian women may manifest with more masculine choices in clothing, make-up and hair styles. During certain periods of time these women were referred to as “butches” although more currently that term is out of fashion. The more feminine lesbian may be referred to as a “lipstick lesbian” or “femme” although lipstick may not be fashionable with any lesbian but may be used by gay men. Styles and means of manifesting gender identity change over time (Faderman, 2015). Some of the resources used in this study will employ these terms while others limit their discussion of gay fashion or leave it to the reader to identify. In other instances, the out individual may have told certain members of their family and friends but not have told one’s employer or co-workers. For the purposes of this study, the term “out” will mean that by some means the individual has alerted some people to her/his/their gender identity. Its scope will be limited to those to whom the individual is specifically named as “out.”

**Non-binary:** Only recently has the term “non-binary” become popular among LGBT individuals. When someone identifies as non-binary they then eschew the pronouns for singular and male or female as in “her” “his.” (Kessler, 2019; Soloway, 2018). The non-binary individual prefers to use “they” and “them” for personal pronouns. The term “Mx” (pronounced Mix) is used in preference to Miss, Mrs. or Mr. (Kessler, 1/20/19). However, this trend is so new that none of the students interviewed for this study used these terms. This explanation is included here not because these terms are referenced in this study but because they are referenced in the readings. Therefore, it is their silence that may confound the reader.

**Intersectionality:** The term intersectionality refers to the several ways in which social identity is constructed. Students may identify as LGBT and also as Latino, Pacific Islander, Black, creating “overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination and disadvantage” (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality refers to the complexity of a student’s life if they identify as LGBT and as a racial, religious or class minority as well.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

Chapter One will introduce the study, the rationale and the significance of the study. Chapter Two is the review of the literature of LGBT students throughout the United States and in some cases Canada and Great Britain. Chapter Three is the methodology for the study of LGBT students in a southern California high school. Chapter Four presents the findings from interviews with 15 self-identified LGBT student from this high school. Chapter Five discusses the significance of the findings of the study and what they may indicate about future policy cages and school practices.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Review of the Literature

#### Bullying

The issue of bullying pervades the popular press, social media and academic research. For the LGBT student, schools are the most dangerous locations. Even those students who do not identify as LGBT may be harassed in schools just because other students perceive them to be gay from the way they present (Gastic, 2012; Williams, 2019). The more rural the school, the less support LGBT students are likely to have and the more dangerous the school environment becomes. The National Schools Climate Survey (2019) has recently identified rural Missouri, Kansas and Maine as particularly problematic. Chesir-Teran and Hughes (2008) conducted research in high schools which revealed that unless a student's homosexuality is invisible, the student will attract hostility. Hostility is the "norm" for LGBT students, not the exception. According to Stephen Russell (2011) victimization of LGBT kids can run the range from social interactions in which homophobic discourse is a routine part of everyday communication, for example, the use of phrases such as "That's so gay!" to "Fag!" to verbal harassment and even physical violence. Although the figures differ as to how many gay kids are bullied during their high school years, studies range from 65% (Minton et al, 2008) to 85% of students (Russell et al, 2011) who are confronted with violence or name-calling. Almost 85% of gay and lesbian high school students reported hearing negative comments about their sexuality, according to researchers Holmes and Cahill (2004), while more than 80% reported outright verbal harassment. Russell's research demonstrates that fully 44% of LGBT students are physically harassed because of their perceived sexuality. Russell believes this bullying at school and at this time in a young person's life is increased because of the heteronormative culture of the school. Young



people are just beginning to date for dances and other school activities and the stakes are therefore higher for the “policing of gender norms” (Butler, 1990). But as students are recognizing and expressing their sexuality earlier, the schools have not kept up in their efforts to protect and nurture their students, leaving the newly vulnerable “out” LGBT student to grapple with bullying, isolation, and loneliness by themselves (Ahmed and Braithwaite, 2004).

Academic research into school bullying is divided on who is doing the bullying. Gender theorists like Judith Butler (1990) identify those who bully as the “gender police,” anyone who wants to enforce “compulsory heterosexuality” among fellow students. Usually their purpose, she sees, is to raise their own social status. Ahmed and Braithwaite (2004) directed their research into examining what kinds of students need to exercise power over another student through bullying. What they found was that the bully was created in the home. Parents with a dominating and controlling disciplinary style, where high levels of hostility and rejection are employed with the child, teach that disciplinary style to their children who then transport it to school. A parent’s aggressive behavior serves as a model for the child to bully others. Usually, this behavior makes the bully unpopular and lonely in school. In an attempt to become more popular, the bully sets out to exhibit his/her power over another child mirroring the domineering behavior of the parent. Where parents demonstrated positive attitudes toward their children, there appears to be less likelihood the child will bully others. The bully also tends to behave as he/she does because he/she believes his/her actions will find favor with the parents, the school personnel or other adults. The bully feels secure he/she is representing a popular opinion among the adults and does not anticipate any reprisal for his/her bullying (Anagnostopoulos, Buchanan, Pereira, Lichty, 2008).

D'Esposito (2011) examines the relationship between the victim and victimizer, finding that the students who get bullied are more likely to display some form of physical weakness that makes them attract the attention of the bully. Having conducted her research in a rural school district, D'Esposito hypothesizes that in this smaller environment when students attend school together over an extended period of time, the physical weakness, particularly of boys, is more visible. She identifies other characteristics, like depression, anxiety and low self-esteem, as other triggers for attracting bullies. But boys and girls are bullied differently. Among girls, the animosity within friendship or rejection among peers may be construed as female bullying. In boys, however, any form of inadequacy, oversensitivity, or social awkwardness signal to an aggressor that these individuals are unable to defend themselves, making them more likely to attract a bully.

Ronni Sanlo (2004) cites other reasons kids harass other kids. According to her, they are demonstrating moral judgments made by their religious training and to prove they are not gay themselves. In private religious schools and among students from fundamentalist church affiliations, this form of gender policing underscores a student's affirmation of the tenets of her/his faith. Students feel as though they will not be punished for harassment because they know they are representing the beliefs of their parents and often of the school or teachers. Her work demonstrates also that students who have been accused of being gay or bullied may bully others to side with the more powerful role. By bullying another child, the bully creates a distance between him/herself and the vulnerability of being gay. Another view might be to say that the child, bullied by a dominant, bullying parent is transformed into a bully him/herself. This child too has failed in some way at gender conformity (Swearer, 2008).

A shocking sidebar to research on bullying is the work of Klein (2012). According to her research, it is sobering to realize that virtually all school shootings began with the shooter being bullied for not conforming to gender. Although this assertion has not been replicated elsewhere, schools need to be on guard for evidence of bullying among their students as a means of deflecting violent retaliation from the bullied.

Teachers and staff are not always involved in restraining students from bullying other students about gender non-conformity. Although gender-based bullying is the most common form of school violence, teachers are more likely to intervene when they observe instances of aggressive boys picking on quiet girls (Anagnostopoulos, 2008). Yet, the more gender non-conforming a student is, the more like s/he is to be singled out for aggression (Toomey, Ryan, & Diaz, 2010). As a consequence of attracting so much negative attention at school, many LGBT kids begin ditching classes. Alia Wong in the Atlantic (2019) identifies gym class as the most contested space in the school for all kids, not just LGBT students. Ultimately, many LGBT students request a transfer to other schools to avoid the bullies from their school. In an experiment to ameliorate school climate for LGBT students, the city of New York created a high school just for LGBT self-identified students (May, 2003). The curriculum made overt reference to contributions to the culture of LGBT scientists, authors, and historical figures.

As students begin skipping school, a pattern of avoidance is established and many students begin dropping out of school without graduating. One asks why teachers don't see and intervene when the amount of bullying is going on in the school environment. Ahmed's research (2004) determines that it is better for everyone when the teachers do get involved to protect the gender non-conforming child. However, too often that does not happen. According to Klein (2012), teachers don't get involved because they share the same attitudes as the bullies or fear

that administration and the parents will object to their interference on the behalf of the LGBT student. Minton (2008) claims that the teachers are just conflicted about intervening because the bully is expressing the prevailing negative attitudes of the rest of the school. It can be expected that a percentage of the school staff themselves are LGBT. However, depending on the culture of the school, the location of the school, and even the principal of the school, LGBT teachers and staff may find that being out on campus is either uncomfortable or just plain dangerous. Some teachers have reported they fear that parents who agree with their children's policing gender norms will turn on them if they halt the bullying of the supposed gay child. Teachers may feel it is their role to support the heteronormative culture of the school. In fact, gender bullying is regarded in most areas as more acceptable than racial slurs, an area in which the teachers would more likely intervene to protect the minority child. In short, then, the LGBT child is not protected by the school staff because of the prevailing attitude of the culture opposing homosexuality.

The literature is both broad and deep concerning the deleterious effects of bullying on gay and supposed gay students. Many studies indicate that lesbian and gay students suffer considerable anxiety from the verbal harassment they experience at school (Almeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar, and Azreal, 2009). Deleterious effects on the students' mental health persists into adulthood. As a consequence, these students have suicidal ideation at more than twice the frequency of heteronormative students. This added stressor of having a stigmatized identity complicates how students deal with other stressors. Even though great strides have been made in improving school climate through Gay-Straight Alliances and new policies supporting LGBT students, the stressors on gay students remains at a higher level than for students in other populations. The reasons this form of bullying has such a negative effect on LGBT students may

be associated with their diminished form of social support from parents, school staff, and community. However, Almeida et al (2005) do not state categorically that the reduced levels of mental health among LGBT students is directly caused by their being stigmatized for their real or perceived sexuality.

Sanlo (2004) writes that LGBT students do not even get the support from parents as they might if they were a racial minority. Sanlo, who is Jewish, had her parents' support and shared racial identity to give her support when she was alienated from social circles while in school. Students of ethnic minorities of all kinds share this same support at home. However, because most parents of LGBT students are not gay, they may or may not support their children with their relationships in school. Gay kids may not even tell their parents of their sexual identity for fear they will be rejected even by their own parents.

When students also come from an ethnic minority, they may identify more closely with their ethnic identity than with their sexual identity. The overlap of ethnicity, poverty, class and gender — referred to as “intersectionality” — also complicates the research. Holmes and Cahill (2005) in their research on high school experiences find that LGBT students of color face challenges that reflect the multi-dimensionality of their life situation. Yet, the work of Holmes and Cahill is unique as they state that for all the reporting on gay bullying, the majority of LGBT students in high schools are thriving in their school environments, are proud of themselves and their accomplishments, have positive and productive coping strategies and tap into support groups or create their own. If they find no LGBT role models in the school, they create models out of one another. Researchers have not as yet isolated how these students cope with being members of a much-maligned minority. However, they do note in their study that students who initiated the Day of Silence with their State Legislatures reported a sense of empowerment by

making a difference in their communities. Proctor and Groze (2007) make the case that the empowerment of the LGBT student creates a better climate in the school around the acceptance of the gay student in general.

Since the students in this study, like those in Meyer's study (2010), share the overlapping complications of sexual difference and ethnic minority status, his work is relevant even though he researches with adults rather than high school students. He underscores that the identities of the LGBT individuals of color differs from the white LGBT identity. The ethnic minority identity individuals usually becomes more stressed than the white LGBT individual. But also the ethnic minority becomes more resilient. In much of the resiliency research, it is an accepted fact that mental disorders originate with social stress. This study also questions the work that argues that ethnic minority identity wars with sexual identity making the individual choose which identity they most wish to embrace. According to Meyers, the differences in the experiences of Latino LGBT people and white LGBT people requires more study.

The Meyers' study is interesting to this study also because it brings up the issue of resilience in the face of bullying. According to Robinson in a study in the United Kingdom (2010) the issue of resilience again surfaces. In this study, Robinson was looking for some general themes to emerge from LGBT students' experiences in educational settings. Using a large sample from schools across Britain, including staff, the following themes emerged: 1) negative experiences at school are common to most lesbian and gay kids, 2) positive experiences surrounding the issue of their gay identities are also common, 3) students develop coping strategies more readily than their straight peers, 4) schools find it difficult to find ways to support gay and lesbian youth. As can be anticipated, many of the respondents to the Robinson study reported having difficulty at school because of their sexuality. But a number of the

students also reported that when they were being harassed they stayed close to friends who were able to protect them from the aggressors. While some of the students found it more beneficial to come out to their sexuality, other students found it preferable to remain closeted to avoid attention from the bullies. Some students reported that their strength comes from a supportive adult while others had aspiration for families and careers of their own which propelled them to succeed in school and persevere through problems they encountered. Whether the student chose to be out to friends or not, the key to LGBT kids' happiness seems to be, according to this study, in the LGBT student's own self-acceptance of their sexual identity. But these are results not so easy to produce for LGBT youth. In a recent study of gay men's experiences when they were younger, Nickerson (2016) found that the damage to self-esteem and the ability to adapt in later life. In his small group of participants, he found that depression and maladaptive coping strategies haunted them into adulthood. Those who participated felt that the cause of the bullying they experienced originated in the religions and families from which their tormentors came.

Although we may want to think that things are getting better for gay teen, other relatively new research suggests that schools tolerate discrimination, victimization and marginalization of queer teens (Boatwright, 2016). In his research he chronicles the lived experiences of a small coterie of queer youth of color. These young, gay men of color paint a dark picture of experiences in their schools and homes as they navigated their multiple identities of color and queerness.

Because bullying is such a high visibility issue in schools and because of the devastating effect on so many young people, it is easy to assume that all LGBT students are depressive, suicidal or homicidal. In fact, more research is emerging which identifies how LGBT students

are proving more resilient than had previously been recognized. The issue of resilience and its source will be considered later in this chapter.

Results are already beginning to surface that demonstrate that the election of 2016 has increased the amount and severity of bullying for LGBT (Lombardo, 2019). In a recent school climate survey taken across Virginia, researchers found higher rates of bullying and teasing in areas where voters preferred Trump over Clinton. Bullying for ethnic and racial reasons were also elevated. (Lombardo, 2019).

### **GSAs and More**

In efforts to curb bullying in schools and offset the negative effects on gay students, many schools are initiating Gay-Straight-Alliances, extracurricular clubs that bring together gay and straight students in a non-threatening environment to allow frank talk and open encounters to sensitize students to their classmates. Few other initiatives seem to be helpful school wide in changing student attitudes toward the LGBT population. Walton (2011) takes the view that anti-bullying efforts are largely a failure in many schools because bullying is seen as “normative practice” in the United States. That is that only heterosexuality is the only form of sexual expression accepted here. Many students hear anti-gay rhetoric at home and among their friends, and even among teachers and staff, and regard bullying as a form of reflecting opinions of the adults in their lives. Adults spew anti-gay invective at home where their youngsters hear this talk and then act out this violence in the schools. In some cases, Walton finds that bullying reinforces social hierarchies, bestowing power and privilege to the heterosexual students. The bullying students feels s/he is gender policing in the name of his/her family, teachers, and church. Few interventions disrupt this discourse as effectively as the Gay-Straight Alliance in creating a dramatically different social environment for gay kids on a school campus (Friedman-



Ninz, 2006). Heck, Flentje, Cochran (2011) explain that GSAs are usually student-led organization with the stated goal of improving school climate, and educating the community about sexual minority issues. The advantage, Heck et al find in calling the club a GSA (or a PSG, Positive Space Group, if one is in Canada) is that the groups' name specifically address the concerns of the LGBT community and not some age reference to diversity (Education Canada, 2012). Rose Eveleth (2019) out of British Columbia finds that the mere presence of a GSA on campus improves the social climate for all students, reducing suicide and suicidal ideation among LGBT and non-identified students alike. Whether students identify as LGBT or not, the existence of a GSA on campus seems to lower the virulence of homophobic comments and raise the awareness of staff and teachers to make more positive statements about LGBT people. Additionally, the GSA helps students identify teachers and staff who are supportive, giving LGBT kids more options of teachers they can consult for advice. Lowered tolerance of homophobic comments, raised awareness of sensitivity to LGBT issues contribute to improving the academic achievement and experiences of LGBT students. The GSA can specifically recommend to the school that they establish and publicize anti-bullying policies based on gender, promote administration to train teachers to recognize and intervene in homophobic behaviors, with the goal of integrating gender discussion into the curriculum wherever there is talk of diversity. GSAs appear to be a simple method of improving school climate. The disadvantage is that GSAs are more likely to form in liberal, urban or suburban school districts, places that have more financial resources to support these efforts and a general population more open to accepting LGBT people in their community. Students in rural schools still do not have those options available to them. Although numbers of GSAs is unavailable, research seems to indicate that it is more likely for them to exist in public schools in urban areas.

Another benefit of the GSA for the non-LGBT student is the opportunity to converse safely about issues of gender. According to Friedman-Nimz's study, the straight students who join the GSA do so because they enjoy being around people who are brave enough to be open about their sexuality. Some of the straight kids come to the meeting to explore the ideas that are in conflict with the religious training they are receiving at home. They find that not all religions see gay people as sinful and not all gay people are offensive. In this environment, the gay students feel no stress to "come out" because they have friends who value them already in this environment. It is interesting to note that the GSAs in Friedman-Nimz's study tend to attract the brightest students and the ones who participate in theater.

Another important aspect of the GSA is that they give voice to the "deafening silence" of gay and lesbian positive images and role models (Valenti and Campbell, 2009). Simply by being present, the GSA says that LGBT people are present in the schools and have concerns that are not addressed in the current curriculum. Silence in curricular areas and invisibility in the community disappear when a Gay-Straight Alliance is present.

However, in the current political climate, some GSAs are finding resistance to their existence. Because of the Equal Access Act upholding the right of GSAs to exist and to call themselves "gay-straight alliances," schools must allow GSAs to exist and must treat them fairly. Court cases have sprung up to rename the GSA as "less divisive" or to broaden the scope of the groups' mission statements thereby obscuring the focus and purpose of the group, making it clear to students that something is missing or repugnant in the term. Leo Jr. and Sr. High School in Indiana has recently forbidden their GSA to call itself a "gay-straight alliance," refusing to allow students to use the term Pride as in LGBT Pride (Taylor, 2018). The club is censored from meeting as other clubs do in the locations on campus. They are not permitted to

fundraise with other clubs and must meet other stringent requirements not required of other clubs. Although the ACLU has taken up the case, Indiana is still permitted to select to make LGBT students meet arbitrary standards not required of other students. (Allen, 2018 and Taylor, 2018).

A disturbing trend “threatening the future” was reported by the New York Times (Goldstein, 2019) in which white parents are pushing back against efforts to foster classroom diversity by forming their own private, majority-white districts. As the white students opt out of the public schools, the resulting schools serve high poverty, racially segregated students which typically attract fewer experienced teachers, advanced courses, and fewer extracurricular opportunities. The preponderance of research shows that students would perform better academically and demonstrate more long term benefits like higher incomes and lower rates of incarceration if they attend more integrated schools. Interestingly, the white students are not hurt academically and even benefit from exposure to classmates who better demonstrate diversity. A possible solution to this white flight from the public schools would be to offer magnet schools to draw students voluntarily to schools that offer special kinds of programs appealing to students of color as well as white students. However, given the long history of white resistance to desegregation efforts many education advocates remain skeptical of any efforts to integrate schools. If students are already identified and marginalized by their racial make-up, how much more threatening will their LGBT status isolate them?

The NEA reports that school districts vary in their ability to make LGBT students safe on campus (Taylor, 2004). Most school districts score a D- for their efforts on the behalf of their gay kids. Those schools that did get an A invariably had implemented a GSA and followed up with workshops for students and teachers about gay issues and concerns. They also encouraged

curricular support of gay contributions. Although these adjustments to the school environment seem small, inexpensive and meager to render the campus more accepting of their gay population, few schools have been implementing these policies which underscores the uneven nature of change in schools. Many schools haven't started to make safe schools for LGBT kids. Only 33% of schools have an anti-bullying policy (Robinson, 2010). Brown and Gormaker (2009) write a guideline for how administrators can gauge their school's climate and plan for increasing the appreciation of diversity on campus. When researchers asked LGBT students what they felt was the cause of the most of their discomfort on campus, they responded that the result of silence on LGBT issues and the lack of procedures for support for them was at the crux of their problems.

Minton (2008) suggests that schools could begin to address the problems of school bullying by preparing the teachers better for the presence of LGBT kids on their campus. Since schools regularly require teachers to attend training sessions before school begins each year and throughout the year, she suggests schools discuss what can be done to help teachers intervene in bullying on the behalf of their students. Whereas curricular changes to highlight the contributions of LGBT individuals in each discipline are recommended, no other concrete suggestions are made as to the nature of the pre-service and in-service trainings.

Robinson (2010) did her research in faith schools, many of which were still teaching that homosexuality is a sin and gay students are not living their faith, causing detriment to their own gay students within the school. Although many researchers have identified self-acceptance as the most important step in living a happy gay life, faith schools are struggling to come to some focus on what they can do. Robinson advises that they hire LGBT teachers to role model the normality of the homosexual life. Counselors working with parents and peer mediation and

support groups of all kinds are recommended. At the very least, the counselors should know of services in the community to which they can refer these students and parents. Of course, the difficulty in these schools is that the staff and parents too often do not intend to change their stance on the sinfulness of homosexuality further isolating and silencing LGBT kids in these environments.

In an effort to reduce violence against LGBT students, suicide among the population, New York City in 2003 opened the first gay high school named after Harvey Milk, the California politician who was assassinated for being a gay advocate. Although students who do not identify as gay may choose to attend the school, predominantly the population is LGBT with the academic focus inclusive of gay contributions to the culture. Counseling and support is also available should students have been thrown out of their homes by parents who could not support their life style, providing food and clothing where needed. However, the school is not without controversy. Even within the LGBT community there is discussion about the advisability of opening an entire school for gays. Some adversaries argue that it is not wise to put all of the gay kids in one place making them localized should someone wish harm on the community. Others argue that withdrawing from local schools does not improve the environment in which the gay students will return after school. Some, even those in Milk's own family, argue that he would or would not have approved of a school just for LGBT students. A fierce proponent of public education, one argues, Milk would have wanted to change the environment in the local school while another family member believes his uncle would have been proud to have had a school for kids who needed more support getting through their teen years. (May, 2003).

In a recent study reported by the Washington Post, T. Fitzsimmons (June 24, 2019) found that African American and Latino parents find it harder to accept their LGBT children than many

other parents. The study asked the question, Can we identify the families that will need the most support to help their children as they mature? Although the acceptance of the LGBT child improves over time, the first two years when s/he is out to her/his family can be the most difficult. Once they see that their child will experience less depression and will find their way in their lives, the parents' reactions seem to relax into more acceptance.

Yet another study of Latino parents raising LGBT kids (Fernandez, 2016) suggest that Latino parents face stigma from their friends and community when it is discovered that their children are LGBT. It appears that parents and children are stigmatized and policed in an attempt to render the child straight.

The work of R. J. Rico (2016) in Texas identifies how the cultural atmosphere of the Latino in school renders the LGBT identity more complex. His work leans more heavily on the importance of being Latino than being gay for the student attempting to navigate school, find personal identity within the cultural and gender definitions of Latino and gay.

It is important to note, however, that all of the research cited here is qualitative in nature. None of these researchers attempted to capture a quantitative improvement in school culture and environment for LGBT kids. Chesir-Teran and Hughes (2009) suggest that we don't really know if the GSAs and anti-bullying policies are legitimately making life better for LGBT kids or if the kids and the adults just think the environment is better because the policies are in place. Walton (2011) states that mediation and counseling are insufficient to turn away bullying from even one student in a school site.

The conclusions one can draw from the research into school environment and culture can be summarized as follows:

- LGBT kids are at risk of school bullying and the presence of a Gay-Straight Alliance on campus may help to ameliorate the behavior of students who might be willing to bully.
- Pre-service and ins-service for teachers and staff help to underscore the issues and presence of the LGBT student on campus. (Minton, 2008)
- Families and schools working together may be effective interventions for these students (Ahmed and Braithwaite, 2004).
- Everything we know may be wrong (Chesir-Teran et al, 2009; Walton, 2011).

### **Resiliency**

Because of all of the public conversation about the ill effects of bullying on gay students it would be easy to fall into the belief that all LGBT kids are terrified, alienated, victimized. Not all students respond with self-destructive or socially destructive behaviors. Research finds many teens who manage to cope, thrive, and develop “increased self-efficacy” (Smith and Gray, 2009). Identifying where resilience comes from, how it manifests in each individual, and how society can support and encourage resilience in young people remains vague and nebulous. As Smith and Gray conducted their research, they attempted to develop an instrument for measuring resilience among LGBT students. Interviews revealed many were “tough, responded to hardships and personal tragedies with notable resiliency, (were) creative in devising ways of transforming hardships to opportunities and continue to make significant contributions to society even though they did not have access to outside support” (213). Although the students they interviewed acknowledged they had heard many demeaning messages about their sexual or gender identity, the students seemed to transform these into lessons to help them grow from life’s stressful experiences. As a result of their interviews, Smith and Gray identified “resilience” in LGBT teens as a result of the interplay of three factors: 1) the buffering or mediating effect

provided by supportive neighborhoods, communities and supportive environments, 2) quality of protective interpersonal relations, and 3) interpersonal attributes and hardiness. The first two factors identify the importance of family and school support. However, it is the third factor, that of the hardiness of the individual that is the most difficult to identify. Several other researchers also focus their research in the area of defining what these hardiness characteristics entail. Smith and Gray postulate that some of the characteristics they discovered were a positive attitude, a feeling that things ultimately turn out for the best, that individuals can control their reaction to negativity, that they can keep going in the face of adversity, maintain a sense of humor and demonstrate integrity. Identifying what personality traits enable the gay teen to manifest these coping strategies remains mysterious to these researchers.

The work of Christiansen and Evans (2005) likewise echoes the work of Smith and Gray. Identifying LGBT adolescents as the most victimized group in society, they too identify “protective variables” as 1) social connectedness, 2) parental monitoring, and 3) neighborhood cohesion. Christiansen and Evans don’t venture into the area of identifying personal characteristics that make LGBT kids demonstrate resilience. They confine their comments to external forces that support from the outside.

Resilience for Tim Grothaus (2004) can only be measured by what action is manifested in the LGBT teen’s behavior. Grothaus does not attempt to involve himself in the inner workings of the resilient teen but only in the self-esteem that stems from their involvement in the community. In his article, Grothaus observes what happens to LGBT youth when they are involved in meaningful and positive contributions to their communities. He shares many ways in which people who work with LGBT youth — teachers, administrators, parents, and community people — and the manner in which they can encourage youth to do something for someone



else. Even the simple work of initiating a Day of Silence to raise school wide awareness of how LGBT individuals have been silenced in society and in our teaching of history promotes feelings of self-esteem.

Smith and Gray, Duarte-Valez, Bernal and Bonilla (2010) conducted their research among primarily Latino youth. Although they assumed at the outset that close-knit families might buffer young people and make them more resilient in the face of difficult situations, they found that it was difficult for the Latino youth to come out to family and claim that support. In many cases these youngsters wait to come out to parents until long after they have come out to other family members and friends.

Munoz-Plaza, Quinn and Rounds (2002) found that non-family members were more supportive of LGBT students than their own families, and not just in Latino families either. Many LGBT teens may find support from heterosexual peers. However, those relationships have their limits as well. These researchers state that the classrooms in most high schools are the most homophobic of all social institutions. The best support for the LGBT student is with other LGBT peers and adults. Sandowski (2013) agrees that finding one trustworthy adult in school can help turn things around for an adolescent at risk. For him, that is the basis of all resilience for the LGBT teen. Brown (2004) believes that mentors are the foundation of resilience for LGBT kids. Once a student finds someone who is not judgmental, who offers encouragement, friendship and advice without chastising or criticizing, the student will survive harsh experiences and transform what is negative into a personal strength.

Resilience among Latino/a students begins with the position of the family, according to the research of J. E. Beckman (2016). Where the family supports the student, the young queer student is able to rise to the tough times that confront her/him. Where queerness contradicts

family harmony, fewer other forms of intervention are as effective. However, financial security, friends, clubs, and pride of culture and history make it easier for the LGBT student to cope.

### **Religion as part of Resilience**

Most research on resilience affirms the role of an adult or peer mentor to support the teen, the potential of a supportive family or teacher, and the effects of personal activism in the school or society. Religion can also play a role in supporting the LGBT teen to feelings of worthiness and efficacy. However, in many cases, conservative religions may further isolate and stigmatize the LGBT teen. Although many churches assume that being gay and being Christian are mutually exclusive, many gay people retain their connection to religion although perhaps not the church in which the teens were raised (Walton, 2008). Walton's research made it a point to find LGBT teens in congregations that were more gay-affirming. Because all forms of social connectedness improve individual mental health and lower stress levels, finding a religious congregation can make a difference in mental health and diminishing risky behaviors (Kubicek, et al, 2009). Duarte-Valez et al (2010) aver that the stronger the system of support the easier it will be to face difficult situations of all kinds. Many gay people find that integrating into their identities both their view that they are gay and a religious person does not cause a cognitive dissonance but further supports them. According to Kubicek (2009), because we Americans are so individualistic, some gays have no difficulty referring to themselves as a "congregation of one," and worship as they choose. Others argue that since God created them this way, it can't be wrong. Spirituality becomes as much a part of their identities as gay sexuality. Gerald Walton writes of congregations that are gay-friendly. He focuses on an Anglican church in New Hampshire that is referred to by the congregants and the community as the "fag church." Some of the men he interviewed said in their home churches they began to see that God was not mad at

the gays, but that the gays should be angry at the congregants or congregations who isolated them. They were therefore able to argue that since God made them this way, it must be good. They integrated their sexuality and Christianity in a “dynamic, continually reciprocal way” (232). Walton continues that a common strategy among these men who were both gay and Christian was “exegesis” or critical interpretation of Biblical text rather than a literalist interpretation. They believed they were put on earth for a purpose and to create a relationship with God. They also focused on the fact the Christ was entirely silent about homosexuality in the New Testament.

### **Conclusion**

Bullying remains a central issue in the literature on LGBT teens probably because of the high visibility of the aftermath of the death of gay kids from suicide. Schools are the most homophobic and dangerous place for LGBT teens because it is here that other students police gender just at a time when kids are becoming aware of their sexuality through dating. Anti-LGBT language has become common place within the jargon of teenagers as they use gay references to denigrate others whether the student is gay or not. Too often teachers do not respond to these comments or threats to the gay student either because of their own ambivalence to gays or their fear they will not be supported by the parents of their straight students or the administration. Harassed by other students with no support from the adults, the LGBT teen becomes isolated and fearful. The bully at school is usually the bullied at home. Parenting styles create the bully and the child who bullies at school usually believes s/he is expressing views that would be heralded by his/her parents. In many cases, the bully is enacting the beliefs of their religious training by calling out the LGBT teen. Some students begin ditching classes to avoid the bully. Some students even transfer to other schools to end the harassment. Too many end up

underperforming or dropping out of school entirely. Boys and girls are bullied differently. Usually the bully is attracted to an individual who demonstrates some weakness the bully can exploit in front of their peers. Boys are bullied more physically while girls are bullied by being isolated from the group. The ill effects of bullying on the mental health of the LGBT kid last into adulthood.

One way to improve school environment for all kids is the imposition of a Gay-Straight Alliance. Whether students attend the meeting or participate in any way, the school and the faculty become more sensitized to the presence of gay individuals in their midst. So far, this seems to be the most powerful way a school can improve their environment for their LGBT students.

It is incorrect, however, to consider that all LGBT kids are silent, isolated, victimized members of their school communities. Many students are thriving and learning mature ways of problem solving through the problems they face in high school. They are not ditching school, changing schools, but are finding other ways to make peace with other kids. They are becoming involved in their communities to bring positive attention to the gay contribution to society. Although their home church may not be supportive of their gay identity, many faithful kids are searching out churches that will support them. Attention to resiliency in the LGBT youth deserves much further investigation.

The overlap of identities gay, minority and poverty, complicate the results of the research. Many students in these researches identify as part Asian, Pacific Islander, African-American, and Latino. Students of mixed heritage may be more closely identified with ethnicity rather than sexuality. Some means of disaggregation of identities must be attempted to explain the complexity of these children's lives.

A parenting article in the *Washington Post* (Friedrichs, June 21, 2017) suggests ways for parents to get involved in positive ways to shield their children from at school bullying. A recent survey by GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network) found that for the first time in a number of years, there were fewer positive changes for LGBT students. They reported increased anti-LGBT discourse often directly associated with policies like the “bathroom bills” in political contention at the current time. Governmental funding and support for abstinence only sex education leaves the LGBT student unmentioned in classroom discussions of sexual experiences. Some states have laws banning teachers from mentioning LGBT life in a positive manner. As the increases in LGBT acceptance is wiped out so easily and quickly, parents are encouraged to make contact with the schools in support of their children, keeping records of the encounters with bullying and the school’s response to them. The article presupposes that the LGBT students have the support of their parents and that the parents are willing to champion their children in a public forum.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

#### **Study Sampling**

The students interviewed in this study self-selected to participate and can therefore be considered typical case sampling. They then become the normal or average LGBT student attending this school at the time of the research. I established a facebook account several years before this research took place. During that time I accepted as “friends” former students of mine and former students to the high school. When I was ready to begin the study, I posted a request on my facebook page. (Appendix 1). I asked students to contact me if they were willing to participate in research I was conducting for my academic work. I did not specifically approach others whom I knew to identify as LGBT. All participants were self-selected. Because the security of a facebook account is notoriously porous, I asked off line for phone numbers or emails where I could contact them. Each student who agreed to participate was sent a letter of consent to be interviewed as approved by IRB (Appendix 2). My next encounter with participants was to send them the survey. (Appendix 3) I assured them that when we talked I would restrict my questions to the answers they had given on the survey. Because the questions are not too personal, any physical or psychological stressors were neutralized. The survey was sent to them using Survey Monkey or in some cases where that was not technically possible through simple email procedure. The survey consisted of 20 questions about their experiences as a gay person at home, at school, in church or other house of faith or in the community. If a participant felt that any answers s/he might give were uncomfortable participants could withdraw from the process at that point. By the time I contacted these students they had been out of high

school for four to eight years and were now adults. They had been students at this high school between 2001 to 2011. None of the questions asked for how these experiences had personally affected the student thereby allowing them to control how sensitive their responses would be. After they returned the written surveys, we made arrangements for me to call them on the phone. I restricted my queries to subjects they broached in their surveys. After the interview, respondents were given the choice to receive a copy of their remarks. None of them were interested in receiving a transcript. A gift card in the amount of \$5 for Amazon was sent to their email in thanks for their participation. No further monetary or other benefit accrued to them. Their benefits will be personal satisfaction that they have survived the teen years and are now seen by a former school employee for who they are. A sense of personal value and the value of their community should accrue in that way.

## **Interviews**

The calls lasted between 15 and 30 minutes depending on the garrulousness of the participant. Prior to the phone calls I took notes on what questions I wished to answer. All of the calls were recorded on my phone but then transferred to my email documents. Unfortunately, when I moved out of state, the transcripts were lost when I changed email providers. Fortunately, when we spoke I took notes on their responses to the questions I had planned to ask, filling in the spaces immediately after the call. Those written transcripts remain in my written files.

I asked all of the students the same questions although sometimes I followed up by asking more probing questions to issues a student might bring up.

## **Ethical Issues**

Although the ethical issues from Patton (2002, 408) were addressed in the consent letter signed by each of the participants, special attempts were made to be clear that I was using their answers for academic work and would therefore hold their responses and identities in strictest confidence. In very simple language I said that I was working on a dissertation about the experiences of LGBT students at their high school, and I wanted their reflections on their experiences. Several of the participants were delighted to hear that their school and community were receiving academic attention they felt was deeply deserved because of the unique nature of the school. By the nature of the means of recruitment, these participants were willing to comply without consideration of further need for a reason to participate. They understood that they could refuse to answer anything that made them uncomfortable.

### **Sample Size**

The sample size for this inquiry is small, 13 people. However, because of the age range of the individuals their responses can be considered normal or average for LGBT students in this location. Seven males and 6 female respondents were contacted to participate in the study.



## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Because of the popularity of Facebook, keeping in touch with former students and students with one another is facilitated by using this social media. Students over the course of my long career can still keep in touch with an instructor. When it was time to begin the investigative part of the research into the experiences of Latino high school students it was natural to turn to Facebook to solicit their participation. For this grounded research project, I posted an invitation (see Appendix 1) to students who identify as LGBT to take a survey and spend a few minutes in phone conversation with me about what it was like during their high school years. A few former students responded and were contacted for their surveys and phone conversations. Many of the students who are out on social media did not make contact to be interviewed.

Ultimately, the total number of respondents came to thirteen. Of those, 7 were male; 6 were female. In thanks to all 13 for their participation, they were sent a small amount of credit for an Amazon purchase.

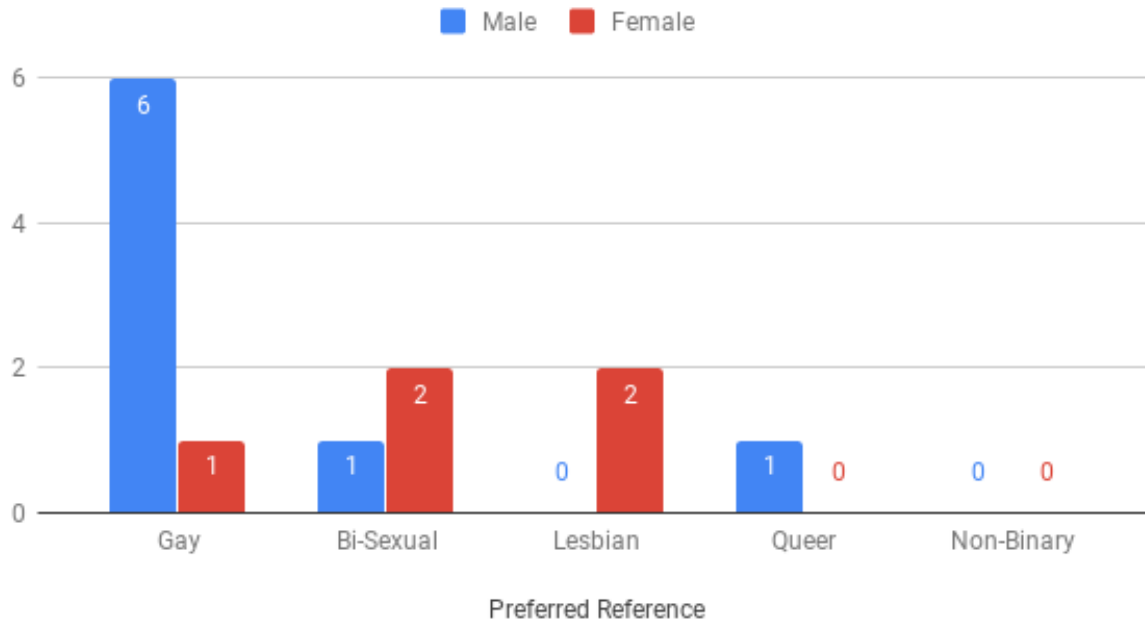
What follows is the result of each question to the group.

### **Question 1: How do you prefer others to refer to you?**

Eight responded “gay,” all of the males and one female. Three responded “bisexual,” both male and female. Two females preferred “lesbian,” while one, the youngest of the group, preferred “queer.” None of the respondents offered to use “non-binary” as this was a term that came into common use after they were in high school.

**Figure 1: How do you want others to refer to you?**

**Figure 1: Question 1 Preferred Reference**



**Question 2: What is your preferred pronoun?**

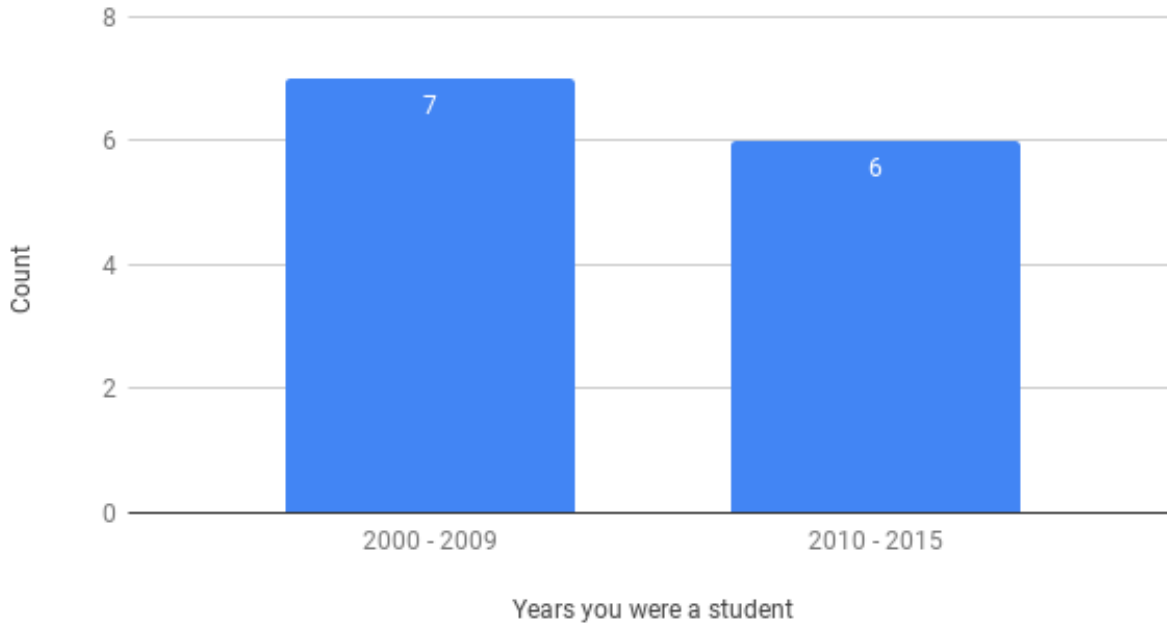
All preferred “he” and “she” as they manifest their cisgender. None chose to use “they” or “them.”

**Question 3: What year were you a student at this high school?**

Seven of the respondents attended this high school from 2000 to 2009. Another six from 2010 to 2015.

**Figure 2: Years you were a student**

**Figure 2: Question 3 What year were you a student at this high school**



**Question 4: Did you know you were gay in high school?**

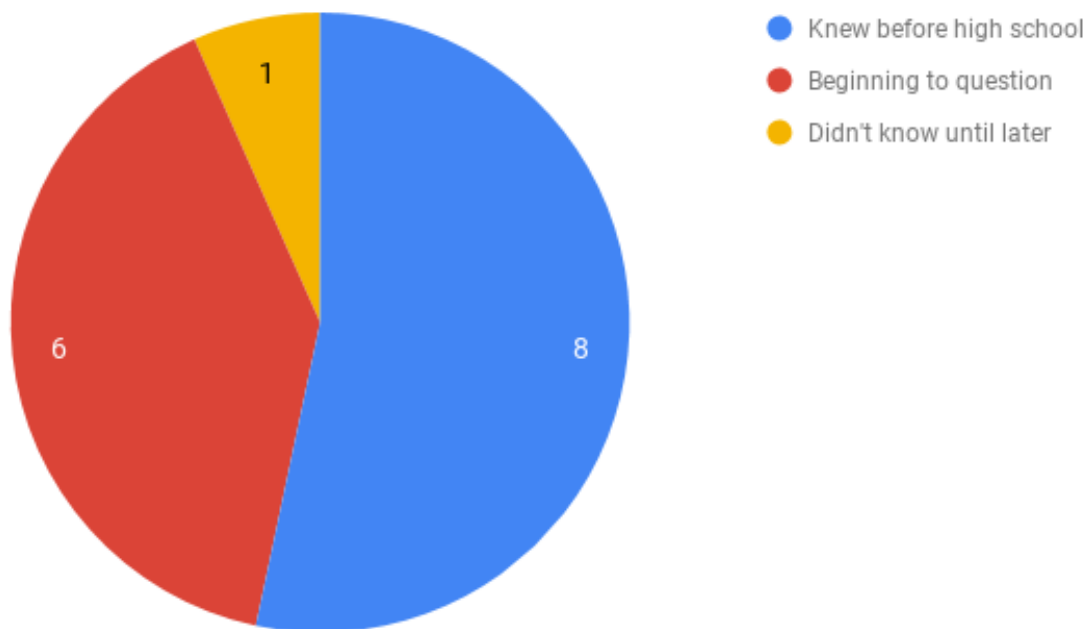
Six respondents said they already knew they were gay when they were in high school. If they didn't know for certain, six were beginning to question. Only one respondent said he did not question or know s/he was gay until beyond high school.

Most of the respondents believed that no one knew they were gay when they were in high school. This response may have an impact later when the questions turn to bullying. If they didn't know and no one else knew they were gay, bullying to police their gender conformity would be unnecessary. However, as an observer of these respondents when they were in high school I was only surprised by one of the student respondents. I thought it was quite evident these respondents were LGBT. If other students were perceptive of gender differences each of

these students would have appeared LGBT to them. Although this seems like a simple question, when I listened to the responses I wondered why they thought no one knew they were gay.

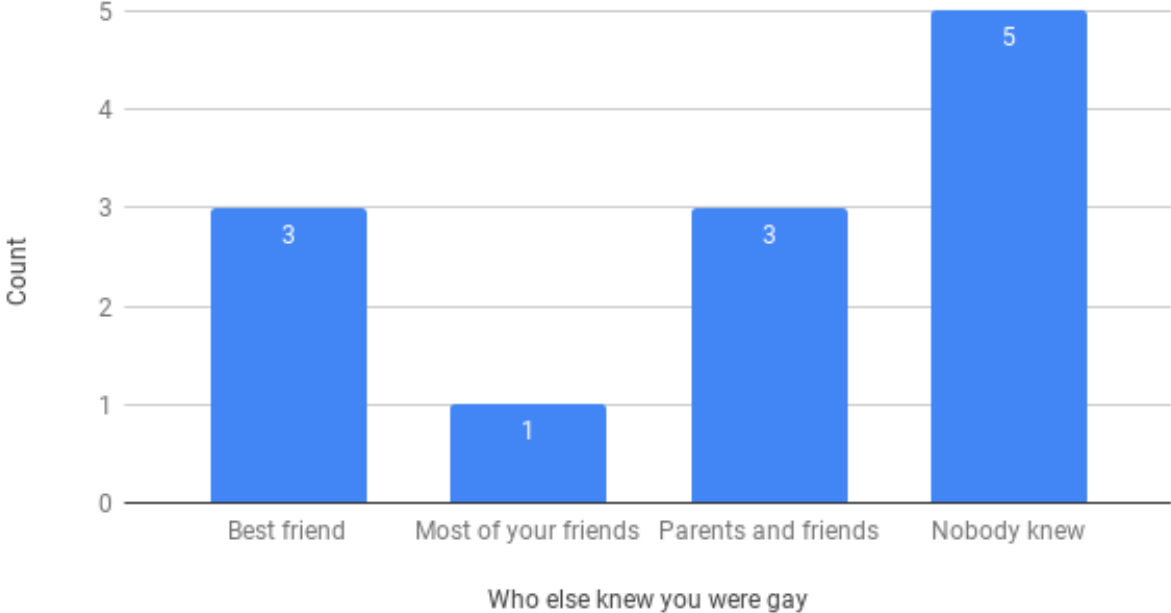
Three respondents said their best friends knew they were LGBT or questioning. One responded that “most of my friends” knew. Only three respondents said their parents, friends, teachers, other adults knew they were LGBT. How these others reacted to this knowledge was probed during the phone call part of the interview with varying reactions.

Figure 3: Question 4 Did you know you were gay in high school



**Question 5: Who else knew you were gay?**

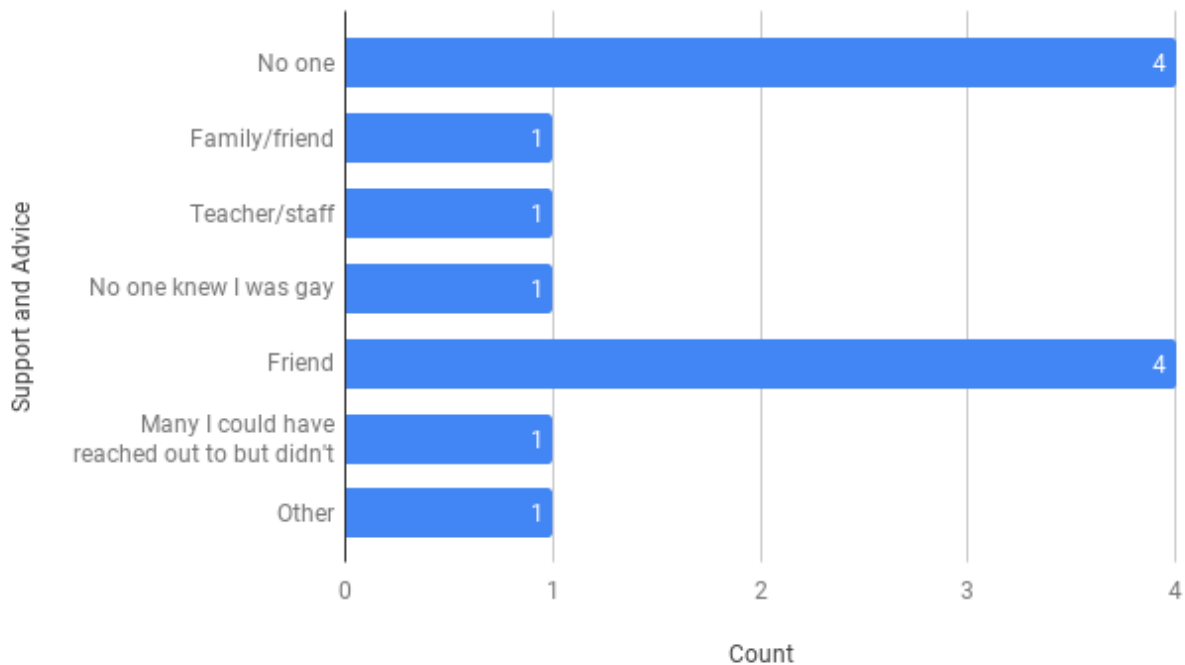
**Figure 4: Question 5 Who else knew you were gay**



**#6: Was there anyone you could talk to for support and advice? Answer all that apply.**

Four people said “no one.” One answered “a family member and a friend.” Another answered “other.” Although s/he would not say who it was, the respondent hinted it was a brother. One had a teacher/faculty member to whom s/he could confide. One answered “N/A because no one knew I was gay.” Four people said they had a friend to whom they could speak. One answered, “There were many I could have reached out to but I never did.” Another said “a family member.” In short, only 4 of the respondents had no one to whom they could turn to talk about life for a gay teen.

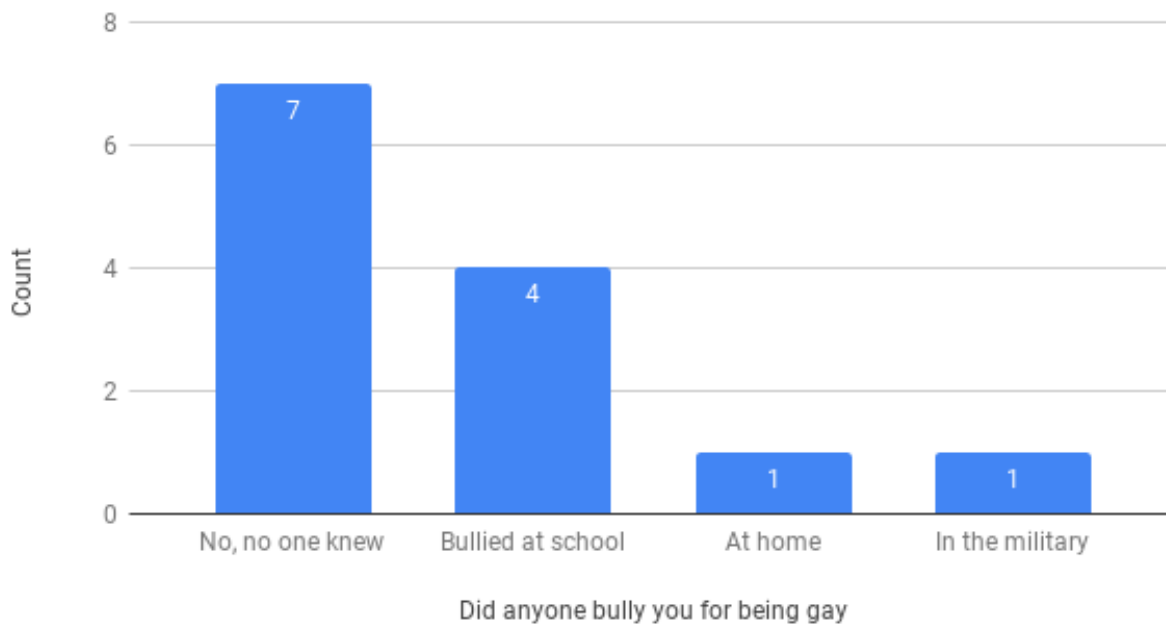
**Figure 5: Question 6 Was there anyone you could talk to for**



**#7. Did anyone bully you for being gay? Answer all that apply.**

Seven of the respondents answered that they were not bullied because no one knew they were gay. Three were bullied at school. One student was bullied both at home and at school. Another was bullied at home and in the neighborhood. Another was bullied only at home. Another was bullied at the place of employment. This respondent had been in the military. Since the military experience occurred after high school, this takes the issue of bullying out of the high school experience.

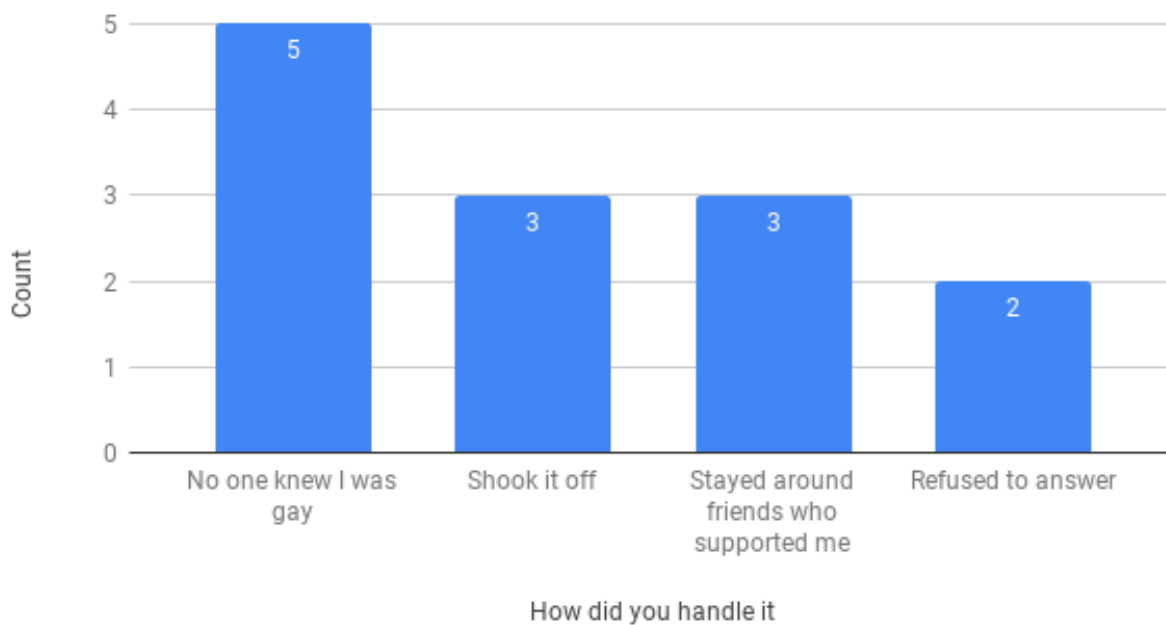
**Figure 6: Question 7 Did anyone bully you for being gay**



### #8. How did you handle it?

Five marked that this did not apply because they were unknown as gay to their friends or family. Another one third, or five, “shook it off.” Three answered “stayed around with friends who supported me.” Two refused to answer that question. In one case, the respondent did not feel others knew s/he was LGBT. But in the other case, no excuse was offered.

Figure 7: Question 8 How did you handle it

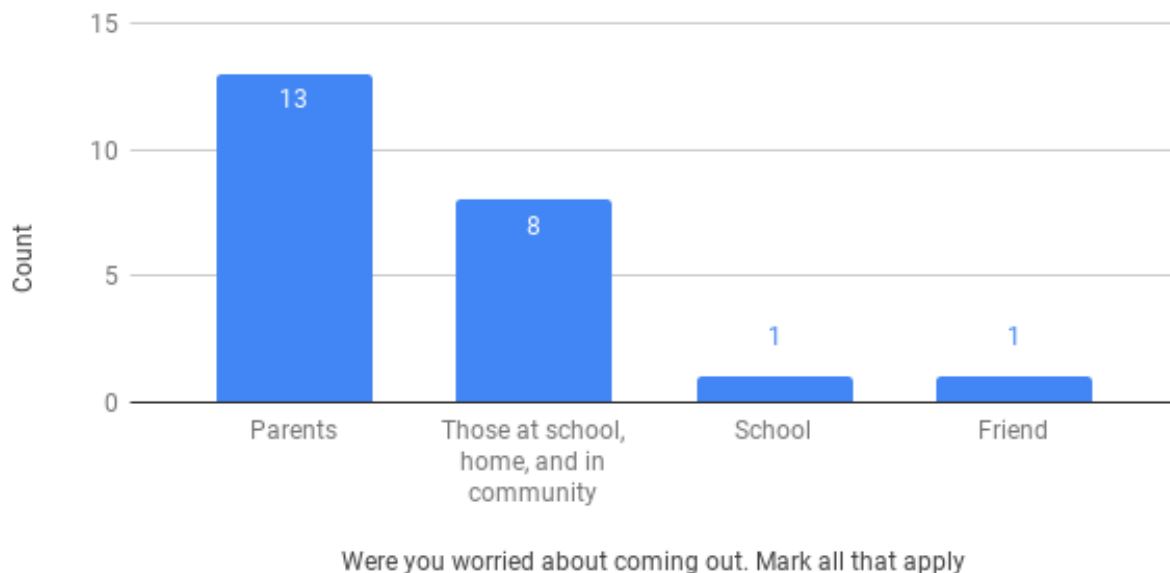




**#9. Were you worried about coming out to the following. Mark all that apply.**

All of the respondents said they were afraid to come out to their parents. Eight were afraid to come out to anyone at all either at school, at home, in the community. One was afraid to come out at school. One was afraid to come out to a sibling. Another was afraid to come out to a friend.

**Figure 8: Question 9 Were you worried about coming out. Mark all that apply**



**#10. Did you have religious or church affiliations at the time?**

Five of the respondents did belong to a religious organization while 10 had no religious affiliation at all.

**#11. Did your religious support you as a gay person?**

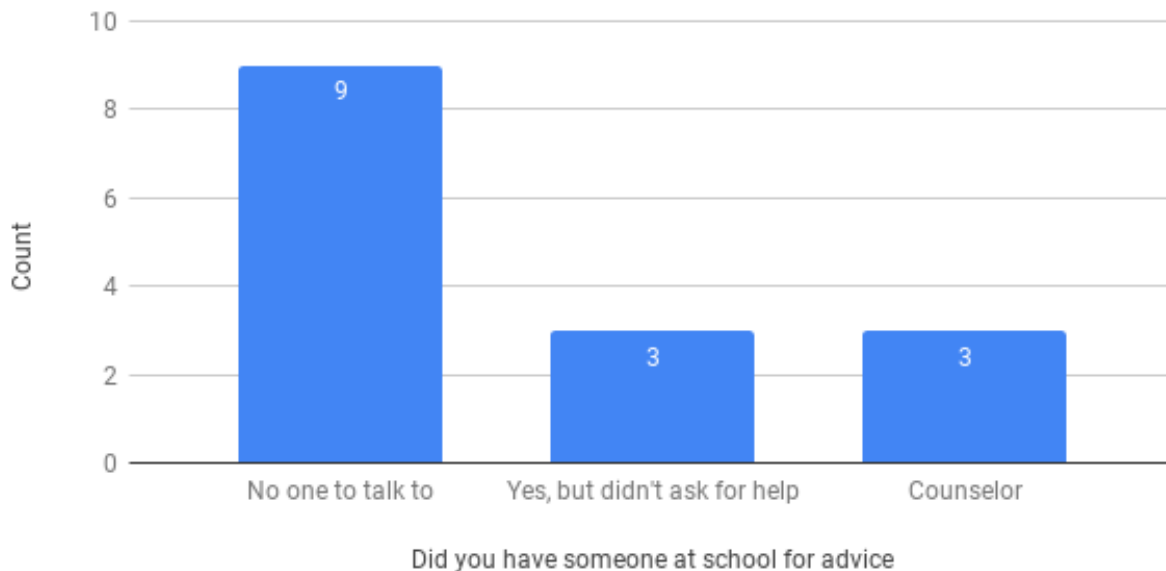
Of the five who were involved in organized religion, none of them felt supported by that faith in their journey as a gay person. However, Lydia [not her real name) responded that she

was “part of religious community until college, but have always been part of one that supported LGBT members. However, I was never out at religious service.”

**#12 Did you have someone at school you could go to for advice and support as a gay person? Answer all that apply.**

Of the 13 who responded, 9 had no one to talk to at school for help or advice they might need as they explored their gay identities. Gina responded that she had a teacher she could have asked but she didn’t “capitalize” on this chance. Lydia said she could possibly have had a teacher to whom she could have spoken but “it was hard to tell” if the teacher would have been sympathetic or helpful. Another student thought a teacher might have been willing to advice him. Three students could go to their counselor.

**Figure 10: Question 12 Did you have someone at school for advice**



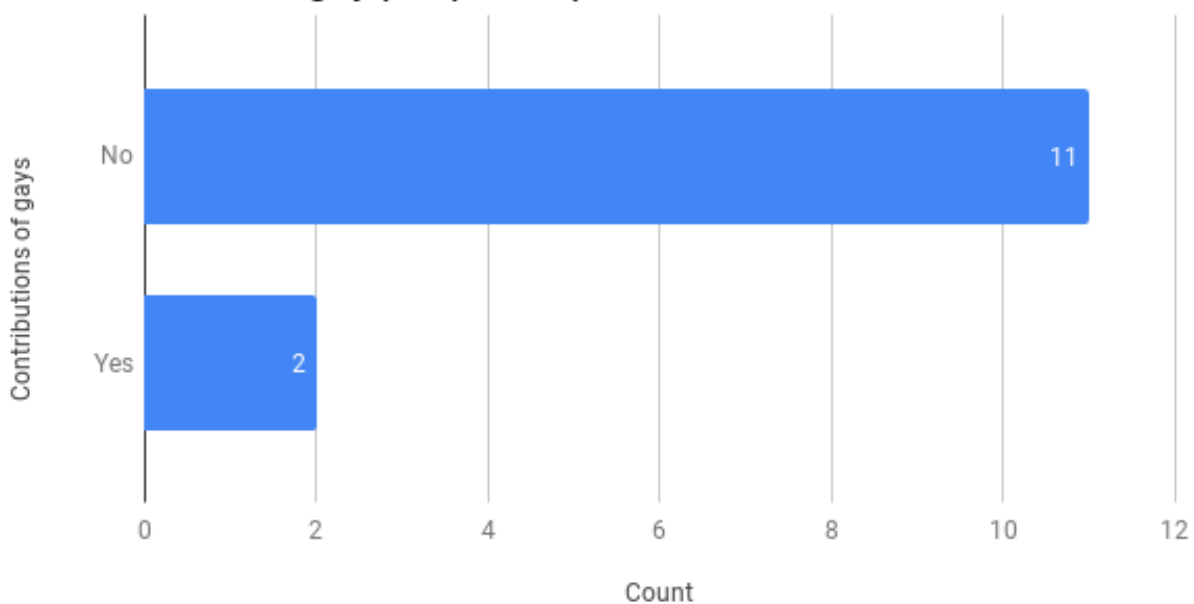
**#13. Did you hear teachers/administrators/staff say positive things about gay people.**

Seven responded “no” while 6 responded “yes.”

**#14. Did any teacher talk about contributions of gay people as part of their curriculum?**

Fully 11 of the respondents said “no.” The 2 who said “yes” were the youngest of the sample, perhaps indicating that teachers felt freer to talk about issues of gay contributions to their field of study.

**Figure 11: Question 14 Did any teacher talk about contributions of gay people as part of their curriculum**

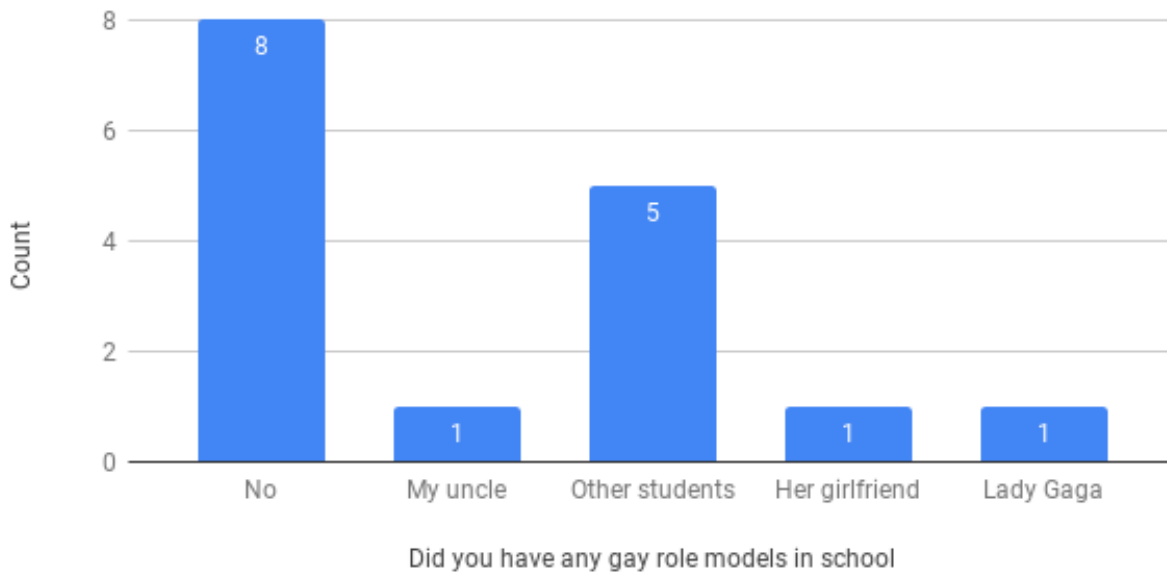


**#15. Did you have any gay role models in school?**

Ten of the respondents did not have anyone they felt were role models for them as LGBT people. One student wrote in “my uncle,” in the space for “other student.” Another wrote in for “other student” that her girl friend was her role model. Four of the thirteen said other students had shown them how to conduct themselves as LGBT individuals. Only one student said a

teacher was a role model. During the phone call interview, one students asked, “Does Lady Gaga count?”

Figure 12: Question 15 Did you have any gay role models in school



**#16. Did you ever hear derogatory remarks about gays made by: Answer all that apply.**

“Parents, siblings, friends, and religious leaders” were marked by 5 of the respondents. Five of the respondents were active in religious organizations indicating that each heard their religious leader denigrate them while they were in religious environments. Three marked that everyone on the list had said something negative about the LGBT community.

Two respondents said only their parents and siblings had been negative. One marked parents only. Two marked their friends had said something negative. Counting all of the students who responded about negative comments from parents, eleven of the thirteen had been made to feel inferior in their own homes.

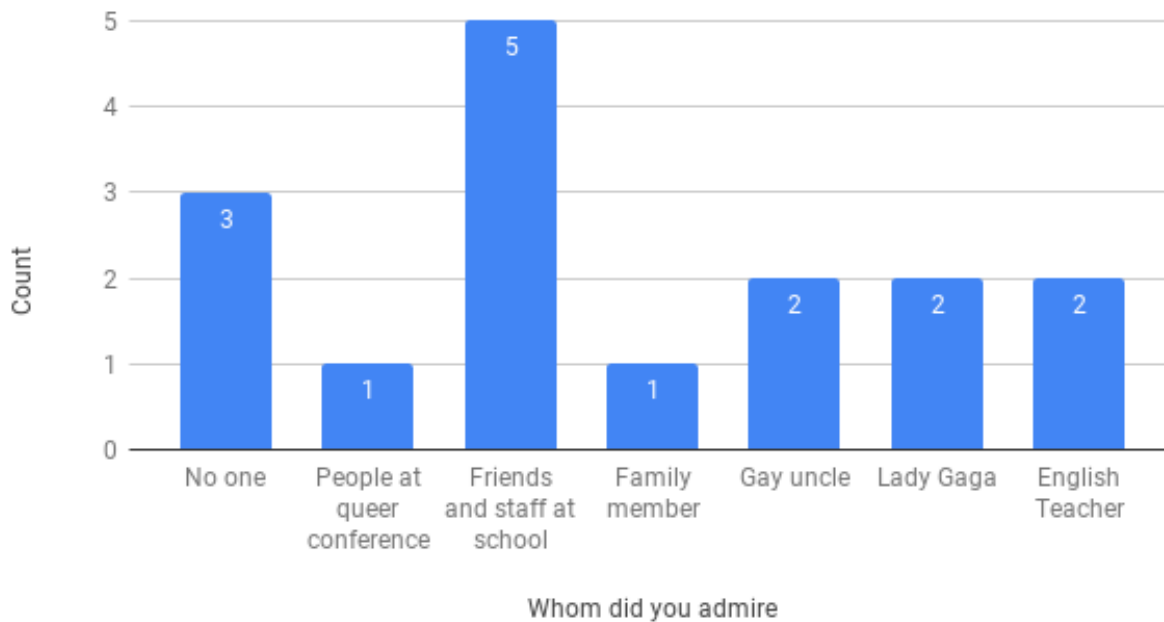
**#17. Did you know any gay students when you were in high school?**

All thirteen students reported they knew gay students. Although they may have known others were gay, many of these students seem not to have been known to one another. Certainly they did not hang out together. This might prove an interesting area investigation for future researchers. Why weren't gay students likely to hang out with other gay students?

**#18. Whom did you admire in high school?**

Three respondents had no one they admired while in high school. One of the respondents had attended a queer youth conference where she found a number of LGBT students she could identify with. At the time she was in school there seems to have been a fledgling Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) where she admired the friends she made even though most of them were straight. Other respondents, 5 of them, mentioned they admired someone at school although they did not specify if it was another student, faculty, administration or staff. One listed a "family member" although s/he was unspecific about how close in the family. Two mentioned they admired their "gay uncle." Two more students mentioned admiring Lady Gaga in this part of the questionnaire. It is interesting to note that Lady Gaga does not claim to be gay and is in fact engaged to if not married to a man. However, her performances seem to demonstrate acceptance of LGBT fans. Two students admired an English teacher. Several others admired someone in public life as well as someone at school.

Figure 14: Question 18 Whom did you admire



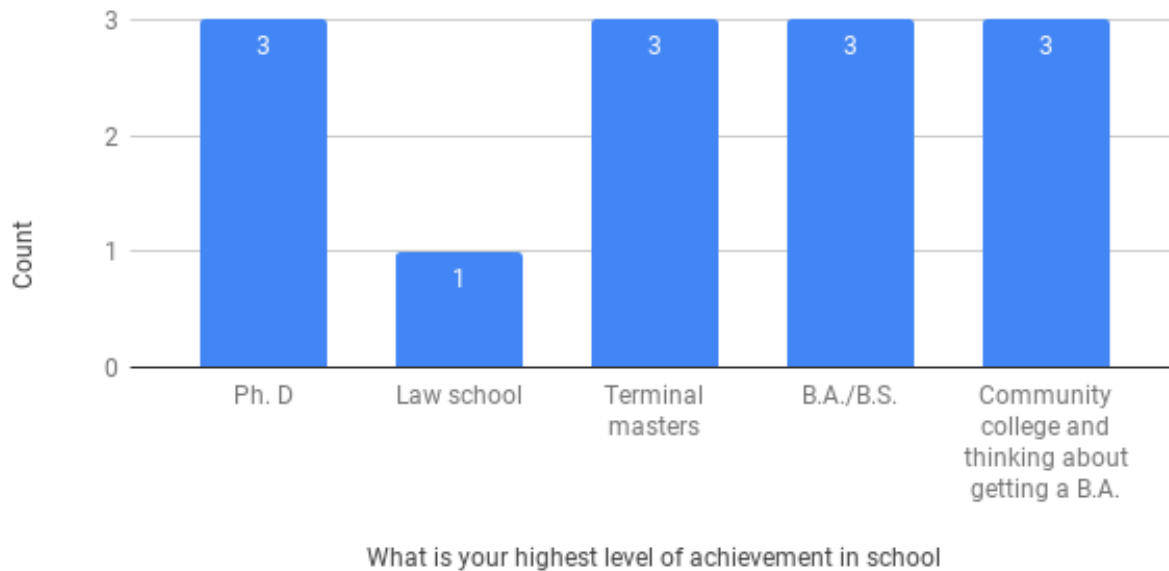
**#19. Did you ever skip school because of bullying?**

Not one student reported missing school because of bullying.

**#20. What is your highest level of achievement in school?**

One respondent is already a Ph.D. employed by a college in a tenure track position. Two others are in the masters portion of preparation for the doctoral studies. One student is in the masters program in preparation for law school. Immediately after high school she enlisted in the Marines where she spent several years in Afghanistan. Three respondents are in terminal masters programs. Three have or are working on B.A./B. S. Three students are in or have completed programs in the community college. One is considering going on for the B. A.

Figure 15: Question 20 What is your highest level of achievement in school



### Phone Interviews

When speaking to former students, I didn't always ask the same question. I changed the questions to amplify answers that were more interesting either because they were unique or similar to answers given by other students. All of the questions were only about amplification of the questions asked on the questionnaire.

### Questions 1 and 2

I did not ask about these answers because they were on the questionnaire to make me sensitive to how students wanted to be addressed respectfully. All students answered with the most conservative of responses to these questions: either they wanted to be called gay or lesbian. It was only the youngest of the group, a girl who had minored in gender studies at college, who selected to be addressed as “queer.”

### **Question 3**

Former students were asked when they graduated in order to see if the natural changes of social interactions over time would affect their answers. Two of the respondents graduated in the 1980s.

### **Questions 4 and 5 and 6**

I consider these two questions (Did you know you were gay in high school? and Who else knew?) as gateway questions. If the student didn't know or was beginning to think s/he was but never talked about it with anyone, there was no real evidence of bullying. If they felt they had experienced bullying it would not have been related to LGBT status. The result were split down the middle with half of the students either not knowing or knowing but not sharing it with anyone (7 students) and half knowing and talking about it with someone (6). However, all but one of the respondents who did not know s/he was gay or didn't tell anyone were male while all but one of the ones who knew and talked to someone about it were female. Does this indicate that being gay and male is more severely punished or less acceptable than queer females? Or does it indicate that males have less conversation about their sexual lives than females?

### **Question 7**

I asked each of the respondents if they had been bullied in high school because they were gay. I asked the question even if they said others did not know they were gay. I asked the



question to keep the questions the same for all of the students but also I thought this might reveal to the speaker if others perceived them as gay even if they thought they were not out to the rest of the campus. Although five answered they were not bullied at all, one girl answered that she was not “directly” bullied. Ricci answered that he was bullied most directly in the classroom where students made snide remarks about gays but where the teachers did not know what was going on. He said the “threats” were always verbal and never physical. But he added that he saw to it that he was always with friends who knew what was going on and who could support him. Elizabeth said that she thought no one picked on her for being gay because they had other things to needle her about. She confessed to being depressive although she denies that depression was associated with being gay. Because of that, she thinks people knew she was “different” and singled her out for that kind of attention rather than gay bullying. Ana also said she was depressed in high school. Occasionally that was the source of some attention from others. She had fallen into an abusive relationship with a boy who expressed his hatred of her for being Mexican although he himself was Mexican. Her friends made fun of her and ostracized her because she was unwilling to break up with this boy who had such a “hold on her.” Although Juan was never physically bullied, he was verbally bullied “in the locker room and in parts of the cafeteria.” He stuck close to friends for their support. Jaime felt he was not bullied although he heard jokes and jeering about LGBT people in his home. Gina gave a roar of delight at this question and answered, “I was really likable! I got along with everybody. Sure, the relationships were superficial but I didn’t want any drama.” Although one student admits to having been verbally bullied in high school, he had the support of a brother, a year older and also bisexual. By being seen together they deflected any of the physical forms of bullying they could have incurred. One of the most effeminate boys in the study reported being bullied at home

where his parents feared he was gay and made sure he knew being gay was not allowed in their house. The girl who went on to become a Marine reported that she was bullied while she was in the corps but not while she was in high school. One of the boys from the earliest age group said he was bullied verbally before high school but never during high school.

Danny is the outlier of the group in all ways. Although he claims never to have been bullied at school, his is the saddest of the stories. Fey and fragile, he was physically the embodiment of the gay boy in all stereotypical renderings. He had come to me early in his tenure in my class to make friends and we spent more time together than I usually had for all the other students. After several conversations, Danny revealed to me that his stepfather had been molesting him since he began dating Danny's mother. Occasionally, he came to school with bruises and black eyes. It seems the mother knew but was powerless to do anything to stop the stepfather. I warned him that since he had revealed this information to me, I was required by law to report him to the Child Protective Services who would come that day and remove him from the home. In tears, he begged me not to do this as he had a younger sister whom he was protecting from the violent stepfather. He preferred to take the abuse and wait until he and the sister were out of school before he left. Although the law requires that I inform Child Protective Services, this was the most morally complex decision I had to make. Believing the father would turn to raping the second child, I did not call the authorities. When I spoke with him about this study, he and the sister had moved away and never spoken to the parents again. Although everyone at school knew he was gay, he believes he was not bullied because people knew how cruel his home life was. No one needed to add to his obvious suffering. This was the hardest call I ever had to make as a teacher. I knew that I could be held responsible if harm came to the boy or to his sister. I wanted them both out of this toxic environment. But I knew of other toxic

environments for kids who were in foster care, particularly those who were gay. I didn't make the call. The boy and his sister are now both away from this stepfather and struggling to put together their lives. Whatever I had decided this was a situation with no positive response for those two kids.

### **Question 8**

None of the respondents reported any incidents of bullying to their teachers, counselors, or school personnel. All reported that they just had to "shake it off" and "stay around friends who would support them." All seemed to have someone to talk to either at home or school about their problems so there was no concern bullying would escalate, no mention that they became depressed as a result, no mention of suicidal ideation.

### **Question 9**

On the other hand, with question 9 many of the respondents were worried about coming out to siblings, friends, teachers at school. None wanted to be totally "out" in high school. All were worried about coming out to their parents. Some said they didn't want to disappoint their parents by not coming up their standards. Others were afraid their parents, especially mothers, would be so upset it would affect her health. One of three males knew his mother would try to shield him from the wrath of the father and didn't want to put his mother in jeopardy. One said his parents were very traditional and he didn't know what to expect from them if they knew. Later in the interview he said he wished he had told his parents when he was in high school because now he knows "what he is capable of" and knows now he could have figured it out on his own even if his parents had rejected him at the time. In virtually all cases, the students did not tell their parents because they feared rejection and being thrown out of the house with no financial support. They all knew of young people who had come out to their parents when they

were in high school or college when the parents' rejection caused the student to become homeless. One of the girls described a household where the parents were emotional about issues of opposition to the church, feared demonic possession and AIDS. In the end, she felt that her father always knew she was gay and would be supportive. When she finally came out to them in college, it was the father who told the mother she needed to be more understanding and less judgmental with their daughter. The bisexual female still has not told her parents. When she tried to broach the subject, her mother's response was, "I am not ready to have this conversation now." She added that she thinks her mother has "come a long way by now," but the conversation still has not occurred. Subsequently, the girl has married a man and given birth to a child. She still identifies as bisexual.

One of the girls was afraid to come out to her parents because, she said, "I was afraid they would throw me out of the house. . . . Whenever they talked about the LGBT community they expressed views that these people were crazed, demonic. Their conversation was full of fear and judgment. Particularly my mom because she is so religious." Finally her parents broached the subject when they questioned her about spending so much time on the computer. They found out she was on a gay chat room site and asked her directly if she was "friending or defending these people." She used that as the opener to explain that she was gay and was seeking connection with other gay teens. She commented, "I just wished I could have hit the rewind button." Her father said at the time he suspected she was gay but it was a shock and a disappointment to the mother. There was a gay aunt in the family but no one spoke of her or her queerness. However, there is a happy ending to this student's story. After about six months, the mother started outing her to everyone she knew, telling all of her friends about her wonderful

gay daughter. Her mother began attending Gay Pride with her. “I think she had more fun than I did! She was in all the pictures! She loved all the buff guys and the flamboyant clothes!”

One of the younger boys came out to his parents after high school, still afraid they would cut him off financially. Again, he knew they were very religious and had expressed their disgust for gay people. When they found out he was claiming to be gay the family had to come to an arrangement in order for the parents to continue to support him through college. He had to pledge to “change” while he was in college. He maintains that he is keeping quiet for now.

One of the younger former students is still not out to her parents even though she is financially independent and living on her own. Her girlfriend is undocumented, a DACA student, whom she fears will be deported if anyone finds out she is gay. She wept through the entire interview, interrupting to ask what I could do to help her protect her girlfriend from Immigration. I was able to give her the name and contact information of another former student of mine who is an immigration lawyer in the state who promised to help in any way she could.

### **After Question 9**

After the question on coming out to parents, the interviewees became more individual. Although I still asked similar questions they were not the same questions of all of the students. Students tended to move the conversation themselves without my guidance. The bisexual girl remembered a strong evangelical, conservative Christian presence among fellow students and faculty. She said she knew not to come out to them. It was at about this time that she claimed her Jewish identity which unleashed a torrent of concern about the “state of her soul.” To have come out as LGBT as well would have been entirely too painful for her. She says wistfully, “If only they had known at the time that I was not only Jewish but queer as well!” She knew several LGBT students in the theater department and upon their coming out other students celebrated

their courage and supported them, she would not have felt comfortable being in a relationship with another woman and her friends would not have supported her if she had. She also never knew anyone who was transsexual and believes that no one, even among her thespian friends, would have been understanding and supportive of a trans individual. She calls herself “selectively out” as she couldn’t tell her more conservative friends who would only say of LGBT people that they were “sick and wrong!” She began to recognize that even though she was not bullied in high school, she still needed to be careful to whom she came out. Although she felt as though she had the support of some of her friends, she knew whom she could tell and whom she could not.

Although some of the responses indicated that students could talk to their friends about being LGBT while in high school, several reserved sharing because they worried friends would think they were coming on to them. Others knew which friends were more conservative and which ones would not appreciate knowing a friend was gay. Students seemed to feel they knew which ones were which. Several mentioned that they knew they had support of their friends in the Theater Arts program. One glib student responded when asked this question, “I thought the theater department was a GSA!”

If there was a Gay-Straight Alliance at the school, I, as a teacher at the school, didn’t hear about it. But one of the more voluble girls tells the story of hearing about a new chapter opening at the school. She talked to her friends, who did not at the time know she was gay, into going to a lunchtime meeting. After the meetings people were filing out when her friends began to discuss whether or not they would return to the GSA because they didn’t know anyone who was gay. Gina inserted, “Oh, yes you do!” But they still didn’t get what she was saying. Finally the teacher chirped at them to get out so her class could come in the room. Gina hollered over

her shoulder, “Give me some time, here! I am coming out!” Among her friends it was a time that everyone thought they were bisexual. It was a popular thing to claim. She did not suffer any adverse reactions among her friends.

During the entire time these students were in high school, the same man was principal of the school. The principal was complicit in ending the school’s GSA. He would not let students use the words “gay” or “queer” when advertising for meetings. All of the meetings had to advertise by word of mouth among students. Quickly, the meetings died. “The community was just too small,” one student lamented. In her junior year she tried to get it restarted but there was not enough sustained interest.

The influence of the teaching staff elicited comments from a number of the students I interviewed. Some remember specific teachers who were supporting of gay issues, particularly commenting that gay marriage should be legal. Others remember that teachers intuited that they were gay. When Gina began “helping” her girl friend with her homework one of the teachers chided Gina that she should spend more time on her own studies so she could achieve better grades. It was then she figured out her teacher knew she was gay. Gina wishes now she had used her as a confidant. She evidently wanted to give her relationship advice. However, even with this interest from her teachers, Gina felt as though she didn’t have anyone to confide in. Looking back, she realizes she was not as alone as she thought. “Just adolescent angst,” she laughs now.

Although many of the students I interviewed were worried about coming out to parents for fear they would be thrust out of the house to become homeless or would be a disappointment to their mother, several of the respondents were concerned about more mundane issues. For example, the girls worried, “Are these pants too masculine? Am I wearing too much make-up to

be authentic to who I am?” Although most of the respondents didn’t take a date to prom, most of them went. They went with a group of friends so they didn’t need a date and didn’t need to dance.

Many complex reasons kept students from coming out in high school. The fear of alienating parents and friends, fear of homelessness if their parents chose to throw them out. Sometimes they discovered that faculty and staff could be real advocates for them. One of the girls knew that other students picked on her not because she was gay but because she was “different.” A counselor knew she was struggling and reached out to her. But the issue for her was not because she was gay but because she was suicidal for other reasons than being gay. Gina worried about coming out to her friends because she was afraid they would think she was coming on to them.

Some of the wisest answers came out of the question “What advice would you give to young gay students now?” and “How would you change the schools to make them more friendly to the young LGBT student?” One of the young men remembered talk about creating “safe spaces” in the school, guidance for the young LGBT scholar, and an open door policy to counselors who can advise the young. One respondent, a Ph.D. on the tenure track at a prestigious community college, said, “As cold as it seems now, I would tell the young LGBT student to leave queerness at the door in high school.” He advised waiting until college when one is more likely to be closer to financial and emotional independence. Gina had obviously given this some thought when she responded: “I always said I would have to have three things in place before I came out: 1) physically safe, 2) emotionally grounded, and 3) financially independent. Straight kids don’t know how lucky they are. They just keep living their lives



without having to have a plan about everything they are doing.” Several others advised students to be careful whom one chose to trust with knowledge of one’s queerness.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

Because of the limited size of the study it would be inappropriate to generalize about the results. The small sample size makes it irresponsible to generalize about larger samples in other locations. What this study does do is demonstrate that there is a significant difference between the experiences of LGBT students in predominantly Anglo high school environments as demonstrated in the literature and those in predominantly Latino environments of this study. This should energize other researchers to pursue studies in these environments. Hopefully, it will elucidate to a more general population, to policy makers and educators what the contributions to society by the emerging Latino population can be. Simply put, this study demonstrates that Latinos are more accepting of their LGBT youth than Anglos are.

Although some of the patterns suggested by the literature were present — bullying, lack of societal support, lack of school support. — the students in this study were not focused on avoiding violence, on avoiding other people, on avoiding school. In fact, many demonstrate a mature resiliency to high school problems. This study begins to uncover some of those elements of resiliency within the character of the students themselves. No students committed suicide from being bullied in school or in the community with a singular exception I will discuss later. High school students in predominantly Anglo school environments, as reported by the research, seemed to have been bullied at an alarming rate. The research of Chesir-Teran and Hughes (2008) casually mentions that unless a student's homosexuality is invisible, they can expect to be bullied. Only those who are either closeted or exhibit no signs of gender non-conformity can hope to avoid harassment from fellow students, often faculty. Minton et al. (2008) estimates

65% will be bullied while Russell et al (2011) estimates on a much higher side to 85%. Seven of the 13, or roughly half, of the participants in this study were not bullied at all.

None of the students in this study even mentioned suicidal ideation based on their experiences. Although students were bullied none of them were fearful at school to the extent that they no longer were able to attend school. They didn't ditch classes or change schools as many LGBT students in Anglo environments do. These students found friends to hang out with in theater or band classes. They were strategic in telling their truths to friends and family members who would be sympathetic rather than punitive. In short, they found more mature methods of avoiding the bullies and surrounding themselves with allies.

This study seeks to dismantle the structure of oppression on LGBT students in schools. On the smaller scale, this study is a form of bearing witness to events I was unable to shape. The hostility to LGBT people of all ages was so prevalent that I was completely closeted for my entire career. Even my closest friends did not know I was lesbian. I did not hear faculty make comments about LGBT students or faculty. However, the atmosphere of unwelcome from a long-serving principal made itself clear in what he did say about upholding traditional and conservative values in society. Once he found out I was gay, he fired me as department chair, a position with considerable curricular power. I was even told by a friend who was an associate superintendent that I must wear a skirt at least one day a week or people would think I was a lesbian. During my tenure of working at District Office, I did wear a skirt, the same one, one day a week.

### **Significant Patterns in Bullying**

However, my experience in this school indicated that this was a different environment for the LGBT student. I had not heard of students being bullied, either from the students or from

faculty. The one student who did commit suicide did so 4 years after graduation. Because the Latino culture is often referred to in common parlance as “macho” or masculine leaning, or even supporting only gender conformity for both sexes, one could expect a higher level of bullying to occur than those who responded to my survey. The numbers of bullied teens in my research were much lower. Of the ones who were, four were bullied at school. But none spoke of being afraid at school. None allowed bullying to curtail their academic studies after high school either..

The literature indicates that in order to avoid bullying, LGBT kids begin to ditch school, drop out entirely, or fail to pursue higher forms of education (Ahmed, 2004). All of the students in this study either had attended at least 2 years of college or were in the process of completing those units. One respondent has completed a Ph.D. and is on a tenure track at a community college in the Los Angeles area. Another is finishing a double masters in Spanish and music before beginning work on the Ph.D. Another is in her second year of law school. Not one of these students reported ever having missed a day of school because of bullying.

I was particularly conscious of omitting anything to lead respondents to consider the topic of suicide. Neither did I pursue the research on this topic while planning for the interviews although the literature was rich with examples of suicide in schools and high levels of suicide ideation in LGBT students particularly. Indeed, none of the students in this study brought up the issue with several exceptions. One was a girl who had problems at home everyone knew about, but her bouts of depression were in no way associated with being gay or being bullied, according to her. Another was the saddest case in the study. He had confessed to me while still a student of mine that he had been repeatedly raped by his step-father over a number of years. He refused to turn in his father to school officials or to let me do it because he had a younger sister at home. As mentioned earlier, he worried the father would turn to raping her if he were taken from the

home. Although he was quite effeminate, this student was not bullied by his classmates because they knew that his home life was stressful enough. He told me that although at one time he had considered suicide as a way to get out of the horror at home, he felt he needed to remain in the home and alive to protect his sister. His resiliency evidently came from his concern for someone else. This was the only mention of suicide to occur in the interviews.

### **Parents and Teachers Are Stumbling Blocks**

Although schools are by far the most hostile environments for the LGBT student, many students heard negative comments in their homes, directed either at themselves, other family members, or people in the general population. In one case, the family repeatedly expressed disapproval of an uncle who was gay. Whether the family suspected that their own child was also gay or not one can only surmise. But the message passed to the student was that being gay was not accepted in her/his family. These students, like most of the students in the Anglo schools, had no one in their families to talk to about growing up gay. When the survey asked them about role models, one answered that he had a gay family member he could emulate. One girl responded she modeled herself after her girl friend. One student was particularly appreciative of Lady Gaga for being supportive of her gay fan base. But Gaga does not identify as LGBT. She is just supportive. However, I still believe that further research into the nature and cohesion of the Latino family needs to occur. Perhaps the family becomes strong because of the pressure exerted on them for being immigrants and poor. Although on the surface it appears that members of the family may have sent negative messages to the LGBT teen, some character of the family persists as they manage this new problem.

All of the students expressed trepidation at coming-out to their parents. Four of the 13 stated specifically that they worried their parents would put them out of the house once the

parents knew they were gay. Several of the others intimated they were worried about homelessness when they were too young to be on their own financially. The youngest of the respondents told his parents he is gay when he was in his second year of community college. They agreed to continue to pay for his college tuition if he would try to be straight while he was in college. He snorted at me that he would do no such thing but he would tell them he was dating women. One of the girls said she had made a plan before coming out. She said she would only reveal her sexuality to her parents if she was 1) financially secure if they did throw her out, 2) emotionally ready for their rejection, 3) willing to be totally independent of them if it came to that. Another of the young men responded that he was sorry he hadn't come out to his parents during his high school years even though he might have run the risk of ending up homeless. He says now that he was stronger than he thought, had more supporters than he knew about and could have handled the situation through other members of the family and friends and their families. These young people were making plans for how to conduct their lives, how their parents might react to them, much more mature behavior than one might anticipate from a teenager. Support from the home could not contribute to the resilience these students demonstrated. They did seem, however, to be prepared to leverage other family members to their support if their parents threw them out of the house. Since this never happened to any of the respondents the results remain hypothetical.

Although they might have had someone to talk to among the teachers and counselors, almost none of those reporting sought out these people. Few could tell friends for fear of rejection. Half of them heard their teachers say negative things about gay people in history and culture if there was any mention of LGBT people at all. Although all of the students knew other people in their class who were gay, they did not fraternize with those students so could claim in

no way any support from them. All of them offered that they went to prom but did not take a date. They went with a group of straight friends. None of these informants felt entirely alone in school. One has to hail these students for the maturity of their behavior not to despair but to seek someone to mentor or befriend them even when they could not find that person in their immediate family, churches. These youngsters made mature choices during the high school years, keeping their distance from those who might bully them and finding others who were accepting. Finding a supportive group demonstrates another aspect of their resiliency.

### **GSA's**

As evidence mounts that Gay - Straight Alliances on campus improve the environment for all students, no stable, continuous GSA was established on this campus. The presence of a GSA on campus was sporadic at best because of the antipathy of the principal to the gay community. Students were constrained in how they were allowed to share information about meetings, never being able to state that the meetings would address issues of gay and straight sexuality. They were not allowed to use the term GSA or indeed any term that suggested sexuality of any kind just as reported in Taylor (2018) in the Indiana school. As recently as December of 2018, Allen reported that schools were not allowed to use the term "gay" in any of their publications. During the high school years of the students in the study, GSAs did not meet on a regular basis nor for any significant amount of time. I did not know when these few meetings were being held or if they were being held. On occasion I would see a notice posted on a school bulletin board that hinted at a lunchtime meeting in one classroom or another of a group of students. I remember being bewildered what the purpose of the meeting would be. Only later did I discover this was a nascent GSA. The group met only several times before they disbanded. A gay English teacher, a relatively new hire, held the meetings in her room at lunch. The next

year, a science teacher whose lesbian daughter was a substitute at the school offered to be in charge of a GSA. But she was also constrained from publicizing meetings by the principal. As a result, GSAs were not able to give any substantive support to LGBT students on this campus.

When I asked another of the girls about the existence of the GSA when she was a student, she said, “I thought the drama class WAS a GSA!” In the absence of a stable GSA, students found other groups on campus where they could find support. Several mentioned they joined a drama class where students tended to be more accepting of LGBT students. One student found a supportive group in the band and orchestra. Because there was no special place for these students to be out to their friends, they created pockets of support in other groups on campus. Why didn’t these students feel more isolated than they did? Students felt they needed to find their own solutions to high school life when others did not support them. They took a mature route of figuring out for themselves how to be who they were.

### **Religion Might Not Contribute to Resiliency**

In the literature some of the people interviewed saw their religious faith as a factor in their resilience to bullying by the straight community ( Kubicek, McDavitt, Carpineto Weiss, Iverson, Kipke, 2009; Walton, 2008). Walton suggests that when religion is important to the gay individual, s/he has the option to construct a church of their own that supports the gay worshiper. They also respond to their religious friends in less accepting churches that Jesus did not speak at all about LGBT people in the Gospels. They also took a more literary criticism approach to the Bible than a strictly literal approach. In the past, it was assumed that all Latino families were members of the Catholic faith. Although that assumption no longer holds with many of the families joining non-traditional churches in their community, students still expressed their lack of support from the religion practiced in the home. None of the respondents seemed to feel



surprised or disappointed to be excluded from the church attended by their families. Personally, I had attended church services in this community where most of the Catholic students would have attended. On several occasions, the priests interrupted obviously prepared sermons to rail against the gay couple who had arrived late to service. The Catholic Church made it quite clear they would not support even the most devout Catholic if they were gay. The couple took seats and ignored the harangue from the pulpit. I am not Catholic but my partner was so I was attending with her. When I asked why we were at such a homophobic service she shrugged it off as “just the way the church is.” I did not attend more than a few times. According to reports from the students, other evangelical or Christian churches they attended did not support LGBT lifestyles or the members of the congregation who lived them. Therefore, it is safe to add that these students could not attribute their resilience to religious faith.

### **Implications for Future Research**

The literature suggests other directions for researchers to pursue when assisting LGBT students to build resilience. Beaver, Mancini, DeLisi, Vaughn (2010) suggest certain LGBT students are more resilient than others because of genetics. Future researchers might want to investigate what characteristics indicate that a student is going to be resilient or how to foster resilience. But in their research it is difficult to foster resilience if one does not have the genetic predisposition for it. Brown (2004) offers the benefits of mentoring to assist LGBT students to find their own direction and self-worth. Hall (2007) believes that turning the LGBT experience into poetry will relieve tension among students. Teaching high school students, and indeed adults, to challenge those who would diminish them makes for a healthier LGBT adult (Smith, Gray, 2009). Grothaus (2004) and Renn (2007) suggest how making students school leaders improves their resiliency to difficult paths. Something as simple as organizing a Day of Silence

in remembrance of LGBT people who did not have a voice gives pride to LGBT students. None of these interferences were tried in the location from which the respondents to this study came. Yet, all of them not only completed high school, they also did well in pursuing professional careers. Both Carpenter (2009) and Donnan (2009) predicted students who survived the high school years would thrive at the college level just as these students did. Underperformance did not plague these students no matter how significant their experiences in high school.

The college counselor with a Ph.D. and a tenure track job advised LGBT students currently in high school to “Leave your sexuality at the door” while in high school, noting that the added stress over already difficult terrain of teen years and complicating family relationships over sexuality can thus be averted. “Get good grades. Make friends. Keep your mouth shut,” he advised. There is plenty of time to come out in college or even after that.” This advice seems regressive in the litigious current environment. Obviously, this young man was speaking from the conservative, traditional environment of his community. But masculine girls and feminine boys do not have that option. Their sexuality is overt every day and makes them an easy target for the homophobic students, teachers and staff at the school. But the political atmosphere and the cultural and social attitudes towards LGBT people is shifting. Academy awards are going to films and actors in dramas about gay lifestyle, films such as Moonlight, Bohemian Rhapsody, and The Favorite. Television series such as Pose and Gentleman Jack attract audiences from all over the gender spectrum. I suspect more students will find the voice to tell about their gender identities sooner. Even the new principal of the school from which this research was gathered is gay. He was, in fact, one of my supporters when the principal was firing me.

### **Personal Reflections**

As a gay teacher in this school I understand the sublimated bullying inherent in a forbidding environment. I felt bullied by my principle with his dictatorial leadership pattern. Prior to his arrival I had been department chair of English, co-chair of ESL and co-chair of the gifted program. When my partner was hospitalized, I took several days off of work to remain in the hospital with her. He came to the hospital to visit her and discovering I was giving her health directives, he kept repeating, "I didn't know. I didn't know." When I returned to work he dismissed me from any leadership roles. He couldn't fire me as a teacher but he could withdraw me from any leadership opportunities.

Many years ago I taught an incredible young scholar. Fluent in English and Spanish expression and literary analysis as he was in math and science, he was class valedictorian and senior class president. Equally well liked among boys and girls, he was the leader of the student demonstrations against proposed laws banning Spanish language from California schools. He had a group of 4 friends who had been close since they went to kindergarten together. The friends were important because this young man was the youngest of 11 children. His mother was in her mid 60's and spent most of her time praying for his oldest brother who was on death row. No father was in the house. He was the only "child" in the home. We were all jubilant when he won a full-ride scholarship to Stanford. After two years, he took a leave from Stanford to travel. I got post cards from him sent from the Soviet Union and England. He had secured a position of Oxford where he planned to start classes in the fall. Abruptly, the post cards ceased. When I spoke with other teachers asking for information about him, they told me he had come out to his friends, all of whom rejected him. In the fall, he had not matriculated at Oxford. He had committed suicide. For many years, I kept a picture of him on my bulletin board where I could see it every day. I wanted to be sure to remember him but also to remind me to be open and

accepting enough of all of my students so that if they needed to come out to someone I could be that person for them. Many times students would ask me who he was, and I got the chance to tell his story. I thought this had established me as someone who could be trusted if one needed someone to advise or counsel them. But the information did not seem to get to the right people.

### **Implications for Future Research**

This study is limited because of its small size in an obscure location. No real conclusions regarding the differences between an Anglo-inflected and Latino-inflected environment can be stated with certainty. However, it 's benefit is that it cracks open the possibility that the Mexican-inflected environment is less toxic for LGBT students than an Anglo one. What elements of the Latino community make it more forgiving? One of the respondents said, "No one had any money." Is this difference a result of money? Is the Latino family strong enough to shelter their young? Several students indicated that if their parents threw them out they could stay with an aunt or uncle or other extended family member. What is the origin of their resiliency? Have the hardships of being an immigrant steeled them to other difficult encounters in their lives? Smith and Gray (2009) indicated in their research that the hardiness of the individual contributed to the general resiliency in all life challenges although they stopped short of defining what those characteristics were. Researchers would be well advised to look further into what personality characteristics contribute to hardiness. Hopefully, others will pursue research into what the Latino community has to teach the rest of the country about creating a fair and equitable environment for LGBT youth.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Request on Facebook to participate in my research.**

Were you a student who identifies as LGBT when a student at \_\_\_\_\_

High School between 200-2015? Would you be willing to answer 20 questions about your experiences?

Please instant message me. Thanks.

Appendix 2:

GROWING UP GAY AND LATINO  
PAGE

Survey Monkey

I am interested in your experiences as a gay student during your high school years. Please mark more than one answer wherever several answers apply.

1. How do you prefer others to refer to you?

- gay
- lesbian
- queer
- trans
- bisexual
- other

2. What is your preferred pronoun?

- he
- she
- Other \_\_\_\_\_ [Please add preferred]

3. What years were you a student at SAHS?

- during the 80s.
- during the 90s
- from 2000 to 2009
- since 2010

4. When you were in high school did you know you were gay?

- Yes
- No
- I was beginning to question.

5. Who else knew you were gay? Answer all that apply.

- your parents
- your sibling (s)
- your best friend
- a teacher
- a spiritual leader
- another adult
- no one

6. Was there anyone you could talk to for support and advice? Answer all that apply.

- family member

- spiritual leader
- friend
- teacher/faculty member
- other

7. Did anyone bully you for being gay? Answer all that apply.

- at home
- at school
- in the neighborhood
- at your place of worship
- at a job

8. What did you do about the bullying?

- stay around other friends who could support you.
- report the incident to school personnel or another adult
- shake it off
- other

9. Were you worried about coming out to

- parents
- siblings
- friends
- at church
- at school
- anywhere else
- Everyone knew already

10. Did you have religious or church affiliations at the time?

- Yes
- No

11. Did your religion support you as a gay person?

- Yes
- No

12. Did you have someone at school you could go to for advice and support as a gay person?

Answer all that apply.

- Teacher
- Counselor
- Administrator
- Staff

13. Did you hear teachers/administrator/staff say positive things about gay people?

- Yes
- No

14. Did any teacher talk about contributions of gay people as part of their curriculum?

- Yes
- No

15. Did you have any gay role models at school?

- Teacher
- Staff
- other student

16. Did you ever hear derogatory remarks about gays made by: Answer all that apply.

- parents
- siblings
- friends
- religious leaders
- teachers and staff

17. Did you know any gay students when you were in high school?

- Yes
- No

18. Whom did you admire in high school?

- someone in public life?
- someone at school?
- someone in your church?
- someone you knew in the community?
- a friend?
- a family member?
- no one

19. Did you ever skip school because of bullying?

- a lot
- sometimes
- No, never
- I changed schools.

20. What is your highest level of achievement in school?

- high school
- community college
- B.A./B.S.
- Masters
- Ph.D.

### Appendix 3:

#### AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN GROWING UP GAY AND LATINO

I am asking you to take part in a research project that is led by Sharon W. Saxton, a graduate student at Claremont Graduate University, who is being supervised by professor of education Dr. Linda Perkins. The purpose of this study is to discover how the experiences of gay Latino high school students in a Latino environment differ from those of gay students in a predominantly Anglo environment. To be in this study you must be a former high school student from one of the high schools in Santa Ana, California. During the study you will be asked to answer a 20 question questionnaire on line which will take approximately 5 minutes concerning you experiences in high school and the people you could trust at that time. Then you will be asked to talk to me on Face Time or Skype for approximately 10 minutes to give details about your answers to the questionnaire. The risks that you run by taking part in this study are minimal as you will not be named in the study. This study will benefit the researcher by helping me to complete my graduate education. There is no direct compensation to you for participating in this study. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may stop or withdraw from the study at any time or refuse to answer any particular question for any reason without it being held against you. Your decision whether or not to participate will have no effect on your current or future connection with anyone at CGU. Your individual privacy will be protected in all papers, books, talks, posts, or stories resulting from this study. I may share the data I collect with other researchers, but will not reveal your identity with it. In order to protect the confidentiality of your responses, I will use pseudonyms when referring to all participants in the study. After transcribing the Face Time conversation, I will erase the audio and video recordings.

If you have any questions or would like additional information about this study, please contact Sharon W. Saxton at 714-925-3113, 4608 N. 12th St., Tacoma, Washington 98406.



[swyattsaxton@gmail.com](mailto:swyattsaxton@gmail.com). You may also contact my faculty advisor Dr. Linda Perkins, at 909-607-7964, 150 E. 10th St. Claremont, California 91711. [Linda.Perkins@cgu.edu](mailto:Linda.Perkins@cgu.edu).

The CGU Institutional Review has approved this project. You may contact the CGU Board with any questions or issues at (909) 607-9406 or at [irb@cgu.edu](mailto:irb@cgu.edu). A copy of this form will be given to you if you wish to keep it. If you wish, I will be happy to send you a copy of this consent form.

Your signature below means that you understand the information on this form, that someone has answered any and all questions you may have about this study, and you voluntarily agree to participate in it.

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_