The Riot Youth Climate Survey

Of Ann Arbor Public High Schools

Report of Findings

April 2009

A Riot Youth Project at Neutral Zone

Riot Youth
Neutral Zone

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE

In 2008, many Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning (LGBTQQ) students across the Ann Arbor Public Schools felt isolated, alone and unheard. They were harassed and discriminated against in their schools daily. Incidents ranged from derogatory terms hurled at students in hallways to life-threatening physical bullying. Few administrators, teachers and other students believed this could exist in Ann Arbor, perceived by most as a liberal town. Students' pleas to administration went mostly unaddressed, and the already isolated individuals felt their calls echo into silence.

Riot Youth, an LGBTQQ youth program at Neutral Zone to provide social support and opportunities to create change, utilized participatory action research to improve their school climate. Participatory action research is a tool for marginalized populations, like LGBTQQ youth, to understand their community and create positive change. Youth designed Climate Survey (RYCS) for Ann Arbor Public Schools to bring to light the realities of students within hallways, classrooms and parking lots. Existing climate surveys were not specific to Ann Arbor, did not thoroughly research attitudes regarding gender identity and gender expression, and did not factor in issues of multiple intersecting identities such as race, ethnicity and religion into their products. The LGBTQQ and allied (A) teens in Riot Youth wanted data to unify their experiences and prove their difficulties were not isolated incidents in order to create change.

KEY FINDINGS

The RYCS reached 1,171 high school students in the Ann Arbor Public Schools. Four high schools – Community, Pioneer, Stone and Huron – agreed to participate, and distribution methods varied. Of 1102 students, 9.53%, or 105, identified as LGBTQQ.

Of 100 students who identified as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Questioning:

- 4 students, or 4%, identified as gay.
- 11 students, or 11%, identified as lesbian.
- 35 students, or 35%, identified as questioning their sexual orientation.
- 50 students, or 50%, identified as bisexual.

Of 17[1] students who identified as Transgender, Queer or Questioning:

- 1 student, or 5.88%, identified as male to female.
- 4 students, or 23.53%, identified as female to male.
- 3 students, or 17.65%, identified as gender queer.
- 8 students, or 47.06%, identified as questioning their gender identity.
- 1 student, or 5.88%, identified as other regarding their gender.

The RYCS found that students "often" hear language derogatory to LGBTQQ individuals, especially in hallways and classrooms. Students "often" heard derogatory phrases like "That's so gay," and "No homo," but do not correctly identify them as hurtful towards their LGBTQQ peers

[1] Many of these students who identified as Transgender, Queer or Questioning their gender identity, also identified as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Questioning (ie. Five of these students identified as heterosexual/straight).

or understand their implications. Derogatory slurs and phrases were most abundant in hallways, where students are least supervised. However, this language was also prevalent in classes, athletic fields, gyms and locker rooms, and cafeterias, from most to least respectively. Despite the abundance of this language, students reported that teachers "rarely" intervene when derogatory language is used.

The RYCS reports that LGBTQQ students feel significantly less safe than their non-LGBTQQ peers. Further, LGBTQQ students of color are significantly likely to feel less safe than Caucasian LGBTQQ students. Due to their sexual orientation, gender identity or both, these students do not have the same capacity to succeed in school because they must worry about their safety. LGBTQQ students also report higher amounts of verbal and physical harassment compared to their non-LGBTQQ counterparts.

The RYCS sought not only to discover how often and where harassment occurred, but also who was or was not intervening. Students self-reported that they only "sometimes" intervene when they see or hear harassment, with LGBTQQ students intervening significantly more often than non-LGBTQQ students. LGBTQQ students are forced to roam the halls without allies or support from their peers. Many students reported that they would not intervene because they feared retribution or that they might be perceived as LGBTQQ themselves. Others expressed that they wanted to intervene, but just did not know how.

One of the most important parts of growing up and being successful is having a healthy set of role models. Non-LGBTQQ students can take for granted their representation in school. However, the RYCS found that LGBTQQ health issues are not covered fully in health classes, teachers "rarely" use LGBTQQ inclusive examples in class, and students are simply unaware of whether or not the books they read are written by LGBTQQ authors. They do know that there are "rarely" LGBTQQ examples in the novels they read. LGBTQQ students live in a world where they are alone and are not represented equally in the classes they attend. This discourages students from succeeding and greatly limits the potential of LGBTQQ students.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

Together, the AAPS and Riot Youth can work to create change for LGBTQQ youth. In order to provide every student in the district with a fulfilling education, Riot Youth has determined that the following actions would greatly improve the lives of LGBTQQ youth. However, the steps are only the beginnings of conversations the AAPS and Riot Youth should continue.

Riot Youth recommends the AAPS:

- **CHANGE** anti-discrimination policies at local and state levels to include protection for sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.
- **UPDATE** curriculums to include LGBTQQ authors in literature classes, LGBTQQ history in history classes, and LGBTQQ health issues in health classes.
- **EDUCATE** teachers, administrators and other school faculty on how to be LGBTQQ allies. Show teachers how to use LGBTQQ-inclusive examples in classrooms.
- **CREATE** venues to report discrimination and harassment within Washtenaw County
- **FACILITATE** dialogue with students through Riot Youth-developed workshops about LGBTQQ issues on topics such as language, intervention and allies.

INTRODUCTION

"All young people, regardless of sexual orientation or identity, deserve a safe and supportive environment in which to achieve their full potential."

- Harvey Milk, the first openly gay man elected to major public office in the United States.

On December 5th, 2008, the Neutral Zone's Riot Youth Social Justice Committee presented preliminary findings on a district-wide climate survey conducted last spring. The presentation at the weekly program was cause for alarm, but it was also a resounding affirmation: their individual feelings of vulnerability and instability were overwhelmingly common in schools. Many had been told that their experiences of harassment, discrimination and loneliness were mere outliers, that they as individuals held no clout. But with statistical data in tow, the students in Riot Youth were angry and had stories to tell.

When Yoni (Jonathan) Siden founded the Survey Project in 2007, he did so as a reparative outlet, because he – like the members of Riot Youth – had many stories to tell. As a young gay man, he experienced six and a half years of homophobic harassment and discrimination while in the AAPS. From the daily taunts of "faggot" in hallways and classrooms, to being pelted by others' lunches in the cafeteria, Yoni's story is further pockmarked by the accounts of school staff and administrators standing idly by as he struggled to retain some sense of self worth. Yoni is not unique; rather, he used his experience to wake up and empower a community of queer youth who all have similar stories.

In his junior year, after being run off the road by two cars full of Pioneer students screaming "faggot," Yoni realized that he had two paths: to fall out of society and become just another lost gay youth, or to fight back against those who tried to tear him down. Choosing the latter, he founded the Riot Youth Survey Project, which is fundamentally invested in empowering LGBTQQ youth to know that they have a voice, and that they have the power to vastly improve their lives and the lives of LGBTQQ youth in years to come. From the beginning, he has believed that it takes a strong community to create significant change, and as such, has brought together numerous aspects of the Ann Arbor community to work together, including Gay-Straight Alliances at five high schools, the University of Michigan (UM) Spectrum Center and the UM School of Social Work, the Neutral Zone Board of Directors, the

adult LGBTQQ community, the Ann Arbor News, the nation-wide Liberty Hill Foundation, the nation-wide Arcus Foundation, many more dynamic and devoted individuals from AAPS's BALAS, and high school principals. As he is quoted in the Ann Arbor News, this project is not "just coming to an awareness that LGBTQ[Q] teens are not being served by the system," but it is also recognizing that this system can only be changed by a community working together.

Riot Youth, one of many programs sponsored by the Ann Arbor Neutral Zone, a local teen center, remains an important and influential meeting place for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQQ) identified youth and their allies (A). Acting as a social space, an activist forum and a source of community, Riot Youth brings together Washtenaw County youth leaders and provides a safe space outside of the school environment where they can grow and develop. But key questions remain. Why do LGBTQQ youth feel isolated enough to seek outside community? Why do LGBTQQ youth feel they need an outlet to express fears, isolation, and frustration? And why are LGBTQQ youth forced to congregate away from the classroom, hallways, and teen social locations that their heterosexual and cisgender (see Appendix A for the definitions of terms used) peers take for granted?

As the stories of LGBTQQ youth come together, a disturbing and frightening picture forms. First, and foremost, their experiences seem to be lost in a sea of misunderstanding and ignorance. Ann Arbor, a community that has long been a bastion of diversity and progressive thought, has been unaware of the rampant homophobia, transphobia and discrimination within its public school system. Young people have been socialized to believe they are valueless through everything from images in the media to taunting within the schools to harassment on the streets. One young gay man recalls being spat on both in school and in downtown Ann Arbor. While Ann Arbor holds a stable and notable record in its legislation and school policy regarding LGBTQQ issues, the fact of the matter is that we are a community in trouble.

This report contains comments from students across the AAPS and reveals the same attitudes that the students in Riot Youth and the rest of marginalized teens deal with daily. You will read why straight, cisgender teens attempt to stop harassment significantly less than LGBTQQ students. You will begin to understand why, as one student at Pioneer wrote, "I hate the environment. It feels like a prison, with limited human expression, color, or art." And most importantly, you will read how we, as an educational community dedicated to the promotion of fostering strong leaders of tomorrow, can effectively revolutionize the experience of over

16,000 students, including over 5,500 high school students in AAPS, and become trailblazers in the world of education.

The numbers and figures can tell you that at least 9.53% of students in AAPS high schools are being marginalized based on their gender identity or sexual orientation, but it is the experiences and stories of LGBTQQ students which can truly shape the understanding of our schools.

Much of the problems and negativity in the AAPS stem from misunderstanding, and Riot Youth believes we can change that. This collection of stories and data is that start – it includes our frustrations, our daily lives, and what we think can be done to help future generations of students feel welcome. We hope to follow through with the spirit of these recommendations, and hopefully after reading, you will help us.

This is not a project intended to place blame. Rather, its goal is to help all in the AAPS and Washtenaw County community recognize that LGBTQQ youth must be afforded the same rights and protections given to others. AAPS has the foundation to create significant and important change, and become a national leader in the fight for LGBTQQ youth. More importantly however, AAPS has the dedicated teachers, students, administrators and community members brave enough to take a stand on behalf of *all* students, not just those who identify as heterosexual and cisgender. In a world where major advancements in civil rights have been made, attention must be paid to those left behind in the fight for equality – both equality under the law, and equality in the hearts and minds of dominant communities. In this vein, scores of young LGBTQQA students have banded together to create a truly remarkable statement, and entrust adults to work with them as partners in improving their lives, and the lives of those to come. Youth founded, youth led, and youth run are not just words, they are a proclamation to all who will listen that LGBTQQ youth must be served fairly, must be heard unabashedly, and must be allowed a safe and welcoming community to learn and grow in.

Together, Riot Youth and the AAPS can give all young people hope, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, for the hallmark of diversity is the recognition that we are all valuable, dynamic, important, productive, and capable leaders of tomorrow.

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH: PROCESSES AND METHODOLOGY

Riot Youth participatory action research project was initiated, created, and led by a collective of more than 30 high school teens between 2007 and 2009.

The Riot Youth Climate Survey (RYCS) is a participatory action research project, a tool for marginalized populations to better understand their community and create positive change. RYCS was designed by youth because existing studies and literatures about high school climate did not fully address the issues, concerns, and experiences of the LGBTQQ and allied youth in the Ann Arbor Public Schools. Specifically, national surveys did not thoroughly investigate intersections in social identities, or transgender issues. Riot Youth and Pioneer High School's Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) were both involved in the inception of the survey itself. Both groups discussed what they wanted to see in a youth-led, youth-serving survey. More than the survey, these youth also agreed that it was important to use the data to create systemic social change in schools.

The youth began the process by asking questions of themselves: What topics do *we* want to cover? What questions are important to ask about those topics? Do we want to collect demographic information? After the first draft of the survey, the project moved away from Pioneer' s GSA and became primarily a Riot Youth project. The Neutral Zone contacted the University of Michigan School of Social Work and gained the support of Laura Wernick who acted as an advisor to the project. **After more than 125 hours, nearly 50 meetings, at least 20 survey drafts, a collective of more than 30 youth completed the participation project research.**

Youth in partnership with school administrators distributed RYCS in four Ann Arbor High Schools – Huron, Stone, Pioneer, and Community. Methods of gaining school approval to conduct the survey varied from school to school, as did the actual facilitation of the survey within the schools. At Huron High School, the RYCS was distributed in English classes; teachers chose to give up part of their class period to distribute the survey. English classes were selected because most students are enrolled in one. At Stone and Community, the RYCS was distributed in homeroom-style courses. These classes were ideal because all students are enrolled in them; therefore, the survey reached as many students as possible. At Pioneer, the RYCS was only distributed in the Health classes. This was not ideal, because only a small group of students were

enrolled in Health during the survey, and the students enrolled in Health are most often sophomores and juniors.

In all classes, anonymity was stressed, and a list of terms was provided to teachers so that they would be equipped to answer questions. Riot Youth participants, Wernick, and school staff aided in the facilitation process for all schools with the exception of Pioneer, where a Riot Youth member was instructed to drop off the survey and then pick them up after they had been filled out. After all surveys were completed, they were numbered, compiled into packets, and kept by Wernick at the Neutral Zone.

Members of Riot Youth along with a handful of University of Michigan undergraduate students entered the over 1,000 paper surveys into an online survey program. After a thorough analysis of the data, Riot Youth engaged in weekly meetings to understand key themes and synthesize these findings. Through several collective conversations youth discussed, posed challenges, and developed new recommendations to address root causes of harassment and bullying in the schools.

The results of the youth participatory climate research are conveyed in this report with recommendations for creating change. With the generous support of Liberty Hill Foundation, Arcus Gay and Lesbian Fund, Arts of Citizenship, Riot Youth will disseminate their findings and recommendations through a formal report that will be conveyed through dramatic art presentations, meeting with school administrators, elected policy officials, community members, teachers and incoming teachers, and their peers. Through these strategic outreach and lobbying efforts, **Riot Youth will educate their community and create new systemic practices for transformative change.**

DEMOGRAPHICS

High School Population Surveyed

The Riot Youth Climate Survey (RYCS) reached 1,171 high school students in the Ann Arbor Public Schools (AAPS). Four high schools agreed to participate, and distribution methods varied. At Community High School, surveys were given to all forums, a homeroom style course that all students are enrolled in; at Huron High School, surveys were taken in English classes; Pioneer High School distributed them to health classes; Stone High School disseminated their surveys in every classroom. Figure 1.1 shows the exact number of surveys distributed at each school, the portion that each school contributed to the total number of surveys of received, and the percent of the school population that was reached.

Figure 1.1 Surveys Received From Each School

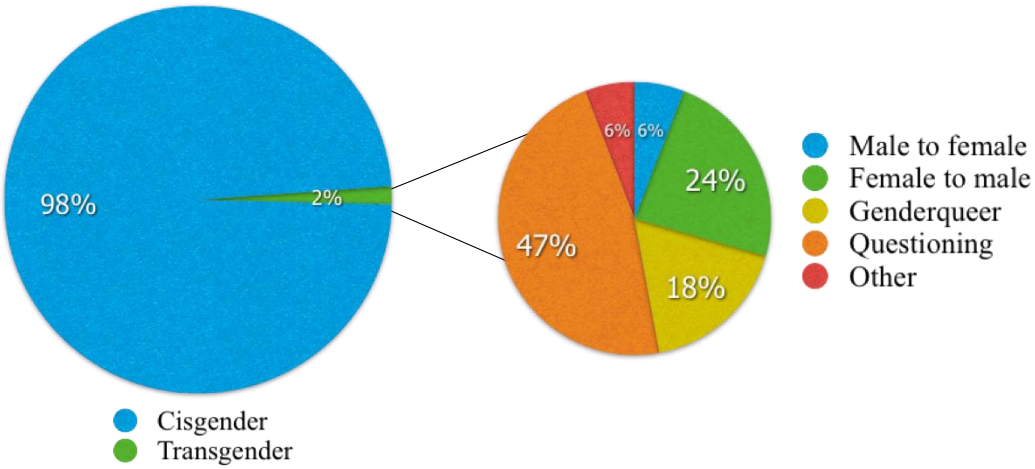
High School	Exact Number of Surveys Distributed	Percent of Surveys Received	Percent of School Population
Community	308	26.3%	66%
Huron	560	47.8%	19%
Pioneer	263	22.5%	27%
Stone	40	3.4%	9%

Sex and Gender

The RYCS asked students to select the sex and gender(s) with which they identify. Of those, 98.5% surveyed identified as cisgender. Of the total population, 46% identified as cisgender male and 52.5% as cisgender female. The remaining 1.5% represented several different transgender identities, including those who are questioning their gender identity. These three major categories are represented in Figure 1.2.

Within the group of transgender students, the RYCS found that 23.8% of students identified as FTM, 6% identified as MTF, 17.9% identified as genderqueer, 47% were questioning their gender or in the process of forming their gender identity. The last 6% of students chose to list “other.” All of these terms are defined in Appendix A. Figure 1.2 also shows the identities within the transgender population as listed above.

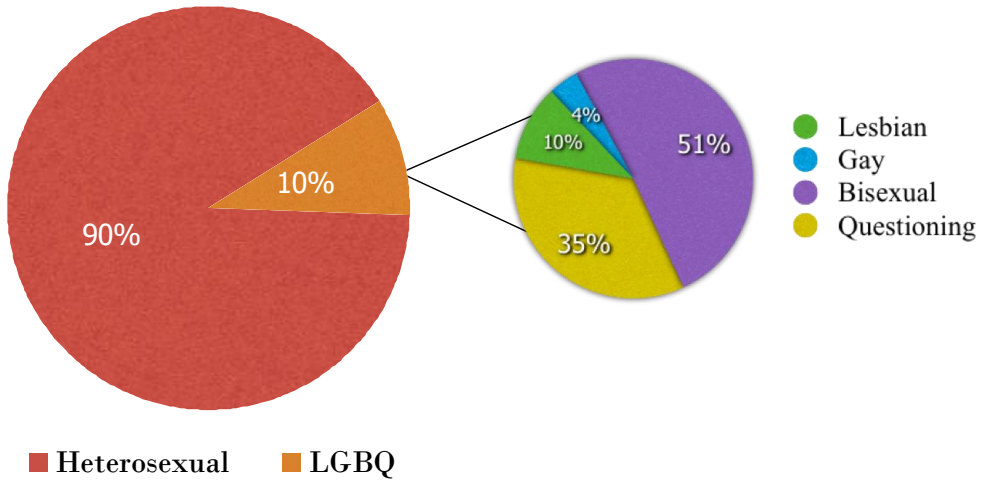
Figure 1.2 Gender



Sexual Orientation

Students surveyed selected the sexual orientation(s) with which they identify. The majority of students, 91%, identified as heterosexual/straight. The remaining 9% identified as non-heterosexual. Throughout this survey these individuals will be collectively referred to as lesbian, gay, bisexual and questioning (LGBQ); transgender identities are not included in this group because those identities are not necessarily related to sexual orientation. Below, figure 1.3 shows the sexual orientations of the total population surveyed, divided between heterosexual and LGBQ; figure 1.3 also breaks up the LGBQ population and shows each identity within the category of LGBQ.

Figure 1.3

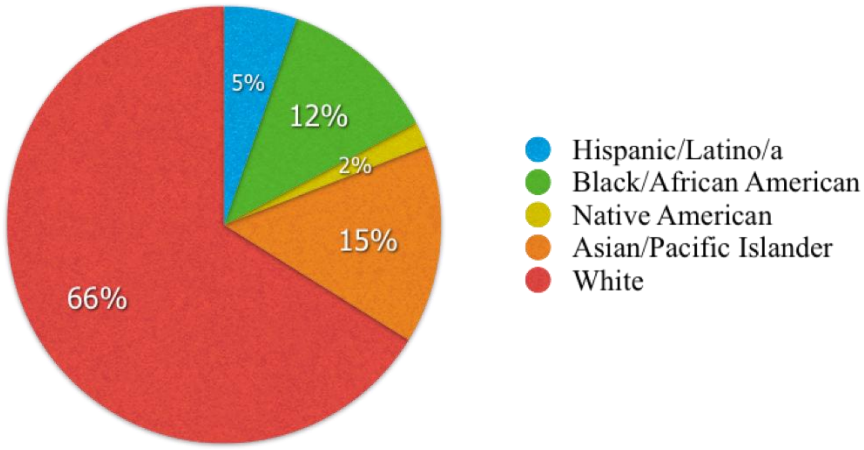


The AAPS LGBQ population (especially bisexual and questioning) is overwhelmingly female-identified. In contrast, the overall LGBQ population is more equally represented with male- and female-identified individuals. This indicates that LGBQ female-identified individuals are more easily accepted than LGBQ male-identified individuals, or are made to feel much more comfortable being LGBQ than their male-identified counterparts. One male member of Riot Youth reported that, "I could never have admitted that I was questioning to my male friends. It felt like my female friends had an easier time because they could talk to other girls about it. It feels like I have betrayed my gender by being openly attracted to other boys."

Race and Ethnicity

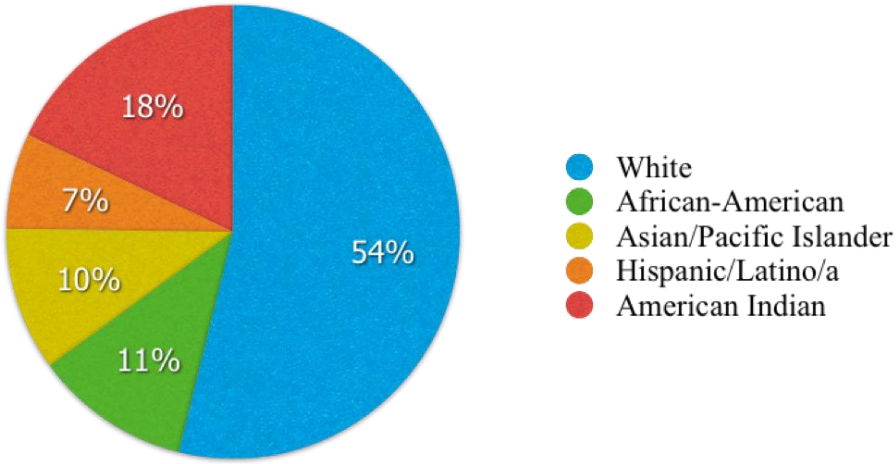
One of the goals of the climate survey was to examine the intersections between the LGBTQQ community and other social identities. For this reason, the survey asked students to specify the races and ethnicities with which they identify. Figure 1.4 shows the races and ethnicities represented by the total population surveyed.

Figure 1.4 Race/Ethnicity



In Figure 1.5, the races/ethnicities of the LGBTQQ population are represented.

Figure 1.5 Races/Ethnicities of the LGBTQQ Respondents



Age and Grade

As students progress through high school, they undergo significant emotional and mental development. Because of this, it is important to take into consideration the age of participants in order to understand the views they represent. In addition, it is important to look at how students' grade levels impact and intersect with their experiences. Figures 1.6 and 1.7 show the entire population surveyed separated respectively by age and grade. Similarly, in Figures 1.8 and 1.9, the LGBTQQ population is represented by breakdowns of age and grade.

Entire Population:

Figure 1.6 Age of Respondents

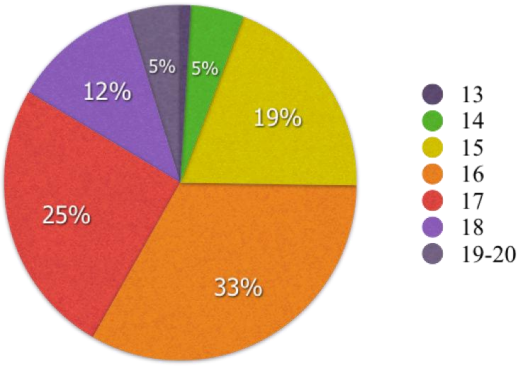
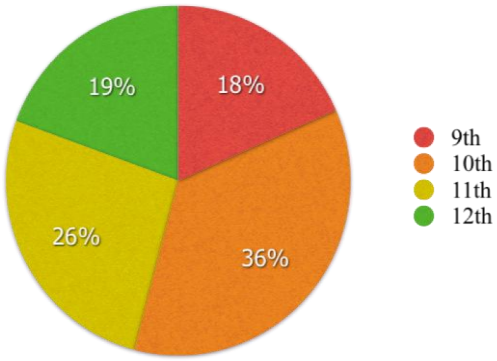


Figure 1.7 Grade of Respondents



LGBTQQ Population:

Figure 1.8 Age of LGBTQQ Respondents

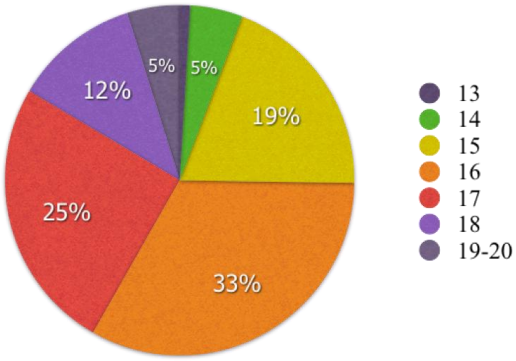
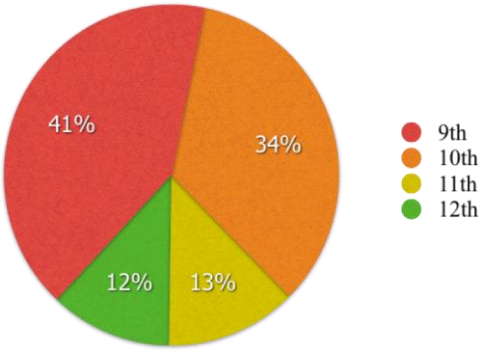


Figure 1.9 Grade of LGBTQQ Respondents



The average age of LGBTQQ students surveyed is 16.3 years old. This supports previous research done by GLSEN and articles in *TIME* magazine[2] and *USA Today*[3]. However, the smaller numbers of younger self-identified LGBTQQ students show that the unsafe climate of middle schools still affects students. In addition, it is possible that students may not have developed enough security in their identity to question and/or self-identify as LGBTQQ, which also explains the age and grade disparity.

The Importance of Examining Intersections in this Report

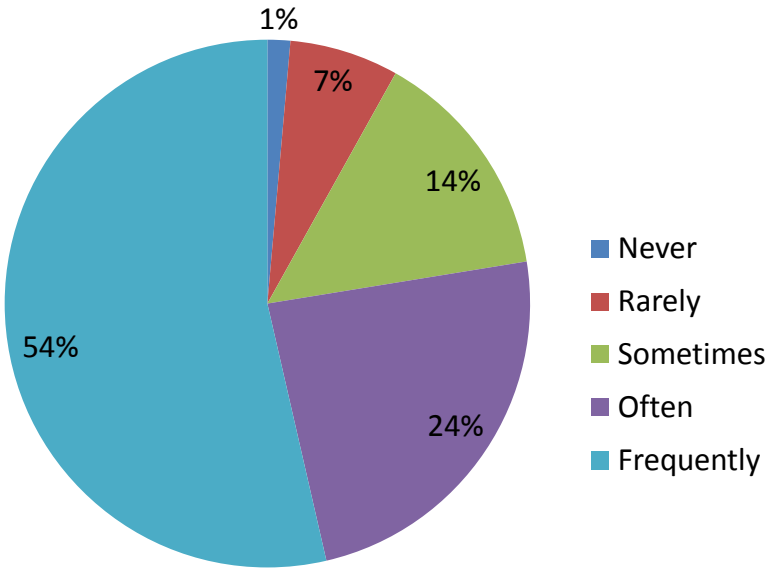
This report hopes to look at different perspectives of various intersecting identities. No two people will have the exact same experiences. There are many factors that contribute to the socialization of individuals, and it is important to examine all of these when looking at issues of sexual orientation, race, gender identity, and gender expression. Many of the most important issues revealed in this report are those related to intersections of identity, and as such, it is necessary to break down data in these terms.

[2] Cloud, John (2005 Oct 02). The Battle Over Gay Teens. *TIME magazine*,
[3] Elias, Marilyn (2007 Feb 07). Gay teens come out early. *USA Today*,

LANGUAGE

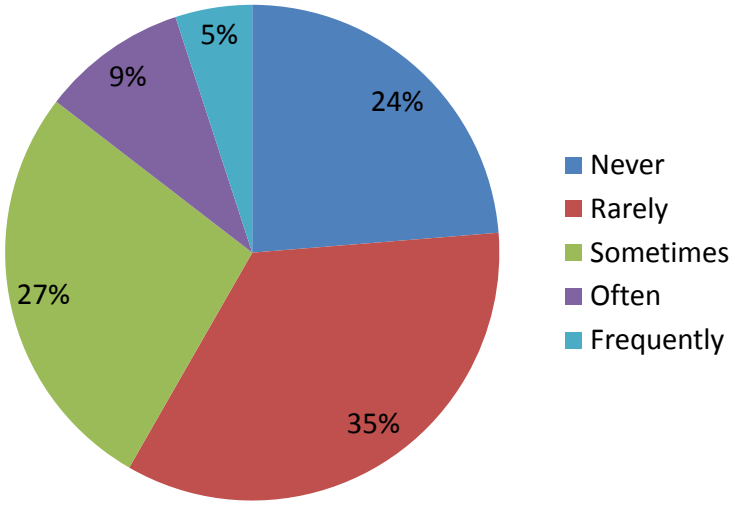
The RYCS asked students a number of questions regarding derogatory language based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. The first questions addressed commonly used derogatory phrases, such as "that's so gay" and "no homo" when referring to LGBQ harassment and phrases like "it" and "he-she" in regards to transgender harassment. The results are displayed in Figure 2.1 – 2.4 below.

Figure 2.1



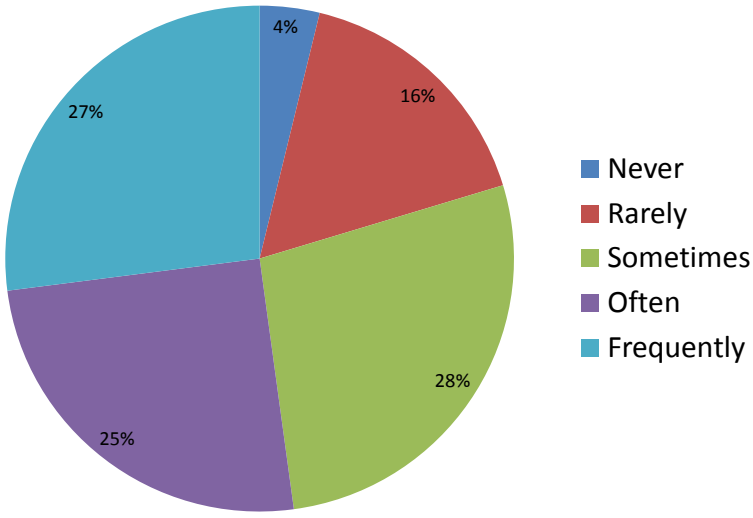
Sometimes people use phrases such as "that's so gay" or "no homo" that are derogatory toward LGBTQ people. How often do you hear phrases like the above in school?

Figure 2.2



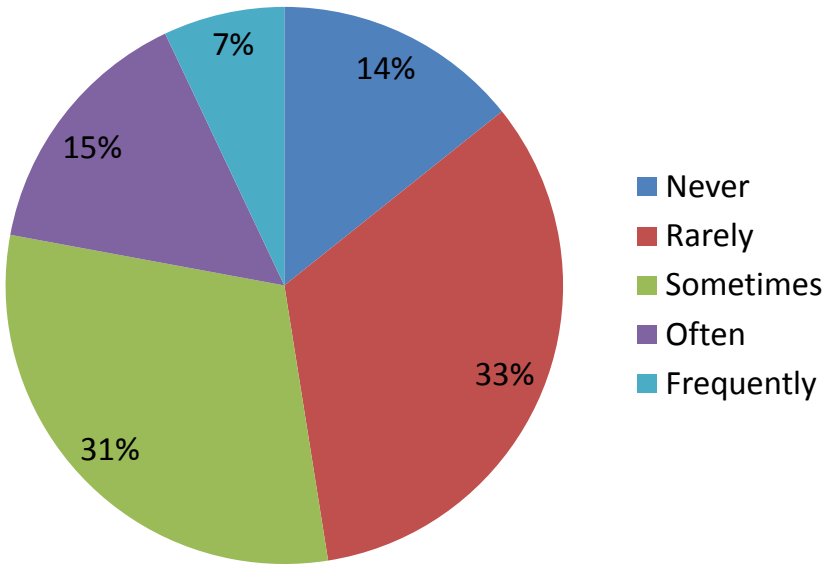
Sometimes people use phrases such as "it" or "he-she" that are derogatory toward transgender people. How often do you hear phrases like the above in school?

Figure 2.3



How often do you hear homophobic or biphobic language in school?

Figure 2.4



How often do you hear negative remarks about gender identification?

While these results show that transphobic language is heard less often than homophobic or biphobic language, this does not mean that there is less transphobia or ignorance about transgender people present in the schools. Many students commented that they did not know any transgender people, and a number of the comments that were received reflect a lack of understanding of LGBTQQ issues. Similarly, many students did not recognize why "that's so gay" is an offensive term, or why calling someone "it" or "he-she" is offensive. One student reported, "I say 'that's so gay' but what I mean is not 'gay,' I just mean stupid. Teenagers have been somewhat programmed like that." Some students were simply in denial of the negative impact of their words; many students defended their use of "that's so gay" and "no homo". "Quit being so [politically correct], let it go, it's not a big deal," reported one student. These students are aware that this language is taboo, but they are either not cognizant of its effects or do not care. This reveals a lack of empathy that plagues the student body and school climate.

Every time an individual hears "gay" used as a term to describe something that is bad, annoying, useless or otherwise negative, it builds a subconscious connection between LGBTQQ people and things that are negative. For LGBTQQ teens, this can create a sense of self-hatred and feelings of worthlessness.

There are other effects as well. “Every time I hear a phrase like that, my stomach turns and I get angry,” said one Riot Youth member. “I feel like I can’t be openly gay around anyone who says, ‘that’s so gay’ and doesn’t see anything wrong with it,” said another. For the straight and cisgender student population, this creates a culture of intolerance. When this subconscious connection is paired with a lack of understanding and lack of exposure to the LGBTQQ community, their only associations with these individuals are negative.

There was a significant[4] difference between students’ responses to the question that asked specifically about “that’s so gay” and “no homo” and the question that asked about homophobic or biphobic language. This disparity further supports the idea that some voiced in their comments: Those surveyed do not consider “that’s so gay” to be derogatory to LGBTQQ people, because they do not understand its implications.

Additional questions addressed how often derogatory language is used by students, and how often it is used by teachers. The findings are illustrated in Figure 2.5.

Figure 2.5 Frequency of Derogatory Language

Question	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
16. When you hear phrases like “that’s so gay” or “no homo”, how often are they made by *teachers or school staff*?	1%	1%	6%	29%	63%
17. When you hear phrases like the above, how often are they made by *students*?	66%	20%	9%	4%	1%
25. When you hear phrases like *it*” or “*he-she*”, how often are they made by *teachers or school staff*?	1%	1%	5%	23%	69%
26. When you hear phrases like the above, how often are they made by *students*?	20%	21%	25%	22%	12%

From this data, it can be concluded that teachers very rarely use derogatory phrases about LGBTQQ individuals, and that the majority of homophobic and transphobic language heard in AAPS high schools comes from students.

[4] In the report, the words “significant” and “significantly” indicate statistical significance at the critical p- value $\alpha = .05$. In fact, most data was significant at the critical p- values of $\alpha = .01$ or $\alpha = .001$.

The RYCS was also interested in where derogatory language was most often heard. The survey asked about classrooms, hallways, bathrooms, athletic fields/gyms/locker rooms, cafeterias, and school parking lots. The results are represented in Figure 3.6.

Figure 2.6 Location of Derogatory Language

How often do you hear phrases like "that's so gay" and "no homo" in:	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Never present
a. Classrooms	16%	21%	32%	22%	8%	1%
b. Hallways	44%	28%	20%	6%	2%	.4%
c. Bathrooms	16%	13%	25%	23%	17%	6%
d. Athletic fields/gyms/locker rooms	27%	19%	19%	11%	8%	16%
e. Cafeteria	31%	19%	15%	6%	5%	23%
f. Parking lot	20%	15%	21%	17%	10%	18%

The fact that phrases like the above were most often heard in hallways reflects the idea that students know that it is harmful to use these types of phrases, or at the very least that the use of such phrases is not allowed, but do not understand why or do not care. Even with community assistants, students in hallways are vastly unsupervised. In this environment, they can feel comfortable making hateful statements, but in places where they might be punished or verbally reprimanded for making comments, they hold back. This indicates that a number of students who refrain from using these types of comments do so out of fear of punishment, not because they understand or care about the impact of their words.

Conclusion

The RYCS has found that the use of homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic language is widespread in the AAPS. Many students do not view these remarks as prejudiced or hurtful. This is one issue among many that negatively affect LGBTQQ teens, and it affects them in a profound way, because it is so widespread. Saying "that's so gay" degrades those who identify as LGBQ, and saying "no homo" implies that being LGBQ is undesirable or bad. Referring to people as "it" or "he-she" invalidates their gender identity and dehumanizes them. Though some action has been taken to prevent students from using derogatory language, no dialogue at a significant scale has occurred that addresses why using such phrases is not conducive to an accepting school climate.

SAFETY AND HARASSMENT

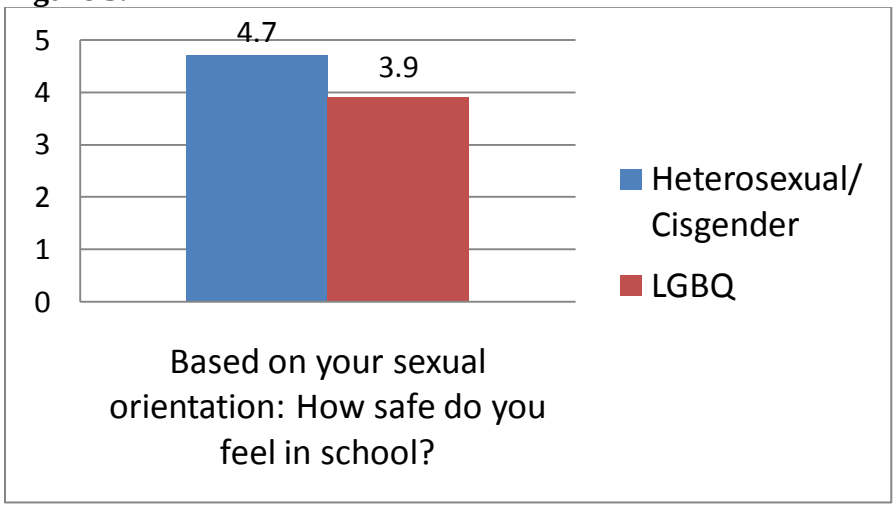
Introduction

When students do not feel safe in school, it limits their ability to succeed to their full academic potential. A negative experience will stunt intellectual, psychological, and emotional growth. One of the most important sections of the RYCS was the section devoted to questions about harassment and safety. "I could be a more successful student if I were straight, and felt comfortable around my peers," said one Riot Youth teen. Feeling unsafe also destroys feelings of community, leads to isolation and can lead to a range of psychological conditions, such as depression, anxiety disorders and bi-polar disorder[5].

Safety

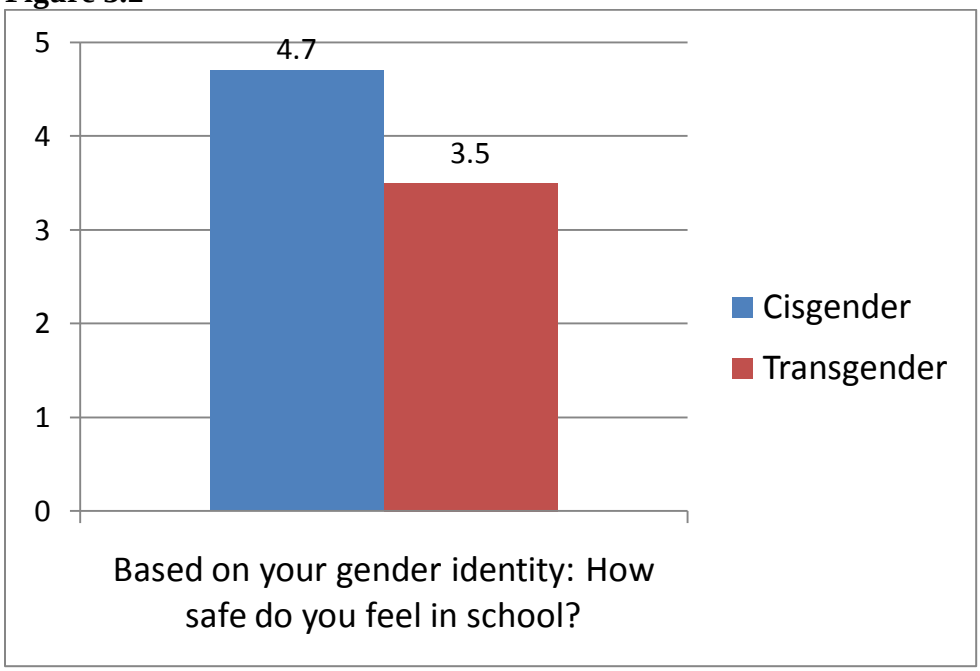
Students were asked how safe they felt at school based on factors of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and race/ethnicity, where 5 indicated very safe and 1 indicated very unsafe. They were then asked to rate how safe they felt specifically in public restrooms based on the same factors. Their answers revealed a climate of fear, especially for LGBTQQ students. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 clearly show a significant difference between the feelings of safety held by straight and cisgender students and LGBTQQ students:

Figure 3.1



[5] Makadon, H. J., Mayer, K. H., American College of Physicians, Potter, J., & Goldhammer, H. (2007). *The fenway guide to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender health*. Philadelphia, PA: ACP Press.

Figure 3.2



The RYCS found that the climate is clearly a hostile one for LGBTQQ students in the AAPS, with public restrooms being viewed as an especially unsafe environment. Although transgender students felt the most unsafe compared to heterosexual and cisgender students, LGB students also felt significantly less safe compared to non-LGBTQQ students.

Figure 3.2a

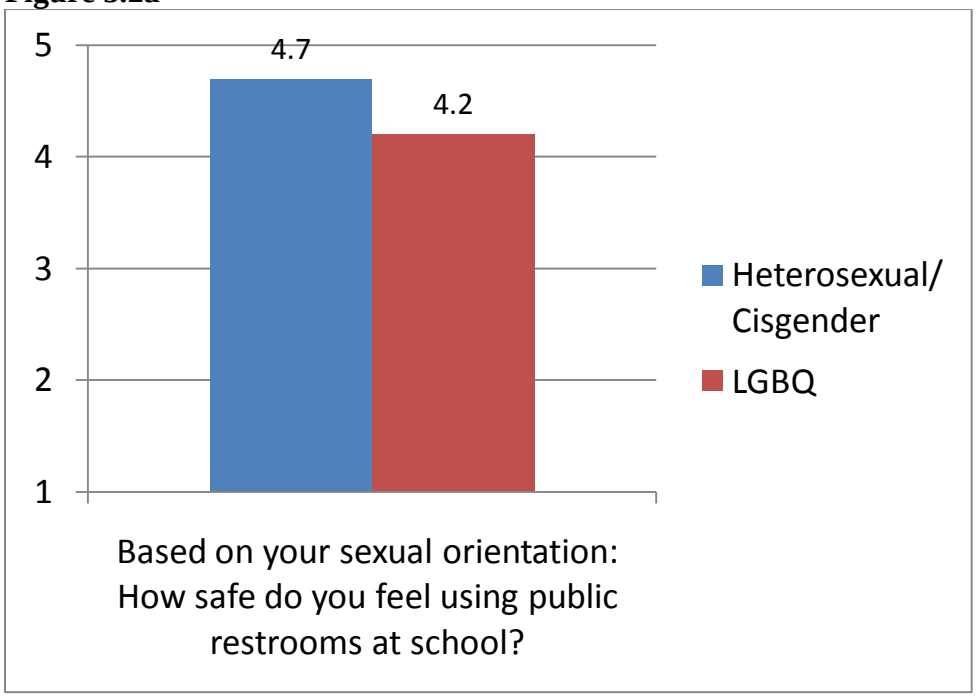
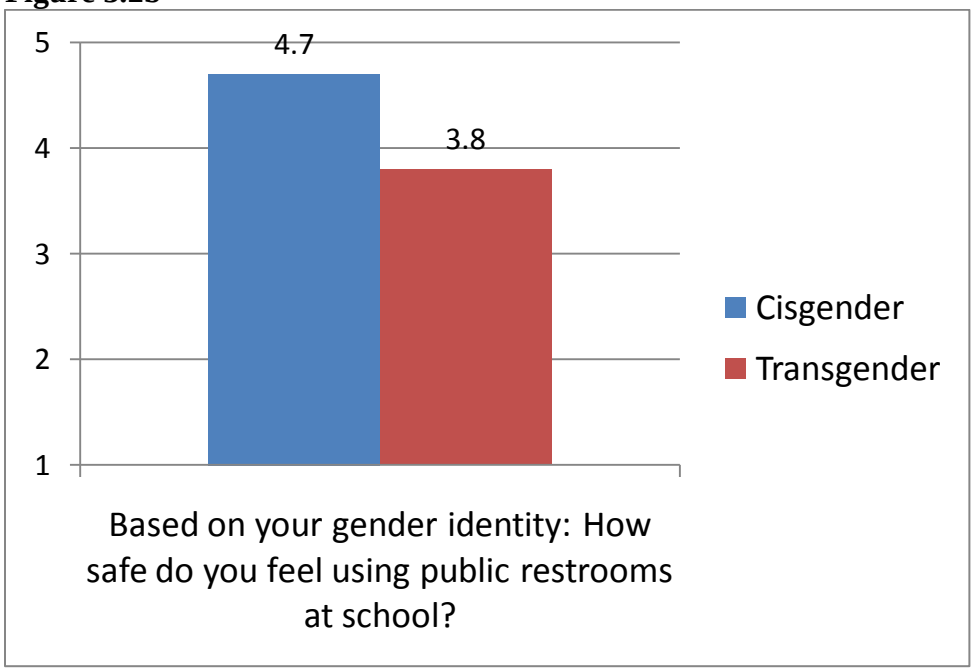


Figure 3.2b



There was also a significant difference in the feelings of safety between white students and students of color:

Figure 3.3 : How safe do you feel in school?

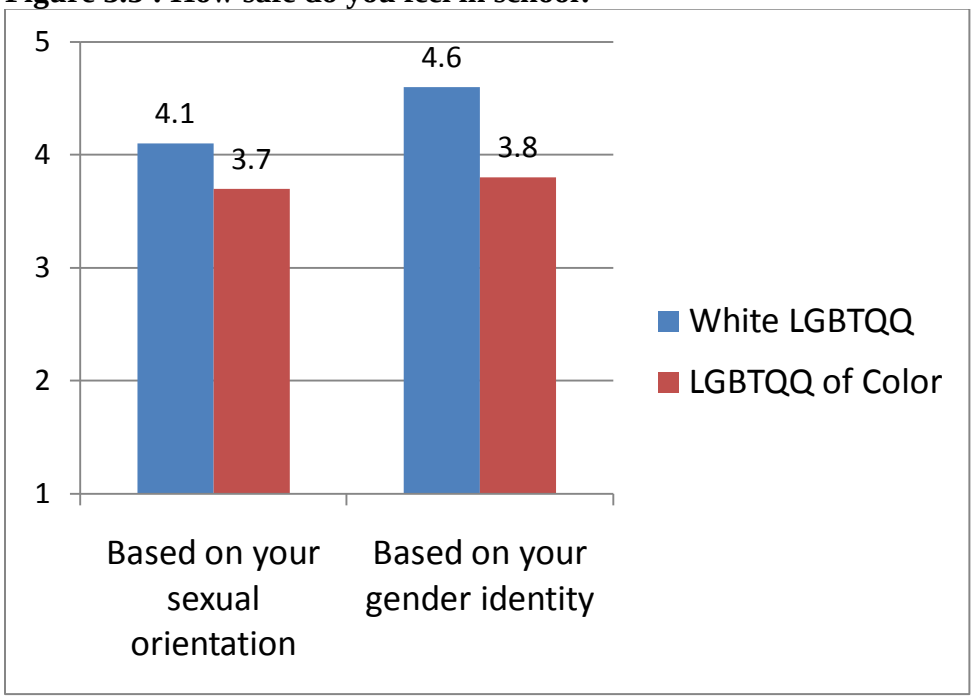
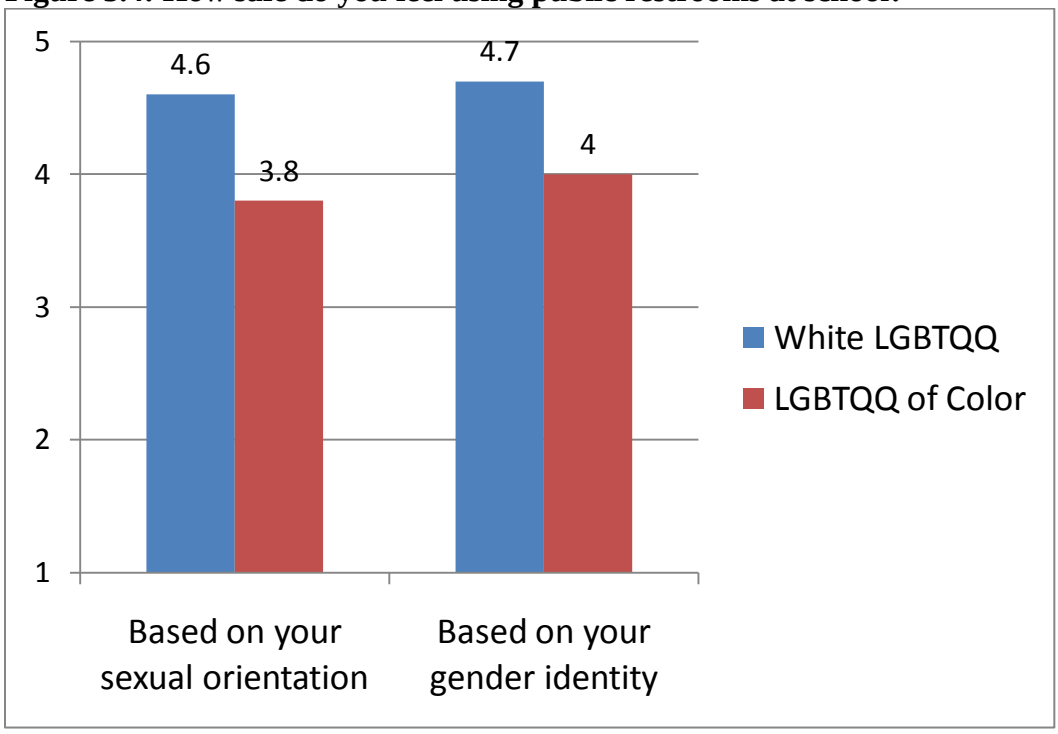


Figure 3.4: How safe do you feel using public restrooms at school?



The RYCS found that LGBTQQ students of color were significantly less likely to feel safe in schools and restrooms than their white counterparts. This difference in feelings of safety was found to exist both on the basis of sexual orientation and on gender identity.

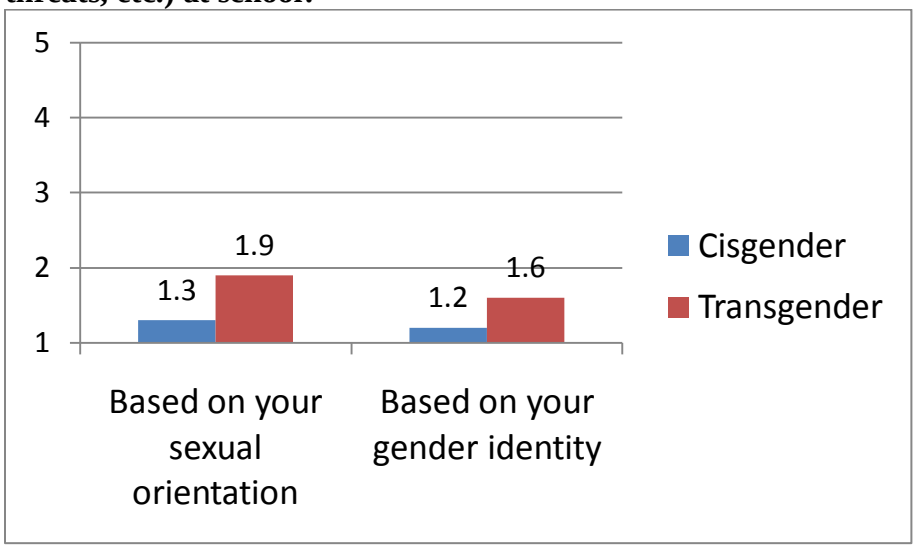
This data shows that there is a serious problem in the AAPS. Students feel isolated and unsafe because of one or more of their identities. On a day-to-day basis, simply attending class or using a public facility is a frightening endeavor for students. The AAPS is failing in its duty to provide all students with an environment that is conducive to their education; if they do not feel safe, it is harder for them to learn and their futures as productive members of society have been compromised.

Harassment

Because of experiences of Riot Youth members that informed the founding of the survey, the inclusion of a section on both verbal and physical harassment was paramount. Frequency of harassment was coded as: 5-frequently, 4-often, 3-sometimes, 2-rarely, and 1-never. As Figure 4.5 shows, verbal harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity significantly varied

between straight and cisgender students and LGBTQQ students.

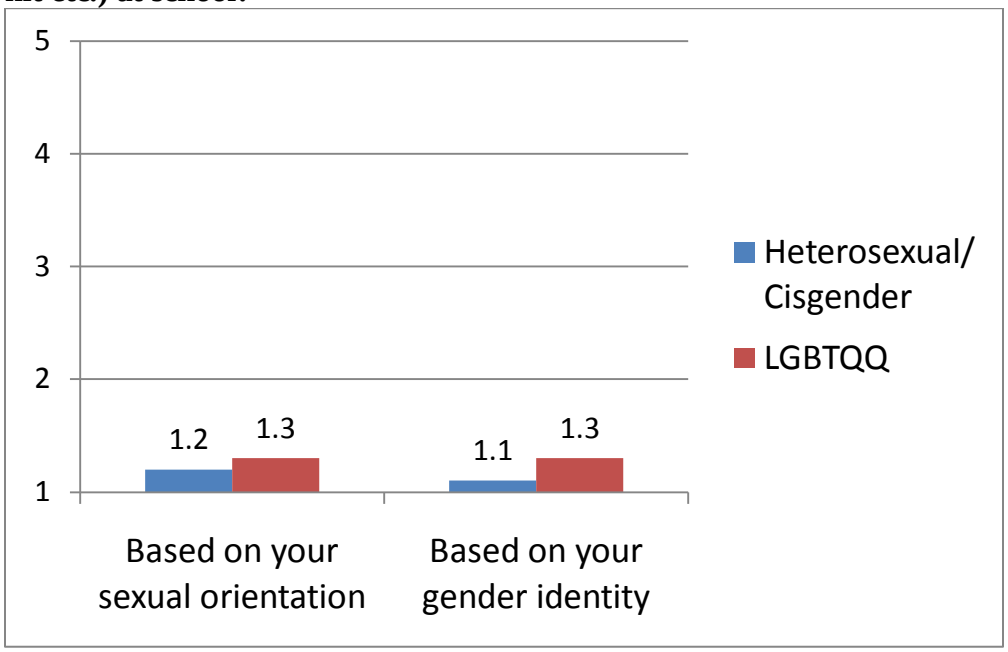
Figure 3.5: In the past year, how often have you been verbally harassed (name calling, threats, etc.) at school?



Many phrases like, "that's so gay" and "no homo" become normalized by peers and older students, who perpetuate the vernacular in the hallways. When this language becomes normal, and the related attitudes about LGBTQQ people are cemented by them, they become verbal and physical harassment. For students who have taken the word "gay" and equated it with "stupid", who have demonized homosexuality with the phrase, "no homo", or who do not understand or care why referring to someone as "he-she" or "it" is hurtful, it does not take much to call an openly LGBTQQ student names, or even physically harm them.

Figures 3.6 and 3.7 depict the levels of verbal and physical harassment experienced by LGBTQQ peers, compared with their heterosexual, cisgender counterparts:

Figure 3.6: In the past year, how often have you been physically harassed (shoved, tripped, hit etc.) at school?



The fear held by LGBTQQ students at school is not an unjustified one. As demonstrated above, the RYCS found a significantly higher instance of physical harassment among LGBTQQ students than their heterosexual and cisgendered peers. When the reality of increased violence is paired with a climate unwilling to assist the victims, LGBTQQ students are left with a strong feeling of being unsafe in their own schools.

Many Riot Youth members reported incidents of harassment in their AAPS high schools. One Riot Youth member, a lesbian-identified woman from Huron High School, reports being physically and verbally harassed:

> *Earlier this year, I was walking in a stairwell that is a little off the beaten track in my school. Some large, extremely muscular guy was standing in the stairwell with (presumably) his girlfriend. He was leaning against the wall and she was leaning against him, and they were both facing out. He took offense because he thought that I "checked out" his girlfriend while I walked by. He stopped me and started pushing my shoulders, asking me if I had checked his girlfriend out, who I thought I was, etc. I tried to walk away because the situation felt unsafe, so he held me against a wall, pushed his crotch into mine, and said, "Does that feel good? I bet you want it, huh?" and other similar things. It isn't surprising that he knew I was a lesbian; everyone does. I pushed him away and continued down the stairwell. Nobody saw it except his girlfriend, who did nothing. It*

was incredibly degrading to me, and I avoid the hallways that aren't full of people now. I'm late to class sometimes, but it's better than having something like that happen again.

The student chose not to report the harassment to school or legal authorities. "It wouldn't have done anything". She said she did not trust the system of reporting harassment. Many students in her situation also fear retribution or increased harassment if they were to report bullying.

"My teachers... were like, 'oh my god, that's horrible. I'm glad you have good friends and I'm glad you have us.' Because that's all you do have in public schools, at least right now." Riot Youth students often report harassment to each other, but express sentiments that the AAPS system would not adequately deal with reported harassment related to LGBTQQ issues. LGBTQQ students who have no safe space like Riot Youth may have to keep their stories of harassment entirely secret, which can cause long-term psychological damage.[6]

Isolation/Loneliness

"I basically didn't exist ... I was hiding from the world." – RY member.

Besides direct harassment and discrimination, students dealing with their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression often experience debilitating feelings of isolation and loneliness. In high school, there are few LGBTQQ students brave and able enough to publicly identify. Even for those students who openly identify as LGBTQQ, it is sometimes difficult to display their identity because of the relative invisibility. Students who openly identify often feel alone: “You feel like you can look around for miles and you might the only LGBTQQ person.” Those students who are not yet ready to openly identify, whether it is due to tensions with family, a lack of understanding, doubt of their own identity, a lack of comfort, or for other reasons are also often isolated because they see few to no role models. One Riot Youth member reflected, “I knew of one other gay man at my school, but he was so distant and illusionary. I was afraid to talk to him, fearing that if I associated myself with him, everyone would know.”

Feeling alone and hiding one’s identity from the public can lead to depression. "I

[6] Perrotti, Jeff, & Westheimer, Kim (2002). *When the drama club is not enough: Lessons from the safe schools program for gay and lesbian students*.Beacon Press.

experienced symptoms of depression for more than three years and didn't know where to turn. I had to hide a part of myself, and didn't feel comfortable opening up and talking about my issues with anyone," said a Riot Youth member. "Up until I came to terms with my gender identity and started transitioning, I was on the border of [suicide] since the 7th grade," said another. "Even after I started coming out it wasn't until I moved on to WCC that I started feeling O.K. at all."

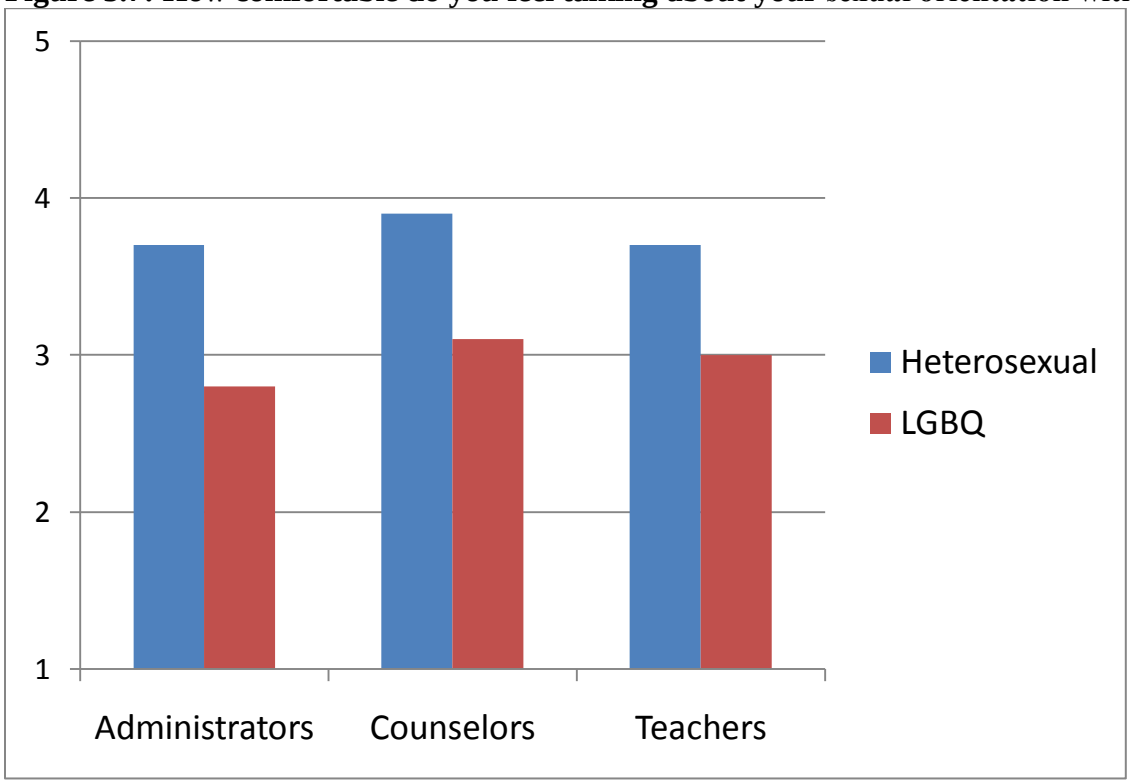
Because being LGBTQQ is rarely discussed in schools, and because of the visible harassment to those who openly identify as LGBTQQ, students often choose to hide their identities. "I had few friends for the first half of high school," said one Community High School student. I was terrified and uncomfortable speaking to anyone I didn't know because I felt different due to my sexual orientation. Even after I came out, I didn't talk about my issues. It was clear I could be different as long as I didn't talk about what it meant too much." Another Community High School student says, "You feel like you can't talk to anyone because you are afraid of what they might say, who they might tell... and what their reaction might be."

These LGBTQQ students are victims of a hostile climate where being LBTQQ is shunned to the point of verbal and physical harassment, LGBTQQ issues are glossed over or ignored in classroom examples and curriculum, and students use hateful and intolerant language which is ignored or replicated by teachers. It is no large wonder that students who have to endure this climate every day develop psychological conditions like depression.

Attitudes toward AAPS faculty

The RYCS examined what resources are currently available to students by asking students how comfortable they felt discussing their sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression with various members of the school community: counselors, administrators, and teachers, where 5 indicated very comfortable and 1 indicated very uncomfortable.

Figure 3.7: How comfortable do you feel talking about your sexual orientation with…

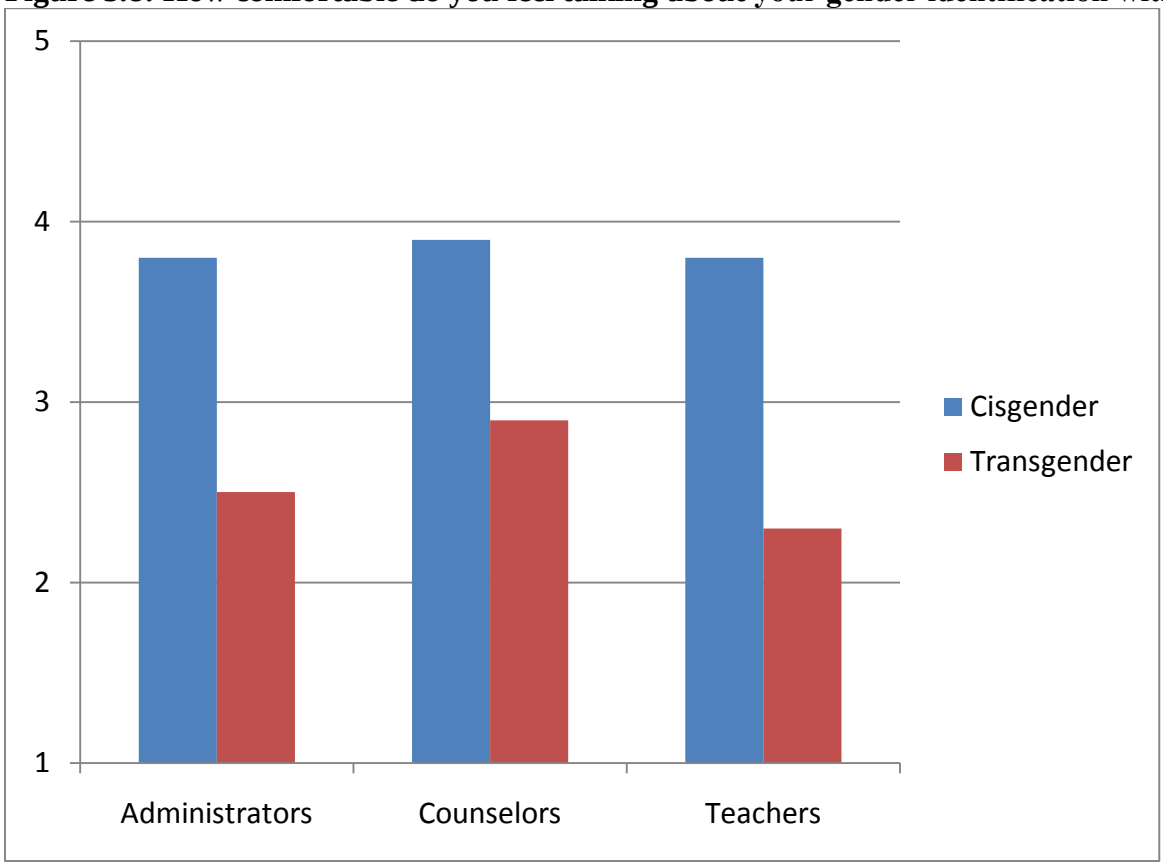


As is shown in Figure 3.7, the RYCS found that the LGBQ youth surveyed are significantly less likely than their heterosexual peers to feel comfortable discussing their sexual orientation with figures of authority in their school. As one student commented:

> *"I'd feel comfortable talking to my counselor, but why would I? Any harassment that I've experienced is not something I'd want to bring up in the school at large, just because I wouldn't want it to happen again. Also, what could my counselor do?"*

Figure 3.8 shows the comfort levels of cisgender and transgender students with discussing their gender identity with administrators, counselors, and teachers:

Figure 3.8: How comfortable do you feel talking about your gender identification with…



Much like how LGBQ youth were significantly less likely to feel comfortable discussing their sexual orientation with authority figures, the RYCS found that transgender students were less likely than cisgender students to feel comfortable discussing their gender identity with authority figures. While cisgender students were roughly equally likely to feel comfortable discussing their gender identity with administrators, counselors, and teachers, transgender students felt most comfortable discussing their gender identity with counselors, and least comfortable with teachers.

Conclusions

The RYCS found many problems in the current system of bullying prevention and harassment reporting in the AAPS. Students are isolated through exclusion of their identities in classroom examples and curriculums. They then go on to experience physical and verbal harassment, but see no dependable resources to go to for help. Students are forced to worry about

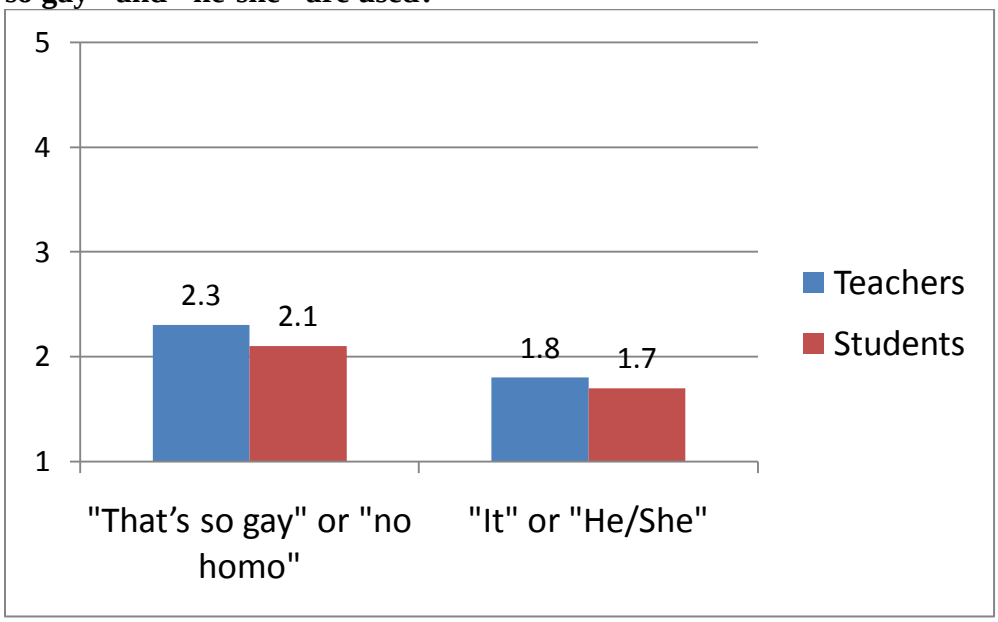
how populated a hallway is, or who is getting on to the school bus, causing fear that ruins their ability to learn and grow.

Many Riot Youth members see no hope in the public school system and seek a way out, through early graduation, split enrollment or simple truancy. It is evident that in order for the AAPS to succeed in its goals of ensuring "each student realizes his or her [or hir] aspirations" and to follow through on its beliefs that "all people deserve to live in a healthy, safe environment" and that "diversity enriches a community", the climate must be changed.

INTERVENTION

In light of rampant LGBTQQ-phobic language, discrimination and harassment, the RYCS examined the practice of intervention in the AAPS. Many students in Riot Youth report that there is no visible avenue to report discrimination, and that their peers and teachers were often unhelpful in resolving conflicts. First, the RYCS asked how often "teachers or other school staff," and "other students" intervened when derogatory phrases were used. These phrases, such as "That's so gay," "No homo," and "He-she," contribute to a rising climate of intolerance. Frequency was coded as: 5 frequently, 4 often, 3 sometimes, 2 rarely, and 1 never.

Figure 4.1: When present, how often do these groups intervene when phrases like "that's so gay" and "he-she" are used?

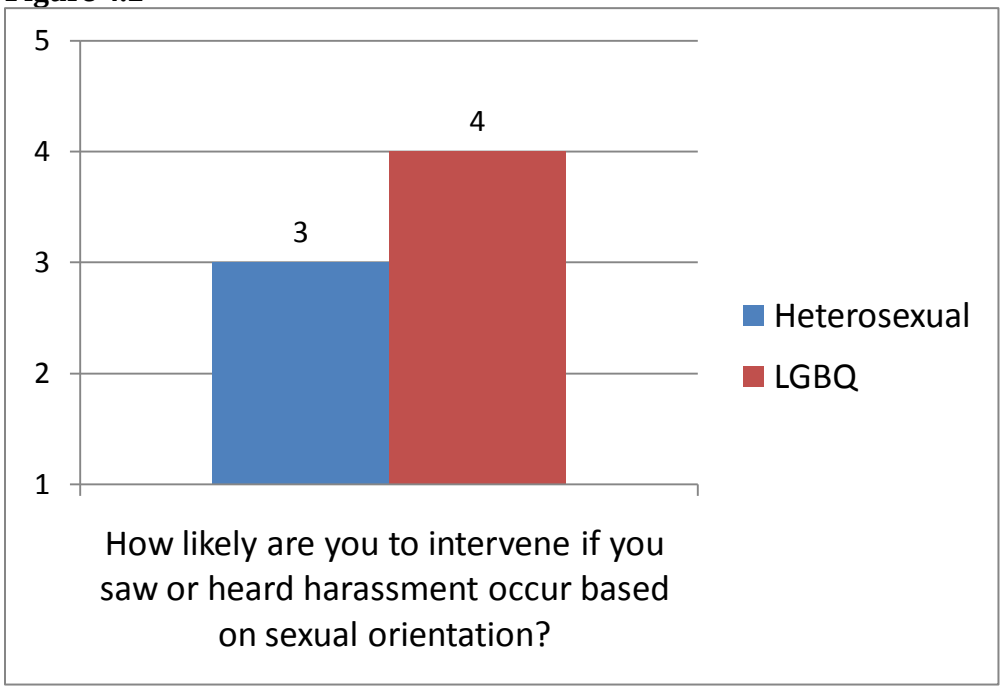


It is the duty of teachers and staff to intervene not only when verbal and physical harassment occur, but also to intervene when the phrases that breed intolerance and hatred are used. "There needs to be more aggressive action taken by school faculty to correct homophobic/bi-phobic/transphobic behavior, especially in athletics and the hallways, [especially] locker rooms," said one student. The RYCS found that teachers do not often intervene in cases of harassment. One Riot Youth member reports, "Out of the countless teachers I've had, only a tiny fraction I can rely on. More times than not, I have seen teachers ignore

[LGBTQQ] harassment or show homophobic tendencies themselves. It makes me feel invisible and alone."

The RYCS also asked students to self-evaluate how likely they were to intervene when they see or hear harassment. In order to investigate factors that make students more likely to intervene, the data was broken down by various intersecting identities. The RYCS found that students were significantly more likely to intervene if the harassment directly related to one of their identities. "Being bisexual and white, [LGBTQQ]-related stuff is more personal to me," said one student. "If I am in any way connected to someone saying stupid crap 'bout sexual orientation/race, I yell or correct," said another student. Figure 4.2 breaks down responses to the likelihood to intervene based on sexual orientation, where 5 indicated "likely" and 1 indicated "not likely":

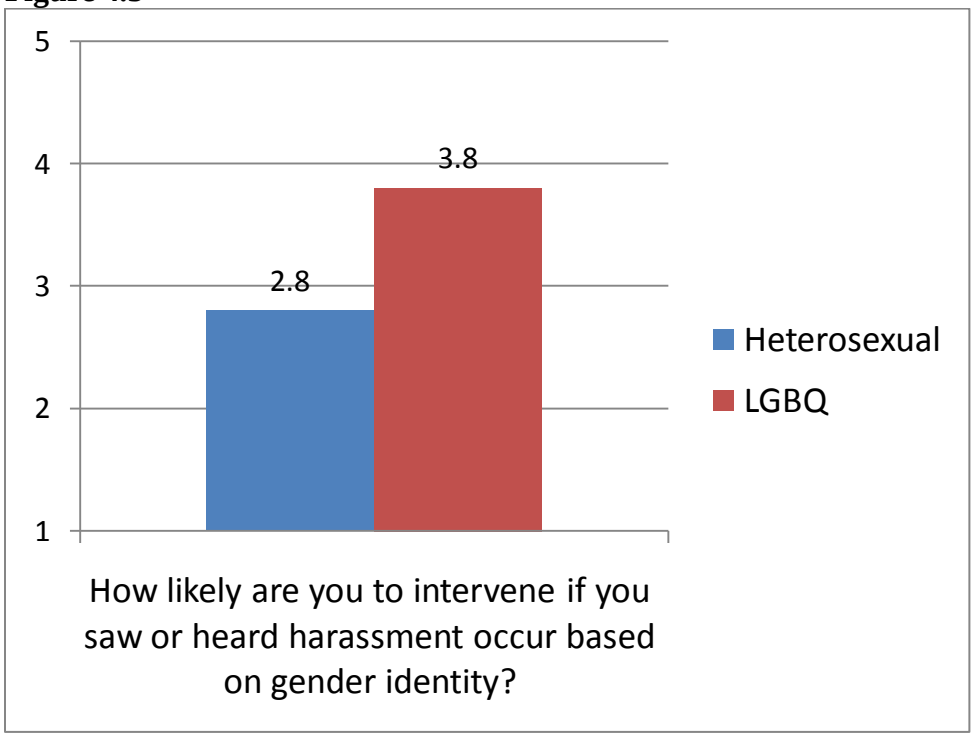
Figure 4.2



LGBQ students are far more likely intervene when they see or hear harassment based on sexual orientation. On average, LGBQ students responded as "likely" to intervene, while their heterosexual peers, on average, responded as neutral. This demonstrates that many heterosexual students in the AAPS are not equipped or willing to intervene when they witness harassment based on sexual orientation, most likely because they have never been harassed because of their sexual orientation.

Figure 4.3 represents the likelihood of students to intervene when they hear or see harassment based on gender identity. It was important to examine if cisgender LGBQ students are allies to their TQ peers.

Figure 4.3

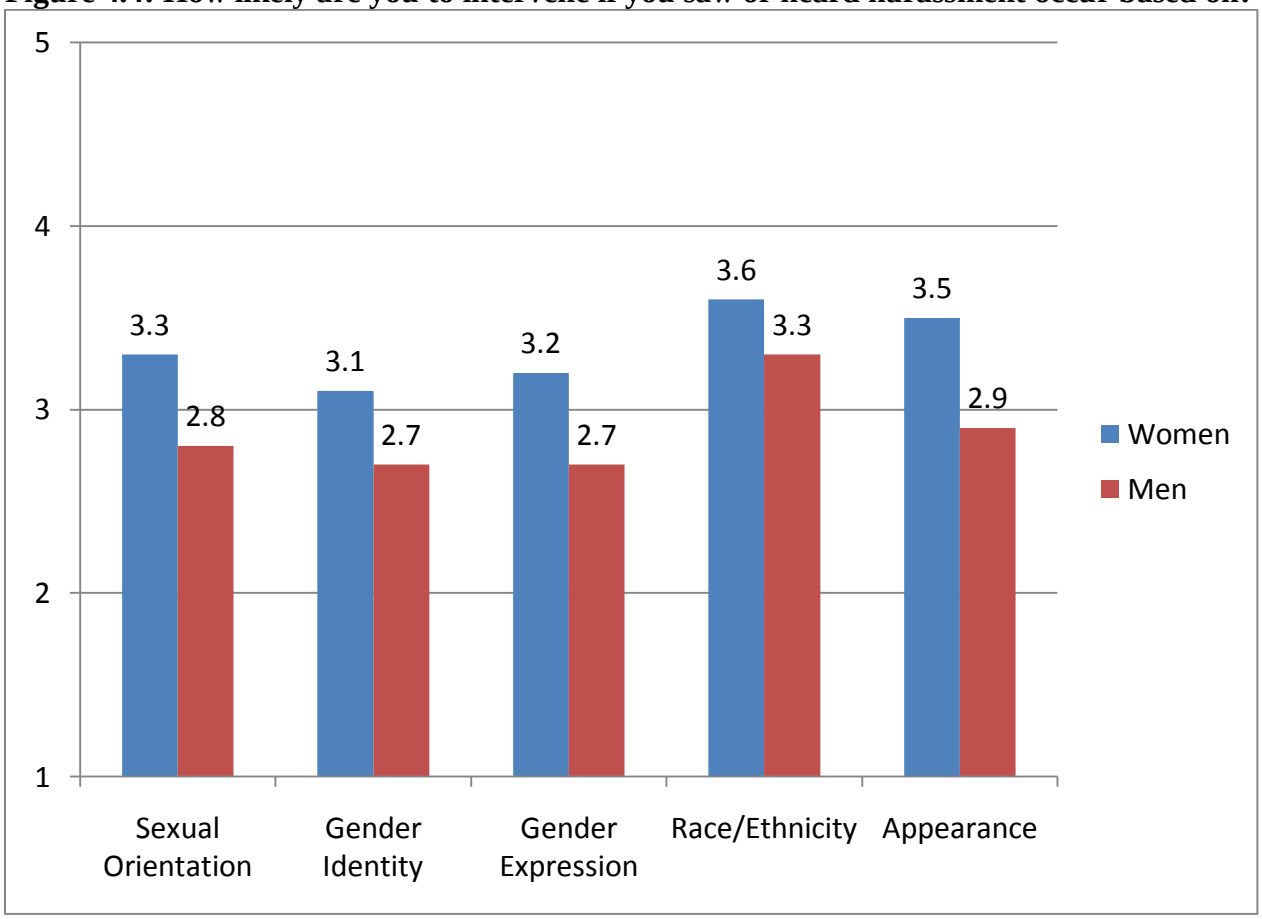


Here, the data shows that cisgender LGBQ students are significantly more likely to intervene on behalf of their transgender peers than heterosexual, cisgender students. This could be attributed to a sense of community between cisgender LGBQ and transgender students; LGBQ students are also much more likely to know openly transgender people than their heterosexual, cisgender peers.

General Trends of Intervention

The RYCS found that several aspects significantly affected the likelihood that a student would intervene when harassment occurred based on all of the intersecting factors – sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, race/ethnicity and appearance. In Figure 4.4, likelihood to intervene based all of these factors is broken down in terms of gender identity.

Figure 4.4: How likely are you to intervene if you saw or heard harassment occur based on:



The RYCS found that individuals who identify as women are significantly more likely to intervene in all categories of harassment. This indicates a climate in which it is more socially acceptable for women to care about marginalized individuals than men. Given that there exists a popular misconception that only LGBTQQ students intervene on behalf of other LGBTQQ students; this can also be attributed to a climate in which male-identified students are less comfortable being perceived as LGBTQQ.

Student-Supplied Reactions to Intervention

The RYCS offered students an opportunity to respond to why they would or would not intervene based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. This was one of the most revealing questions on the survey, as many attitudes surfaced regarding the safety of intervening as well as the lack of allies in the schools. Their comments are in bold.

"[If I intervene] people might see me as gay," wrote one student, and many others expressed similar sentiments. This shows that there are so few visible straight and cisgender allies that those who wish to intervene would be assumed to be LGBTQQ, and not an ally; it also shows that being perceived as gay is seen as undesirable. This misconception leads to the trends represented in Figure 4.2, in which LGBTQQ individuals must stand up for LGBTQQ individuals while the rest of their peers stand by.

Others expressed feelings of apathy about harassment: **"It's not my business,"** said one student. **"I don't really care,"** said another, and similarly, **"Depends if you know the person."** This shows that students feel that they must look out for their friends or not act at all in matters of harassment. More extreme attitudes emerge when feelings are not neutral but negative. **"Other people's sexual choices/orientation are not my choices,"** said one student, implying that peers who are LGBTQQ choose to be that way and thus deserve harassment and discrimination. **"I hate homosexuals and I don't care about what happens to them,"** said another student. This reveals a climate in which students feel comfortable having homophobic attitudes, and in which their peers are not allied enough to change these views. **"People have the right to say what they want,"** said another student.

Still more common were attitudes that individuals who intervened would experience discrimination and harassment themselves**. "If you intervene, you could get beat up or jumped later on,"** said one student. **"I'm afraid of having daily school enemies again,"** said another. **"I would be afraid of being hurt myself,"** still another student said. Besides physical harassment for intervening, students also feared social repercussions. **"People would think I'm weird,"** said one student. This shows that intervention is outside the norm, and that those who care enough to stray from that norm experience social isolation and risk being categorized themselves.

The RYCS found attitudes from students surveyed in which individuals wanted to intervene. **"Bullying shouldn't be tolerated,"** said one student. **"[Nobody] should be hurt for being who they are,"** said another. This indicates that some students understand that harassment and discrimination has no place in school. **"It's not O.K. and people should feel safe,"** said another student. However, some of these students who wish to intervene do not because they are afraid of retribution from their peers**. "I don't have the courage to intervene,"** said one student.

Another expressed concern that they did not know if they should get involved**. "I wouldn't know if it was my place or not to help someone I didn't know,"** the student said.

Conclusions about Intervention

It is vital that students and teachers feel comfortable to intervene in order to create an accepting leaning environment. Attitudes from students about intervention ranged from scared to apathetic to simply unaware. Allies must be established in order to stop harassment based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and these allies must be taught how to intervene.

CURRICULUM

Introduction

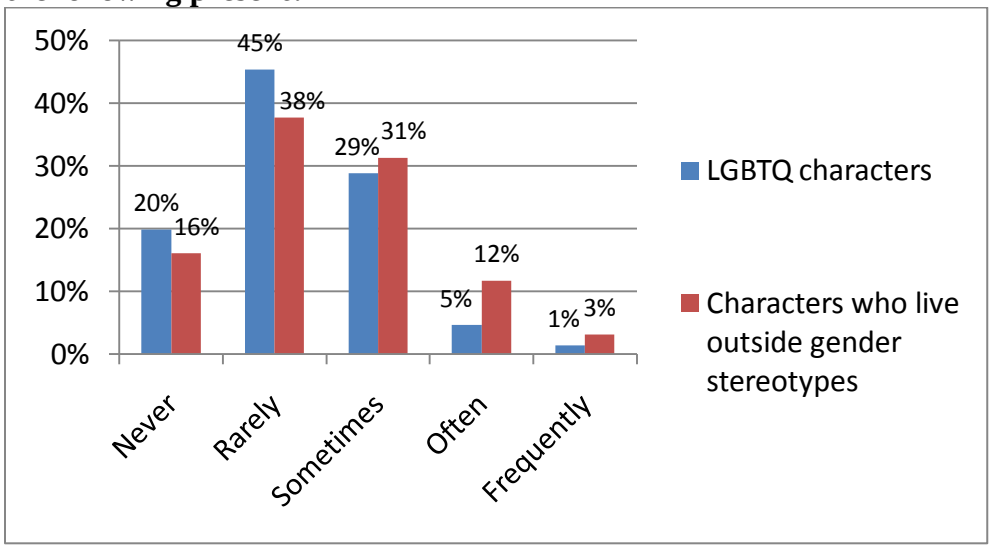
> *Wow I didn't know LGBTQ lit existed (as in they never bring it up during school)!*

The RYCS included a section of questions relating to curriculum to reveal how much the AAPS teaches about LGBTQQ individuals and issues. Inclusion of LGBTQQ individuals and issues in education is essential in promoting acceptance, diminishing ignorance and helping LGBTQQ-identified students feel less isolated and more included. However, the AAPS high schools have not been inclusive. "[T]he lack of representation needs to be fixed," one student remarked. Another commented that, "[t]he topic is carefully avoided."

Results

Inclusion of novels, textbooks and films that positively present LGBTQQ individuals is important to helping LGBTQQ students feel safe and accepted. Additionally, the exclusion of materials based on their LGBTQQ content limits teachers' ability to effectively instruct their students and provide a complete educational experience.

Figure 5.1: In books read (novels and textbooks)/movies watched for class, how often are the following present?



The majority of students reported that LGBTQQ individuals are not represented in materials used in classes in the AAPS high schools. One student was surprised to learn that literature about LGBTQQ people exists, commenting that, "they never bring it up during school." This shows a lack of knowledge about the tremendous amount of LGBTQQ literature and films in existence, due to a lack of placement in curriculum.

Including novels and textbooks written by LGBTQQ individuals further expands students' knowledge and understanding of the contributions of LGBTQQ people. But the RYCS has found that teachers "rarely" mention if an author is LGBTQQ. According to one student, "I don't actually know whether or not authors are [LGBTQQ]. Teachers don't bring it up."

Figure 5.2: In books read in class (novels and textbooks), how often are they written by LGBTQ characters?

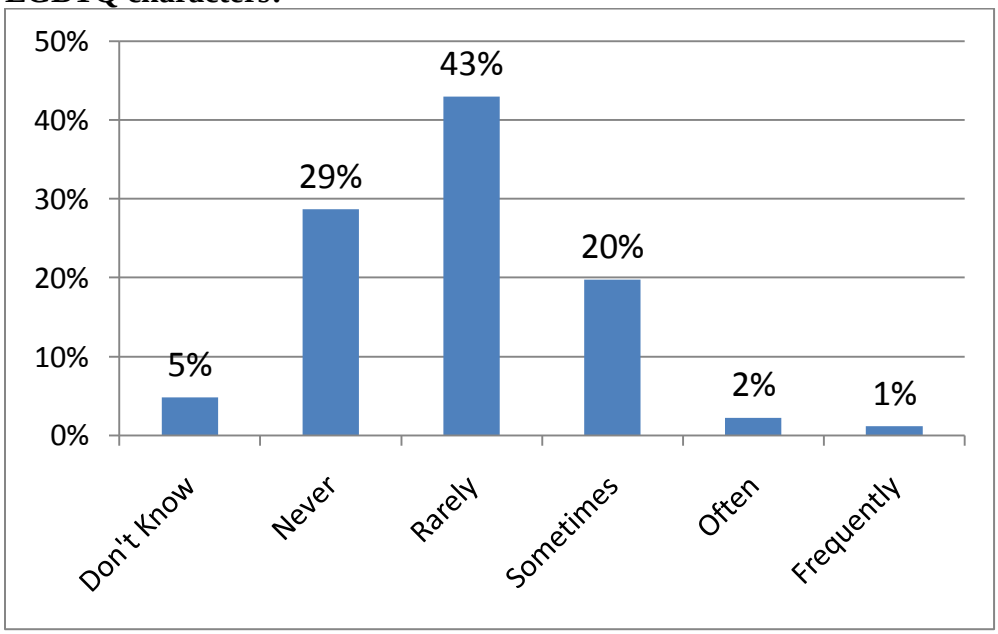
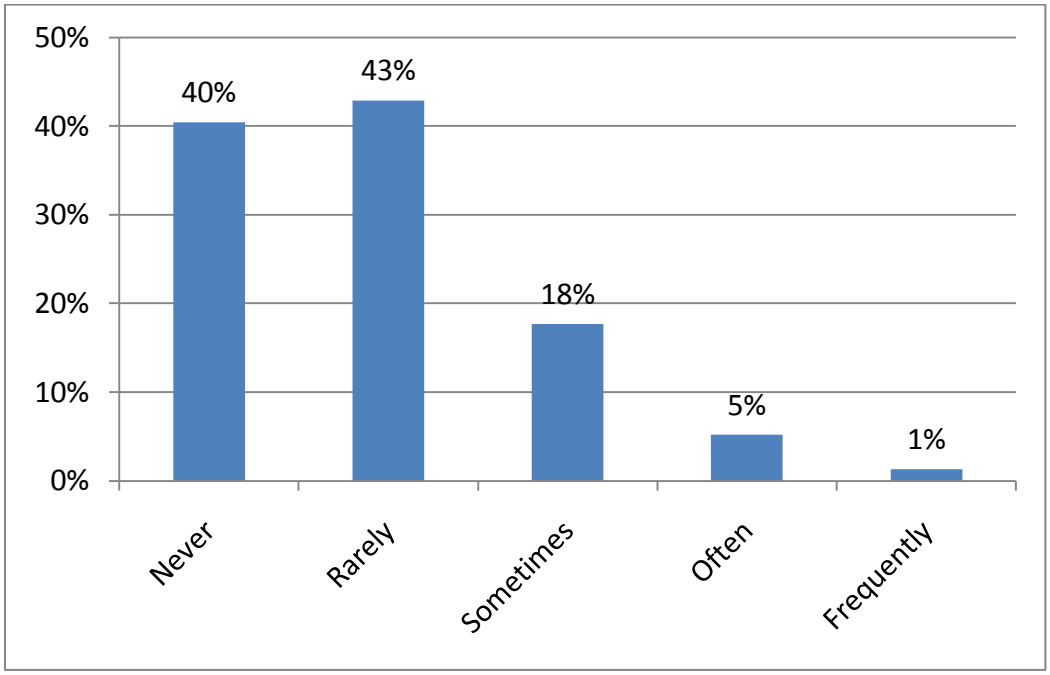


Figure 5.3: How often is LGBTQ history/cultural significance discussed in social studies classes?



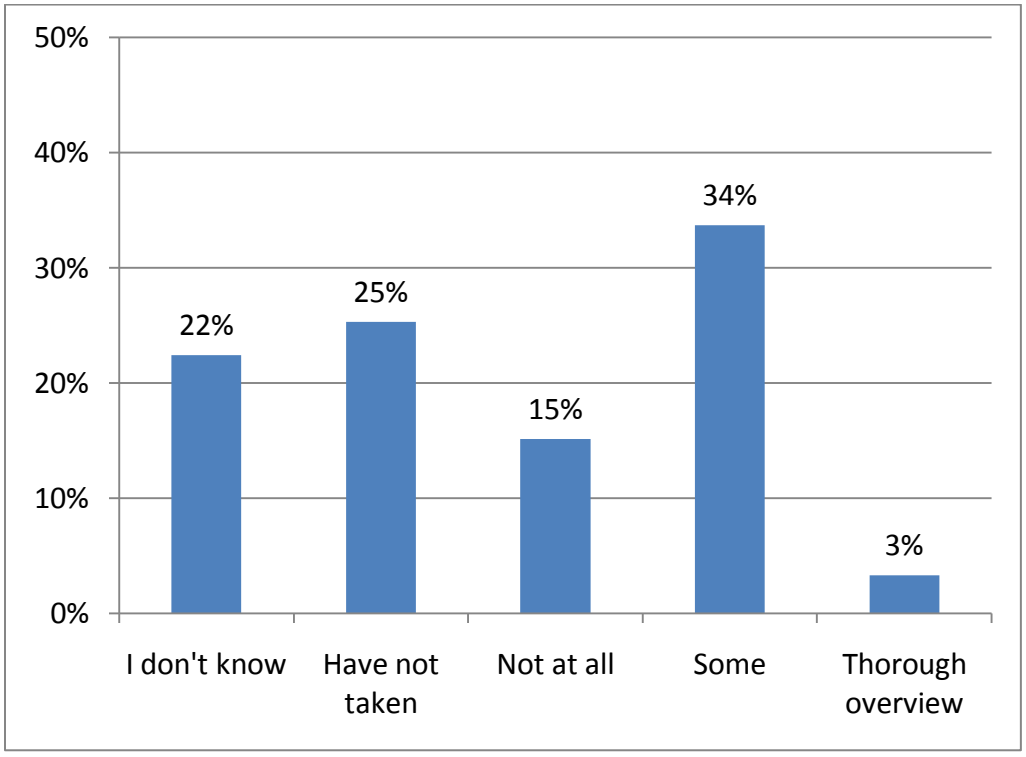
When asked about how many books in class were written by LGBTQQ authors, many students provided responses in the margins such as "I don't know," and did not respond to the provided options. Because of this, the RYCS added an "I don't know" response to the question while analyzing the data. This shows that students do not know whether books read in class are LGBTQQ-related because this is not discussed, which demonstrates a lack of coverage of these issues. If LGBTQQ authors' works *are* used in class, teachers do not reveal that the author is LGBTQQ. Some students surveyed inquired why an author's sexual orientation or gender identity is relevant to their studies. This issue was also raised in regards to inclusion of LGBTQQ persons in Social Studies courses. Not only does having LGBTQQ authors provide role models for LGBTQQ students that could potentially increase their desire to succeed academically, it also is important to discuss in terms of the factors that influence the author's work. For example, it would be difficult to effectively and fully discuss Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* without exploring issues of Woolf's own sexuality.

Social Studies classes provide information about history and government, in which LGBTQQ individuals have played major roles. Though these individuals are not always excluded from classes, the fact that they were LGBTQQ is not acknowledged. By recognizing the sexual orientation, gender variance and/or gender identity of these individuals, teachers

would be providing role models for LGBTQQ students, and educating all students about the contributions LGBTQQ individuals have made to society. This would foster the creation of allies as well as acceptance by students in the AAPS who would come to understand that LGBTQQ youth have equal potential to contribute and succeed. The results illustrated in Figure 5.3 show that students are not aware of the role that LGBTQQ people have played in history and culture. It also shows that they have little to no knowledge of the historical struggle for LGBTQQ equality.

The required Health & Wellness course acts as an opportunity to educate students about issues critical to their health. Traditionally, health classes have been completely silent on LGBTQQ health issues, ranging from sex education that assumes all youth are heterosexual and cisgender to units on bullying that do not discuss homophobia and transphobia. Figure 3.4 shows the lack of LGBTQQ representation in high school level health classes in the AAPS.

Figure 5.4, titled "Are LGBTQQ health-related issues discussed in health classes at your school?

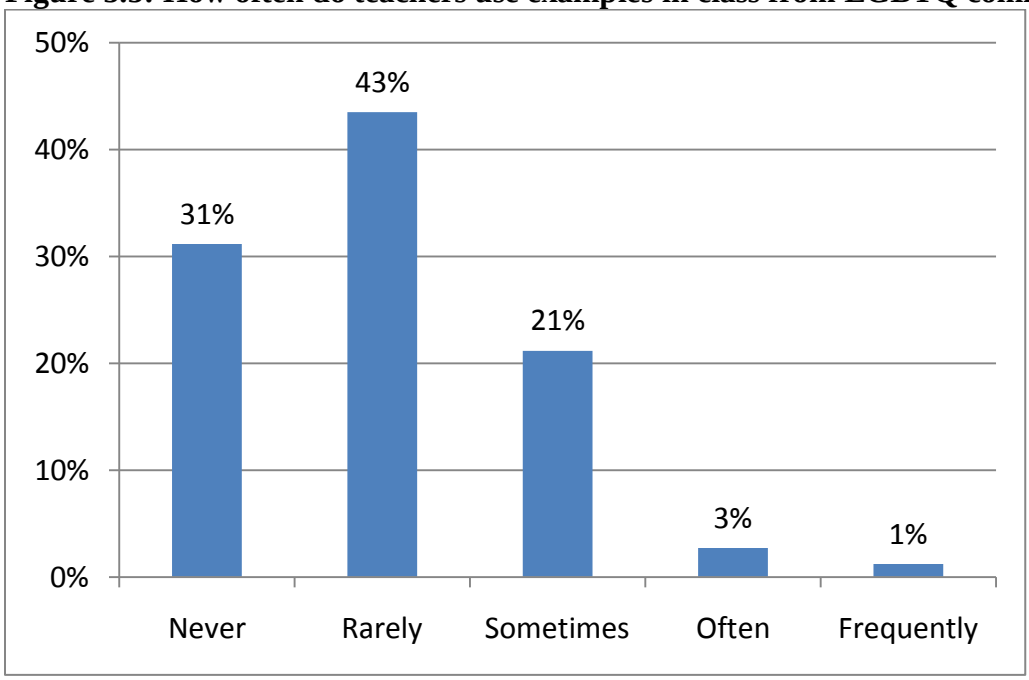


This means that while an effort is being made to cover LGBTQQ-related issues in some health classes, it does not provide comprehensive coverage of health issues related to their gender identity and sexual orientation. Although some teachers may choose to include LGBTQQ health

issues, others do not, and this leaves LGBTQQ students without a guarantee that they will learn about their own health. The inclusion of LGBTQQ individuals in health classes is also another way to effectively improve climate, because exposure to LGBTQQ health helps students better understand what it means to be LGBTQQ and can dispel myths and stereotypes about LGBTQQ individuals or the LGBTQQ community.

Examples used in class are usually taken from the real world to help students apply concepts and better understand the material. The RYCS found that teachers "rarely" use examples from the LGBTQQ community in class, as represented in figure 2.5.

Figure 5.5: How often do teachers use examples in class from LGBTQ community?



Students have reported that teachers do not use these examples, possibly because they are uncomfortable. One student remarked, "I think teachers feel uncomfortable talking about LGBTQQ or non-traditional genders because they don't want to be caught offending anyone." Another expressed concern that LGBTQQ issues are not relevant to most subjects in school. "I don't see how [language] or math teachers would work [LGBTQQ] examples into their lessons. Many subjects have nothing to do with this stuff and you can't expect them to mention it out of the blue," said one student. However, this is a misconception. There are numerous ways to incorporate LGBTQQ individuals into every class. As a first step, teachers may use LGBTQQ inclusive examples when they speak of teenage dating, marriage and affections. Other steps

might include embracing gender neutral pronouns and using a more diverse set of examples, especially in lectures and on tests and worksheets.

Conclusion

The absence of LGBTQQ inclusion in curriculum leads to feelings of marginalization and social isolation. This negatively affects all students – including straight and cisgender individuals – because it leads to lack of exposure to diversity and a narrow world-view. Inclusion in the curriculum involves simple changes, and will lead to a climate of acceptance where all students will feel safe to learn and succeed.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

LGBTQQ and allied students face harassment and discrimination on a daily basis. They feel marginalized by the current exclusive curriculum, ignored by school staff and other adults, and isolated from their peers. Riot Youth, like the AAPS, believes that "we are strongest when working together", and invites the AAPS to work with LGBTQQA youth. There are many ways in which the climate of schools can be improved so that "100% of Ann Arbor Public School students will exceed international standards in achievement."[7]

The following recommendations are a brief summary of innumerable ideas resulting from in-depth analysis of the survey data, research in the field of education, and countless conversations between the students in Riot Youth. These recommendations are not a set of demands, but merely the beginnings of a long-term dialogue about improving the climate for LGBTQQ students. In brief, Riot Youth wants to:

- **CHANGE** anti-discrimination policies at local and state levels to include protection for sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.
- **UPDATE** curriculums to include LGBTQQ authors in literature classes, LGBTQQ history in history classes, and LGBTQQ health issues in health classes.
- **EDUCATE** teachers, administrators and other school faculty on how to be LGBTQQ allies, and show teachers how to include LGBTQQ-inclusive examples in classrooms.
- **CREATE** available venues to report discrimination and harassment within Washtenaw County.
- **FACILITATE** dialogue with students through Riot Youth-developed workshops about LGBTQQ issues on topics such as language, intervention and allies.

Riot Youth holds some beliefs about how these goals should be accomplished.

CHANGE anti-discrimination policies at local and state levels to include protection for sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

In the AAPS:

At this time, the AAPS Statement of Non-Discrimination does not include gender identity or gender expression. This exclusion leaves students and teachers vulnerable to discrimination and harassment.

[7] Ann Arbor Public Schools Strategic Plan, 2007-2012

Gender neutral bathrooms are a crucial asset to providing a safe and supportive environment to students who are LGBTQQ, especially for transgender students, students questioning their gender and students who are otherwise gender-variant. In many schools there are one stall bathrooms that could easily be converted to gender neutral bathrooms. These bathrooms need to be easily accessible for all students who wish to use them.

On a state-wide and national level:

Riot Youth believes that the support of various state-wide and national legislation that guarantee equal rights for LGBTQQ families and LGBTQQ adults is an extension of supporting an accepting school climate. Although these types of laws may not appear to directly affect LGBTQQA youth, they help develop a general level of acceptance that influences school climate. These laws can also provide a safeguard for students who experience harassment because they provide another layer of protection.

UPDATE curriculums to include LGBTQQ authors in literature classes, LGBTQQ history in history classes, and LGBTQQ health issues in health classes.

To create an atmosphere of inclusion and respect, and to give role models and examples for LGBTQQ students, all classes need to include LGBTQQ relevant issues.
In history classes, LGBTQQ role models and history can be easily incorporated through the use of supplementary articles and discussions. Although LGBTQQ history is not yet included in most standard textbooks, teachers can include topics like the same-sex relationships in Greco-Roman cultures, the existence of thriving LGBTQQ subcultures during the beginning of the 20th century, and the modern LGBTQQ equality movement and culture. They can also reveal the same-sex relationships or gender variance of major figures in history, such as Alexander the Great, Eleanor Roosevelt, Walt Whitman and Billy Tipton.

Throughout the history of literature and language, LGBTQQ individuals have made tremendous contributions. Also, many works have been written that include LGBTQQ characters. These relevant novels should be included in literature and English classes, and their significance should be discussed. The gender identity and/or sexual orientation of the author is relevant to the discussion of the literature and deserves to be discussed.

LGBTQQ examples can easily be incorporated into all classes. Teachers can embrace inclusive language in lectures and on tests and handouts. This is not an effort to strictly enforce "politically correct" language, but language that is inclusive and is inviting and welcoming to all students.

EDUCATE teachers, administrators and other school faculty on how to be LGBTQQ allies, and **SHOW** teachers how to include LGBTQQ-inclusive examples in classroom settings.

Currently, many teachers are not sure if they can facilitate dialogue about LGBTQQ issues in their classrooms. There is a lack of clear policy on the subject. This leaves teachers in fear of retribution should they address these issues as they come up in curriculum and class discussion. Riot Youth recommends that the School Board issue a statement that informs teachers that they can discuss LGBTQQ issues without fearing punishment from administration, and that the administration will support teachers if outside parties voice objections. Teachers and other school staff should not be afraid to address topics that are relevant to the subjects that they are teaching and students in their classrooms.

Many teachers and staff may feel as though they are not properly equipped or trained to handle situations related to LGBTQQ students. A number of them have expressed a lack of knowledge of what to do in such situations. This is often because of the sensitive nature of the subject, and because information about it is hard to find. Riot Youth suggests the use of workshops and in-service training to help teachers, counselors and other school staff members learn how to intervene effectively, use examples of LGBTQQ individuals in class, and be inclusive. It is extremely important that school staff know how to handle issues related to their LGBTQQ students.

Examples of workshops Riot Youth could facilitate with AAPS staff:

- Intervention: How to intervene, and encourage intervention
- Inclusive Teaching: How to use examples in class, find LGBTQQ-relevant literature and history, and interact with students
- Position-Specific Training: LGBTQQ-related training for all positions, particularly the following:
  - Nurses
  - Psychologists/Social Workers

- Administrators/Administrative Assistants
- Community Assistants

CREATE available venues to report discrimination & harassment within Washtenaw County schools.

On an official level:

There are no readily available, uniform guidelines for reporting bullying and harassment in the AAPS. Students need a place to report they are being harassed verbally or physically, while still remaining anonymous. The school has a responsibility to investigate instances of harassment, and if the harassment is criminal, it must be reported to the police.

Through personal relationships:

Riot Youth recommends that LGBTQQ students know where to turn when they are discriminated against, harassed or have important problems to solve. There are several steps the AAPS can take to create a public image of acceptance and of an environment to seek help. A very simple step is for AAPS staff to post LGBTQQ "Safe Space" stickers on their doors or in visible places if they are in fact establish and maintain a safe space for LGBTQQ individuals. Another is for teachers and counselors to foster reputations of being accepting and supportive. Further, LGBTQQ health, safety and suicide prevention resources should be easily accessible in counseling offices.

FACILITATE dialogue with students through Riot Youth-developed workshops about LGBTQQ issues on topics such as language, intervention and allies.

To provide students with a comprehensive education, the AAPS must thoroughly expose their students about matters concerning diversity. LGBTQQ-phobia ultimately comes from students. Workshops with students would encourage discussion and ultimately make school a more inviting place for LGBTQQ teens. While creating awareness and acceptance will be difficult, it will allow for LGBTQQ and allied students to achieve their full potential. Riot Youth would primarily center workshops with students about how and why to be an ally, and how to intervene when they witness harassment or bullying. Eventually, though, Riot Youth thinks it

would be important to raise awareness through dialogue about issues related to gender and LGBTQQ identities.

Conclusion

This report and these recommendations are only the beginnings of a long, important journey to acceptance of LGBTQQ youth and their allies in the AAPS. Riot Youth and the AAPS will have more ideas and action steps as conversations about diversity in terms of sexual orientation and gender identity become commonplace. These should be discussed and embraced. In this way, the survey can accomplish its ultimate goal of improving the lives and educations of LGBTQQ youth in the AAPS.

APPENDIX A: TERMS DEFINED

Ally: A person whose attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors are supportive and respectful of people who identify as LGBTQ. An ally works in various ways to provide a supporting environment for others regardless of their sexual identity or gender identity/expression.
Biphobia: The irrational fear or disdain of, hatred towards, discrimination against and/or intolerance of people who are, or are perceived to be bisexual.
Bisexual: A person who has an emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to individuals of various genders and/or gender expressions.
Cisgender: A person who identifies with the gender associated with their biological sex. For example, someone born male who identifies as a man.
FTM (F2M, trans man): An individual biologically female who identifies as a man.
Gay: Usually refers to a man who is emotionally, romantically, and/or sexually attracted to other men. This term can also refer to the larger LGBQQ community.
Gender Expression: How a person chooses to express one's gender, manifested in personal experience. This may or may not be related to someone's sexual orientation or gender identity.
Gender Neutral Pronouns: Pronouns that do not designate an individual specifically to one gender. Examples include: zie used similarly to he/she, hir like her/him, and hirs like his/hers.
Gender Identity: Refers to one's psychological sense of their own gender.
Gender Variant/Genderqueer: Gender identity that falls outside the gender binary, including fluid gender presentation, or gender express that does not conform to traditional gender norms.
Hir: See gender neutral pronouns.
Homophobia: The irrational fear or disdain of, hatred towards, discrimination against and/or intolerance of people who are, or are perceived to be homosexual.
Lesbian: A woman who is emotionally, romantically, and/or sexually attracted to other women.
LGBTQQA: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning and Allies. This acronym is used to refer to the whole community and/or all individuals with these identities. The acronym is often shortened to refer only to specific identities and/or communities.
MTF (M2F, trans woman): An individual biologically male who identifies as a woman.
Queer: Term used to describe people who transgress culturally imposed norms regarding sexuality and gender. This term can also be used to refer to the entire LGBTQQ community. Although the word has formerly had negative connotations, it has been reclaimed by many.
Questioning (gender identity and/or sexual orientation): Someone who is unsure of their personal gender identity and/or sexual orientation.
Sexual Orientation: A term used to describe a person's emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to another person.
Social Identity: A socially constructed identity that informs one's perception of their self. Examples include: race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and ethnicity.
Transgender: A person whose gender identity differs from the biological/physical sex to that which they were assigned at birth. Also used as an umbrella term for people who do not fit neatly into the gender binary of male or female.
Transphobia: The irrational fear or disdain of, hatred towards, discrimination against and/or intolerance of people who are, or are perceived to be transgender.
Zie: see gender neutral pronouns.

APPENDIX B: ADDITIONAL READINGS AND RESOURCES

LGBT Health/ Health Education

Center for Young Women's Health – Lesbian Health: A Guide for Teens
http://www.youngwomenshealth.org/lesbianhealth.html

Human Rights Campaign – National GLBT Health Organization Websites
http://www.hrc.org/issues/8310.htm

Brown University Health Education – LGBT Health
http://www.brown.edu/Student_Services/Health_Services/Health_Education/general_health/lgbt.htm

Brown University Health Education – Transgender Health
http://www.brown.edu/Student_Services/Health_Services/Health_Education/general_health/lgbt_trans.htm

Glik, D., Nowak, G., & Valente, T. (2002,). Youth Performing Arts Entertainment–Education for HIV/AIDS Prevention and Health Promotion: Practice and Research. *Journal of Health Communication,*, *7*, 39-57.

Counseling LGBTQ Youth

Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League – Counseling Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth
http://www.pflagdc.org/advocacy/docs/Counseling.pdf

Ryan, C., & Futterman, D. (1998). *Lesbian and Gay Youth: Care and Counseling*. Irvington-du-Hudson, NY: Columbia University Press.

Safe Space Creation

Pinkett, R., & O'Bryant, R. (2003, June 2). Building community, empowerment, and self-sufficiency: early results from the camfield estates-MIT creating community connections project. *Information, Communication & Society*, 187-210.

Crowley, C., Harré, R., & Lunt, I. (2007,). Safe Spaces and Sense of Identity: Views and Experiences of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Young People. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Psychotherapy*, *11*, 127-143.

Barry, R. (2000,). Sheltered Children: The Self Creation of A Safe Space By gay, lesbian, and bisexual students. *Construction sites: excavating race, class, and gender among urban youth*, 84-99.

Barber, H., & Krane, V. (2000, September). Creating a Positive Climate for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youths. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance;, 78,7,* 6.

Finkel, M. J., Storaasli, R. D., & Bandele, A. (2003,). Diversity Training in Graduate School: An Exploratory Evaluation of the Safe Zone Project. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 34,* 555-561.

Miscellaneous

Meyer, I. H. (2003,). Prejudice, Social Stress, and Mental Health in Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Populations: Conceptual Issues and Research Evidence. *Psychological Bulletin, 129,* 674-697.