

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Civilian

Empowering Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth: Lessons Learned From a Safe Schools Summit

Craig, S. L., Tucker, E. W., & Wagner, E. F. (2008). Empowering lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth: Lessons learned from a Safe Schools Summit. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Social Services*, 20(3), 237-252.
doi:10.1080/10538720802235310

SUMMARY: LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) youth are often victims of school-based violence, discrimination, and harassment. This study surveyed 24 attendees of the Safe Schools Summit regarding their experiences with victimization and the benefit of participating in the Summit. Results revealed that almost all participants gained strength from participating in the Summit.

KEY FINDINGS:

- All participants reported having experienced or witnessed school-based harassment.
- Some participants reported a sense of powerlessness and felt the need to use self-protection due to their LGBT identity.
- Almost all participants (92%) gained catharsis, strengthened skills, and a determination to confront bullies after the Summit.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Attend training about LGBT concerns and needs to enhance their ability to support the sexual minority population
- Examine ways to create a positive and safe environment for Service members self-identified as LGBT

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Offer support groups for LGBT youth in military families so that they can empower each other
- Develop workshops for military families on effective ways to communicate with and support their LGBT youth

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Raise awareness on military bases regarding the harassment and discrimination that LGBT youth experience
- Support programs that promote a safe environment for LGBT Service members and youth in military families

This product is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense between the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a grant/cooperative agreement with The University of Minnesota.



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METHODS

- Participants were recruited by announcement at the Safe Schools Summit.
- Each participant completed an anonymous one-hour survey regarding their experiences with victimization and the effect of attending the summit.
- Data were analyzed to exact themes related to participants' experiences with victimization and their experiences at the Summit.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were 24 Safe Schools Summit attendees; their average age was not reported.
- Half of the participants identified as male and the other half identified as female; 40% of participants identified as gay, 24% as lesbian, 12% as bisexual, 16% as straight, and 8% as queer.
- Half of the participants were White (50%), followed by Black (25%), multiracial (16%), and Latino (9%).

LIMITATIONS

- All participants attended the Summit and were especially interested in improving the school environment for LGBT students; therefore, since they already had this interest, these findings may not be widely generalizable.
- The study was based on self-report data, so the results may be subject to social desirability bias.
- The survey was designed specifically for the study, so no evidence existed regarding its reliability and validity.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Conduct longitudinal studies to examine the long-term effect of the Summit on attendees
- Recruit participants who did not participate in the Summit to examine their experience of victimization at school
- Explore which components of the Summit were most empowering for the attendees

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