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## Sharevision Collaboration Between High School Counselors and Athletic Educators to Stop LGBTQ Bullying

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**SHAREVISION COLLABORATION BETWEEN  
HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELORS AND ATHLETIC EDUCATORS  
TO STOP LGBTQ BULLYING**

A Dissertation Presented

By

LISA DAWN THOMPSON

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 2013

Education

Social Justice Education

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HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELORS AND ATHLETIC EDUCATORS  
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LISA DAWN THOMPSON

Approved as to style and content by:

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Richard Lapan, Chair

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Pat Griffin, Member

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Ann Ferguson, Member

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Christine B. McCormick, Dean  
School of Education

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my Mom, Peggy Melanson.  
You protected me and my sister Linda like a mother bear.  
You raised me to value myself and others including animals.  
I learned how to speak out, be assertive and stand up for myself.  
I witnessed the importance of standing up for others.  
I learned how to do it without hesitation by your example.

Thank you Mom for reminding me in the midst of writing this:  
“Remember Lisa, you have strength in purpose...”

I also dedicate this work to my Dad, Edgar Del Thompson.  
You provided for us the best ways you knew how.  
Your patience, quiet strength and insights were a gift.  
It was hard to say good bye to you on January 16, 2012.  
But there is comfort somehow that you transitioned on Martin Luther King Day.  
Thank you for answering me as I prayed for the strength to finish this.  
Every day thinking of you gave me the strength I needed.  
Your incredible work ethic lives on in me.

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I feel honored to have been part of this case study. Each participant shared so much in the individual interviews and group meetings. School Counselors and Athletic Educators have a daunting task doing their jobs and for them to give their precious time to this study demonstrates how committed they are to what they do. Their eagerness to embrace the Sharevision group reflection process with each other was inspiring. The learning community they are building, for a short period of time, included me. Thanks.



## **ABSTRACT**

### **SHAREVISION COLLABORATION BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELORS AND ATHLETIC EDUCATORS TO STOP LGBTQ BULLYING**

MAY 2013

Ed.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Richard Lapan

The purpose of the study was twofold: to explore how school counselors and athletic educators experienced implementing the 2010 Massachusetts Anti-bullying law and to explore how participants experienced using the Sharevision structured group reflection process as the format for group discussions. The Sharevision structured group reflection process provided the safety and support school counselors and athletic educators said they needed. Participants eagerly shared their experiences with one another. They used the Sharevision process to discuss the list of participant generated questions they posed during the individual interviews. They exchanged ideas and were able to generate new ways to respond to anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment as a result of their reflective group discussions. The participants said that the Sharevision meetings relieved stress, were productive and inspired them to continue working together to take action on their ideas. After the study was over, members of the group met over the summer with the GSA Advisor to continue to work together. They designed and then co-facilitated their fall orientations for incoming students, athletes and parents proactively promoting diversity, their GSA and a positive LGBTQ school climate.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of the Problem

This case study examined how high school counselors and athletic educators in one school experienced a professional development study group designed to support them as they collaborate in their school's efforts to address anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment. The persistent wave of teenagers committing suicide related to anti-gay bullying by classmates has raised public awareness to the pervasive harassment that Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) students face in schools across the country. A recent national school climate survey of LGBTQ students found that "84.6% of students were verbally harassed (e.g., called names or threatened) at school because of their sexual orientation and 63.7% because of their gender expression" (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, GLSEN, 2009). When hostility toward LGBTQ students is tolerated in schools it also contributes to an overall negative climate for every student, e.g., anti-gay language is most commonly used as a put-down in name-calling even when students are "different," not necessarily gay. Yet, students nationwide reported that school staff rarely intervenes to protect LGBTQ students (GLSEN, 2009).

Public outcry over these issues has resulted in the enactment of stronger state anti-bullying laws and stricter enforcement of federal civil rights laws. These laws mandate that schools implement effective ways to prevent harassment and bullying or they risk penalties, including loss of funding (BNO News, 2010; Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2010). New legislation puts increased pressure on all schools. This in turn requires that school counselors act as change agents, taking

leadership roles in implementing effective school-based anti-bullying policies (ASCA, 2008).

Two years later GLSEN's 2011 National School Climate Survey of 8,584 LGBT students from all 50 states and the District of Columbia reported that problems persist:

- 8 out of 10 LGBT students experience harassment.
- 84.9% of LGBT students heard "gay" used in a negative way (e.g., "that's so gay") and 71.3% heard homophobic remarks (e.g., "dyke" or "faggot") frequently or often at school.
- 6 in 10 LGBT students (63.5%) reported feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation; and 4 in 10 (43.9%) felt unsafe because of their gender expression.
- LGBT students reported feeling unsafe in specific school spaces, most commonly locker rooms (39.0%), bathrooms (38.8%) and physical education/gym class (32.5%).
- Transgender students experienced more hostile school climates than their non-transgender peers - 80% of transgender students reported feeling unsafe at school because of their gender expression.

Fortunately the survey also showed that "school-based resources and supports are making a difference" (GLSEN, 2011). According to the GLSEN 2011 report, "a safer school climate directly relates to the availability of LGBT school-based resources and support, including Gay-Straight Alliances, inclusive curriculum, supportive school staff and comprehensive anti-bullying policies." To build safer schools, school counselors need to collaborate with students, colleagues and community members (Lapan, Gysbers, & Petroski, 2001).

With an average student to school counselor ratio of 457-to-1, school counselors must depend on collaboration and in-school partnerships with educational colleagues to address pressing school problems such as bullying and harassment (ASCA, 2010).

School counselors with limited resources can maximize their impact by joining forces with other school colleagues with common goals. Through alliance building, school-wide initiatives may prove to be efficient, cost-effective, and sustainable.

### **Literature Review**

Findings from numerous studies point to the fact that the prevalence of homophobia has a profound negative impact on individuals as well as the overall climate in education and athletics (e.g., Tucker, 2000; Mallon, 1997; Serra, 2000; Halpert & Pfaller, 2001; Barrett & McWhirter, 2002; and Liddle, 1999). Existing research supports the importance of addressing the issue of homophobia in schools and in sport as a very serious public health issue (Walters & Hayes, 1998). Through their non-discrimination policies, medical, teaching, and all other allied health professions responsible for licensing and credentialing mandate that professionals become culturally competent to work with LGBTQ people. Programs need to be developed in order adequately to enforce nondiscrimination in counseling practice, along with resources to support them (Van Soest, 1996).

Accordingly, every professional accrediting body is responsible for ensuring that providers of care are prepared and trained to deal with this very serious issue (Baker, 1980; Frost, 1998; Palma & Stanley, 2002; Metz, 1997). However, graduate schools have not been able to provide adequate training and supervision programs (Athanasas & Larrabee, 2003; Liddle, 2002; Mallon, 1997; Remafedi, 1993; Phillips, et al, 1997, Falman et al, 2002; Palma & Stanley, 2002). There is a commitment that schools provide the necessary conditions to ensure non-discrimination of students and staff serving them. A commitment must be backed up with sufficient programming to meet the legal



mandate. It is unacceptable that existing professional training programs are inadequate. This situation must be remedied.

### **School Counselors**

School counselors are required to “demonstrate with data” that they are making a difference (Dahir & Stone, 2003 in Lee, 2005, p. 5). To accomplish this, the American School Counselor Association has established the ASCA National Model for national standards for school counseling programs (ASCA, 2005). To be successful, school counselors need to shift away from individual and mental health models. They need to adopt a collaborative social justice model as they implement a school-wide anti-bullying safety plan (Baldwin & Thompson, 1989; Adams, Bell & Griffin, 2007; Adams, Blumenfeld, Castaneda, Hackman, Peters & Zuniga, 2013). The Sharevision Model provides an equitable structure for counselors, educators and colleagues to collaborate (Thompson & Baldwin, 1989; Landis, 2010b). This requires school counselors to act as change agents advocating for LGBTQ students (Thompson, 2011).

Ball State University researcher Martin Wood argued that it is imperative that school counselors recognize “the challenges faced by nearly all teens are tremendously exaggerated for gay adolescents” (Wood, 2005, p. 1). Yet, in a statewide survey of 118 high school and middle school counselors, Wood found that “only 14.4 percent claimed to possess adequate skills to assist gay and lesbian students deal with their problems” (2005, p. 1). Fortunately, Wood (2005) found that “an overwhelming majority of counselors surveyed want access to more training and educational programs” (p. 1).

A later study on the education and training needs of school staff relevant to LGBTQ youth revealed that they are aware of their responsibilities, but most claim they

are not adequately prepared to carry out this critical aspect of their job (Sawyer et al., 2006). To aid counselors in developing the necessary skills to work with LGBTQ people, in 2003, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) published a long awaited comprehensive textbook for clinicians. Authors Hunter & Hickerson offer the basic characteristics of an affirmative or “empowerment approach” for practitioners, to be able to:

Collaborate and share power with clients; establish trust; accept clients’ definitions of the reasons they are seeing a practitioner; identify and build on clients’ strengths; raise clients’ consciousness of issues of class and power; involve clients in the change process; teach clients specific skills; use small groups that emphasize mutual aid, self-help, and support; mobilize resources for clients; and advocate on behalf of clients. (Gutierrez, Delois, & Linnea, 1995 in Hunter & Hickerson, 2003, pp. 200-201)

Hunter and Hickerson argued for on-the-job training and clinical supervision as necessary for school counselors to be able to develop an affirmative practice when working with LGBTQ people (2003, p. 2). School counselors need to build confidence and skills in discussing gender and sexuality issues with students and colleagues in order to effectively advocate for LGBTQ students. Whitcomb & Loewy (2006) support the NASW position and argue that this means school counselors must be involved in community organizing, influencing social policy and legislation, influencing public opinion, seeking support through professional organizations and a willingness to navigate conflicts between activism and academics when they arise (pp. 215-223). Such an approach is fully consistent with called for by the ASCA National Standards (2005).

While these standards are laudable, the ability of school counselors to actually carry them out is severely limited by lack of funding for public education. School counselors are expected to take a leadership role in implementing their school’s anti-

bullying and harassment efforts. Given the high stakes pressure to lead the implementation of their school's anti-bullying plan, they need assistance in developing these essential multicultural and emotional competencies for working with LGBTQ youth (Hunter & Hickerson, 2003; Goleman, 1994).

### **School Counselor Training Initiative**

In February 2002, the American Psychology Association led a collaboration of six national school health professional organizations to establish the Healthy Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Students Project (HGLBSP). Among these included the American School Counselor Association (ASCA); the National Association of School Nurses (NASN); the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), and the School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA). The HLGBS Project began with a five-year grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) with the goal of training school professionals on the health and mental health issues of LGB students, including students questioning their sexual orientation or engaging in same-sex sexual behavior.

By 2004, the HGLBS Project prepared training materials to address the growing need for school staff professional development in LGBQ youth issues. A Training Workshop and Manual for School Counselors, Nurses, Psychologists and Social Workers was developed entitled "Preventing Health Risks & Promoting Healthy Outcomes among LGBQ Youth" (Anderson & Porter, 2004). The HLGBS Project Training was offered one time in 2004 at each collaborating organizations' national conference as an all-day training. I attended the six-hour pre-conference Training Workshop at the 2004 SSWAA annual conference to experience it first-hand.

The effort to address the professional development needs of the coalitions professional members through the development of the Training Workshop was an important first step. Unfortunately, I observed a number of limitations to the HLGBS Project's Training Workshop: (a) When I inquired at the start why transgender issues were not included, I was told by the facilitator that the training was research-based and there was insufficient research on transgender youth issues. Gender-based issues were not addressed, period. (b) It was apparent that the Centers for Disease and Control (CDC) funding for the project steered the training's primary goal was a focus on youth physical self-care: "to increase participants' intentions to provide professional services that prevent HIV and other health risks and promote healthy outcomes among LGBQ youth in school-based settings" (Anderson & Porter, 2004, p. ASW3). (c) Though Training participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire concerning other counseling services for LGBQ students, the training did not specifically address the issues the questions raised, e.g., "helping students cope with harassment from peers, actively intervening with students to address harassment of LGBQ students, and developing a positive school climate for LGBQ students" (Anderson & Porter, 2004, p. ASW4). (d) Impact of the HLGBS Project's national training initiative was limited to those who had access to attendance at the one-time pre-conference trainings at each national conference for an additional cost.

The HLGBS Project continues to be funded by the Division of Adolescent and School Health of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) with its current emphasis on "providing capacity building assistance to schools and other organizations that serve gay and bisexual young men at risk for HIV infection, especially African

American and Latino youth” (APA, 2010). Clearly the CDC funding has driven the project to focus on addressing pressing health issues among at risk gay and bisexual men rather than providing on-going on-the-job training in LGBTQ issues for school counselors. Currently, school-based staff learning-community initiatives can access the resources found in the “Toolbox” of the workshop’s participant manual which are updated and available online (Smith Bailey, 2004, APA, 2011). Sustainable in-service training on LGBTQ Youth issues is still desperately needed by school counselors.

### **Focus on Athletics**

High school counselors can play a pivotal role in their school’s efforts to prevent and address anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment by focusing their efforts on athletics. For years researchers have documented that anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment have been tolerated and, in many cases, promoted in athletics (Pascoe, 2007; Wellard, 2006; Anderson, 2005; Lenskyj, 2003; Perrotti & Westheimer, 2001; Griffin, 1998; Sabo & Messner, 1990). Some research has revealed that some of the anti-gay bullying by student-athletes may be linked to denial of a student’s own sexual feelings (Messner, 1999; Griffin, 1998). According to GLSENs 2009 National School Climate Survey data, LGBTQ students reported feeling unsafe in areas of the school that are not closely supervised by staff such as bathrooms and locker rooms (p. 21) as well as outside areas such as the school’s athletic fields (p. 22). As a result, high school athletics has been identified as a key social site for school counselors to target for intervention.

School counselors need to familiarize themselves with the culture of sports in general as well as their school’s athletic department. Counselors can help ensure that their

school's athletic environment lives up to its potential to provide positive experiences and a physical outlet for all students including LGBTQ adolescents. To do so, school counselors need to invest in building relationships with athletic educator and offer to collaborate with them.

### **What We Know About the High School Athletic Environment**

It is important to note that participation in athletics can also be a source of stress. Balancing the demands of academics and participation in athletics can be difficult especially when students have other challenges such as family issues, economic hardship, abuse or disruptions such as divorce (Brenner, 1984). Students can have difficulty managing those experiences while participating in athletics especially if they have other stigmatized identities due to racial/ethnic background, language barriers or immigration status, gender identity expression, learning, physical or mental disabilities (Goffman, 1963; Herek, 1998). For example, Black Lesbian student-athletes have documented the challenges of navigating what they called a different kind of "triple threat" in facing racism, sexism and homophobia all at once (Bailey & Ruffin in Griffin et al., 2002; Ross, 2006).

On the positive side, a good portion of the student adolescent population utilizes athletics to build connections with one another. Not only do athletic competitions serve as a unifying force within schools, they also function as major county-wide and regional community events. For student-athletes, regular participation in the athletic environment by playing an individual or team sport can be both rewarding and challenging. School counselor collaboration with athletic department educator to make sure athletics are safe for LGBTQ students can benefit all high school students.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that athletics provide adolescents with a physical outlet for some of their stress, addressing some of the risk factors for depression, and also improving academic performance for boys and girls (Staurowky et al., 2009). Physical activity and physical exercise has been proven to be helpful in managing stress, anxiety and depression (Johnsgard, 1990, 2004). Besides physical activity, athletics provide adolescents with key social opportunities for peer interactions which are a critical part of the maturation process. Athletics provide students with structure and purpose, social and other life-skill building, opportunities to set individual and group goals, the experience of group affiliation including belonging and membership (Simmel, 1955).

Learning how to deal with the ups and downs of competition with the support of teammates can help prepare students to deal with future competitive environments including school and work (Burton Nelson, 1998). Athletics can also provide team building and leadership training opportunities, experience with diversity and positive contact with adults supporting them (NIH, 2002). All of these can enhance an adolescent's ability to be successful in adulthood, especially in college and the workplace. For some student-athletes, excelling in athletics can be their ticket to a scholarship to college, and for low-income students, it may be their only way to afford it.

The tremendous benefit of participation in high school athletics is well documented. The Women's Sports Foundation Research Report (2009) found:

- Research has time and again demonstrated a strong and positive correlation between high school sports participation and academic achievement (Hartmann, 2008, p. 3 in Staurowsky, 2009, p. 48).
- Economists have found a positive association between sports participation and future wages and earnings (Barron, Ewing, & Waddell, 2000; Curtis, McTeen, & White, 2003; Ewing, 1995, 2007; Howell, Miracle, & Rees, 1984 in Staurowsky, 2009, p. 48).

- Girls who participate in sports are more likely to experience academic success and graduate from high school than those who do not play sports (Sabo, Melnick, & Vanfossen, 1989a in Staurowsky, 2009, p. 49).
- Athletes in high school tend to do better academically over time (Crosnoe, 2002; Danish, 2002; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Marsh & Kleitman, 2003; Videon, 2002 in Staurowsky, 2009, p. 49).
- High school female athletes expressed a greater interest in graduating from college (Melnick, Vanfossen, & Sabo, 1988 in Staurowsky, 2009, p. 49).
- A longitudinal study of 22,696 high school students in 1,052 schools found that both female and male athletes had higher grades, higher educational aspirations, and fewer school-related discipline problems than nonathletes (Fejgin, 1994 in Staurowsky, 2009, p. 49).

### **LGBTQ Issues in Sports Training Initiative**

In 2002, the Women's Sports Foundation (WSF) launched the Project to Eliminate Homophobia in Sport in collaboration with seven national organizations including: An Uncommon Legacy Foundation; Astraea; Ms. Foundation; National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). The Project's mission was "to eliminate homophobia in sport and create an educated public that respects all athletes and sports-affiliated personnel regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression" (WSF, 2002). The primary result of that collaboration with Pat Griffin as the lead writer was the production and launch of "It Takes a Team! Making Sports Safe for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Athletes and Coaches" an Education Kit which included a 15-minute educational video "It Takes a Team! Making Sports Safe for All" and curriculum for educating coaches, teachers, administrators and parents (Griffin, et al., 2002).

Laurie Priest, co-writer of the It Takes a Team! video and Education Kit presented it at the February 2005 NCAA CHAMPS/Life Skills Conference. Attendance at her



workshop netted over twenty colleges volunteering to evaluate the effectiveness of showing the video to undergraduate student-athletes. The evaluation results showed viewing the It Takes a Team! video and discussing it with peers had “a statistically significant positive attitude change toward lesbian and gay athletes and coaches in sport” among the 242 undergraduate student-athletes participating (Griffin & Thompson, 2006, p. 2). The NCAA then funded the distribution of the It Takes a Team! Education Kit materials bundled with other curriculum materials sent to all NCAA participating college athletic departments nationwide. It is unclear how many schools actually used the materials since the Project did not have the budget to provide accompanying staff training or follow-up. While the video would need to be updated for use with today’s student-athletes, the It Takes a Team! Education Kit remains a useful resource and is available online at the Women’s Sports Foundation website.

Pat Griffin is now directing the GLSEN Sports Project, “Changing the Game,” which recently launched with a Team Respect Challenge initiative. The Game Changers Video Project showcases people “taking action to make sports and physical education safe and respectful for LGBT students” through short 1-3 minute video clips on the home page of their website. The GLSEN Sports Project mission is to “assist K-12 schools in creating and maintaining an athletic and physical education climate that is based on the core principles of respect, safety and equal access for all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression” (GLSEN, 2011). The GLSEN Sports Project can provide high school counselors with the most up-to-date resources and materials as they collaborate with athletic educator in their schools to work on behalf of LGBTQ students.

## **Promoting and Supporting Standards for High School Athletics**

In 2007, the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) commissioned Paula Mirk and the Institute of Global Ethics to do an assessment, “The State of High School Athletics.” As a result, NASBE made recommendations for “policies for adoption by states, districts, and schools that ensure that athletics programs support, rather than undermine, students’ academic achievement” (2007, p. 9). The report “Promoting and Supporting Standards for High School Interscholastic Athletics in an Era of Reform” details three model high school initiatives that “were particularly effective at keeping high school athletics aligned with their school system’s values, mission, and academic aspirations for all students” (Mirk, 2007, p. 9).

The school examples were located in three different parts of the country, representing urban, suburban, and rural populations with varying degrees of racial and cultural diversity. Mirk said they were deliberately chosen with “significantly different demographics in an attempt to represent the wide differences in the readership served by this report” (2007, p. 10). Three different exemplary school-wide approaches were outlined in her report. Northeastern Suburban school participates in a statewide initiative seeking to become national in scope, called “Sports Done Right: A Call to Action on Behalf of Maine’s Student-Athletes” (Mirk, 2007, p. 11). Northwestern Urban participates in a statewide sportsmanship and citizenship program called “Just Play Fair,” promoted by the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association (Mirk, 2007, p. 14). Southwestern Rural is involved in “Pursuing Victory with Honor,” a national initiative promoted by the Josephson Institute of Ethics (Mirk, 2007).

Mirk's (2007) literature review concluded "school leaders are in an optimal position to lead the effort to bring about change, but must be involved in the wider school and community to be successful" (p. 19). Combined with site-based research, the report found several broad themes were mirrored in the literature review, including the need for:

1. Developing a statement or philosophy about sportsmanship and ethical behavior;
2. Effectively communicating the philosophy, standards, and guidelines for ethical behavior;
3. Encouraging ethical behavior as part of coaches' training. (Mirk, 2007, p. 19)

Among the NASBE report's recommendations are that school leaders:

1. Promote across-the-board reflection and communication about sports, so that teachers and coaches are working to support one another's goals.
2. Recommend professional learning communities that focus on the academic goals and include the athletic educators.
3. Recommend a student-based sportsmanship initiative, and check on progress once initiated. (Mirk, 2007, p. 20)

### **Professional Training of School Counselors and Athletic Educators**

Funding for staff training in LGBTQ issues for school staff is a major issue. While staff development materials have been developed by the HLGBS Project for school counselors, and the It Takes a Team! Project for athletics, school staff training in the implementation of the materials is missing. In a recent example, since preparing the NASBE report published in 2007, I heard from a representative of Maine's Sports Done Right initiative that the funding for their statewide staff training was recently cut. The need for school counselors and athletic educators to be adequately trained in LGBTQ youth issues persists.

## **What School Staff Need to Know about LGBTQ Youth Issues and Athletics**

Researchers have identified key issues high school counselors need to understand in order to develop competencies in addressing LGBTQ issues in athletics. These include general LGBTQ issues such as the declassification of homosexuality as a disease, sexual orientation is not a choice, and so-called conversion therapies are not scientifically supported. Models of sexual identity development provide some insight as to what LGBTQ people experience as they embrace a culturally stigmatized identity (Cass, 1979; Savin-Williams, 1990). It is important for school counselors to know about the need to distinguish between sexual orientation, sexual behavior, and sexual identity among adolescents (Savin-Williams, 1990a, 1990b).

While some adolescents may have a clearly defined sexual orientation, many are still experimenting with sexual behavior with a more fluid and forming sexual identity. For instance a bisexual teenager who is sexually responsive to same- and opposite-sex partners might consider themselves heterosexual at one time, but then form a gay or lesbian identity later for social or political reasons. It is important for school counselors to know that while it is possible to know some of the disputed historical and political roots of the terms that reflect sexual identity, much of it still continues to be contested (Ferguson, 1989). The terms Queer and Questioning representing the "Q" used in this study are an attempt to capture both the fluid nature of sexual identity and some youth's expressed desire not to be "boxed in" to one label or another. There is a contradiction even when attempting to be inclusive by using the letters L G B T Q or calling a support group Gay-Straight that creates the very dichotomizing boxes some youth find unhelpful.

In the athletic environment male and female student-athletes experience the presence of sexism and homophobia differently. Student-athletes have unique pressures to conform to traditionally stereotypical gender roles and to present themselves as heterosexual in public. LGBTQ student-athletes have to deal with a stigmatized identity and for some more than one, e.g., race/ethnicity, class, and disability.

### **Risk Factors**

Increased risk for suicide among LGBTQ student-athletes may be due to factors other than sexual orientation. Other factors such as sport related pressures, mental illness or family genetic history may play a greater role. However, the pressure to keep their sexual orientation a secret in order to play sports increases stress levels for LGBTQ student-athletes. Exposure to taunting with anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment by teammates or coaches causes even more stress for a gay or gender non-conforming student-athlete. There is ample evidence that physiological and biochemical changes in the body such as the production of “stress hormones,” e.g. corticosteroids as a reaction to acute stress have been associated with increased risk for a variety of illnesses, e.g. tension headaches, gastrointestinal problems, sleep disturbance, heart disease, cancer, eating disorders, anxiety, depression, cardiovascular problems (Axelrod & Reisine, 1984; Dusek & Benson, 2009; Sternberg, 2001).

### **Protective Factors**

LGBTQ high school students, like all students, have a right to have access to exercise (Johnsgard, 2004) and mind-body exercises (Lewis & Lewis, 1996) that are proven to alleviate stress and symptoms of anxiety and depression. Comprehensive pre-participation examinations can help screen for at-risk athletes (Donahue, 1990; Dymant,

1992; Baum, 2005). Primary prevention programs in schools that include social competence building programs, problem-solving skills training, and basic mental health education have been identified as most effective in preventing suicide (Garland & Zigler, 1993). Researchers have demonstrated that family connectedness, adult caring, and school safety were significantly protective against suicidal ideation and attempts (Eisenburg & Resnick, 2006). Participation in athletics can have a protective effect in that it provides LGBTQ student-athletes with opportunities to build physical fitness, a sense of belonging, social connections and positive contact with adults (Griffin, 1998).

Using data from GLSEN's 2011 *National School Climate Survey*, the 2013 GLSEN Research Brief "The Experiences of LGBT Students in School Athletics" revealed some important facts:

1. Physical Education classes were unsafe environments for many LGBT students. (More than half of LGBT students who took a P.E. class were bullied or harassed during P.E. because of their sexual orientation (52.8%) or gender expression (50.9%).)
2. LGBT students may be underrepresented on extracurricular sports teams. (About a quarter (23.2%) of LGBT students participated in interscholastic sports.)
3. LGBT student athletes reported better academic and mental health outcomes. (LGBT students on interscholastic or intramural sports teams reported higher GPA's than non-athletes (3.2 vs. 3.0) and Team leaders reported additional benefits) (Excerpted from GLSEN, 2013 Research Brief)

While it is obvious that athletics can be beneficial to high school students for the reasons mentioned above, students will not reap these benefits if they are bullied or harassed out of participation.

### **More Research is Needed**

Based on the limited research that has been conducted, there is a huge gap in the existing knowledge about how high school counselors and colleagues in athletics can

work together to address anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment in their schools. It is important to note that it is stressful for school staff to deal with bullying and harassment. A groundbreaking study of “bullying at work, health outcomes, and physiological stress response,” with 437 employees, found that individuals who had been bullied at work had higher concentrations of cortisol in their saliva (measure of psychological stress) and they “reported more symptoms of somatisation, depression, anxiety, and negative affectivity (NA) than did the nonbullied respondents” (Hansen, et al., 2006, p. 63). The bystanders also became symptomatic as well, reporting more symptoms of anxiety after witnessing bullying (Hansen, et al., 2006, p. 63). There have been no studies on the impact on staff of exposure to bullying and harassment in high schools has on staff.

### **Summary**

Counselors who build a resilient practice as they acquire cultural and emotional competencies are the best prepared to work on behalf of LGBTQ students and athletes (Hunter & Hickerson, 2003). The HGLBS Project, a coalition of seven national certifying agencies with the American Psychology Association in the lead (Anderson & Porter, 2004) has developed training materials for school counselors to help them focus their attention on sexual orientation issues to promote health. Curriculum materials have been developed to help high school athletic department staff to take steps to respond to LGBTQ student-athlete’s needs and to protect them (Griffin, et al., 2002; Griffin & Thompson, 2006, Griffin, 2011). What is missing is on-going on-the-job staff training for high school counselors and athletic educators so they can access existing resources and support one another’s efforts.

## **Research Study Plan**

Schools need to create inexpensive, efficient and sustainable in-school professional staff training in LGBTQ youth issues. The staff development effort brought high school counselors and athletics educators together in a collaborative inquiry process in order to build upon the knowledge gained from the development of existing professional training materials for school staff in LGBTQ youth issues e.g., HGLBSPs Training Workshop Toolbox for school counselors to help them focus their attention on sexual orientation and gender issues to promote health (Anderson & Porter, 2004); It Takes a Team! Education Kit materials; GLSEN's Sports Project for athletic department educators to take steps to respond to LGBTQ students' needs and to protect them (Griffin, et al., 2002); and the NASBE report recommendations and guidelines for schools to promote across-the-board reflection and communication about sports and to establish professional learning communities that involve athletic educator (Mirk, 2007). The staff development training included an introduction to Sharevision, a collaborative inquiry, (Landis, 2010a) which is a proven strategy for reciprocal adult learning (Mezirow, 2000; Yorks & Kasl, 2002).

Since the research focus was to help "explain some present circumstance" (Yin, 2009, p. 4) e.g., why most school staff do not intervene on behalf of LGBTQ students and athletes (GLSEN, 2009), case study research was from among other research methods considered (Creswell, 1994; Creswell, 1998; Creswell, 2003; Gilbert, 2001; Greene, Caracelli & Graham, 1989; Jick, 1979; Merriam, 1998; Mertens, 2003; Morse, 1991; Seidman, 1998; Sieber, 1973; Stake, 1995; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Yin, 2012). The case study explored how school counselors and athletic educators experience their role in



implementing the school's anti-bullying policy generated "questions [that] require an 'in-depth' description of some social phenomenon," which met the conditions necessary for case study research (Yin, 2009, p. 4). This study met the three major conditions for case study research as follows:

1. The type of research questions posed, (like experiment and historical forms of research, case studies attempt to answer how and why forms of research questions);
2. The extent of control an investigator has over actual behavioral events, (case study research does not require control of behavioral events like experiment research does);
3. The degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events (case study research focuses on contemporary events, like experiment and survey research does, archival analysis can, and history research does not). (Adapted from Yin, 2009, p. 8).

The study was designed to gain insight into what it is like for school staff to be responsible for implementing the legal mandate to protect LGBTQ students in school. The study at one school explored the participants' experiences of a professional development effort that brought a small group of high school counselors together with their athletic educator colleagues to address and resolve school-related problems with gender-based harassment and abuse of LGBTQ youth. High school counselors and athletic educators were invited to participate in a three session professional development training. They had an opportunity to share with one another how they dealt with anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment, the challenges they faced, identified their aspirations and how to best support one another's efforts in the future.

The study participants were introduced to the Sharevision Model for small group discussions to reflect on their experiences with one another in a supportive way (Thompson & Baldwin, 1989).

## **History of the Sharevision Model**

I am one of originators of the Sharevision Model beginning in 1987 with Richard Baldwin and a group of family therapists at People's Bridge Action, Inc. in consultation with family therapy pioneer, Lynn Hoffman (Hoffman, 2002, pp. 185-200). The Sharevision Model resulted from a project I worked on in graduate school in social work at the University of Connecticut. I wanted to develop a training manual for outreach family therapists. I met with Baldwin and Hoffman to discuss my idea of designing a training manual for beginner family therapists as a way to give something back to People's Bridge Action, Inc. (PBA) where I began my career. PBA was formed in 1971 when two local organizations from sister towns, Athol's "People's Action" and Orange's "The Bridge" were merged into one non-profit community action organization located in Athol, MA.

In 1982, I was hired at PBA as an outreach family therapist and trained by my supervisor Richard Baldwin in an apprenticeship model (new therapists did co-therapy with experienced therapists) under the clinical supervision of Janine Roberts. The idea of developing a training manual came from my personal experience learning the practice of family therapy. I thought it would be beneficial for new therapists to have a manual to help guide them as they developed the skills needed to do outreach family therapy.

In the first meeting I had with Richard Baldwin and my clinical supervisor Lynn Hoffman they agreed with one another that a training manual, per se might not be the best way to accomplish my goal of providing guidance to new outreach family therapists. Instead they suggested collecting stories from experienced therapists about their work with families might be more helpful. As a compromise, we collected stories and put them

in a three-ring binder so it could be read by new therapists and the "training manual" could evolve as new stories were added over time.

The idea was introduced to the family therapy team at PBA for their input, and they agreed to contribute to the project. As a result of that meeting, the team and Lynn Hoffman began to meet regularly to experiment with a different way of conducting weekly clinical case conference meetings. The development of the Sharevision Model stemmed from a desire to meet a practical need to train new family therapists in clinical practice as an alternative to traditional hierarchical supervision models. The model was designed to provide an opportunity for counselors to practice reflecting on their work with one another in a supportive atmosphere.

The practice of Sharevision was born from socially conscientious streams within the field of family including the early influence of Bateson (1972) on Hoffman's (1985) work. Hoffman's thinking meshed together Anderson's (1997) collaborative conversations and Andersen's (1991) reflecting teams, with White's (1997) narrative work. The Sharevision meeting structure was developed by the team based on how to practice Hoffman's (1985) "set of guidelines for how we [family therapists] put the methods we do use into practice" (p. 393). In "Beyond Power and Control" Hoffman suggested guidelines [for family therapists to practice] have the following characteristics:

1. An "observing system" stance that includes the therapist's own context.
2. A collaborative rather than a hierarchical structure.
3. Goals that emphasize setting a context for change, not specifying a change.
4. Ways to guard against too much instrumentality.

5. A “circular” assessment of the problem.
6. A nonpejorative [or] nonjudgmental view. (Hoffman, 1985, p. 393).

The team at PBA practiced and continued to develop what Richard Baldwin eventually labeled "Sharevision" in weekly team meetings (Baldwin & Thompson, 1989). We each contributed ideas and experimented with variations on how to conduct Sharevision meetings. The Sharevision Model evolved as the team practiced operationalizing the theoretical foundations of Hoffman's (1985) guidelines and other self care strategies. By 1989 team members agreed to follow the following format and guidelines so as new members joined the team, they would know how to participate.

### **Sharevision Format and Guidelines**

Sharevision is a structured group meeting process that directs participants to practice equitable and reflective communication. The Sharevision Model formula is as follows:

#### **Format**

1. Moment of silence
2. Check-In
3. Create the agenda together
4. Divide up the time for each agenda item
5. Choose a time-keeper
6. First person makes a presentation.
7. The time she uses leaves the amount of time remaining for others' input. For example, if the presenter has 15 minutes and introduces her situation in 3 minutes, the group has 11 minutes to divide equally between them. The presenter always gets a minute or two of that time to reflect/resonate on what everyone else had to say.

8. If there is time left over, divide up the time for a second go-round about the same situation.
9. Next person with an agenda item presents her question, gets reflections (same as above) until all agenda topics have been presented and everyone in the meeting has shared their ideas, reflections, feelings about each topic, given the agreed upon amount of time.

### **Guidelines**

1. Be consistent about the time (time-keeper gives ample warning, sharing time equally allows everyone a chance to be heard).
2. Talk about yourself, tell a story or describe your own experiences or thoughts.
3. Give examples of what you have experienced, tried and found rather than give advice.
4. Give each person her full time, rather engage in back and forth talk.
5. Focus on listening, not rehearsing, what you are going to say ahead of time.
6. Focus on understanding what others are saying while listening.
7. Be brief and concise with what you have to say; practice saying things simply.
8. The person who puts the topic on the agenda and/or presents the situation is in charge of her section of the meeting, the process and always has the last word.

### **Variations**

1. When there is time left over, feel free to suggest a dialogue (if it is your time).
2. If someone else's question is similar to yours, feel free to suggest that you combine the time and have longer go-rounds. Be sure both people have a chance to have a final word after the group members have each shared their reflections/thoughts (Thompson & Baldwin, 1989). Copyright Sharevision, Inc., Richard Baldwin, Ellen M. Landis, Lisa D. Thompson, 1989.

The Sharevision Model evolved with Lynn Hoffman's assistance for small groups of counselors to practice certain skills that are necessary in clinical work with families

(Landis, Baldwin & Thompson, 2004). The goal was to establish a “parallel process” so that counselors would practice a narrative style of asking questions, listening intently, and speaking succinctly that could transfer to therapist’s direct work helping families discuss highly charged family matters. One team member described Sharevision as "collaborative supervision" and found participation an effective part of "self-care strategies for working with trauma" (Fontes, 1995). Another team member Ellen Landis has successfully introduced Sharevision to groups in other settings including hospitals, governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, university students, staff and faculty. In her research on Sharevision she found that Sharevision helped reduce secondary trauma among clinicians who worked with relational violence (Landis, 2010a). Utilizing the Sharevision process in this collaboration study between school counselors and athletic educators as they implement their school’s anti-bullying policy provided similar benefits.

Effective prevention of sexual orientation and gender identity based bullying requires that “practitioners must also take responsibility for attaining both emotional competency and intellectual competency in their work...” (Hunter & Hickerson, 2003, p. 222). The key to emotional competency is that “practitioners feel comfortable with their own sexuality and sexual orientation and with sexual issues that LGBTQ clients may present” (Cabaj, 1988; Fassinger, 1991 in Hunter & Hickerson, 2003, p. 223).

Yorks & Kasl (2002) argued that “through its structure of peer participation, multiple ways of knowing, and systematic validity procedures, collaborative inquiry provides a highly effective strategy for learning from experience” (2002, p. 1). The Sharevision meeting format helped staff practice collaborative reflection skills which are essential as they build the supportive learning communities that high schools are working

to establish. Participants were also asked to reflect on the process of learning the Sharevision meeting format as they exchanged ideas and built alliances.

Yorks & Kasl explain that:

Collaborative inquiry (CI) provides a systematic structure for learning from experience. Participants organize themselves in small groups to address a compelling question that brings the group together. In order to construct new meaning related to their question, collaborative inquirers engage in cycles of reflection and action, evoke multiple ways of knowing, and practice validity procedure. Typically, they balance exploration of inner experience with action in the world. CI is especially appropriate for pursuing topics that are professionally developmental or socially controversial or that require personal or social healing. (2002, p. 3).

Collaborative inquiry itself has been tested as a research method (Landis, 2010a; Bray, 2002; Heron & Reason, 2001; Heron, 1988). A number of researchers have introduced collaborative inquiry to a group of which they are not a member; in a staff development seminar (Van Stralen, 2002), as a consultant to community organizations (Smith, 2002) and to groups of teachers in a small rural K-12 school (Bray, 2002). Lisa Fontes' (1995) article described how participating in Sharevision, as a collaborative supervision, was a self-care strategy for clinicians dealing with trauma. Ellen Landis' (2010) research demonstrated that participating in weekly Sharevision for twelve weeks reduced secondary traumatic symptoms among clinicians (who treated relational violence in their clinical work). The research study introduced Sharevision to school counselors and athletic educators to use in meetings as a resource to support one another as they implement their school's anti-bullying policy.

### **Significance of the Research**

The potential contribution of this research is its immediate practical application to supporting existing high school anti-LGBTQ bullying and harassment efforts. For school

counselors, the results of the study would make a contribution toward developing evidence based practice related to high school interventions with athletics. It can also contribute toward meeting the need for staff training focused on LGBTQ youth issues e.g. bullying based on gender identity/expression and sexual orientation.

Hunter & Hickerson (2003) argued that professional development to increase counselor emotional comfort is necessary to be most effective in addressing sexuality issues with adolescents. School counselors who participate in supportive collaborative initiatives can help make participating in athletics safer for LGBTQ students. Recently researchers have stressed from a “school improvement perspective,” to “enhance school violence prevention and response” evaluating and improving the quality of counselor and teacher “inter-personal collaboration” is imperative (Woodland & Hutton, 2012; Gajda, 2006; see also Brott, 2006; Gajda & Koliba, 2007; Gajda & Koliba, 2008). The results of this study generated new and innovative ideas for addressing anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment that could benefit schools in many ways.

### **Research Questions**

The Primary Research Question was: How do high school counselors and athletic educators experience the responsibility of dealing with anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment in their schools? The Secondary Research Question was: How do high school counselors and athletic educators experience the Sharevision process of structured collaborative reflection to exchange ideas as they implement their school’s anti-bullying policy?



Several pre- and post-stimulus measures of change (interviews, written responses and evaluation forms) with multiple sources were used, the hypotheses included expecting positive gains in these three related areas:

1. Gains relevant to participants' experience reflecting about gender and sexuality by communicating (listening and talking) in an emotionally supportive atmosphere.
2. Gains relevant to preparedness in advocating for LGBTQ students and athletes.
3. Gains relevant to relationship building in a supportive learning community.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The High School Counselor-Athletic Educator Collaboration research study included determining the feasibility of the study plan conducted at a public regional district high school in rural western Massachusetts, as well as soliciting and then selecting a research site for this qualitative study. After obtaining the necessary approvals from the University of Massachusetts, I was able to proceed with the study and then contacted the persons in administrative authority at the high school to form the study group. Paramount were scheduling issues and identifying necessary incentives to recruit participants. An informational meeting was offered to identify and recruit participants, and then finalize the group.

The study was comprised of four parts: In-depth Individual Interviews; Sharevision Group Seminars; In-depth Exit Interviews, and Follow-up. The entire study was recorded and transcribed and entered into NVivo 10 software program for analysis. Clara E. Hill's (2012) Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) method was modified to analyze the data. For this qualitative case study, readers and auditors read the complete transcripts and reached consensus on the presentation of the significant results “helping to circumvent the biases of any one person” (Stahl, Taylor, & Hill in Hill, 2012, p. 26.)

#### **Outline of the Study**

Part I of this study began with scheduling and then conducting in-depth individual interviews with each study group participant before the first group meeting. Each participant was asked to pose a question for their colleagues to reflect on during group meetings. A list of *Participant-Generated Questions* to be used for group discussions was

prepared from notes taken during the interviews. In Part II of this study the Sharevision collaborative inquiry process was introduced as the format guiding the group process. The first group meeting was comprised of the three school counselors; the second meeting was comprised of the three athletic educators. The subsequent two group meetings were comprised of the entire study group of six participants. In Part III of this study the in-depth Exit Interviews were scheduled and conducted with each study group participant. In Part IV Follow-up was conducted after the study. Study group members invited me to join their on-going "Task Force" meetings over the summer to collaborate on incorporating a LGBTQ safe schools message in the upcoming fall orientations for the 7th grade parents and athletes.

### **Feasibility and Study Plan Approval**

To begin the study I contacted principals and superintendents from five high schools within thirty minutes drive from the University of Massachusetts Amherst campus. These regional district schools were made up of numerous rural towns in Western Massachusetts. I first sent an email to both the principal and superintendent - the administrators and gatekeepers for these schools. The email subject line read: "seeking advice re: anti-bullying research study," explaining that the study was "a professional development seminar designed to promote collaboration between school counselors and athletic educators in high school anti-bullying/harassment initiatives" (see APPENDIX A). I stated that I would conduct the study as part of my doctoral studies at the University of Massachusetts, School of Education Social Justice Education Program. I requested a meeting to discuss the feasibility of the study and how to best approach prospective participants.

I left follow-up voice-mail messages to ask them to look for the email and to contact me directly if they were interested in meeting with me to discuss the study. One principal responded that she was too busy but was supportive of the study and hoped to become more available in the future. Fortunately it turned out that two principals and one superintendent responded affirmatively and agreed to meet.

At the first meeting with each of the two principals, I presented a brief description of the proposed research study. I told them I would initially interview a select group of volunteer school counselors and coaches. Then I would bring the entire group of participants together for three group discussions to compare notes on how they deal with anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment in their high schools. Finally, I would interview each of the participants individually again. A month or so later, I would contact each participant for follow-up to complete the study. Continuing Education Credits would be applied for on behalf of the participants in the project. The principals were supportive of the research and said they could make their staffs available for individual interviews. But both were unsure if they would be able to arrange for their staffs to meet together in a group.

The first principal who was available to meet in early summer was supportive of the study. She said that she believed her school was welcoming to LGBTQ students but admitted that they did not have a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) even though they had budgeted \$2K to pay for an advisor. She said that there was student interest but no adult sponsor since the previous GSA teacher/advisor had retired. When discussing existing professional development opportunities for her staff, she mentioned that the school offered a very interesting faculty study group opportunity over the summer with a

stipend. Faculty could earn \$250 if they formed a study group to look at LGBTQ issues at the school. This would generate faculty interest in taking on the role as advisor for a GSA in this school.

Later that summer, the second principal said that he thought his staff would be receptive to having an opportunity to talk about how they deal with bullying in the high school. However, he said he did not want his counseling or coaching staff contacted directly by me. He asked for a written proposal and offered to “walk it over to the guidance and athletics department” to see if it was something they are interested in doing. He said he should be able to arrange individual interviews, but he was not sure about arranging for them to meet as a group. He said, "I have to think about how much time I want my staff to spend with you, and not with students." I responded that I didn't want to be the only beneficiary of the information the staff was sharing if I met with them individually only. If we met within a group format, they could benefit from sharing experiences and ideas with one another.

I understood these concerns and reactions. I appreciate the pressures schools are under given media scrutiny of public education. The potential for publicity from the local newspapers perhaps had a negative impact on a school's willingness to participate in this study. As it turned out, when I met with one principal an article in the local newspaper revealed that there was a Title IX non-compliance issue at that school that was just about to go public. In the same month, the newspaper also reported that a superintendent at one of the other schools that I had contacted announced his retirement after a major issue of bullying blew up at his school. The most important thing I learned from the informational

interviews with the principals concerning the feasibility of the study is that time and scheduling are major issues for school staff, especially for holding group meetings.

### **Selecting Research Site**

Within days of meeting with the second principal, a superintendent replied to my initial contact email with the statement: "I am a doctoral student. I know the pains. I am happy to assist you. See my info below." It turns out that he was superintendent at one of the schools served by a Quabbin Mediation grant that provides the Training Active Bystanders (TAB) program for students and staff free of charge (see APPENDIX C). This school stood out in the first round of prospects as it had advertised their TAB program on its website. It seemed like a perfect school for a case study, especially because of their proactive programming to address bullying. I contacted him immediately, and he was able to meet within two days. The public high school he represents is a regional district school in a rural low-income community.

### **Description of the School**

The selected school is a regional district high school serving four rural towns in western Massachusetts; the majority of students are from the largest town. According to the school's website:

The public school is comprised of a middle school, grades 7 through 8, and a comprehensive high school, grades 9 through 12. The total enrollment is over 800 students with a faculty of over 80 and an assisting staff of over 45. The middle school is heterogeneously grouped and employs a team concept to meet the needs of early adolescents. In the high school, grade 9 English, Science, World/History/Geography and Grade 12 Global Studies classes are heterogeneously grouped. Other classes are grouped by self-selection to meet the needs of a diverse student population. Special education programs are provided for students with diagnosed learning difficulties. Grades 9 through 12 are block scheduled. Classes are 85 minutes per block. Each course meets for one semester. High school courses have credit value. A course that meets one block per

day per semester is valued at 5 credits—the equivalent of a one year course on a non-block schedule. A course that meets one block every other day per semester is valued at 2.5 credits. Students are scheduled for 40 credits per year, and 20 credits per semester. (Information changed slightly and website not included to ensure participant confidentiality)

At the time of the research study, according to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education profiles link at the school's website, in 2011-2012: The student population was over 90% white and 5% multiracial, almost 50% of students were eligible for reduced and/or free lunch, over 15% special education students with a graduation rate of almost 70%. The school had been earlier identified as an underperforming school (level 3) and had been undergoing New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) reaccreditation. This became the primary focus of the administration.

Early in our conversation, the superintendent confirmed that the school counselors and coaches at his high school never meet together to compare notes on how they address bullying. He was intrigued by the potential benefit for his school. He got the point immediately and was enthusiastic about it. He said that he would like to publicize his school's participation in the study and could see how that alone could benefit the school. I reminded him that the study participants would have to be guaranteed confidentiality so there might be a limit to how much he would be able to publicize. His thinking this way clearly affirms the value he places on this project. Nonetheless it would not be appropriate for him to publicize the project because it would identify participants.

He said that he would call in some favors since he had a good relationship with the staff and assured me that he would get together as many participants as needed for the study. He said, "If I want people to help me, I have to be willing to help others." I

thanked him for his generous offer to have the study conducted at his high school and to help find the participants. He agreed to be interviewed at the end of the project, as long as it was some time after hours.

### **Final Study Plan Approval**

Once I established the feasibility of the study and identified a willing school district, the finalized dissertation study plan was approved by both the dissertation committee and the Internal Review Board (IRB) for Human Subjects Research at the School of Education. At this point, formal invitations to prospective participants could be made. I contacted Smith College School of Social Work and was approved to offer seven (7) continuing education credit (CEUs) for participants (see APPENDIX C). At that time the superintendent emailed the principal asking him to help me find participants to join the group.

### **Formal Contact with Administrators at Selected Site**

The superintendent put me in touch with the newly hired principal at the high school to start inviting staff to participate in the study group. I did continue to follow up with the contacts made with the other schools whose principals expressed some interest and willingness just in case the one that was selected fell through. But I decided that it would take a good deal of effort to overcome scheduling issues to form a study group at even one high school, which proved to be true. Discussions thus far confirmed that bringing school counselors and athletic educators together was "never done," at least not according to the leadership of the schools I had met with so far, so it would seem like a miracle to see that happen at one school. The informational interviews were a helpful



way to gain an initial understanding of what was occurring between guidance and athletic departments in each school.

### **Obstacles Encountered and Overcome**

#### **Initial Contact**

I set up a face-to-face meeting with the principal who was very pleasant and agreed to be interviewed for the study. He seemed unsure how to schedule group meetings with his staff. I asked if the staff already met as a group and wondered if that might be a good time for me to meet with them. He did say that school counselors have weekly meetings on Wednesday for an hour, and they had recently opened it up to others. He didn't seem to think he could tell them to meet with me.

I was concerned that the principal being new to his position felt less confident than the superintendent in being able to get enough participants for the study. It was reassuring that the superintendent knew the study involved group meetings between school counselors and athletic educators. He is the one who said, "It is never done." Since the superintendent didn't hear the complete presentation, might he have agreed to conduct the study at the high school too soon in the initial meeting with him? In response to a longer than usual email reiterating the study plan, the superintendent replied the next day (apparently after speaking to school staff) that the best times for the group to meet are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday at the end of the school day.

I sent an email invitation offering an informational session to explain the study including a participant contact sheet that the principal could forward to his staff (see APPENDIX D, E). He did so but no one showed up for the meeting. I failed to confirm the meeting on that day, and the principal seemed to have forgotten as well. He told me

that he only had heard back from one person. When the principal agreed to meet with me briefly, it seemed he didn't understand what the study was all about. He said, "So... you are a doctoral student and you need help with....?" I was alarmed that he thought the study might be about doing someone a favor; he didn't really recognize the benefits of the study for the school and his staff like the superintendent did. The principal didn't seem to think his staff needed a seminar on how to collaborate with one another to address anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment. Before he could effectively invite his staff to join the study, he had to be on board.

The superintendent assured me that he would be able to get enough participants for the study. On the other hand, since the principal was new to his job, he thought it would be difficult to get staff to meet together for a new project. I was pleased to have the opportunity to explain the study to him. He explained that the school is in the middle of re-accreditation and the holidays are coming up so staff is really busy.

When I outlined the study and its benefits to the school, he said that the school was already in compliance with the anti-bullying law and was doing a great job. I agreed to some extent that was true, but I said I wanted to capture stories at a school that is "getting it right" and to share success stories for the benefit of other schools. To that end, I explained that a key reason that this school was chosen as an ideal case study was because it already had a pro-active Training Active Bystanders Program (TAB) in place. He agreed.

### **Finding Participants**

The principal said he would check with the superintendent to see whom he would suggest to participate. He sent an email to the person in charge of the Wednesday

morning school counselor meetings to see if I could join their next regular meeting. He said it would be good for them to meet me in person to help them decide. I then walked directly to the superintendent's office; fortunately he happened to be there. I asked to speak with him briefly. True to form, he was kind enough to see me right then even though he clearly was very busy.

I asked for help in finding participants. He said the principal should be able to help me with that. When I said the principal wasn't sure how to get the staff motivated to meet with me. The superintendent said emphatically, "we want to do the study here." I said I really appreciated his support, but what I needed help with right now was finding participants for the study. He said the new principal "doesn't realize the power he has," and said he would talk to him that afternoon. I realized the superintendent wanted to help me, but the principal is responsible for managing his staff at the high school.

### **Identifying Incentives for Participants**

It was reassuring that one staff person had already expressed interest. I also realized that no one could do a better job of explaining my research study than I. Recruiting participants by setting up in-person meetings with the people willing to talk was next. The senior Guidance Counselor in charge of Mediation and the TAB Program, said in her email, she would "love to talk about our programs and how we collaborate with the health classes" and said she forwarded her email to the Department Coordinator of Physical Education and Health. I responded with enthusiasm because even if it took reaching out to individual staff one by one, I might be able to piece together a group. Since group meetings of this type are never done at this school, I would need to find out

what are the best ways to motivate busy staff people to participate. To successfully complete this project, I had to learn to adapt as I went through it.

When I called the principal, he apologized, stating that apparently his staff was way too busy to help me out with the research project, even though the superintendent had promised to help me get participants. When our phone conversation was unexpectedly disconnected, I searched for ideas to motivate people to join the study. I remembered how the other high school had offered its staff a \$250 stipend for the professional development study group over the summer. Even though I hadn't heard back yet, I had already applied for a grant to be able to offer stipends to these study participants. While waiting for him to call me back, I spent the time writing him an email that he could forward to his staff (see APPENDIX F). Since I had applied for a grant, and time was of the essence, I decided if I had to pay out of pocket, it was worth it to offer stipends if it would make a difference in recruiting participants to form a group for the study.

After having received that email, by the time he called me back the excitement in his voice was palpable. Since the year-end holiday season was approaching, I said "I bet people could really use the money this time of year." He agreed. It was a dramatic difference. Financial support can make the difference between something important happening and it not happening at all. The stipend offer was the tipping point. By the time he reached me on the phone, he had already talked to one counselor who was going to think about it, and forwarded my email to everyone else he could think of that might be interested. He offered to help in any way he could. He said he would get a group of

people together who might be interested and booked my visit to talk to them in two weeks.

### **Informational Meeting**

Having learned from an earlier mistake, I made a point to contact both the principal and superintendent to confirm that meeting, date, time and place. The principal responded with a request to change the time so that more people would be able to come. I was elated. Remembering to confirm paid off. When I arrived I was welcomed warmly into the Guidance Department office, and a small group of counselors, health and physical education teachers came together to hear about the study. I brought cider and a sour cream coffee cake warm from my oven as an offering. That turned out to be a big hit. They were very appreciative. I told them that one of the benefits of the study was that I would provide snacks and refreshments to each of the interviews and group meetings.

I was relieved when the Department Coordinator of Physical Education and Health said they were on board with participating in the study. She said they just needed a better sense of it to see who would be the best people to participate. By the end she suggested that they would recruit some of the coaches to be part of the study since she said, "they have not received nearly the amount of professional development training that other staff have and could benefit from participation in the study."

The group of staff present really seemed to understand that the study was about finding ways to gather together the physical education, health education, athletics educators with the school counselors to compare notes on how they deal with bullying. Although not all of those who attended that informational meeting would end up as participants, they agreed to the proposed plan of three 90 minute group seminars after I

explained that if the group meetings were shortened that would mean giving each participant less time to share. The Department Coordinator of Physical Education and Health said, “They are getting paid, aren’t they, so they’ll do it.” She said that she was aware that Wednesdays are the day set-aside weekly for coaches to not schedule practices, so she proposed group meetings that met from 2:15-3:45 in the afternoon might work. I reminded her that I would bring snacks, and she joked, “We can tell them they can have steak and cheese subs!” We laughed.

### **Study Group Finalized**

At the end of the information meeting the senior Guidance Counselor who was Coordinator of the school's Mediation and TAB program eagerly signed up to be the first person interviewed individually for the study. The Department Coordinator for Physical Education and Health said that she was also the Curriculum Coordinator and offered to be the point person to identify and recruit the remaining participants for the study. She agreed to be interviewed herself but ended up going on maternity leave after her first interview. Nonetheless before she left she helped to get three counselors and three coaches to agree to participate. That was very exciting and affirming. It took numerous emails back and forth between us to identify all of the participants to form the study group. I finally accepted the fact that it would take longer than I had hoped since the entire staff was swamped with finishing up school in preparation for the winter holiday break. I resolved not to rush them.

Fortunately, when school was back in session after their holiday break, two more participants were identified. I met them after the first interview I did with the senior Guidance Counselor. She walked me to the gymnasium and fitness center to introduce me

to two coaches who then agreed to be interviewed the following week. I also approached one of the other Guidance Counselors who was at the informational meeting to ask if she would be willing to participate. She said that she wasn't sure how much she would have to offer, but agreed to be a participant after I said that her perspective would be valuable to the coaches in the group meetings. Another coach was identified, as was the Gay Straight Alliance Advisor, both of whom teach at the middle school but work with high school students in their after school activities. The study group was formed and the study began.

### **Participant Demographics**

#### **School Counselors**

**School Counselor 1** is a white, heterosexual married woman. Her mother was a teacher and her father was a professor. She has a Master's Degree, is a Guidance Counselor and a Certified School Counselor. She plays no sport, has been a paid full time staff person at the high school more than 6 years.

**School Counselor 2** is a white, heterosexual woman. Her mother is a social worker and her father is a teacher. She has a Master's Degree, is a Guidance Counselor, Certified as a School Counselor. She plays no sport, has been a paid full time staff person at the high school for more than 3 years.

**School Counselor 3** is a white, gay man. His mother is a retired librarian and his father is a librarian. He has a Master's degree, is a Certified Teacher. He is a middle school social studies teacher and 7 through 12th grade Gay, Straight Alliance Club Advisor. He plays no sport, has been a paid full-time staff person for more than 3 years.

#### **Athletic Educators**

**Athletic Educator 1** is a white, heterosexual woman. She identified as raised middle class. She has a Master's degree and is a Certified Teacher., Physical Education and Health Teacher. She is also a Strength & Conditioning Coach. She is a Coach and her sports are track and field and volleyball. She has been a paid full-time staff person for more than 6 years.

**Athletic Educator 2** is a white, heterosexual man. His mother was a cafeteria manager and his father is retired. He has a Bachelor's Degree and is currently enrolled in a

Master's Program. He is a Physical Education Teacher. He is a Coach and Assistant Coach. His sports are golf, soccer, track and field and volleyball. He has been a paid full-time staff person for more than 3 years.

**Athletic Educator 3** is a white, heterosexual married woman. Her mother is deceased and her father is retired Tool and Die Maker and Pilot Instructor. She is a Special Education Teacher's Aid in the high school. She has no certificate/license. She is currently enrolled in an undergraduate Bachelor's degree program. She is a Coach and her sport is field hockey. She has been a paid full time staff person for more than 3 years.

The following participant did one interview at the beginning, but left on leave before the groups began meeting. She was instrumental in getting the participant study group formed and had some valuable input (because of her role and knowledge of the school) in the beginning of the study so her interview was kept in the mix.

**Athletic Educator 4** is a white, heterosexual woman. Her mother is a home care person, and her father is a retired Paper Mill worker. She has a Master's degree and is a Certified Teacher. She is the Department Coordinator of Physical Education and Health. Her sports are skiing, soccer, lots of recreational activities, e.g., snowshoeing, kayaking, etc. She has been a paid full-time staff person for more than 3 years.

### **Part I: In-depth Individual Interviews**

It took a couple of months to get the initial individual interviews completed. First, each participant was emailed the official invitation with the contact form and demographics sheet to complete. Once these forms were received, (obtaining them needed some prompting on my part) an interview was scheduled. I sent a reminder with the Interview Protocol and Participant Consent Form attached to the email. Doing this would give them the interview questions a few days in advance of the interview so they could give some thought to how they might want to answer the questions. I confirmed with each participant by email on the morning of the interview for each individual interview. When I arrived, we identified a location in the building for the interview (as private as possible – the library, a teacher's classroom, a fitness center office space, a counselor's office, the principal's conference room). I offered a picnic of refreshments and set up the recording equipment and conducted a sound check. We reviewed the



consent form and obtained signatures and had those witnessed by a nearby colleague of theirs.

### **Recording Equipment**

For equipment, a hand held Olympus Digital Voice Recorder (WS-210S) with an Energizer AAA battery and a Radio Shack Omni directional Boundary Business Microphone (33-3041) with an Energizer 357/303 electronic battery (2300441) from Radio Shack was used. I used a stereo head-set to check the microphone sound prior to leaving for the school and did a sound check just before recording each of the individual interviews and group meetings. I brought spare batteries and instructions for both the recorder and microphone each time I made a recording just in case they were needed.

Immediately upon arriving home I uploaded the interview recordings and checked to be sure the sound quality was good. I then re-labeled the files with participant initials, date and type of recording: Pre-Seminar Interviews, Group Seminar Meetings, and Post-Seminar Interviews. I then saved the recordings in a number of places, including Drop Box for online access. On my desktop and laptop computers, I installed the Martel Transcribing Software Express Scribe with foot pedal and stereo headset and transferred a copy of the labeled digital audio recordings to be transcribed into the Express Scribe software program. I transcribed the recordings and kept track of how much time it took to transcribe each of them. As I completed each transcript, I emailed it to volunteer “readers” who read them, looked for emerging themes. They then emailed me notes on each of the interviews. One reader met with me to review the transcripts one by one, in person. I digitally audio recorded some of those meetings.

## **Participant-Generated Questions**

In preparation for the group meeting seminars, I referred to hand-written notes I took in the initial in-depth individual interviews with each of the participants. As a result I was able to prepare a list of *Participant-Generated Questions* that they had said they wanted their colleagues to reflect upon during the group meetings (see APPENDIX G).

### **Part II: Sharevision Group Seminars**

#### **School Counselor Sharevision Group**

The first whole group meeting was scheduled after all of the individual interviews were completed. In preparation for the first group meeting I found myself in a quandary about how much I should spend presenting and how much of the time I should spend facilitating the exploration of their questions, ideas and feelings. I did bring the informational materials I had gathered to share with them but decided not to use them. I decided to focus on the point of the study – to support collaboration between the participants. Also, one potential outcome of the study is for them to recognize that they have the tools to facilitate their own professional development. I decided to focus the (content) on the seven *Participant-Generated Questions* they proposed during the individual interviews and to use the Sharevision group meeting format (process) to show them a new tool to pose questions and share ideas in a supportive atmosphere (see APPENDIX G).

As it turned out not all of the Physical Education, Health and Coaching Educators showed up. One coach had contacted me earlier concerned that she had to accompany an athlete to an event and would miss this meeting but still wanted to participate. I had responded to her that we could do a make-up group, the concept of which I just made

up on the spot because I didn't want to lose her as a participant. When I arrived I heard that another coach was out sick and the Department Coordinator of Physical Education and Health was also out sick, and one coach simply forgot about the meeting. I decided that we could make the most of the meeting with the three who did come, all of whom served in counseling or advising capacities.

It turned out to be an eventful and dynamic group session. Before I started the recorder at the beginning there was some sharing off the record from the women staff reporting feeling bullied sometimes. They attributed that to the recent leadership changes with mostly men being hired into the administration. I invited them to fold this conversation into the beginning of the group meeting. It was an abbreviated meeting, but as it turned out we were able to cover everything planned because it was a smaller group. At the end I handed out index cards and asked them to hand write a few sentences in response to the question: "How did you experience the Sharevision group meeting format?" They reported being surprised that they enjoyed the process as much as they did. We then did a closing discussion to reflect on how the meeting was for them, what they liked and also wished was different. They seemed to really miss the opportunity to involve the athletic educator in their conversation. Their interest was piqued. I let them know that I would be in touch with the missing group members to schedule a make-up group and then would be able to schedule a whole group meeting.

### **Athletic Educators Sharevision Group**

As it turned out the Department Coordinator of Physical Education and Health went on leave to have her baby. She offered to be interviewed again, but I told her that her help with the formation of the group was invaluable and that I hoped she enjoyed her

well-deserved time off caring for her newborn baby. Fortunately, I was able to schedule a make-up group for the remaining three coaches. This make-up group went really well. They took to the Sharevision process like it was a game. They even used their stopwatches to keep time. It was remarkable to introduce the group meeting format to them and to see how efficient they were in talking about school bullying issues using it. At the end I handed out index cards and asked them to write a few sentences in response to the question: “How did you experience the Sharevision group meeting format?” In closing, they reflected on how the meeting went for them, what they liked and also wished was different. They enjoyed the Sharevision format for a number of reasons including having to stop talking in order to listen and to be assured that they would have their chance to talk. They were surprised at how much they had in common with one another, and they were excited about how it would be to discuss the issues with school counselors.

Finally, one of the members of this group who had originally posed the question, “What do other schools do?” reiterated that query when looking over the list of *Participant-Generated Questions*. I decided this time to bring in the information that I had left out in the earlier group. I waited until after the group was over and offered to hand out the informational materials from three different high school initiatives (*Sports Done Right; Just Play Fair; Pursuing Victory with Honor*) suggested by the Mirk Institute of Global Ethics (2007) report for the National Association of State Boards of Education. I also included a copy of the *It Takes a Team! Education Kit* and DVD for the Athletic Department with a print out of the GLSEN’s *Changing the Game* Sports Project initiative I thought they should be aware of.

All the materials were presented as a give-away so they could review at their leisure to see if any of it appealed to them to look into further for use at their high school. I am aware that some people prefer to search for information online on their own, but for others it is easier to have the materials that are readily available online printed out and organized for them to review. Participants seemed to be appreciative of the information. I noted that I would now have to be sure to get this information to the other small group members so they would have access to the same information.

### **First School Counselor/Athletic Educator Sharevision Group**

The next step was to schedule the final two group meetings. As it turned out, it was much easier to schedule the meetings where three staff could attend. Through multiple emails, phone calls and texts, finding a time for all six staff was proving to be elusive. I finally used the "Doodle" online application that helps groups identify meeting times. I created one for the first whole group meeting, and even though it would be a month later, we found a date and time that everyone could attend. It did require one of the teachers to ask for a substitute for his last period. I reiterated that both the superintendent and the principal had stated that they supported the study so it seemed worth asking if it would be possible to get a substitute for the group to meet on occasion. He asked and permission was indeed granted.

The first whole group meeting was dynamic and very promising. All of the participants had practiced the Sharevision group process in their first smaller group meeting, so they were ready to go without much instruction this time around. I made sure they had the Sharevision instructions handy and the variations at their fingertips. They

selected which ones of the seven *Participant-Generated Questions* they wanted to discuss and a volunteer timekeeper was identified (with his stop-watch).

One participant reminded us to follow the steps and start with a moment of silence and check in which we did. They started self-facilitating the discussion with my input as only one among many in each go around. They became so efficient that they were even able to do second go-rounds on a couple of the questions that they had more to say about. On the paper provided, I asked them to write in a few sentences in a response to the question: “How did you experience the Sharevision group meeting format?” After writing they shared how much they enjoyed using the sharevision format for the group discussions. At the end, I handed out the informational packet the members of the first small group so they would have the same information that I had given to the make-up group.

#### **Final School Counselor/Athletic Educator Sharevision Group**

Before the final group meeting I thought about Question number five on the list of Participant Generated Questions. It was: “What do other schools do? Do differently? Proactive type programming [is] more important than reactive ones [to address anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment]?” The group did not address that question. Some thought having a presenter come in would be the way to deal with it. To promote peer teaching and a study group format, I sent an email before the last meeting and asked if they would be interested in being assigned homework for the final meeting and they all agreed (see APPENDIX H). Since they had taken well to facilitating the group, instead of me presenting it to them, or having it be set aside to look at on their own time, I thought they would enjoy presenting the information to one another. They all

agreed it was a good idea. I divided the informational packet I had given them into six parts and assigned one part to each staff. The day before our last meeting, I sent a reminder out to them as to what they had agreed to review and present. I also said that I would present for them if they didn't have time to prepare. They all came having done their homework and were appreciative of the reminder.

Finding the day, date and time for the last group meeting proved to be arduous. They seem to have great difficulty making time to support one another. I organized several "Doodle" meeting schedules until one finally worked. We found a time for the final group meeting. Two teachers had to arrange a substitute for one period to make the meeting happen. Fortunately, that was approved again.

The final meeting was a great success. We met in the Superintendent's Conference Room that signified to them an elevated importance for this group meeting at the high school. The symbolic gesture was duly noted. The room had technologies that could be used to do conference calls. They felt special and enjoyed the accommodations. While the final group meeting was a success, I could tell the staff was frustrated because they hadn't accomplished anything from all the discussions and were worried the ideas they were discussing would lose momentum.

To that end, they discussed ways they could continue to support one another in the coming academic year. They discussed the idea of forming a school climate task force or GSA Advisory Group in order to establish an identity for this group. They discussed the possibility of involving others from the school administration to possibly parents, students and others. On the paper provided I asked them to write a few sentences in a response to the question: "How did you experience the Sharevision group meeting

format?” After writing, they reported that they had all found the Sharevision meeting format useful and supportive, and they pretty much knew how to do it on their own. I suggested someone could volunteer to play the part I did, to be the one to help organize the meeting day, time and place. I handed out evaluation forms for them to complete (a requirement for the Continuing Education credits).

### **Part III: Exit Interviews**

I met with each member of my dissertation committee to get ideas about how to approach the second round of individual (post-group meeting) interviews. A lot of good ideas were generated, so I decided to focus on making sure I could answer the two research questions (see APPENDIX I). To that end, during the exit interviews, I asked the participants to reflect on their experiences participating in this study, their thoughts on what kinds of collaborations they think are feasible, and how their school can make peer support sustainable. I asked them to reflect on whether they found the Sharevision group meeting format useful and how they might use it on their own. I asked them to reflect on what their personal vision for the school was. I asked what they might get out of regular group meetings and what kind of external support they needed to do so. Each individual had both a positive reaction to the individual interviews and group experiences and expressed a desire to keep meeting as a group but were concerned that if they did not, the ideas they were generating might lose steam and not materialize.

### **Part IV: Follow-up**

After the final individual interviews, I received a typed letter from the senior Guidance Counselor thanking me for doing the study at the school and letting me know that the group had continued to meet without me and had a plan to meet over the summer



(see APPENDIX J). They invited me to come to their next meeting, which I did. Two School Counselors and two Athletic Educators attended. They had assigned tasks to one another, and I observed that at their self-facilitated meeting they used the Sharevision meeting format: a quiet moment, check-in, dividing up time and go-rounds on topics they each presented. They decided to work together on a number of fronts spearheaded by different members of the group:

1. A request to the administration asking for all staff training on LGBTQ issues and a plan for a protocol for handling these issues
2. A plan to build allies to form a community, parent, student Advisory Group
3. A plan to work together on developing a plan for the 7th grade orientation with all parents to introduce S.O.S. (GSA) and the school's diversity and anti-bullying policies
4. A plan to work together on a plan for parent orientation for all athletes at the beginning of the upcoming school year to address fan behavior

The group scheduled to meet again in the summer to bring ideas and work on a plan for the upcoming year orientations for incoming 7th graders, athletes, and their parents. They did meet again in August in a work session to brainstorm ideas for the upcoming orientations and collaborated in preparation for implementing their plans in the fall. As far as I know, they worked together at both the guidance and the athletic orientations.

After that someone emailed me to postpone the next group meeting until after the NEASC (reaccreditation) process was completed in the fall. A new GSA Advisor was hired because the one who had been in the study group was offered a job closer to his home; they included her in that email so she can be involved in their ongoing collaborations in the future. They will keep me informed.

## Data Analysis

### **Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR)**

Clara E. Hill's (2012) Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) approach was modified in order to analyze the data in this case study. CQR has four major steps:

(a) collecting data in an open-ended way; (b) sorting data into broad categories, called *domains*; (c) creating summaries; called *core ideas*; of what each participant has said in each domain; and (d) looking for themes or patterns across participants' responses within each domain, called *cross-analysis*. Thus, CQR is an inductive process that allows the results to emerge from the data and uses words and stories rather than numbers as the raw data. In addition, attention is paid to the context within which the words are spoken in assigning domains and creating core ideas, and the research team constantly returns to the raw data to check for the trustworthiness of the analysis. Furthermore, CQR relies extensively on the use of judges who collaborate to consensually analyze the data, and auditors examine the work of the research team to provide feedback about each step of the data analysis. (Hill, 2012, pp. 25-26)

### **Reader-Judge Group**

In accordance with a modified Consensual Qualitative Research CQR (Hill, 2012) methodology, I formed a research team to examine the data and to enrich the case study presentation using multiple perspectives. Two colleagues of mine volunteered their time and expertise to carefully read all of the transcripts as *reader-judges*. One of the benefits of including multiple readers is that it helps reduce the bias inherent in having only one researcher's perspective analyze and present the data. After the reader-judges read the complete transcripts, we used the Sharevision meeting format during the research group discussion to identify and agree on the broad categories the data suggested. In CQR they are called *domains*. Using Sharevision helped to reduce the potential pitfalls inherent in the “power differences and hierarchical considerations” routinely experienced among members of CQR readers’ groups (Vivino, Thompson, & Hill in Hill, 2012, p. 50).

## NVivo Qualitative Software

The NVivo10 software was then used to code the transcripts according to the categories or *domains* the research team agreed to in our first meeting. Each transcript produced in the study was carefully coded accordingly into what NVivo labels *nodes*. Summaries from each of these *nodes* were created to capture the *core ideas* of what each study participant said in each domain. The reader-judges reviewed the summaries and we conducted a *cross-analysis* looking for themes or patterns across participants' responses within each *domain*. To check for the trustworthiness of the analysis, we kept referring to the transcripts.

The reader-judges met once again to decide on the best description for the major *themes* their cross-analysis of the data suggested. Two things happened. The reader-judges easily and quickly agreed on the major themes that had emerged from *cross-analysis* of the data for each research question. The *description* for those themes, however, took a number of iterations before the whole research group came to 100% consensus on them.

## Reader-Auditors

In this modified CQR data analysis, two *reader-auditors* also read all of the transcripts to ensure that the study followed the major features of CQR: maintained ethical guidelines, was conducted in a trustworthy manner and had attended to the cultural context of participants' experience as much as possible (Hill, 2012).

After careful review of his notes one auditor accepted the findings of the readers group. Another auditor met with the reader-judges group in a Sharevision meeting to discuss some of her observations and suggestions. The reader-judges reached consensus on the

major themes within each of the two research questions. Both reader-auditors approved the results of the reader-judges group as accurately describing the major issues contained in the data.

### **Reader (Judge) Biographies**

**Reader-Judge 1** is a white heterosexual 88 year-old female social worker, family therapist, author and historian of family therapy. She obtained her bachelor's degree in English Literature from Radcliff College, and her Master's degree in Social Work from Adelphi University. She was honored recently by a documentary film about her life and contribution to the development of the field of family therapy. She is considered by some as the “god-mother” of family therapy mentoring hundreds of practitioners along the way. Though retired, she still works part-time as an editor and consultant and lives with her new partner and his daughter in an old mill town in western Massachusetts.

**Reader-Judge 2** is a white heterosexual 74 year-old male artist, family therapist and organizational consultant. He obtained his bachelor's degree in English from Dartmouth College, and his Master's Degree in Fine Arts from Indiana University. He has alternated between careers in the arts and education. He returned to his earlier career in the arts after retiring from his team leadership role for a local child and family counseling center in 1998. He has been making paintings for the past twelve years as well as doing private coaching and consultation. He lives with his partner, a retired elementary school teacher/educator, now part-time librarian. He has been serving on the school committee and library art committee in a rural town in western Massachusetts.

### **Reader (Auditor) Biographies**

**Reader-Auditor 1** is a white heterosexual 56 year-old male physician's assistant, former secondary math and science teacher and single parent. He played football and baseball and studied martial arts in high school. He obtained his bachelor's degree in Zoology from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. After working as an Emergency Medical Technician, he obtained his Master's degree in Math and Science Education from Harvard. He spent ten years teaching secondary math and science in secondary schools, public, private, urban and rural. He coached basketball in physical education. He then obtained a Master's Degree in Physician Assistant Studies at University of New England. He lives with his daughter in a small town outside of Portland, Maine.

**Reader-Auditor 2** is a white bisexual 54 year-old woman artist-activist and organizational consultant. She has a bachelor's degree in Behavioral Health from Lesley University. She is an artist, singer and performer in a local choir. She has worked in both schools and human service agencies, including a child guidance clinic. She specializes in organizing retreats bringing performing arts-based activities to team building and leadership development activities for youth and adults. She lives next door to her sister and her wife in their two-family home in a small town in western Massachusetts.

**Author-Primary Researcher** is a white married lesbian 53 year-old family therapist, mediator, social worker, educator with a performing arts background. I have over 30 years experience and specialize in teaching relational responsibility. I have a bachelor's degree in Education and Women's Studies and a Graduate Certificate in Feminist Studies from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. I have a Master's degree in Social Work Administration and Child and Family Studies from the University of Connecticut.

### Summary

The School Counselor-Athletic Educators Collaboration case study was successfully completed at a regional district high school in rural western Massachusetts.

The school is an exemplary case as it is one of a number of schools that fall within the catchment area of Quabbin Mediation's Training Active Bystander (TAB) Training program to address anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment. The TAB curriculum is grant funded to train students and school staff free of charge. The administration of the high school was supportive of the study to bring School Counselors and Athletic Educators to meet together to collaborate in the implementation of their Anti-Bullying policy.

The case study consisted of in-depth individual interviews, group discussions using the Sharevision meeting format, and follow-up with participants after the study was completed. Field notes were taken during interviews with the high school Principal and Quabbin Mediation's Executive Director and Training Director conducted to provide additional context for the data collected. Contact was made with Massachusetts Senator Stanley Rosenberg to obtain an accurate history regarding the Massachusetts Commission on LGBT Youth and the Massachusetts Safe Schools initiative which began in 1992.

A modified Consensual Qualitative Research method was used to analyze the data which included the use of a readers group of judges and auditors to ensure the reliability

and trustworthiness of the data collection, analysis and results. The following chapter is a description of the results produced by the judge's group and approved by the auditors.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESULTS

#### Case Study Design

The High School Counselor-Athletic Educator Collaboration Project is an illustrative case study that provides an in depth look into how high school counselors and athletic educators experience the responsibility of implementing a school's anti-bullying policy. The study also examined the participants' responses to using the Sharevision group meeting format to discuss their efforts to support LGBTQ students.

The results of the project suggest plausible and credible reasons for the inconsistent support of LGBTQ students. The small size of the study provided the opportunity to obtain greater detailed information than would be possible with a larger survey study. Multiple sources of data were collected including interviews with the high school principal and leaders of the community organization participating in this study that developed the Training Active Bystanders (TAB) Program the school currently uses. Contact was made with Massachusetts State Senator Stanley Rosenberg to obtain accurate historical information concerning the Massachusetts Commission on LGBT Youth and Safe Schools initiative.

This study primarily examined two research questions. The Primary Research Question is: How do high school counselors and athletic educators experience the responsibility of dealing with anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment in their school? The Secondary Research Question is: How do high school counselors and athletic educators experience the Sharevision process of structured collaborative

reflection to exchange and generate ideas as they implement their school's anti-bullying policy?

In qualitative research an abundance of data is collected and exploring it can lead researchers in many different directions. I limited my reporting of the results to these questions and included themes that were agreed upon by 100% of the reviewers involved. The following are the results of the School Counselor-Athletic Educator Collaboration study. The two research questions are presented followed by the key issues study group participants identified. A representative mix of statements that reflect what the study participants were already experiencing at the high school are presented with statements that reflect their aspirations for improvements including some of their really good ideas.

**Research Question 1: How do high school counselors and athletic educators experience the responsibility of dealing with anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment in their school?**

1. **Promoting Safety** including subthemes: Language: Defining, identifying and enacting behavior helpful for LGBTQ students; Visibility: Enlisting allies to support GSA visibility; Safe spaces: Classrooms, hallways, locker-rooms, gender-neutral bathrooms and private changing rooms, buses, playing fields.
2. **Cultivating Relational Responsibility** as an antidote to passive and aggressive behavior including subtheme: Making high school athletics safe for LGBTQ students to come out?
3. **Developing Communal Mind** including subthemes: Supporting colleagues: Benefits from opportunities to debrief; Collaboration that supports LGBTQ students; LGBTQ empathy training for all staff: Training staff to be better responders.
4. **Encouraging Student Activism** LGBTQ advocacy through student-led initiatives.
5. **Building Community Fairness** Parents and family connections and community building for LGBTQ inclusive school culture.



**Research Question 2: How do high school counselors and athletic educators experience the Sharevision process of structured collaborative reflection to exchange ideas as they implement their school's anti-bullying policy?**

1. Restorative and Reciprocal Relationship Building;
2. Time Equitable Reflection;
3. Egalitarian (non-hierarchical) Transformative Exchange;
4. Communal Inventiveness – Catalyst for Change.

**Research Question 1**

**How do high school counselors and athletic educators experience the responsibility of dealing with anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment in their school?**

**Theme 1: Promoting Safety**

**Language: Defining and enacting behavior helpful to LGBTQ students**

The Training Active Bystanders (TAB) program the school uses proposes an alternative language. The School Counselor who oversees the TAB program describes it:

... [Instead of bullying] they talk about harm-doing. They talk about the roles people play [Harm-doer, Target, Passive and Active Bystander]. And, then they ask them to come up with ideas of how to stop it. You know it's not a proscription, it's getting ideas from the kids themselves - it's a lot stronger.

In her individual interview one Athletic Educator said:

The kinds of things that are happening in the school...? Well, what I find interesting is the misinterpretation of the bullying. I find that to be a big challenge. We do talk about that and it does come up often. We could be talking about physical activity then all of a sudden what is a conflict? What is bullying? That's one of the difficulties I think that students run into. And how we have that miscommunication... We talk about healthy relationships. We talk about White Ribbon campaign [Organized by men working to end men's violence against women] and TAB Training, training active bystanders... one of the biggest challenges right now is the availability or disadvantage of communicating. It's so easy to send a text or to email rather than have a conversation face-to-face so things can get misinterpreted. Are they bullying you? Is this a conflict between you and one person? So that's discussed frequently.

Yes, they'll say, "Oh, stop bullying me." Then I'll correct them and say let's not use that. You need to be sensitive to others because that really does happen in real life. So it's kind of a tag line almost. And they do... they feel threatened by texts. That's the big thing now. I hear it more from my 8th graders. They love to tell stories, the middle-schoolers... I'll get more lengthy stories about how they're up until 3 o'clock in the morning because they're going back and forth. I think my seniors... when they look dead tired and they don't necessarily tell me all the drama. Because some of it is not appropriate for school and it's pretty serious stuff. I'm not sure how they're interpreting the bullying.

We did just receive results from a survey that we put out. We worked in collaboration with the Community Coalition for Teens and every other year they put out a survey to their 8th, 10th and 12th graders. We recently incorporated bullying questions, and I'd be more than happy to share those results with you. One of the challenges was that boys are less likely to tell if someone is being bullied. But for the most part, [this school] specifically and the County region... is that most people do feel safe in their schools. This was great. It's an anonymous survey. So we were pleased with the results but there's always room for improvement.

In her role, one School Counselor offered a compassionate way to conceptualize bullying behavior in her way of describing how to promote safety:

Well, pretty much how to intervene with the understanding that these are kids, they're learning, they make *social mistakes*. We don't want to make them close down when we talk with them about things. So, ways of intervening, ways of making it safe for kids to get help about it so they don't feel like they're just... "Oh, you're suspended." [Instead] ...learning, real learning.

In the first group meeting with other School Counselors, in discussing Participant Generated Question # 4: "What can we do for the bullies? Prevention focused," that same School Counselor discussed how she sometimes felt bullied in her role. She described how the hierarchical structure within schools can promote a culture of bullying rather than preventing it. She reframed bullying and prevention issues that were both interesting, insightful and that others found validating:

I just really feel like the term [bullying] that's so interesting... then I feel like we, the schools can so easily be a culture of bullying. The hierarchy that's within schools, it just... I think we present a model for bullying as just the way we're structured and the power system that is here so... Anyway, I'm coming right from

a phone call two minutes before we came in here saying [to me] “we will do this, and you will have this kind of outcome from the kids with the college applications process...” And that was like... (ugh).

I’m not good at being bullied, but it still happens. And I feel like... what can we do for bullies when we bully? I think all of us to a certain extent, even as our role as teachers and as cramming information to kids for testing purposes and things like that. I feel like it’s hard for us to step back and say “how can we prevent bullying when that’s our culture” and maybe not everyone feels that way but...

And then when I think about what can we do for the bullies it feels like such an important topic though because you’re never with people if you were feeling bullied. You’re not. You can’t support them well. You can’t be honest with them. It’s just...they’re in such a worse position of leadership if they lead by bullying. Kids, adults, everyone, so getting that message I think is part of prevention. [The answer is] showing how, when you work with people collaboratively you’re in a better, stronger position.

And the other part I think of prevention focus is... what can we do for the bullies and what can we do to bully-proof targets? I love stuff that I’ve learned about that approach. How do you bully-proof people? So, we’ve got the active bystander... I think both active in our school and growing, and the [Administrative] support has been activated because of unpleasant events in our society [referring to the recent youth suicides and the enactment of the state anti-bullying law] but it's still support. But then how do you work with the other people in the picture, the people who are doing the bullying?

And I...I don’t know, for me “bullies” is a tough term ‘cause I think we all go in and out of that role. But for people who are bullying and especially who bully on an ongoing, regular basis. And then target focus. My interest, not so much, although I think that is primarily my job a lot of times is helping the targets. But how do you bully-proof people? How do you get people to be strong and also socially responsive and to such an extent to where they’re harder to bully?

I really appreciate hearing all the different perspectives, especially from people who have training in counseling. (laughs) So, I think that [the bullying behavior] does make sense to a certain extent [and] is developmentally appropriate... this kind of *social experiment*... that kids are kind of engaging in... Like figuring out what happens if I do this... and also of course reacting to the environment around them.

That raises another question for me, where’s the line between appropriate and developmentally appropriate? You know [the] “kids will be kids” kind of behavior and the life threatening bullying kind of behavior... and I wonder if part

of that does have to do with building... somebody mentioned earlier... I forget... how it was termed... but the word that's coming to my mind now is *resilience*. So building some kind of inner confidence... inner... that kids can take that kind of, not like the really terrible stuff, whatever the line is, but like the more kind of developmentally appropriate stuff that some kids really like just can't handle.

And, maybe there needs to be a piece of working with that aspect, like the kids [who feel that] everything that's being said to them is bullying... (laughs) versus the kids who just joke around and it's nothing and they're not trying to hurt anybody's feelings. But then, you know, that the (sighs)... I mean the system has a lot of hierarchies... that we've talked about and pressure that is on everybody and how could the kids not feel that. I mean when parents are stressed out, I am just thinking about this, like when parents are stressed out the kids notice. I mean, of course they notice when the teachers are stressed out, of course they notice when there's an atmosphere in the school of like... (whispering) "Oh my g-d, there is so much to do" and like...

### **Visibility: Enlisting allies to support Gay Straight Alliance (GSA)**

The Gay Straight Alliance in this school is called a nick-name for Diversity Club.

The Gay Straight Alliance Advisor (A) explained to the Interviewer (I) that issues of anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment were related to other issues like race-based bullying:

A: [In] my second year [as a teacher], I started with a... there were some incidents that happened, around race-based bullying, which I know is not exactly a part of your study, but it's... related.

...So there was some race-based bullying that went on that I became aware of towards the end of my first year. And so in my second year another teacher in the building and I created this middle school Multi-cultural Club where we decided that we were going to do... confront this bullying through education around different cultures because in this school kids are not exposed to many other cultures. And they don't really have an understanding of how there are all these different types of people in the world. And that they live in many different ways and okay, we might see that as weird, but there are many different ways of being in the world; the importance of accepting differences, that kind of thing.

...The reason for that and the reason that I felt strongly that I needed to apply for it was that the club was completely inactive. The name of our Gay Straight Alliance, it's not called the Gay Straight Alliance, it's called [name of club does not include any reference to GSA] and nobody knows what that stands for. I can tell you the history behind that and I probably will through the course of

this group. Nobody knew what it stood for. And they did nothing in the school, there was no... they were just doing some middle school dances.

I: Do students use “That’s so gay” or gender, or homophobic comments, or sexist comments to address a person that’s different? Some people have reported that. That if a person is different, one way to put them down would be to say that they are gay. Not that they really think that they’re gay.

A: I definitely notice kids getting singled out because they’re different... Okay. Oh, you know there is one thing. Here’s an incident that I can definitely point to that I did know about. Last year there was a 7th grade student who was coming to the Gay Straight Alliance meetings and he, as far as I know, identified as straight and was actually coming to the meetings because his older sister was coming to the meetings. Kids started calling him gay. Like asking him if he was gay. And saying, “You’re gay” and really, I mean really targeting him. His response was “No, I’m not gay. I just go. I support gay people.” He had a good response. It was reported to the administration. It was through the paperwork, the bullying paperwork that we have. And the students were disciplined for bullying in the way that students would be disciplined for bullying.

But I will say that a response that I got from the administration, one of the... from the acting principal at the time last year, was... it was brought up to me in the context of, “well, are you sure you want to have the club identified as a Gay Straight Alliance? Because this kid was being harassed for being a part of the club because it was a Gay Straight Alliance... So the problem, that he was saying, was with the Gay Straight Alliance itself. Whereas I would counter, that’s why we need a Gay Straight Alliance is to educate kids and stop that kind of bullying. I mean that was just... it was dealt with... as bullying... but...

I think when I explained that students feel very strongly that they need this Gay Straight Alliance and this is coming from the students, including this kid who’s still showing up to the meetings, who is still a really active member of the club, in spite of it, so it’s not like, he’s saying, “Oh I shouldn’t be a part of the club because people are giving me a hard time.” It’s “No, I want to be there.” “I want to be a part of that” and “I get support from it, regardless of who I am.” I get support from that. So I think that... I think that’s what helped him see otherwise.

This is an example of how the new GSA Advisor initially responded to a student asking if he was gay:

A: I got a note from a kid saying “Mr. \_\_\_\_, are you gay?” And I felt targeted at this point, so I turned it in to the administration and said this is an inappropriate note that was left on my desk.

I: Was it signed by the student?

A: As it turned out, yes, I knew who it was and I had no idea that she had two moms and she felt like it was an okay question to ask. Of course it is an okay question. But I was at the point of already feeling so... so this student whose real experience of her life was just being shut down because there was this atmosphere of intolerance that I was feeling. I think that as I got professional status here, so I have tenure and become the advisor of the Gay Straight Alliance, in addition to that, I think as I've settled in I've become more comfortable.

Yet he said school staff routinely talks about their heterosexual orientation:

A: People mention "Oh, I'm getting married." People have had kids at their weddings. People have brought in husbands to cook food for cookouts with the kids. People just tell stories about their personal lives, like, "Oh, I went out somewhere with my girlfriend over the weekend" and "there's a weird story that happened to me" and the focus is not about the girlfriend. People just do it. (laughs) Or, I'm pregnant. That's as personal fact about your body that people share at school, right? (laughs) It happens all the time.

He emphasized the importance of LGBTQ students having positive and successful role models, so his coming out as a gay faculty member with his partner at events that other faculty brings their partners to be another way he personally helped increase positive LGBTQ visibility:

...as Gay, my GSA students know, they've actually met my partner, some of them have... at different events because he's helped out with some events. So that's something that I feel like... that's great to be able to have that connection, to feel just like any other faculty member or any other staff member, my family can be a part of the school community...

This is what happens all the time here. People bring in husbands who will bar-b-que for the kids, or whatever.

### **Safe Spaces: The classroom**

One Athletic Educator said:

Well, in my classroom, especially because it's health, we create a safe classroom so I say that right up front. I just said it again. We started a new semester so there are new kids, students, in my classes and I make that very clear, the respect issue. In my classrooms, we might talk about a topic and feel free to share stories. I share stories all the time. I'm very big into making it personal because I feel that they can connect with that and I feel that if I tell my stories maybe you'll tell your stories. And if you ever

disrespect, I will ask you to leave immediately, no questions asked. I feel like that really creates a safe environment. There are individuals who talk about various stories, including gay and lesbian. . .

Another Athletic Educator said:

(Sigh) Well, I think it happens, I mean (clearing her throat) I guess there are people who go around calling people “gay” and using it in, everyday slang. Or calling someone “a fag” or whatever, a “dyke” and things like that. And, sometimes I don’t think my students really mean for it to be hateful. But, they just have to understand that it’s like... I do an activity called “words around us” and my students write all these... like anything that they have heard that is derogatory or negative towards someone who is gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual, questioning, and they put them down. And you read it, it’s like, in class, my teacher was there, no one said anything. So, I make it a point and I’ve always been like this, just be like “you can’t use that word – you have to understand, you have to find something else to say, because you don’t really know what it means...” And, I think, I mean, if it gets to the point where someone’s referring or calling someone that in my class a lot, then we, report it. Go through the proper protocol. I’ve never actually really had to do that. Because usually my kids know in my classes to not use that kind of word. And all my athletic teams as well.

The GSA Advisor and middle school teacher said:

What I’ve noticed is that, (pause) kids... (pause) it seems like homophobia is just kind of part of the lingo at school here. I and other, there are other staff members as well, who work against this. When kids say something like “That’s so gay,” we confront that. And say... What I say is it’s not appropriate to use that word in a negative way because when you use that word in a negative way, you’re talking about an entire group of people; you are talking about gay people. So to say that and mean it as stupid means gay people are stupid and that’s NOT okay. We don’t talk about any group of people in that way. So that’s something that I will say.

And I generally have to explain that a lot in the 7th grade and then I get the same kids in 8th grade because we loop with the kids for two years. So I don’t have to explain as much in 8th grade. Instead I say, “Did I just hear you using that word in a negative way? I know I didn’t just hear that.” So I’ll confront in that way. I’ll usually give warnings for that kind of thing. If it becomes a real issue, maybe a detention, something like that. That’s the kind of disciplinary way that I handle it.

## Safe Spaces: The locker-room

The following is an excerpt with the Interviewer (I) and the Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) Advisor (A), where he said, like other School Counselors, students had reported to him that locker rooms are a primary site for anti LGBTQ bullying behavior:

- A: However, I have heard from my kids that the most anti-gay bullying that they see or name calling, or most anti-gay name calling that they perceive is happening in the locker rooms.
- I: In sports, or...?
- A: Not necessarily, because if they are not involved in sports but in gym class. In this school...
- I: Okay so it's not just if they play sports...?
- A: In this school, kids have to take gym every single year. And that's not true of any other subjects except for math, English and gym. So they have to take it every year, which means they're always in gym class. And so that... so they always have that [locker room] experience.
- I: Middle school through high school?
- A: Middle school through high school.
- I: And, so when you say the locker room, that's from being in gym class, and that's where they do... [phone call interruption] So that was the other thing I was curious about is where the locker room seems like the place people are describing as the most incidences of...
- A: That's what I've heard from my kids. Yeah.
- I: So they are confirming that.
- A: Hmn...
- I: Okay, so say that's the case, what is the adult response... in the locker room?
- A: Again, according to my kids because that's all I have...
- I: Right, from your perspective. Right.
- A: Nothing. They're not aware. Or they're not doing anything about it if they... The



kids think they do notice, but they're not doing anything about it.

I: Okay. So that's what they report. Is that they say this is happening but nobody in the locker room is doing anything about it?

A: Right. They know... there's one teacher who's a part of the [study] group actually who will say something about it every time. And they know. They know which teachers will and which teachers won't.

I: Got it. So the GSA members know who will and who won't...?

A: Right. Yeah.

I: And also the students who are saying things . . . . ?

A: They must, other kids must know as well, right? If these kids know, every kid must know... which teacher is going to say, "Don't do that" and which teacher is going to just turn a blind eye and be like "whatever... kids." Yeah.

One Athletic Educator described a powerful story about his own experience being bullied in the locker room in his youth and how the actions of an Active Bystander on one occasion stopped years of harassment. In hindsight he realized that if the bullying had not been stopped by an Active Bystander at that time the abuse could have progressed to something even worse. (See APPENDIX K) for full story.

He confirmed there is a need to promote LGBTQ safety in the locker rooms in this school. The experience of being bullied and the positive results of having Active Bystanders on his behalf in his formative years clearly made a powerful impression on him. He describes his recent actions as an Active Bystander in the locker room that day:

I: That if they're athletic and they're gay, especially we're talking about males, to be out in their high school sports is...?

AE: Is... like even today, literally in the last class period, so it was half an hour ago, I heard kids talking in the locker room, "what happened to Nick?" and (the other kid) said, "oh, I heard he went to another school, I heard he's gay now." And the other kid yells out, "I shared a water bottle with him, that's gross." Half an hour ago. And of course, I yelled out "guys I don't want to hear it don't talk like that..." And I asked him, "why are you talking like that?" and he said,

“What do you mean?” I said, “You shared a water bottle with him, what’s the matter? You didn’t know at the time, why do you care now?” (response) “Well, I didn’t know.” I said, “What does it matter? It’s still Nick.” So I mean it still happens to this day, it still [does]... twenty minutes ago.

I: If they were saying that...and somebody else in the locker room was gay, but not out, that’s what they’re hearing...?

AE: That’s what they’re hearing. Then that’s the last they’re going to do, is come out. And then they’re going to feel like they’re the outsider because they’ll say, “well I can’t share a water bottle with him anymore” now they’re going to be protective... I mean it’s... it’s a snowball effect.

When the six members of the study group: School Counselors (SC 1-3) and Athletic Educators (AE 1-3) met for the first time, they chose to discuss Participant Generated Question number 6: "How can we make our school culture safer and accepting? Is it safe for somebody on football team to come out? Have we had openly gay boys in football team? What would that be like?" They had a very compelling exchange using the Sharevision structured group reflection process which illustrates how essential the format is to ensure that every member of the group has an equal opportunity to contribute. (See APPENDIX L) for full transcript of that important group discussion.

One Athletic Educator discussed the changes in his efforts to promote LGBTQ safety in male locker rooms as a result of being in this study in the exit interview:

AE: Not that I was ignorant of it before but especially when hearing School Counselors say “Well, you know the locker room is a hot bed.” It’s like, “I know,” and now I’m sort of... (It wasn’t like I had turned a blind eye to it) but now... I’m much more cognizant of what’s going on, especially in terms of the middle-school students. And you know how many times we’ve said, “We have got to catch it early and start when they are young.”

So I’m more so... walking around in the locker room and having the other teacher also be in there. I even made a comment to one of the baseball coaches... I said to make sure you are in there when the guys are because they can get a little harsh sometimes.

So, you know I'm sort of just taking more of a pro-active approach than I have been. Because I think I was more reactive before but now just hearing – after you hear it a couple of times you sort of [think] “I've got to get on this or this is just going to go to something bigger.” So... and I'm trying to take more of a leadership role so I'm trying to be the one...

### **Transgender Safe Spaces: Gender-neutral bathrooms and private changing rooms**

The GSA Advisor said that a major issue for Transgender students is the need for safe changing room and bathroom spaces and he suggested really good ideas:

I think having a separate, gender-neutral, single room, changing area would be important because I'm not sure how else you could do that for gym class, sports and things. That would be something that would be helpful. That needs a key, or some sort of... so there is safety in place, locks or whatever, but I think it's important if it locks that somebody has to have the key in case the kid locks themselves in there or something.

In the discussion with the Interviewer (I) about how to make the school safer for Transgender staff, the GSA Advisor (A) said:

A: One thing that just gets on my nerves (laughs) that would be great if they just changed it... the faculty and staff bathrooms. They're single stall bathrooms, it's a one room kind of thing and yet they're labeled men and women. Why? (laughs) They are exactly the same. In fact when the women's room is full I've definitely seen women use the men's bathroom because it's the same. (laughs) That seems kind of small but. . . .

I: What should... what would the label say?

A: Restroom.

I: There you go.

A: Yeah.

I: Isn't it amazing how simple a solution that solution is?

A: Uh, huh. Yeah.

I: But if... or adult... because I think they are saying....

A: Yeah, adult. Adult Restroom. Yeah, because it's men and women and boys and girls, right?

I: Right.

A: So adult restroom or faculty/staff restroom, or something like that... I think would be totally fine. I don't see any reason why those have to be separated by gender.

I: So in the... all the adult... all the men's and women's rooms that say men and women...are the same?

A: Yeah, they're exactly the same.

I: Okay, so there are not urinals....?

A: Urinals... no, there's no difference. They're exactly the same.

I: Okay.

A: Yeah. So...

I: So, that's a huge thing to happen that would be so easy to do.

A: Yeah, it would be so easy. Yeah. Right.

I: Now what about the kids? Like what...is the point of separating them?

A: Right. So I mean what happened in the past... As far as the bathrooms with more stalls there's the issue of safety. And the kids are part of a larger culture... Where they expect bathrooms to be gender separated. Where I went to college... I went to college at \_\_\_ there were so many gender neutral bathrooms on the campus. The dorms...were co-ed and the bathrooms were hallways and basically people walked from one hall to another through the bathroom. And the bathrooms were never labeled and everybody used the same bathroom. There was no... I was totally fine with that. Yeah most people adjusted and that's a small population and it's not like kids in school. So I think there's the issue of ... and also the heterosexist idea of we don't like kids making out in the bathrooms so...

I: Oh.

A: If you have boys and girls using the same bathroom, they're going to make out, you know, have sex or whatever, in the bathroom. Because that never happens in boys rooms...or... (laughs) I hope it doesn't. You know what I'm saying. I mean, for the record, I really hope it doesn't. Just for the record I really hope it doesn't.

I: (Laughing) Right.

A: But, it can happen. (laughs) Um, yeah.

## Theme 2: Cultivating Relational Responsibility

In the individual interviews and group meetings participants discussed how to cultivate relational responsibility among staff and students. One Athletic Educator said in the first Sharevision group meeting she attended:

While you were talking I just thought about an assignment I did with my 9<sup>th</sup> grade health classes a couple of weeks ago. We were talking about relationships and we talked about dating relationships, relationships with your families, and then we were going on to friendships. We did this worksheet called, “What would you do for a friend?” and it has all these different scenarios on there like “What would you do if your friend forgot his lunch money?”

All these different things... It’s very interesting to see the responses from the kids because a lot of them are just mean... plain out mean. Like one of the questions is “What would you do if your friend told you that she was a lesbian?” And some people wrote, “I wouldn’t be her friend anymore.” And that’s disturbing to me to see that in a high school, to write that stuff down. Or... “What would you do if your friend passed out at a party and you were there?” What would you do? One responded, “I’d throw him in the pool and laugh at him.” I’m like, “Are these serious answers?” They’re like, “Yeah, that’s what I would do.” I’m like, okay, we need to reevaluate these things.

So, you can [see] just from even doing that, it’s amazing to me the things that people think are acceptable. Obviously, if it’s coming from home and that’s what they’re learning, or it’s their friends and that’s who they hang out with. I think more education, more interactive showing them what could happen. I’m not sure exactly what to do about it.

One School Counselor described the challenge of responding to student behavior that teaches students what is appropriate at the same time encourages targeted students to stand up for themselves:

But I think there are issues that we can’t tune out and the issues about . . . you know, kids can be joking with each other in ways and you don’t want to jump in the middle of every single joke but I think you can present that, “okay there are certain kinds of jokes that just really aren’t acceptable and we’re going to teach you this. It’s just like a work environment, that’s just not acceptable.” I think any kind of sexism, homophobic comments, comments about people’s intellectual abilities are things you can’t... we just can’t be jokey about.”

It's good training too, for everyone. And [to be] not tolerant about [certain things and] that's the deal. So [we need] that kind of training and then some real concrete information about how to successfully intervene. How to intervene without making the target of any kind of teasing feel uncomfortable. Like when a grown-up rushes in, being a hero, can often make the target feel more marginalized... but to create a culture that just doesn't allow that. Yes, so that it's more about school culture than about feeling that this person can't stick up for themselves. So that's the norm, do you know what I mean? So it's consistent and the norm.

Other Athletic Educators described how experiences in their youth either being harassed or witnessing bullying influenced their commitment to step in as Active Bystanders as an adult. In the in-depth initial interview, the Athletic Educator who spearheaded the formation of the study group gave two poignant stories from her formative years that led her to become an Active Bystander as adult. In the first one, she described how she stood up to gender-based harassment playing soccer in her youth:

I was very talented as a soccer player, not that I ever went Division 1 but I played on a lot of boys teams. Back in my day, there wasn't girls' and boys' teams so a lot of the boys, I guess would harass me a little bit to try to intimidate me to not work as hard on the field. So I guess I do have a little bit of experience in that respect when you talk about sexism. I remember even being very young, never being anti-gay or sexist in that sense but I guess I felt it a little bit. Not to the point where it affected my life and I felt I shouldn't play soccer or should back down to some of those boys.

Their goal was sheer intimidation and because they did say some really nasty remarks. He would call me a bitch (laughing) and I was young, gosh I was 10. I think his goal, my interpretation of his goal, was to intimidate me to give up the ball. I remember specifically, every time I would get the ball and break away and try to score, that's when he would say stuff like that. I remember sticking up for myself, "I'm not a bitch!" (laughs)

You know, teaching health now and understanding the dynamics of personalities, I don't think that particular boy would have pursued those comments if it didn't work in the past. So, I guess, my assumption is that he used those comments because it had worked and he probably would have said them to other young ladies as well.

In the second example, that same Athletic Educator described a formative experience being an Active Bystander on behalf of people with disabilities when she was in high school and how that led to her assuming a leadership role in her school:

We had a program in school at my high school where there are severely mentally and physically disabled individuals and at many times, my mom did respite so we were exposed to those individuals my whole life and we never looked at them as being less than us or as disabled. We just looked at them as people. They were part of our family.

So I was hyper-sensitive, especially when I transferred, I went to a private school and my sophomore year of high school, I transferred into a public school, so I've never experienced that before where you go down the hallway and the Downs person. . . . It's not like today where they have a person with them at all times, they would just go to the bathroom on their own, and they weren't accompanied by a caretaker. So there were students who would make comments that would make me completely irate and I would say something back. Later on I actually volunteered for their group and it actually opened up a window for a lot of other students and they had a program after that so it was really interesting. I thought it was great. So I have experience with that.

Another Athletic Educator (AE) discussed his experience as a bystander in response to the Interviewer's (I) questions:

I: The issue of bystander... I know there is a bystander program... did you ever have the experience of being a bystander? And, not really knowing what to say, or...?

AE: No. I... my parents raised me extremely Catholic, very by the book. This is right, this is wrong. And I always knew if something was wrong, whether it put me in danger or not, or was uncomfortable or not, you need to say it. In terms of regular bullying, I've broken up four fights in the last two months at the school. Ask any teacher who has broken up a fight in the last year of school. Nobody else has. So, I'm the teacher who has no problem stepping in places. And it's been like that ever since I can imagine.

And the last fight I got involved in... broke-up or whatever... and [when I talked to my] father, him saying [to me] "Well, what [would have] happened if they had a knife or something?" I said, "I don't know – I would have gotten stabbed." He goes, "Well, you didn't think about that?" [It] didn't cross my mind. So, for me, being a bystander is a no-brainer. If there is something wrong – you say something, if there's something wrong – you do something. Makes sense to me. Other people, it's not that that simple. So for me, I feel like being an [active]

bystander is important. I try to tell other kids, “you know, if you’re there, break up the fight.” If you see somebody being harassed, say something. It takes thirty seconds out of your day that could help somebody else.

**LGBTQ Inclusion: Make high school athletics safe for LGBTQ students to come out and making sure the GSA is accessible for student-athlete's to participate.**

In response to the question, “Your school has a Gay, Straight Alliance, are there athletes in that?” One Athletic Educator said:

No. None that I can think of now that you mention that. Most of the students that I'm aware of are, are not involved in sports and I am curious of why. I really, really am. Maybe it is [the] intimidation factor... especially for the boys. I think it's obvious in most places that I have worked, corporate, non-profit, now education, it seems to be in knowing that relationships on the health front is that women are typically known to be more supportive of each other. And I think that sense, for the gay, lesbian, and transgender, they find their support networks. Where boys... they still... don't giggle as much, but there's still that intimidation or lack of education surrounding...

For example, we have two boys, one now he's in 9th grade and one who is in 12th grade who plays Field Hockey. Our 9th grader would love to play at the college level but there are no college level sports that we can find that has field hockey for boys. And as far as I know they are not [gay]. They both have girlfriends but it doesn't mean anything. I have definitely seen the transition between you can be feminine and work up a sweat and [be] muscular and still not be presumed to be a lesbian.

In the first study group meeting, the GSA Advisor said:

I really appreciate this opportunity to get to talk with everybody and I think especially today getting to talk with athletic staff as well. I think that my own past experience is that I was not very athletic when I was a kid, certainly not in high school. And I felt there was like this opposition between the kids who weren't athletic and the kids who were athletic in school.

And I think that when I started being the advisor to SOS, I was thinking there aren't many opportunities for kids who aren't very athletic to do something after school here. So this [the GSA] is something that those kids can do, not saying that athletes couldn't be a part of it, but just offering that option as well for kids who might not be involved in a sport. This is something you can be involved in.



And I guess I wasn't really thinking about the needs of the kids who are involved in athletics as a part of that. It wasn't something that I was really attuned to, so this is starting to open my mind and think I'm thinking about that more and I appreciate the opportunity to grow on that. This is great and I want to do this more. Yeah.

### **Theme 3: Developing Communal Mind**

#### **Supporting Staff: Staff benefits from opportunities to debrief**

The primary focus of the staff training for the school's anti-bullying policy is to ensure that staff knows they are expected to report it. They are not trained on how to respond. The following dialogue between the Interviewer (I) and an Athletic Educator (AE) is an illustration:

- I: What is the protocol for responding... you know, when you see something, are you supposed to respond a certain way?
- AE: Well after they passed the anti-bullying law, we do have separate forms we have to fill out now that say, you know, what happened? What's the incident? Who was the aggressor? Who was the target? And, I have a close relationship with the Vice Principal of the middle school and so as soon as it came out, I go all the time, I bug him all the time, like, "hey, how many bullying reports do you have?" And he'll show me a stack of papers. So the teachers know, and they've talked about it at the beginning of the year. [They] said, you know, if there is a bullying... we have this new form, it's on your teacher drive (computer) you can get it whenever you need it or you see it. Fill it out, and send it to the office. Even if it's something minute, they'd rather have, you know, a lot of incidents that they can deal with, that are documented, than one big incident that they have to figure it out. So there are forms that we fill out now. Give them to the Vice Principal, and he does what he needs to do with them. So...
- I: And, so... is there a certain protocol, or certain expectations of you, the person who witnesses? If you are there, is something expected of you... as to how to respond when it is happening?"
- AE: Yeah. They... I don't think they expect you to intervene and be like "hey, what's going on here, separate..." I mean, they've never said that. I mean I think that one would assume... if a teacher has morals and a good character that they would step in and say, "hey, cut it out!" rather than just fill out the paperwork and send it on its way... I'd like to think that most teachers in this school have enough, you know, sound morals, to step in and say "hey, cut it out!" So...

I: But it's not an expectation...?

AE: It's not a written...

I: So, they're not saying, these are the things that we want you to do or say...?

AE: Right. They don't have any steps lined up, nothing.

The following exchange between the Interviewer (I) and that same Athletic Educator (AE), also explains the benefits of an opportunity to debrief:

I: What kind of support do you get personally for dealing with bullying or harassment? Do you have someone that checks in on you... if you have to deal with bullying or harassment? Or do you have somebody to talk to about the effect it has on you?

AE: Nothing. Really, if anything, if there is an incident, I will go check up and see what happened with it. I don't [have anyone to talk to or check in with me]. If there is an incident and I fill out a form, I don't get any feedback on what actually happened with the situation. Usually I'm nosy enough that I'll want to go find out what happened to make sure that it got resolved. So, yeah, we have a school resource officer, who is in the building. A lot of times, he'll take over, and do his investigation or whatever. I'm friends with him. A lot of times I'll sit down with him and say, "What's new, what's going on?" And, I'll get some of the scoop. But, there's no formal process for reporting what actually happens, or checking in to see how the teacher handled the situation, or anything like that.

And yet later in the interview he responded to the question:

I: Given that you are the person that intervenes on those fights, did you feel supported by folks?

AE: Yes.

I: So how did you...?

AE: Because when I first... I was nervous breaking up a fight... and I pulled the kid off of him, and afterwards I said, "oh, I could probably get sued for putting my hands on a student..." I didn't think about it at the time. I thought, "I wonder what would happen...?" So I went to the Principal and I asked, "I... is it alright that I did that?" He said, "Picture perfect. I couldn't ask for anything better." So I asked... "No liability on me?" And he said, "Absolutely not. If you think somebody is in danger, you've got to do what you've got to do." He said, "So what you did is perfect." To get

that reassurance from the top saying, “what you did is what you are supposed to do,” was great.

In the first group meeting of School Counselors, they reported the need for school staff to have support and to build safety into their relationships with administrators, colleagues and students to be better able to promote a LGBTQ positive school climate.

In the first group meeting with School Counselors, the GSA Advisor said:

I... I've been feeling pretty stressed today. I yelled at a student and sent him to the office and that's not something that happens very often in my class. So...I think I'm still feeling that. (Sigh) But, it feels good to be here and have yummy food and nice professional dialogue with colleagues. I appreciate that opportunity.

A School Counselor said:

I went from my initial feeling... like what can we do for the bullies? I feel like the term [bully]... that's so interesting when I... When I feel like we, the schools can so easily be a culture of bullying. The hierarchy that's within schools, it just, I think we present a model for bullying as the way we are structured and the power system that is here so... Anyway, I'm just coming right from a phone call two minutes ago before we came in here [after hearing someone] saying, "We will do this and you will have this kind of outcome from the kids with the college application process..." And that was like, (ugh!), I'm not good at being bullied but it still happens. And I feel like, “What can we do for the bullies when we bully?” I think all of us to a certain extent, even as our role as teachers and as cramming information to kids for testing purposes and things like that. I feel like it's hard for us to step back and say, "How can we prevent bullying when that's our culture?"

Another School Counselor said:

(Asks to clarify the question they are responding to) Well, so how do you (pause) help the bullies and how do you empower the targets, right? [That's] the dilemma. Well, what I like about the [training active] bystander program is that we don't call them bullies because that's kind of like, "you're a bully," but [instead] call them harm-doers, and they really emphasize that at any point in time, it's fluid. You could be a harm doer one minute; you could be the target the next. On any given day anybody can be one or the other.

That being said, I honestly would like to know what you do to help people who are habitual harm-doers. Who are sort of drunk on that power and I think it comes from... they tried that approach, it got an effect, so it's a behavior change... they're in a habit of doing that. Because once you... I always give kids the example: that if a parent is hitting their kid... their kid is crying or doing something... [A] little kid, and one parent will hit the kid and the kid will stop crying. And the [second] good parent will go over and distract the kid or do something to get this child to stop crying by distracting them or whatever without hitting them. And the [first] bad parent, I don't [actually] say "good" parent, but that parent learns that if they go and distract the kid it stops the kid from crying. The other parent learns that. Well I just... I don't know how you would break that behavior chain, change that behavior. That's really what it's about.

The GSA Advisor said later in the discussion:

I think that yeah, I mean the system has a lot of hierarchies that we've talked about and pressure and that is on everybody and how could the kids not feel that. I mean when parents are stressed out, I am just thinking about this, like when parents are stressed out the kids notice. I mean of course they notice when the teachers are stressed out, of course they notice when there's an atmosphere in the school of like... (whispering) "Oh my g-d, there is so much to do" and like...

You know. You know... Yes I care about you as a human being, but I'm... the administration is calling you a data point that I have to somehow raise. (laughs, others laugh, chuckle) It's.... yeah; I mean of course they feel that. That makes a lot of sense. I hadn't... you know, I... thinking about...

I was just thinking about this kid that I yelled at today. Of course, he was being really obnoxious, I mean I'm not going to deny that but I think that the way I handled it was certainly partially caused by the stress I've been feeling around all this stuff getting ready for MCAS and also stuff that's going on for me at home... so of course That... it's not like I go into the classroom and I'm like this robot who cheerfully presents the lesson everyday in the same way to every class regardless of everything else that's happening, you know, around me. Like, yeah.

So, maybe a part of the bullying prevention has to be around supporting staff, (others cheer: Whoo-hoo! Wow!) supporting teachers and not just like, teachers as rule enforcers around bullying. But actually if teachers have more... can build... if teachers can come into the classroom with more of an emotional capacity to handle what's going on because there's adequate support for teachers, then that could help the issue, too. (voices in support and agreement)

Another School Counselor said:

That... that's quotable. That's a quote. [To Researcher] Be sure to write that down!

### **Collaboration that supports LGBTQ students**

The GSA Advisor (A) describes to the Interviewer (I) the ways he and the School Counselors already collaborate on behalf of LGBTQ students at the school:

A: Yes. The Guidance Counselors have been in touch with me whenever there's a new student coming in who has expressed interest in the Gay Straight Alliance. I've had this happen at least three times this year. Where they'll bring a student down and I'll meet with them during my planning period. I'll meet with the student and the guidance counselor, talk about the cool things we do with the Gay Straight Alliance. Ask if they have any questions and just introduce them to it. That's been pretty exciting. When this Trans student was here, the student who is fully out as Trans because I've had another student come out to me as Trans but is not out in the building or anything. But when the student who is out as Trans and was here, I was coordinating with his Guidance Counselor almost on... sometimes on a daily basis because she was coming around to my classroom every day for support.

I: For support?

A: Right. For support, exactly, he'd want to talk with me about what was going on in his life or just do his math homework or whatever. So I was always in touch with the guidance counselor as a way of partially covering my ass.

I: Sure. Absolutely.

A: (Laughs) So, [he would say to the Guidance Counselor] here's something that B told me about whatever was going on and [I] thought you should know. And also sometimes I would meet with her and bring him in as well so that three of us would meet about how things were going for him.

When he decided to "come out..." when he decided, yeah, "I would really like my teachers to call me B (male name)." "I really do want them to use male pronouns," we had the three of us meet together to figure out how to implement that. So I worked very closely with Guidance on that. I was really excited that we could do that and then when this student was, had this major mental health issue that kind of ended up with him not coming back to school, I was working with the Guidance Department.

When he came to see me, I noticed something was wrong and immediately brought him down to Guidance. And actually, Guidance wasn't available so we went to the nurse, for a while. But there was full collaboration there and I told him, I said, "I want to keep your Guidance Counselor in the loop because I want you to know that there is more than one adult in this building who is here for you and she is definitely here for you." So that it wasn't just me.

I: Yes.

A: And that was important.

I: That was really important for you that you knew to do that even if it was also to cover your ass. It's also because it's important that nobody should have to do this by themselves.

A: I've also had guidance counselors give me information. If they go to their Guidance Counselor's conference or something like that, they'll pass along information to me. I'll also pass on information to them if I get some helpful things, from a conference. So we do share information about that stuff. Yeah.

### **LGBTQ empathy training for all staff: Training staff to be better responders**

The School Counselors and Athletic Staff would like more substantive in-service training on LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment issues so they feel better prepared to respond when it occurs in their school. One Athletic Educator described how she went with a colleague to a seminar on bullying and found it helpful:

...Have an expert come in... I went to this great workshop with [Barbara Coloroso], she wrote that book *Bully, the Bullied and the Bystander* [2003]. And, that was a phenomenal workshop. I learned so much that day that I just didn't even think of. We were like, "we should get her to come to our school." And, you know, that's something that would be... I mean... great. Just someone like that... because sometimes you just... there's strategies or things that you can say that you don't even think of. And you think you are doing everything right.

Other school counselors agreed that staff and faculty training about how to handle LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment issues is needed. At the same time, there are resources within the school community that can be tapped into for staff development.

The GSA Advisor said:

You know it's interesting; a lot of that stuff is kind of already here. When kids come into the school that are new, if they come out to their guidance counselor, then the guidance counselor brings them down to meet me and they get really excited. And they're like, "Oh, cool, I can come here after school." So some of that's here. We have the rainbow flag hanging up in the library. So on the surface, it looks like (chuckles) that stuff is there but it needs to be throughout the whole school and I think that faculty training is a really important part of that. And having faculty well trained so that they've got their safe zone stickers up and they can actually be a safe zone. I think that that is really important, having the safe zone stickers everywhere in the school as long as the training has gone along with that that's actually making it real. Having training every year...

I wish that I had... I really do wish that I had training around how to talk with middle school students about LGBT issues. They just come up in the classroom. I'm not even talking, I'm not a health teacher but it comes up. I just wish I had some training in how to do that.

And I would really like some training to teach those [LGBTQ students] how to advocate for themselves. I have no training on how to do that. I think that that would be really helpful.

I've been trained on this kind of stuff, (explaining a drawing of a ginger bread doughboy shaped figure)... just this little gender bread person. This is kind of the standard Trans 101 thing so I did this with my kids in the Gay Straight Alliance. We talked about it and had a really good conversation about it and they really got it. But I don't this kind of thing is happening in the larger health classes or something like that or anything like that. This is... yeah.

Yeah, I think that this could be a good tool, it could be a stretch to get into health classes, I don't know. I don't know what the health teachers are like. I don't know. So if they're talking about Transphobia, sexism, whatever... this is a great tool for that. I think it could also be helpful for the teachers in general. If they're saying that there's a lack of training around Trans issues, this is a really useful tool.

[It took] Like ten minutes. I mean really. Discussion takes longer than that. Maybe ten to twenty minutes; a half hour with discussion maybe. That's how long I spent with my Gay Straight Alliance and they got it. It's very simple to understand and we talked about [Transgender issues]... I mean people can relate to this.

One Athletic Educator explained his desire for more training to deal with anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment. Currently enrolled in a graduate degree

program in Athletic Administration, he stressed that individual staff need to take personal responsibility for educating themselves if the school isn't providing enough. He stresses the importance of preparing and training educators and coaches to deal with bullying and harassment:

I wish I had more knowledge of better practices to deal with it. And I think that's what you are doing here. Is trying to have a tool, where you can say, "How can we better prepare educators, prepare coaches, teachers to deal with this?" I don't think in my four years in college we ever had a class on how to deal with bullying, how to deal with harassment. I mean, they say, "oh, as a teacher, you just learn discipline as you go..." Well, that's tough when you're 22 years old, come out of college and having to deal with something like that.

So I think that there's definitely a lack of education of... of educators, and people in schools on how to deal with things like this. (pause) Because the more resources... the more evidence you have in your brain to deal with situations... the easier it is for you to deal with them. It seems like a no-brainer, but...

Well... (interruption) Especially now with all the issues with MCAS. Now, I mean professional development is going towards "how can we get their scores higher?" So, as an educational setting, that is what you have to focus on. But there are so many social things that are happening now that aren't being addressed because MCAS is so important.

I think there is a potential for disaster. I mean, if you can't learn how to deal with harassment and bullying and stuff like that, you are going to have Phoebe Prince's and Carl from Springfield all over the place. You are going to have kids who aren't getting the intervention that they need, and it's just going to escalate. So I think that the potential for disaster is... grows every day you don't deal with it. Every day you sweep it under the [rug or push it to the] back burner is any day it could explode in your face.

This same Athletic Educator made a case for self-directed learning:

Well I think that the more teachers care on a personal level, the more that they will take the initiative and say, "okay what can I do?" If the school is not giving me time and money to do it, well I probably should do something on my own to figure it out." And how many teachers who say they are overworked already and underpaid are going to take time to sit down and think... (interruption)

[The] more information the better. The more information about... like even numbers... I couldn't even tell you how many, percent [age of] kids aren't going to say it... how many athletes do come out after high school? You know, I couldn't even tell you. I couldn't tell you how many, you know, athletes are in that



position. So I think the more information that coaches and teachers can know about whom their students are, the better. But, getting that information is always difficult.

In his Exit Interview he (AE) explained to the Interviewer (I) how he is taking the initiative to educate himself:

I: Yeah. I mean somebody had mentioned that the reason that schools are more interested in the bullying, and gay and lesbian issues is because there is a law or because somebody committed suicide or some big crisis happen.

AE: Right.

I: To really change a culture in a school is a tremendous effort.

AE: Yeah. I would say more of the little things rather than one big event. Because I think one big event can sort of do the global change but if you want to make... I'm reading a book right now called *Deep Change* [Discovering the Leader Within, Robert E. Quinn, 1996]...And it talks about how you have to personally change yourself if you want a larger group to change. And then it talks about the concept of "slow death" and if you don't change and you just stick with the status quo that eventually things trickle down to nothing.

And it's the same thing. Unless we are making individual changes, these small changes, that can amount to a bigger change...If you try to go for a bigger change right off the top and say this is one big event, we have to do it, there's no motivation behind it because you are being forced to do it. This is the state saying, "oh, we have an issue and we have the bullying law, we have to have lesson plans that are evidence based..." What's the motivation? The teachers are thinking, "It's more work we got to do." So until there is that personal change, the personal motivation... I don't think the bigger change can happen. So I think it's more, you do a lot of little things to make that one big thing.

In a revealing moment, that same Athletic Educator said that there is a need for formal training for coaching staff on how to deal with LGBTQ student-athletes. He said that he doesn't think the high school coaching staff is prepared for a male student who wants to come out as gay to his team. He admitted that he did not feel prepared:

I think education is a big thing – there is no coaching development here. There is no "Here's a coaching class..." or "Go get a coaching certification..." It's... I know the MIAA (Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association) is trying to push to have everybody certified in their coaching principle through an NFHS

(National Federation of State High School Associations) path class but that's not until 2014 or something that they want to have it done by. So...

We don't have any education for them to learn new things or how to handle a situation like that. That's another... I [don't] think any coach would know how to handle a situation when one of their players came up to them and said, "Hey coach I'm thinking about coming out to the team..." I mean, I wouldn't know how to handle it. And I think I'm a pretty knowledgeable coach... And I have taken coaching principles and youth coaching classes. And I... I wouldn't know how to handle it.

At the same time the senior School Counselor described how the high school had successfully provided staff training on LGBTQ issues in the past:

Well, I have to tell you, when I first got here, they were in the middle of what they... I don't know what they were calling it, "sensitivity training," or not. But one of the very first in-services that I went to was a panel of gay and lesbian college students talking to the faculty about what it was like to be gay in high school. That was one of the first workshops I attended here as a professional development. They were doing a great job when I got here.

And, it became at that time, it was like, there were people you could tell were saying things like, "Well we're undergoing sensitivity training, so I'm not going to say anything about that," or they were... It was changing people's behavior but they were saying, "Well, you know, I'd make a sexist remark, or I would say something" inappropriate..." you got the feeling that they would say something inappropriate at that moment, but they knew better. The younger... I would like to see that happen again. We've been talking about Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gay people (PFLAG), having PFLAG come in.

Well, I think it would raise people's sensitivities to the fact that it is hard to be gay in school and maybe give them some strategies for working with students. I think people are pretty... I don't think it's like in the old days when people thought... Well, I can remember when I first got here [we had physical educators and the GSA Advisor that were out as lesbians].

And, what I can remember was the GSA Advisor when I first got here. She came down and she interviewed me. She said... and I didn't realize that I was being interviewed until at the end, she said to me, "you don't think that it's a sickness, do you?" (laughing) Referring to homosexuality, because, you know, she brought it up. There were still people around eighteen years ago that perhaps thought it was an illness. And, I laughed when she said that, but... I got a picture as to where she was coming from. She had done a great job of "desensitizing people", or "sensitizing" people here at the school. She was really behind all that sensitivity training, you know.

The first Gay Straight Alliance was one of the first one's in the state and became the model for other ones that came after. The Gay Straight Alliance. And, so had taken on the work of really educating the whole school around that issue. Back in the beginning, she was really a pioneer. She was a Lesbian woman who had grown up in this town.

Yeah. Just...because it's all different... people... really... And, it would be good for people... to bring it into people's consciousness. And, I can't remember. Every now and then something will happen and I can't even give you an example at the moment. And, I'll think, gee, I wish we had training around that. I wish the staff were being trained about that, because it was... Well, (remembering) you know what it is... there was this sheet that she produced and I kept it and I gave it to our current Gay Straight Alliance person. And I've given it to Administrators before but I would like to see this training happen in the school. And, it is... the title of the work sheet is "How to interrupt homophobic comments..." so it's how, [and] it's what to say to students when they say, "faggot" or "that's so gay." Because at that time, there was a period of time here, where you never heard that. Honestly, you never heard it.

Yeah, every single person in this building, every single staff person in this building knew how to interrupt it. And, I think that sheet being put out to people I think would be helpful. But, a little workshop to go with it. I think that's what it is, that's what I'd really like to see. I'd really love to see that. So that people say, "oh, and then they just... [know what to say in response]"

[We need] More in-service... Yeah, for staff, because the truth of the matter is that not enough of the staff know the language of the [TAB] program. Even though we've had brief in-services on it. Really the next step is that I want them to teach every staff person in the school to teach a refresher for their students. So they've never had the course, the kids have, but their leading a classroom discussion that's a refresher every year, of some of the points. So that then if the teachers are teaching it, it'll get to... they'll know... they'll become familiar with the language of it and what not.

And, then I wish that more of the Administrators too. Because I'm not sure that if something got sent to the Deans that they would deal with it in a TAB way. And, the administrators haven't familiarized themselves with the program. So these are the kinds of things I need to tell people.

Another School Counselor reiterated the need for staff training and outlined a really great idea for how to implement it:

And I really, really want to see all staff/faculty training and I think it's great that it come from a larger group than just the...not to say that, it's like saying. "Just the

girls,” and not to be “Just the counselors” but to be a broader group of support for all staff and faculty trainings. I think is more powerful.

I think the staff needs real awareness raising, consciousness raising trainings. And then I would have outlined what trainings are going to happen and how they’re going to be facilitated, when and how. And then departmental check-ins and maybe even... we used to have these inter-departmental [meetings]... like we’d be teamed up with another department... which can be pretty valuable as we can see from your project... to check in and talk about what the experiences are and to support one another each other to keep it alive, to keep it from atrophying...because I think from what people said before, it was a very live part of the culture before.

That it’s somehow imbedded enough in the school so that even if we have a change of administration that all the other layers above and below whoever comes in, we say, “Oh, we’re working on this. This is something we work on.” And then so one year, big push, and then subsequent years always have some training at the beginning, some check-ins in the middle and then some wrap-ups at the end so that it stays alive from year to year. (pause) Like you know when you are trying to reinforce behaviors you've got to keep checking in about it.

[There are] so many other pressures on the school, MCAS performance, certifications and passing different kinds of standards like NEASC and other kinds of... Oh, well, let’s just say it...Other people being in charge of what we decide to do, like okay our training, [they say] intensive training for all staff is going to be about "taking Cornell notes." It’s like, well that’s good but maybe we could do that in a Monday afternoon staff training and maybe give our one full-day that we get each year to something a little more substantial.

Well, when all of a sudden this bullying stuff came out and administration is trying to find out, “What do we do anyway? Do we have anything we’re already doing?” It took them even a while to look around and see if we were already doing something. There was [our senior Guidance Counselor] saying, “Well, we’ve had this training, Active Bystanders and this peer mediation." We’ve got all these programs in place...We need more support, academic support (laughs) to make it happen even better, but... So unfortunately a lot of times it [has to] come to some kind of crisis [to get recognized for what we are already doing].

But I think this idea of a band of people, cross departmentally working together to request that training. If we have enough of us from enough different... so it’s not just counselors, “oh, the counselors, of course.... they’re going to want that...” But others.... Like the English department, people in each department, at least a few people or one or two people from each of the departments stepping forward and saying, “Yeah, we really want this training...” That way we could...

Well, it's so funny, you can't know if you're desensitized really so well. I mean I want more training. I want to get retrained. I've been trained in so many things. I went to UMASS I spent endless hours at People's Market having all kinds of training and all. I was raised by a psychiatric social worker, pretty liberally. I do feel like... (pause) that it's part of my identity to say if someone says something [gender-based or anti-LGBTQ] in the hallway; I take it as my thing. I don't like to hear that. I don't want to hear that. And so they're not... that's... I don't. (laughs) I do think that people will... [think] 'oh, Ms. \_\_\_ doesn't want to hear that' and I'd much rather see it be that... "Oh, the school doesn't tolerate that..." I think that's much more powerful than to just be individual voices saying something...

When I say but you don't know what your conditioning is. I don't know how much I have come to sort of not to notice certain things here. Because I... you're just part of the culture.

And also checking up with us: How's that going? I think a lot of times as teachers we figure we have that kind of tendency... I don't know... not as a whole... not everybody... but as a group... I think we sometimes tend to be a little bit like that... what do they say when you're learning about multiculturalism and racism is that sometimes it's easier for people to know where you stand... like when you're explicitly racist.

So I guess one thing I'm wondering, the administration encouraged us to participate in this...It's intense with the coaching. But we can do that. I would like us all to get together to at least draft a proposal requesting specific training around these [LGBTQ] issues and I think we should devote a delayed opening or professional day to that training and have it be really interesting, dynamic, interactive... I mean, gosh people would be so much more into it than sitting in a cafeteria learning about how to encourage kids to take notes. It would be... being able to do all those [Sharevision] techniques where people can share a little bit, it moves quickly (snapping her fingers) everyone... people can start to invest in it. Requesting more training...Ongoing. An ongoing training. So it not just like one, that stuff dies out really fast.

Yeah. There should be a Task Force. With some school committee people, some staff and faculty, and some students, I think, that meets regularly. And an administrative [representative] person. And that will keep it alive. It would be enough cross group to both make a stronger case for it. Kind of make it more built into the school but also to weather changes in any of those systems. Students are going to come and go so that is a structure for that...And they could be the people that choose the types of ongoing professional development. And that check in. And that kind of send out feelers to department heads to say, "okay it's time to have a check in with your department... see what's going well and not going well, what you need for support..." (pause)

Well I actually think the task force would keep it sustainable. Because they'd sort of be the nucleus of it to keep it alive. Probably I, maybe [name] of someone on the school committee, he's a counselor and school committee member so...I know I was just saying, "oh, counselors... but" (laughs) they are usually wanting a healthy social environment for people... And then GSA.... And the GSA Advisor. So those are probably the...the key people for the group...

#### **Theme 4: Encouraging Student Activism**

One Athletic Educator explained the school's (TAB) Program:

Training Active Bystanders, North Quabbin Coalition comes in and does that. So we have a community person and one of our guidance counselors works with them very closely. We actually get upper classmen trained to be a TAB trainer. We have a student trainer and a community trainer come in and for the 7th graders there are a total of six programs. Six classes total of forty two minutes and then we have and then we have another program for the 10th graders which only consists of four classes of forty two minutes. I feel like it's an asset to our school. It definitely teaches them and we're trying to slowly change the culture of sticking up for others. So that's one way how we incorporate it.

According to the GSA Advisor (A) there has been some training on Transgender issues at the school. During the individual interview, the Interviewer (I) asked:

- I: Sure. Now what about the gender issues? The transgender issues...? Has there been any effort that you're aware of to bring transgender awareness to the school, both staff and or students?
- A: Yes. I do know that the peer mediators had a training where they were trained by the people from Quabbin Mediation I believe. And one of the trainers there, who I actually know outside of school, talked to them about transgender issues and also tried to show them a video about a transgender experience but they had technical difficulties. But anyway, so there was that kind of effort. I've done some training with my Gay Straight Alliance kids. [Interruption]

I've been trained on this kind of stuff, (explaining a drawing of a ginger bread doughboy shaped figure)... just this little gender bread person. This is kind of the standard Trans 101 thing so I did this with my kids in the Gay Straight Alliance. We talked about it and had a really good conversation about it and they really got it. But I don't this kind of thing is happening in the larger health classes or something like that or anything like that. [It took] maybe ten to twenty minutes; a half hour with discussion maybe. That's how long I spent with my Gay Straight Alliance and they got it. It's very simple to understand and we talked about... I mean people can relate to this.

But I had kids who are Cisgendered (feel comfortable with the gender assigned at birth) you know, they are not Trans but I had them talking about how, gosh, I've got this... she identifies as female, is a woman, but really defies all these stereotypes about what women are supposed to be so she found herself of more in this . . . .

I: Androgynous?

A: Yeah, right and so it was a great point of being able to identify with the two kids who had recently come out as Trans [gender] in the group. And that was... it was good... it's not just about Trans [gender] people, it's about everybody.

One really good idea that the GSA Advisor described was a student led initiative to build allies for LGBTQ students in their school:

In October... we did this whole Ally Week thing with the Gay Straight Alliance this year and it was very cool. We had kids take an ally pledge... saying that they would... [pledge to be allies]. And the kids came up with that. I mean it was based on what they saw on the GLSEN site but they came up with it. The Gay Straight Alliance kids came up with it.

What we did is we had people read the pledge and they did have to... I was very adamant... make sure that they read it, before they sign anything. So they had kids read the pledge and then they could sign this banner, I pledge to be an ally. All these kids signed this banner. We actually had so many signatures in the middle school that we had to make a new banner for the high school lunches.

So they signed the banner and we hung them up in the cafeteria for a couple of weeks. And then if they signed the banner they got this Ally pin, this Rainbow Ally button. Every kid wanted that button. They really wanted that button. And that was cool. To see all of these kids... and there are still many kids who still have them on their backpacks or on their sweatshirts. They wear them all the time. They've got their ally button.

We also made posters. Like you can see that one right there and there are posters... they're still all over the school in different teacher's classrooms that say "Choose to be an ally, not a bully" and "Don't be a bully," that kind of thing. They're still around the school. So that's something that we did to kind of raise awareness. And I think that... I think that it was pretty effective, for that time at least. It is worth doing every year

And certainly we'll be doing the Day of Silence [National youth-run effort using *silence* to protest the actual silencing of LGBT people due to harassment, bias and abuse in schools. See [dayofsilence.org](http://dayofsilence.org)] in April. Also last year we did

the Day of Silence and we had a lot of kids participating in that, including the middle school.

That...I think that doing those two events during the year, this year, when we do the Day of Silence it will remind them. Maybe we'll show them the Ally Pledge again and say this is what this is about. You signed this pledge in the fall and here's a chance for you to take action on that pledge. I think that what it does is it puts this vocabulary out there into the kids; well it puts it into their vocabulary.

So they know, "Oh, that's an anti-gay slur, anti-LGBT," or "Oh, now I know what LGBT means..." And, "Oh, in order to get this button, I'm saying that I'm not going to do these things." Not all of them stop certainly, but they became aware of "oh, that that's not okay," "that's not okay for me to be doing that." Somebody out there has a problem with me doing this. Because if they're not encountering people who are telling them, "Don't say those words" or "It's not okay..." then they won't know that it's a problem to do that. When they come in 7th grade and they're using, "That's so gay" everyday. It's clear that nobody in elementary school told them, "That's not okay and here's why."

### **LGBTQ advocacy through student led initiatives**

...As the Gay Straight Alliance advisor, let's talk about that. There's so much I feel like I need. I wish that I had training in developing student leadership. Because... you know the Gay Straight Alliance should be a student led club. And my kids are really hesitant to take on leadership roles. And I would really like some training to teach them how to advocate for themselves. I have no training on how to do that. I think that that would be really helpful. I actually also am working on getting somebody in here to train the kids how to be student leaders.

## **Theme 5: Building Community Fairness**

### **Parent and Family Connections**

One of the Athletic Educators suggested the importance of involving parents and families in school initiatives to support LGBTQ students:

I think one of the biggest things I've learned in that respect, coming to the educational world, how young people can be and already create this judgment [about LGBTQ people]. It makes you wonder... where is this coming from? It is family members. There are still some kids who absolutely believe that that is not the way to be and you have a choice. How much time do I have to convince them that you're born that way, it's not a choice? That's one of my biggest challenges.



Unfortunately, we have such a low family, parent attendance at this school. We are trying and working with many different avenues to bring them in. We have the robo-call system that is phenomenal; [it] goes out to all parents. We have parent teacher nights and we've increased it to twice a year now instead of the one. We don't get a lot of attendance but we're not giving up either. We're really trying. So I think that's an excellent idea, is to have...

One Athletic Educator described some of the difficulties but also stresses the importance and benefit of parent involvement and support:

My concern... is how do you get a good sample of students and parents? And not that I don't want those same parents, I mean they're wonderful. But how do you get those parents [that] don't... appear to not give a damn, or whose children is not their priority? Or school is not their priority... those people? Because I feel like you could get a lot of the people that you see involved already really taking this by the reins and doing something with it but how then do you still manage to reach out to everybody else who we're still desperately trying to reach? You know? But I do. I like the organic nature of that. And it would take more time, and that just is good. It teaches me more patience...

And I think that's something that's really missing here... is consistent, and... not 100% but close to 100% of parent involvement and support. Maybe I'm... generalizing but I feel like a lot of parents aren't necessarily working, so how great would it be to get them doing something every day that's related to the school and to the community. Things like that. I think that's part of it. To get the kids to really be looking out for each other, I think we need a sense that everybody is involved.

Another Athletic Educator suggested:

Right. I think they should do like a parents meeting. A beginning of the season meeting where they talk about all this stuff and don't just say it is in the handbook. I mean they really need to sit down and say this is what we value...this is what the school values...the athletics and school philosophy are pretty much the same thing...

And this is what we expect of you. They don't do that for the kids at school and I just think that athletics a prime time to say "Hey! Bring your parents in; you've got to come to this meeting anyway." This is a perfect time to have a large group of people...A major population of the school... and talk about some of these issues. And the administration would be there – we would hope they would be there... To support the Athletic Director with this. But I think just leaving it up to the coaches to be in charge of that kind of stuff is sort of just passing the buck.

The GSA Advisor said that opportunities for parent and family involvement in school activities for students who have LGBTQ families are crucial for them as well:

Well, first of all, there are kids who have parents and a family member who are LGBT and that doesn't destroy them (laughs) in any way shape or form. I think having more adults around who are LGBT, for those kids, can be really great. Because they say, "Oh, it's not just my weird family."

[And that would be good for other students too] If they are starting to feel like, oh my identity might [be] this... but I don't see anybody else around me... [Also it is] just a matter of kids understanding the diversity of the world around them. They just need to...they're learning about the world around them, and the world around them includes people who are LGBT.

One School Counselor pointed out that some students who live in foster care depend on the support they get from teachers and coaches that they might not get from their parents especially if they happen to be LGBTQ:

...sometimes they'll have better relationships with the teachers that they see every day. Or their coaches. And that is a key relationship for kids, are their coaches. So when I can, if we get new students, especially if they've moved a lot or don't know people in this area, I urge them to get involved in sports because there isn't much else to do around here for a social life. To have the coaches are just like having another parent, especially kids coming from foster systems where they don't have great family support.

### **Community Building for LGBTQ Inclusive School Culture**

Inevitably there is potential for negative interaction with some community members as part of the school effort to publicly promote safety for gender non-conforming athletes or LGBTQ students. For example, as one Athletic Educator described:

It's actually interesting, there's a boy who's on the varsity this year. He's a great hockey player. He was a soccer player, he decided he didn't want to do soccer this year so he played hockey. He plays a lot of ice hockey... he played field hockey this season and he plays at the rink in town. I remember listening to some I think parents or adults during one of his men's league games at the regular deck rink and I figured out pretty quickly that they were talking about him because they were talking about field hockey and this and that. I remember one of the

comments from the adults was, and they weren't saying it to him they were just having a chat amongst themselves... "He could have at least played football. I mean why did he have to play a girl's sport?" Something to that affect. I remember having to hold myself back from intruding on their conversation and giving him an earful. And it just seems to be the... that mentality, that kind of the biggest reaction is that it's a girl's sport.

Yet, the GSA Advisor told a story about an earlier GSA Advisor's use of a negative interaction with a student out in the community as a teachable moment:

One of the original advisors was telling me this story about how when she had started working with the Gay Straight Alliance at the school, and actually as a result, I think she was "out" at the school. There were students in the community who [when] she'd be walking down the street and a student yelled out "Dyke" to her. And because she was part of the community, [one time] she actually confronted that student, and talked about how inappropriate that was and had a very good conversation and that didn't happen again. So that did happen in the larger community I heard about. That was a while ago.

A really good idea was implemented when the GSA Advisor described how he and another staff had responded to race-based bullying by initiating the creation of a Multicultural Club. He explained how they drew resources from the community to provide programming for two Multicultural assemblies for the school:

In the middle school Multi-cultural Club we did some pretty cool things. We had two multi-cultural assemblies. We had a Native American woman from the community come in and teach the kids how to make drums. In one of the assemblies was drumming and then in another assembly, it was more about poetry and mostly focused on Black history.

Unfortunately, though a really good idea, their Multicultural club idea was not supported or sustained by the school administration at the time:

So we did that for a couple of years, but it wasn't... there was no stipend, it wasn't a position that was written into the school. It wasn't an official club, we didn't have a budget; it was just kind of us doing this because we wanted to. (laughs) We tried to get it written into the contract but to no avail. So, that kind of petered out after a while... and also because she took on the position of the Advisor to the International club because the advisor of that had retired.

And that's also when the Gay Straight Alliance Advisor position opened up. So we just went into different directions with that. Still with the same idea but I've been going through channels that were already part of the school culture. So we did that but like I said, that kind of petered out because there was no money and it felt like we were doing our own thing.

The GSA Advisor has identified concrete ways invested parents, families and the community could help as allies to LGBTQ students at the school:

I think also, money... (laughs) for transportation. Because as the Gay Straight Alliance Advisor... you know we're kind of in the middle of nowhere here. And there are all these events that happen. There's a Gay Straight Alliance Network right in Massachusetts. And I think I talked about this before that when they have regional meetings, the nearest meeting was an hour away from us. If I had a bus so I could take the kids that would be so easy but buses are so expensive. So money for transportation.

Integrating community resources has helped the school address LGBTQ student needs in a variety of ways. One really good example is illustrated by the current GSA Advisor's use of outside resources:

There are tools that I feel like... I do have... I forgot to mention this, the [University of Massachusetts Amherst] Stonewall Center Speaker's Bureau. I am actually having the Speaker's Bureau come to my Gay Straight Alliance meeting in the beginning of March. So that is a tool that I have. If I can bring people here, that's good

## **Research Question 2**

**How do high school counselors and athletic educators experience the Sharevision process of structured collaborative reflection to exchange ideas as they implement their school's anti-bullying policy?**

### **Theme 1: Restorative and Reciprocal Relationship Building**

#### **Restorative**

*The GSA Advisor said:*

It's been really great getting to talk honestly with colleagues who agree on the importance of addressing the needs of LGBT kids.

*After the first group meeting, one School Counselor said it could be used to debrief:*

I was thinking, I could see how this would have worked say if, for instance, (motioning to the teacher, GSA advisor), the thing that's bothering you is that you yelled at a kid 'cause it's so atypical of you and I know it's just like eating you. So if you had really come in with that, if you really presented that, and then I would have given my heartfelt... times of ... "Oh, I know exactly..." "I've had that happen," or "I've done that and you know it just eats away at you all day," or "some story..." or (to the other guidance counselor) "you would have gotten up and done a little dance or something," (laughs) it really... I could see how that would really have... been cool? (heads nodded)

*Another School Counselor said it helped rest her mind while listening:*

I really liked the Sharevision model. I thought that was a very nice way to conduct a meeting, give space. I don't know, from my mind it did help to set that, a little bit to rest, that temptation, or whatever it is that... of thinking of your answer (laughs) and just give people space to listen to them and know that you're going to get a chance also... yeah. I thought that was really good.

*In her first group meeting, one Athletic Educator said she found her voice:*

I was extremely nervous about finding my voice. As time wore on I guess I was able to focus better on the exchange of ideas... it was a nice reminder that we're all here for, essentially, the same reason. I didn't need to be shy... I think we need MORE of this.

*In the last group meeting, she said:*

The tension was palpable, but as everyone took turns to speak and share their ideas, I think we were able to put our stress behind us, at least for an hour or so. I think this is good, especially for people who came in really stressed today. I hope. It was a nice 60-80 minutes to put it on the back burner for a little bit.

*A School Counselor agreed with her and said:*

Well I totally agree that it's been enjoyable and the part about stress. I didn't write that down, but that's true. It is... it's been nice being able to come in here and eat. (Laughter) It's terrible. But, really for me, I agree with (athletic educator) that it's so nice to spend time with you guys not talking about students and to see where our common ground is, which is probably about everything, almost, and to figure out ways to collaborate. I think that's really great. And to see that we're all kind

of excited about something all together. And I'm saying that about them (the athletic educators) because I work with you (to GSA Advisor) a lot about stuff and of course (other school counselor). So it's nice to spend time with the athletes.

### **Reciprocal Relationship Building**

*The GSA Advisor then said how important building personal connections were to him:*

Yeah, I definitely appreciated the opportunity just to be able to sit down and talk with all of you and just to be able to have good, professional dialogue but also acknowledging the check-in time I felt was nice to acknowledge our lives outside of school, too, because as much as I don't sit down and talk with you all about professional stuff, I never talk to you about anything that's going on in our lives outside of school. So it's nice to have that opportunity to get to know people a little bit better. I really appreciate that.

*One School Counselor remarked that she enjoyed building relationships with:*

[This is a] great group of people. I want to share how important these coaches and club leaders are to the (school) students.

*Another School Counselor agreed and commented:*

It has been great to connect with athletic coaches [Educators].

*An Athletic Educator enjoyed the opportunity to converse with school colleagues:*

I really enjoyed some of the co-workers points. It is nice to have a conversation with people whom I see every day but rarely talk to.

*Another Athletic Educator appreciated talking to colleagues in a different department:*

I enjoyed talking to other colleagues that are not coaches about their ideas on bullying etc. here at the school. I always enjoy our meetings as they get me thinking about lots of things for the future.

## **Theme 2: Time Equitable Reflection**

### **Time Equitable**

*The GSA Advisor said of his experience of the first School Counselor Sharevision group meeting:*

That it seemed like we came up with new insights just by talking and listening. Like not needing outside information, not needing, like here's data, or here are lectures, you know, about this particular thing but... And I think I do feel like it would be even better if more people were here. I would have loved especially to have had insight from the athletic staff because I have no clue what goes on in their world at all and I was really looking forward to having a discussion with them, learning something about that. You know.

*One of the School Counselors liked these features of the Sharevision experience:*

Dividing time - usually equally; time keeper is not facilitator; [time-keeping] done nicely with advance notice; leave time for input; not required to say something; keep away from advice giving mode.

### **Reflection**

*Another School Counselor could see how Sharevision could help staff process emotions:*

I liked the timed talking. I could see how it would work for example if we (e.g., GSA Advisor) had talked about something that was really bothering us. I would have liked to have responded when people were talking, so it was good I couldn't.

*At the first Athletic Educators Sharevision group meeting, an Athletic Educator said the Sharevision process was a productive way to exchange ideas:*

The time limit is a fabulous idea because that way you don't spend too long on a topic. Today a lot of the ideas from one question could transfer to other questions which were great.

*Another Athletic Educator said the time-keeping in the Sharevision format helped allow for critical thinking while listening:*

I enjoyed having time to sit and listen to other people. I guess I am one of those "talkers" who wants to put his two cents in all the time. I had to sit and focus on what other people were saying which is not easy to do with ADHD. I probably did

more critical thinking into what they were saying than I normally do in conversation.

*He also could see how Sharevision provided an opportunity to get feedback:*

I have no problem being open and honest so this format allowed me time to say exactly how I felt and could get feedback on the issue I brought up.

*One Athletic Educator said of her experience of the Sharevision format for the first time:*

It's like an awakening, to realize there are lots of people who have the same concerns, and no solutions... or vague ideas. I'd like this roundtable discussion to go somewhere. What we'll do next, sort of idea. I think the format worked well. It forced me not to interject, to let everyone be heard, and I felt I had ample opportunity to share my ideas. I don't think any of us were stymied.

*After the large group meeting with the School Counselors, the same Athletic Educator said of the Sharevision process:*

It gives me a lot to reflect on and I hope that we can continue to have these discussions, because I feel that many of us still have more to say.

*A School Counselor responded with:*

I have more I want to say. Follow the \$ [money] the GSA was State funded. The \$ [money] now comes for MCAS.

### **Theme 3: Egalitarian (non-hierarchical) Transformative Exchange**

#### **Creating New Ideas**

*In the first School Counselor's Sharevision group meeting, the GSA Advisor was surprised that a small group could generate new ideas:*

At first I felt like I was open to the idea, but I didn't know how much new stuff would come out of the people in the room. As we practiced more, it seemed that we could get some new insights just by talking and listening, no outside information/lectures. I think it would be even better if more people were here!



*The other two School Counselors both had the idea to try it with groups of students and one School Counselor said to the other:*

I liked it. I was thinking about how it would be to try it with kids, to get them to do it with kids, like when we, if we have to run a group... (speaking to the other School Counselor, who starts to laugh)? Were you thinking that?

*The other School Counselor responded:*

(Laughs) Points to her nose [“on the nose,” meaning yes]. (laughter)

*In the first Athletic Educators Sharevision group meeting, an Athletic Educator said she could see the generative value in using Sharevision to exchange ideas with her colleagues:*

I thought the process of going through the questions and having each of us bounce ideas off each other was very powerful. I love hearing what other people's (colleagues) ideas are and interacting other ideas with those. Having educators and coaches discuss innovative ideas always is a great way to get perspective on other unique thoughts about a particular subject.

### **Transformative Exchange**

*Another Athletic Educator said that he valued the opportunity to use Sharevision to get to know one of his Athletic colleagues:*

I have never had a full conversation with (athletic educator) before so it was neat to hear her thoughts on the topics and her thoughts on what goes on at the school. She sees kids in a different manner than I do so she has different relationships than me.

*The Athletic Educator he was referring to noted that she came away with some new ways of thinking about bullying as a result of the Sharevision meeting with her colleagues including:*

Bullying [behavior], separate from bully [the person]; [bullying] behavior has a reason [look for what is behind it]; and be a living example.

*Finally when the six members of the study group of School Counselors and Athletic Educators met together in a Sharevision Group, one School Counselor described it as powerful:*

[It was] very interesting. It is more powerful when different "groups" and perspectives collaborate.

*The GSA Advisor who had been looking forward to meeting the Athletic Educators didn't anticipate how much it would change his thinking about the GSA and the Athletics department:*

I really appreciate this opportunity to get to talk with everybody and I think especially today getting to talk with athletic staff as well. I think that my own past experience is that I was not very athletic when I was a kid, certainly not in high school. I really appreciated a chance to hear from the athletic staff. I feel like we barely scratched the surface.

I think I'm realizing that my vision for the GSA was that I thought it would offer an alternative after-school activity for kids who weren't athletic (not only them, but including them). I guess I didn't think about the needs of kids in sports because I assumed they were fine. This is really starting to open up my mind.

*At the same time, as a result of a constructive group discussion with the whole group, an Athletic Educator realized he could do more to promote safety for LGBTQ students in the locker rooms:*

I at first was a little annoyed when they were bashing on locker-room supervision, but then I realized from their perspective it might seem like a scary place. I try and do my best, and the department does as well, but the 2:00-5:00 slot is a breeding ground for bad behavior. There is only so much that can be done by the teachers, the kids need to start stepping up.

*Another School Counselor commented the large Sharevision group meeting confirmed they shared common goals:*

I liked the meeting with the athletic coaches and hearing everyone's perspective AND common goals of inclusiveness and wanting the school culture to be friendlier.

*A School Counselor agreed and said:*

It's hard to add something new to that because it was a great experience to talk with people who aren't in our regular line of who we communicate with. Although, in many ways, we are communicating about you and around you, all day, every day.

*An Athletic Educator had an enthusiastic response to how the whole group*

*Sharevision meetings provided them an opportunity to be inventive in how they work:*

The experience has been amazing. It's been awesome to hear ideas from colleagues and invent new ideas together.

*An Athletic Educator, who said she found her voice in her first Sharevision group meeting, challenged the whole group to take action and said:*

Everyone talks about how great the school is and I don't want to be "Debbie-Downer" but I think it could be so much better and I think a lot of people agree. It's not going to happen unless we stop talking and actually start making demands of the administration, or kind of putting ourselves out on a limb there.

#### **Theme 4: Communal Inventiveness - Catalyst for Change**

##### **Communal Inventiveness**

Each participant experienced the group discussions as stimulating new ideas and they expressed a desire to make changes in how they work together to support LGBTQ students. They said they did not want the conversations to end and that they had more to say to one another.

*One Athletic Educator expressed her desire to continue meeting as a group:*

Again, I feel like we're on the cusp of something, and that if we don't follow-up our discussion with some action, we'll totally lose it. I'll admit, after our last meeting, I was all geared up to do this, that, and the other. But when I got home, I went back into mommy mode, I left my reading material in the car, and I put all of our work and discussion on the back burner. But, how do we go about answering our questions? How do we keep the topic alive?

Because our daily lives will get in the way of thinking about these things unless we set aside time for it. I am really looking forward to another group meeting. I'd

even like to sit for another hour with everyone to start making plans to do something.

*A School Counselor responded:*

I'd love to... It's something we talk about in our department as wanting.... As saying, "okay, lets [do it]"... we want to be at that same place, at the same high level that the school was in. It's the same families; it's the same economic realities, if not worse, than when the previous GSA Advisors were here creating a climate where it was not okay to be insensitive about a lot of things, really. ...I appreciate being able to be a part of it.

So, I think just more awareness of each other but hopefully some real concrete projects to work on will come out of it too. And I really, really want to see all-staff/faculty training. And I think it's great that it come from a larger group than just the...not to say that, it's like saying, [it's] "just the girls," and not to be "just the counselors" [who want training]. But to be a broader group of support for all staff and faculty trainings I think is more powerful.

*That same School Counselor had other concrete ideas she wanted to pursue and said:*

I would like a grant to get an overnight for each grade [the school used to have all students from each grade students stay overnight at the school in the gym to socialize and get to know one another with supervised activities but it costs money so the school stopped doing it]. I would like the locker rooms to be supervised and "pre-taught" etiquette.

### **Catalyst for Change**

*An Athletic Educator said:*

But after all this talking, I feel like we need Action! Put ideas in motion.... I really hope that we will continue to meet.

*A School Counselor noted that the conversation was:*

Encouraging - sounds closer to action - collaborations and training. We could draw support and help from resources, speakers from GSA Advisor's connections. Concerned about parents reactions [and the need to prepare for that]. Consider calling group the School Culture Advisory Board.

*The Athletic Educator who had already started to incorporate the group's input into his work said:*

As a potential AD (Athletic Director) at this school I have learned a different side of issues facing the Athletic department. I think that there is a ton of info that can be used to help the student athletes at our school. We have people at this school that think along the same lines, so this is the ground work for a successful change.

*A School Counselor responded to the idea of banding together to get all staff trained:*

As a counselor, we have worked with them [colleagues], but it feels exciting to think we could collaborate to bring trainings and awareness to our faculty and students.

*The GSA Advisor asked how they could implement their ideas:*

Moving forward, I am nervous about time. How will we keep meeting? How will we realize our goals?

*The Athletic Educator who suggested the group continue to meet pushed the group to meet over the summer:*

I think we need to meet over the summer to solidify our plans for the upcoming year. There is a lot to consider - almost too much - and I hope we can narrow it down to 3 concrete things we can begin. Suggestions and comments: Meet again. Get students on board. Make 3 concrete goals to implement next year.

*A highlight from my interview with the Principal is that he supports doing all staff*

*LGBTQ training especially GSA student members themselves are advocating for it:*

I: I think it is amazing that your whole approach is to try to focus on the [school's] strengths and build on those. ...Could you imagine improving... especially with my research... focusing on the [school] climate for gay [LGBTQ] and gender identity issues, if there are things that you could see that could be improved?

P: Well we have the GSA...a program that is geared towards gay [students]... They attended the [Pride] Parade last year... The [GSA Advisor] and I would converse all the time about next steps. [But] NEASC came in and we kind of put that on hold. Then he went and got another job so he left our building.

We have a new person [GSA Advisor]... we are now just getting to...“How do we keep up with the things that were going on? and...How do we get the folks around here [trained]...?...he wanted to do a training... We didn't

have time for it because of the accreditation. Everything was spent around accreditation. There was no time. Now our time is coming back.

That [staff training] is one of the things that will be next... The [GSA] kids are their own advocates... We always find the means for kids. We want to meet their needs. It's not about what we feel the best programs are. "What do they think are the best programs... or clubs that will help them to feel a part of this community?"... Once we get a break [upcoming holiday], we have to get that rejuvenation happening again...

I: And historically it [the GSA] was really connected to the athletic department. And in the study I brought athletic educators together with school counselors and they seemed really excited about re-energizing that collaboration between [them and the GSA]... I don't know if any of them have spoken to you about any of their initiatives... The study group members really enjoyed the group meetings. They actually met on their own over the summer.

P: Okay.

I: They are really excited about sharing ideas with each other and supporting each other. So I thought it would be great to somehow for administration to support that initiative.

P: Oh, yeah. Of course we would. I mean if folks are going to do [that on their own].

I: If people are motivated, you want to have their back?

P: Absolutely.

I: They said they would keep in touch with me. I was very impressed.

P: I heard very positive things out of there [the study group members talking]. And in speaking with one [study group member] who was the Coordinator of the Health Department, he felt very positive about it [the study]. And he thought that there was a lot that we could do with it [the ideas they came up with]. And then all of a sudden NEASC came and... (laughs).

I: Well, right, and people have to prioritize. Do you want to add anything?

P: No, you've been here. You've see what we do here. Any chance [we get]... I'll always stick to the fact that we are not hiding anything in this building.

I: No there is a lot to be proud of.

P: Yeah, I say it every day. And I'm glad that I have the opportunity to say that even through the hard times that we are facing, the environment and the economic state

here and everything else. It's a wonderful atmosphere, you know what I mean. And I'm very lucky to be here so...

I: Well you contribute a major part of that, so thank you.

P: Thank you. Anytime.

## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION

Two research questions are addressed in this study. The first research question explored how school counselors and athletic educators experienced implementation of the 2010 Massachusetts Anti-bullying law. The second research question explored how school counselors and athletic educators experienced the introduction of the collaborative inquiry Sharevision process to support one another and exchange ideas.

Results descriptively illustrate the variety of experiences school counselors and athletic educators have had implementing the 2010 Anti-bullying law in Massachusetts. Study participants were somewhat surprised to discover that they had a lot more in common than they thought and found meeting together in small groups enjoyable and fruitful. The Sharevision study group discussion served as a catalyst for change (Brafman & Beckstrom, 2006). Many good ideas were generated and participants were motivated to put them into practice. Participants became so engaged in this process that they continued to meet over the summer to continue the work.

#### **Advancing Theory in Practice**

The bulk of existing “research directed at the unique needs of sexual minority adolescents is descriptive or explanatory” and is scanty (Elze, 2005, p. 77). In contrast, this research helps build *control* knowledge that allows practitioners to forecast and actively predict the consequences of their interventions. This constitutes knowledge that guides practitioners in selecting and implementing interventions that will achieve desired outcomes (Rosen, 1993; Rosen et al, 1999).



Much of the research that exists in this area describes or explains how anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment affects students. This study focused on culling the best ideas on how staff can intervene to prevent and address anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment in their roles at their school. The study participants used the Sharevision group discussions to get to know each other, ask each other questions, and to share and develop new ideas. The group also reviewed, presented to one another and then discussed a wide array of LGBTQ training materials that are designed for their use in school and athletics. Even though the school was already doing the TAB and mediation programs, the group discussed ways the school could do a better job at training all of the staff to advocate for LGBTQ students.

For example, one school counselor shared with the study group a list, "Ways to Interject when You Hear Homophobic Putdowns" that she received from a former GSA Advisor. They discussed ways to update it by incorporating suggestions from the Human Rights Campaign LGBT Youth Handout, "Bullying, Don't Ignore it. Don't Excuse it. What do you say to 'That's so gay'... and 'What don't you say to 'That's so gay'..." (HRC, spring, 2012). Since the school counselor said that approach had worked to positively influence school culture in the past, the group thought it would be helpful to reintroduce an updated version making it available as a handout for the entire school.

Beyond the scope of the study, school counselors, athletic educators and the GSA Advisor worked together over the summer. Their efforts culminated in redesigning their fall orientations to incoming students, athletes and their parents to incorporate a LGBTQ affirmative message. This study demonstrated that when professional colleagues spent time supporting one another they were able to learn from one another, incorporated ideas

from outside resource materials and invented new ways to support LGBTQ students. The Sharevision process was experienced as being very helpful in facilitating this growth.

### **Theoretical Approaches**

School counselors approached the issues discussed in the study based on their clinical training and experience. Most graduate schools do not adequately prepare high school counselors to address sexuality and gender identity and expression issues with students (Hunter & Hickerson, 2003). Graduate school is where some counselors can begin the process of learning the issues involved. For example, Anne Rene Elsbree's (2002) report "Disruptive Pedagogies: How Teacher Educators Disrupt Homophobia" illustrates how one study helped prepare teacher educators to examine and address LGBTQ issues in school. According to Elsbree:

Respondents noted that they had not learned to disrupt homophobia in their initial teacher preparation, but rather, they were able to disrupt homophobia because of their learning experiences in graduate school...Participants were teacher educators who were collaboratively designing and constructing a video product to be used in teacher education classrooms to help teachers understand, recognize, and disrupt homophobia... Respondents said that effective disruptive pedagogies contained at least three strategies: taking advantage of openings to address homophobia, [teachable moments] teaching language about sexual diversity, and using a fluid understanding of the world to teach acceptance of sexual diversity. (Elsbree, 2002, Abstract).

One school counselor in the study who said she had taken a graduate level social justice course felt she needed a “refresher course” to stay current. The American School Counselor Association ASCA developed a National Model to help guide school counselors to shift their practice away from working with students individually. Students face a complexity of issues which require counselors to have an expanded theoretical perspective that includes understanding their social identities, health, family and

community issues. School counselors have to be social change agents in their work given increased mandates from both the state and federal government.

Results from this study support the position that school counselors need and want training to be better prepared to address the needs of sexual minority youths in their school. But there is an assumption that school counselors will learn what they need to know while on-the-job. However, this puts the responsibility for comprehensive in-service professional development on increasingly underfunded public schools. Stress related to unfunded mandates is felt in two ways. School counselors are expected to do their jobs without training. Administrators are expected to prepare them without funding.

Athletic educators approach students from a very different framework than do school counselors. They too are unprepared to advocate for LGBTQ students. School counselors focus on understanding emotional experiences of students and tend to be interpretive. Athletic educators primarily focus on performance therefore tend to be more descriptive. Instead of a clinical perspective, they approached the issues discussed in this study from a teaching and coaching perspective. Generally these two approaches were quite different from each other. For example, coaching tends to be hierarchical, more directive, working within a game framework with written rules, obedience is important, and the focus is on winning. Counseling is more congenial, not hierarchical, attempts to put the person more in control, encourages understanding rather than obedience, and the context is not a game, where generally there are no written rules.

Many athletic educators are not required to have a graduate degree to teach or coach, and there is no state or national coaching certificate even offered. Generally coaches are hired based on their athletic ability and experience as an athlete in a

particular sport – their lived experience. Some do have advanced degrees, obtain a teaching certificate and/or have some coaching training. Training in handling issues related to LGBTQ student-athletes has only recently been made available (NCAA, 2005; GLSEN, 2011). Enforcement of Title IX on behalf of LGBTQ youth has had some recent success guaranteeing equal access to athletics and sports (USDOE, OCR, 2010).

One of the things school counselors and athletic educators have in common is a concern for LGBTQ youth's issues. For both school counselors and athletic educators these issues tended to be invisible to them in their day-to-day work. One athletic educator said, "We've gone to bullying conferences and our other health teachers have gone to bullying conferences. But it's not always so directed... those conferences are more about people just picking on people. It's not necessarily targeted on gender or sexual orientation." Learning more about at risk LGBTQ youth is not a focus of this school's professional development efforts as it was reported to be when the Massachusetts Safe Schools Program was fully funded in the early 1990s.

In this study school counselors and athletic educators were interviewed individually to discuss their personal and professional experiences with anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment. They were asked to generate questions they wanted to discuss with colleagues in our group meetings. The emphasis of the study was to capture success stories and to elicit diverse perspectives. The reason the Sharevision format was used was it expressly encourages the expression of divergent thinking rather than working toward agreement on one approach.

## **Theme 1: Promoting Safety**

In the first group meeting with only school counselors the members experienced an “aha!” moment when the GSA Advisor said the best way to help promote safety for LGBTQ students is supporting teachers. He said, “Maybe a part of the bullying prevention has to be around supporting staff. (The other two school counselors cheered!) ...if teachers can come into the classroom with more of an emotional capacity to handle what’s going on because there’s adequate support for teachers, then that could help the issue too.”

Though the athletic educators all teach and coach high school students, they had never met together as a group to discuss their approaches to bullying. This group meeting seemed to mend the isolation one of the athletic educators had been feeling since she doesn’t teach in the same department. She wrote in her reflection about the meeting, “I was extremely nervous about finding my voice. As time wore on I guess I was able to focus better on the exchange of ideas... it was a nice reminder that we're all here for essentially the same reason. I didn't need to be shy... I think we need MORE of this.”

In the first combined group meeting the school counselors and athletic educators said they really enjoyed exchanging perspectives and ideas. One powerful exchange occurred when they discussed how locker rooms are reportedly a major site for anti-LGBTQ bullying. The following is an example of *egalitarian transformative exchange*. One of the athletic educators reported in the initial individual interview that he had been bullied for years in the locker room as a child until his older brother and his brother’s friend intervened.

He confided in the exit interview that he had a reaction to that group discussion. He said, “I at first was a little annoyed when they [school counselors] were bashing on locker-room supervision, but then I realized from their perspective it might seem like a scary place. I try and do my best, and the department does as well, but the 2:00-5:00 slot is a breeding ground for bad behavior. There is only so much that can be done by the teachers, kids need to start stepping up.”

Later he described how he changed how he approached his job after that discussion. He said “So, I’m sort of just taking more of a proactive approach than I have been. Because I think I was more reactive before but now just hearing – after you hear it a couple of times you sort of [think] “I’ve got to get on this or this is just going to go to something bigger.” So... and I’m trying to take more of a leadership role so I’m trying to be the one...”

My Recommendations related to Theme 1 are:

1. School counselors and athletic educators need to advocate for the creation of LGBTQ safe spaces in school – classrooms, hallways, bathrooms, locker-rooms, playing fields, school buses, etc.; the staff need “safe space” training. The bathrooms and locker-rooms need to be prioritized for transgender students.
2. School counselors and athletic educators need their own safe and confidential emotional support so they can be better responders to bullying.
3. School counselors and athletic educators need to spend time reflecting with one another in a supportive environment to reduce the isolation they experience; they are serving the same students.
4. School counselors and athletic educators need to problem-solve with each other; they can help each other get better at doing their jobs.

### **Theme 2: Cultivating Relational Responsibility**

The use of language in cultivating relational responsibility emerged as a major theme when school counselors and athletic educators were asked to describe their

experiences dealing with anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment. In this school, language used by students and staff is undergoing a process of change. Formally the school requires the staff to fill out a “Bullying Prevention and Incident Reporting Form” that uses the terms bully, aggressor, target, and retaliation. In contrast the school has integrated into their health classes two different programs to promote safety in the schools that introduces alternative language.

The Training Active Bystanders (TAB) curriculum is taught by peer-educators. TAB replaces the term “bully” with “harm-doer” in referring to a person’s behavior separate from their identity. Quabbin Mediation Executive Director Sharon Tracy explained that they “never use the word bully.” She said it “implies a static role that can’t be moved out of; it’s too broad.” Tracy said the word “bully” is a “complete trigger for a lot of people.” She noted that it is important to keep in mind that “the behavior described in the anti-bullying law is behavior that adults engage in on a regular basis.... countries engage in bullying... corporations bully...” It’s in error to think that “if you isolate and punish the person, the problem is solved,” because it’s not that simple.

TAB Training Director Susan Wallace said it is also important to remember “how people change over time.” She said that TAB introduces alternative language to describe the different behaviors in a harmful situation: harm-doer, passive bystander, active bystander and target. Wallace said that TAB Training helps people understand: “some of the reasons why people do or don’t help; the inhibitors and motivators to helping; and the importance of developing the moral courage to act.” (QuabbinMediation.org) (<http://www.trainingactivebystanders.org>)

The TAB program provides peer-educators with cognitive and behavioral skills training to respond in a positive and effective way when witnessing something they consider to be harmful. The TAB Trainers teach the six-session curriculum to their peers. The cognitive component of the program teaches youth to understand some of the reasons that bystanders might respond passively and how to practice ways to overcome obstacles to taking assertive action. In the experiential component, real life scenarios are solicited from the youth being trained, and role-playing is used to practice assertive responses to harmful behaviors.

In general, people often assume they have to choose between being either passive or aggressive in response to harm doing. Sometimes the person doing the harm is doing so in reaction to a previous infraction against them, and the vicious cycle is perpetuated. The TAB training provides them another choice.

Also incorporated into the health classes is a social justice curriculum that addresses racism, sexism, able-ism, and heterosexism. These classes are based on the University of Massachusetts School of Education Social Justice in Education curriculum. Health teachers introduce a new language to students that describe various forms of oppression, e.g., social group membership: Agents and Targets. Other subjects introduced in these social justice classes include: prejudice, stereotypes, social power, privilege and rights, collusion, internalized domination and subordination, ally, empowerment, social and individual change, etc. (Adams, Bell & Griffin, 1997, p. 64).

Vocabulary provided in these classes provides students with a lens through which to see and understand issues of diversity and oppression in new ways. Both of these curricula introduce new language to help shape how students construct their lived



experiences. In this case study the school health curriculum is intentionally teaching new language for the expressed purpose of assisting in the co-creation of new experiences for students. Transformation toward social justice in education depends on creating a common or communal language. Language that actually helps define experiences evolves over time. The language used by school staff and students combined to create and maintain a communal reality as they cultivate relational responsibility.

My Recommendations for Theme 2 are:

1. School counselors and athletic educators need to be trained by student peer-educators to use the same vocabulary taught in health classes.
2. School counselors and athletic educators who are TAB Trained can capitalize on teachable moments to support their students cultivating relational responsibility.
3. School counselors and athletic educators can practice serving as models for relational responsibility and help students stand up for themselves and each other.

### **Theme 3: Developing Communal Mind**

One of the reader-judges described the study group as a "bee hive" after reading all of the transcripts (L. Hoffman, personal communication, 2013). She offered that metaphor to describe the process of *developing a communal mind*. Shared knowledge grows the way honey is made from the bees' hard work. Sometimes people don't know what they know until they share it with others. When a person's lived experience is validated by peers in similar circumstances, their way of knowing is validated. This study connects to Mary Field Belenky's work with Listening Partners – a project promoting intellectual development in rural women at the University of Vermont. In 1986 Belenky published *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* with Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger and Jill Mattuck Tarule. In the introduction to the book they talked about the "roar which lies on the other side of silence

when ordinary women find their voice and use it to gain control over their lives” (1986, p. 4).

To illustrate, the following is another example of an *egalitarian transformative exchange*. I observed that after a number of really insightful statements one athletic educator with no graduate school education expressed a lot of self doubt in the individual interviews, saying “maybe” and “I don’t know” repeatedly. In the midst of her first Sharevision group meeting she said she “found her voice.” She then offered what I consider to be one of the best ideas for how to deal with bullies. She told a story that she had heard from a college classmate:

There’s a fellow classmate of mine who works in a school and he works in other countries than our area and what we have here. I remember him relaying a story about a student who... there was some bullying incident and the repercussions. It was actually interesting. The kid was actually given a choice when he got in trouble. He could either serve his detention...or suspension for whatever he had done or he could kind of pay back the kid. Like make amends, I guess, to the student. And, that’s the option he chose. I don’t know the whole details of the scenario but I do know that he ended up choosing that. And, I don’t know if they became friends but he came to look out for the kid. At this point, this kid was an upperclassman and I think the story was also that he had been bullied as an underclassman. And so he kind of went down one path in reaction to how he’d been treated, but was given an option at some point to really take responsibility and change the course, take responsibility... be proactive in changing his own fate. I think that was an interesting idea.

Like a bee, she had taken the nectar from a learning experience she had and offered it in one of study group discussions about how to help the bully. That prompted another athletic educator to reflect on his own approach. He explained that her sharing of this story helped him connect his thinking about how he supports his student-athletes academically to how he could support them to recognize they have a choice about their bullying behavior. Then he offered this to the group discussion:

I think the idea of a choice, and being a high school student or a middle school student... As teachers we sort of give them their choices, and we've seen a lot with some of our athletes... is that they have a choice; they either pass their class or don't pass their class. We can't do everything. We can hold their hands, and make sure they are there after school, but if they don't make the choice to do the work, they're going to fail.

And this is the same concept where... if they're bullying, that's a choice they make. That is... that's not something they're doing subconsciously saying, "Oh, I'm just a bully so I bully everybody." It's something that they are choosing to do. "I want to pick on this person." And until they're educated about what that behavior can do to somebody else, what's going to stop them from doing it? I'd rather have education rather than punishment, like she said.

[There needs to be] some way for them to learn what their behavior could lead to or what their behavior is doing to somebody else because they're not thinking about that when they're doing it. They're not thinking "oh what's going to happen when I take everything out of this kid's locker and throw it on the floor?" They're just not thinking that. So, I think that they... the choice of what the repercussions of their actions are and what damage they could be doing to somebody are the most important thing for them to learn.

In each group meeting the school counselors and athletic educators wanted to explore some of the best ways to address what one school counselor described as the chronic harm-doers. Both school counselors and athletic educators balked at leaving it up to the Deans at the school to discipline students written up for bullying. They discussed the importance of reaching out to students and their parents to identify the underlying "reasons for negative behavior" to help them more effectively.

One School Counselor reframed some of the negative behavior as social mistakes or social experimentation. An athletic educator said that she was convinced that certain gender-based harassment behaviors she had personally experienced on the playing field occurred because "they must have worked in the past" to intimidate young female athletes. One School Counselor described the necessity to help "bully-proof" targets so

that negative behavior is not reinforced. All of the students involved need support making responsible choices.

The athletic educator who told the story about giving a student the choice to make amends rather than serve detention added another gem to the discussion. She said that the group discussion brought to mind the need to also consider the developmental and biological issues adolescents face:

...Something else I've been thinking about is this whole discussion about kids and impulse control and how our limbic system isn't fully developed and we have trouble with our impulses and really thinking through actions before we do them.

But I still don't understand why some people are able to be appropriate and not bully and stand up for what they believe in if they see something going on. You know I know a handful of kids who would stand up and say something. What's that common denominator that makes them like that versus all these, the majority, it seems, who don't have that impulse control or don't have the wherewithal to say, "This isn't right." There are kids who will and I'm just wondering what is it they have that you can give to everybody else to make them more like that.

As a result of the study group meetings the school counselors and athletic educators found they had more in common than they anticipated. They had shared values even if their approaches differed. As they took turns contributing to the discussion, their ideas built upon one another. New questions were asked and new ideas emerged. In describing reflective conversations, one reader used the metaphor of "rolling ideas into conversations... like kneading bread as it rises from starter dough" (L. Hoffman, personal communication, 2013). She explained communal inventiveness results from reflective conversations.

The study group members' efforts toward creating a safe affirming LGBTQ school culture are done for the benefit of everyone. To do this requires developing a

communal mind, taking into account the needs of all members of the school community. This includes providing staff the support they need to be able to respond well to students.

For example, in response to reading the transcripts, one auditor reflected that he:

...remembered as a teacher, the feeling that even though needing help or stressed personally around the teaching role or events (e.g., when I've broken up gang fights and been stressed after) when you had to go to the "dean" ostensibly your "boss" that this was seen as a sign of "weakness" as a teacher - that doing so was not a "safe place" for help - that going to the dean or principal for help on dealing with an issue comes with a "cost" and that going there was like taking a "withdrawal" from a limited bank account. I do not remember a formal teacher support when I was teaching and from my reading of the transcripts, I can't identify one in this school either (B. De Cristoforo, personal communication, October 5, 2012).

My recommendations for Theme 3 are:

1. The school needs to be a learning community for the educational professionals and students. They can use Sharevision as a feasible and sustainable way for them to do this.
2. All of the adults at the school need to be TAB trained so they can be counted on to reinforce the TAB curriculum with students throughout the school experience.
3. All staff needs to be trained in LGBTQ issues and annual refresher in-service trainings if the school is to maintain an LGBTQ inclusive school culture.
4. All students will benefit from the GSA having an Advisory Board of counselors, teachers, athletic educators, administrators, parents and community resources.

#### **Theme 4: Encouraging Student Activism**

The GSA Advisor explicitly said he wished he had training in developing student leadership since he believed “the GSA should be a student-led club.” He said he is

“working on getting somebody in here to train the kids how to be student leaders.”

The Guidance Counseling Department does offer high school students a few leadership development opportunities. The school also trains peer mediators to provide conflict resolution using mediation. Students are nominated for training as mediators.

The TAB curriculum trains the student to be activists and to develop assertiveness skills so they are better able and more likely to stick up for themselves and for one another. Even though all of the students are TAB trained in 7th and 10th grade, it is inconsistently reinforced by school staff not TAB trained. That can easily be remedied. The Quabbin Mediation Training Director said they can do a brief all-staff training for free. What remains is for the administration to arrange it.

Though the athletic educators were aware of the TAB Training they reported they did not see much evidence that their students were using the skills they learned. The following is an excerpt of a conversation between the three athletic educators making a case for more leadership development opportunities for students:

- AE1: So no one does anything about it that's why it's important for someone to be able to stand up and say, "No, this is not okay." And I don't know, I think it's going to take more students to try to come together to spread that around the school. And that's something that we can't really do. It's not really. It takes more like a student leader. Maybe you institute student leaders in the school. I don't know.
- AE2: There's got to be some program out there that empowers students to be leaders in their school. There's got to be but I just have no idea what that would be. I've never heard of one.
- AE1: You think of RAs in colleges or I worked at a prep school and we had student leaders in those dorms and some of them were day-students and they didn't live there. So maybe you come up with senior student leaders or senior and junior student leaders. And you create a program where they, I don't know, kind of go around, help kids maybe, do like an orientation thing for the younger kids. I know that Key Club does that orientation. [Key Club is an international service organization sponsored by Kiwanis clubs. KEY stands for Kiwanis Educates Youth.] But I'm saying more like they come here and this is what it's like, they talk to them more about their experiences in school, answer questions, maybe do a panel thing, question and answer. I don't know.
- AE3: I agree that the Training Active Bystanders is a very big mystery to me. I know I talked to you [Interviewer] about that in our individual interview and I don't know if that's just me not asking the right questions. But we hear things occasionally from Guidance but I don't see it. I don't see kids in the hallway. I don't know who these active bystanders are. They'll mention a student, I don't

know if I'm allowed to say names, or not. They said something about [student's name] but then I've never seen anything. I don't know what they're talking about.

I think, yeah, if there's more student governance. If the upperclassmen, and maybe everybody, maybe it's something they all have to do rather than just picking. Because kids join the Key Club because that's what they want to do and kids who aren't interested in that, they miss out on great opportunities. So maybe if initially they're kind of forced into doing something. Maybe there's a buddy system with the incoming 9th graders or incoming 7th graders. They have to buddy up. They've got 3 or 4 kids that they're assigned to and they check in with them, some kind of student mentoring and that, and make them all do it.

AE1: Like a big brother or sister.

AE3: I think there needs to be community service, too, and I think that would help too. I don't think there's enough. I think it's silly that the only students who have to do it are seniors and it's not enough hours.

The Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) has an annual New England Student Leadership (NESLC) that high school student-athletes can apply to attend. One of the remarkable things about this group of athletic educators is that they were interested in generating ideas that would benefit the whole school community, not just student-athletes. That is the best way to build a positive school culture, encouraging student activism through leadership the opportunities afforded all students.

My Recommendations for Theme 4 are:

1. The school's Professional Development Plan should include specific training for Club Advisors to encourage existing student leadership and further activism.
2. School counselors and athletic educators need to connect to their ASCA and MIAA affiliations to help students find and apply for leadership opportunities.
3. Existing student leaders e.g., Club leaders, team captains, peer-mediators, TAB Trainers need to be supported to build coalitions to advocate for peer-support services such as tutoring, mentoring and service learning in the community.

## **Theme 5: Building Community Fairness**

This case study was designed to capture a school that was “getting it right” on behalf of LGBTQ students and in many ways the study group participants exemplified just that. However, it was remarkable to hear from two of the staff who had institutional memory about this school who were lamenting the past school culture that was more LGBTQ affirmative and how that had dramatically changed. One School Counselor described an experience she had when she started as a Guidance Counselor at the school 18 years ago:

Well, I have to tell you, when I first got here, they were in the middle of what they... I don't know what they were calling it, “sensitivity training,” or not. But one of the very first in-service's that I went to was a panel of gay and lesbian college students talking to the faculty about what it was like to be gay in high school. That was one of the first workshops I attended here as a professional development. They were doing a great job when I got here. And, it became at that time, it was like, there were people you could tell were saying things like, “well we're undergoing sensitivity training, so I'm not going to say anything about that,” or they were... It was changing people's behavior but they were saying “well, you know, I'd make a sexist remark, or I would say something” inappropriate...” you got the feeling that they would say something inappropriate at that moment, but they knew better. The younger... I would like to see that happen again. We've been talking about PFLAG, having PFLAG come in.

Well, I think it would raise people's sensitivities to the fact that it is hard to be gay in school and maybe give them some strategies for working with students. I can remember the GSA Advisor when I first got here. She came down and she interviewed me. She said... and I didn't realize that I was being interviewed until at the end, she said to me, “you don't think that it's a sickness, do you?” (laughing) Referring to homosexuality, because, you know, she brought it up. There were still people around eighteen years ago that perhaps thought that it was an illness. And, I laughed when she said that, but... I got a picture as to where she was coming from. She had done a great job of “desensitizing people”, or “sensitizing” people here at the school. She was really behind all that sensitivity training, you know. The first Gay Straight Alliance, which was one of the first one's in the state, and became the model for other ones that came after.



In the Sharevision group, one of the Athletic Educators talked about that time:

...when I was here, I think the culture was completely different and I know I was in SOS and I think there was more, I'm not sure how to say this, not prominent people in the school involved in SOS but top athletes were in SOS and I don't really see that now. Yes, some track girls do SOS but they're not like these number one state championship basketball players, like a Jessica Corey or Sam Parker. Those people are just not involved in it.

The School Counselor got into a dialogue with her about it:

SC1: How many people were involved in the GSA when you were here?

AE1: Oh, a ton.

SC1: A hundred probably.

AE1: Yeah. We just did. It was a completely different thing when I was here and there's just not as many people involved in it now that were, you know, president of Student Council... or you know...

SC1: They were tied into the Peer Educators.

AE1: Kind of. It was two different and separate programs but there were just all these people involved that were pretty known names in school. And I feel like it's not that anymore. I don't know why that is.

There were a number of factors that influenced why the GSA was more active in the mid1990's. At that time the state of Massachusetts Department of Education had launched the Safe Schools program with a million dollar budget and provided free training for all public schools requesting it. After a series of state budget cuts, the Safe School Initiative now has one tenth of the budget to work with.

Also, this school's first GSA Advisor was a champion of the cause and took an active role in making sure staff was trained and on board with an LGBTQ affirmative approach (Brafman & Beckstrom, 2006). High profile student-athletes were active as allies in the GSA since the meetings were held after practice in the late afternoons. Staff

turnover has left most current staff untrained in LGBTQ issues and unaware of the popularity of the GSA and its activism to promote a positive school climate at this school.

My Recommendations for Theme 5 are:

1. In addition to TAB Training, the school needs to develop an annual Professional Development Plan that includes Diversity and Social Justice Training for all staff.
2. The school could benefit from incorporating a Diversity Coordinator position similar to the existing Curriculum Coordinator position to arrange inter-disciplinary training and collaboration on diversity and social justice issues.
3. The school needs to provide administrative support to school counselors and athletic educators who want to fundraise and staff school sponsored events to promote positive student bonding activities, e.g., overnights for each grade, class, student-athlete team and club trips.

### **Participants Experience of Sharevision**

The second research question explored how high school counselors and athletic educators experience the Sharevision process for the exchange and generation of ideas about implementing their school's anti-bullying policy. The Sharevision format was introduced in the group meetings to facilitate the discussion of the questions they generated during their individual interviews talking about their personal and professional experiences with anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment.

In unstructured meetings groups commonly follow an agenda and the process is goal oriented. Usually a handful of people tend to dominate and this occasionally results in cross talk and arguments. Because the focus is goal oriented usually the chair of the meeting stops arguments. In contrast the structure of the Sharevision process provides participants with an opportunity to share their time equitably in a non-hierarchical conversation. Participants practice listening and talking in a new way.

Another key aspect of the Sharevision process is that the meeting begins with a moment of silence and then people checking in with one another personally. This helps build their sense of safety with one another. When they share time equitably, each participant can take the time to say what they need to say without cross talk, argument or discussion. So this egalitarian process promotes real dialogue. That is to say people are encouraged to listen to what one another is saying and this process tends to be more transformative for participants. There is a restorative quality to building these reciprocal relationships. Many ideas are shared that build upon one another and the generation of new ideas is common. Everyone benefits from this sense of communal invention.

One of the readers aptly described one of the major benefits of participating in Sharevision:

The experience of sharevision “draws the toxicity out” of people who have previous human interactions when there was a misuse of power imbalances, by not allowing people to re-enact them in meetings. Instead requiring and providing each participant receive the same amount of air-time asserting equal value and status. It shifts the interaction from being impositional (where some people dominate the conversation or agenda, leaving out or marginalizing others) to being supportive, lifting and uplifting each participant. It may be uncomfortable for participants at first, taking up space, or giving space to others. A great reason to learn how to interact equitably is that it benefits everyone. It’s like a salve or a poultice, it draws out the poisonous feelings from the past – it is healing (L. Hoffman, personal communication, 2011).

I didn’t expect that a group meeting using Sharevision would be met with such an enthusiastic response. I thought the school counselors would relate to it as a nice alternative to case conference meetings. One School Counselor admitted she had been skeptical at first but then she loved it when we reflected on using the Sharevision format in the first group meeting:

I wasn’t sure. When something has a name like Sharevision I get a New England thought like, “Oh, come on... Sharevision? I hope we don’t have to hold hands!”

(Laughter) or anything... (More laughter) I love it. But then... it really... I knew even when you were explaining it I knew that it was going to be interesting. And then I did... I felt like it was productive and I loved it...totally.

I thought the athletic educators would be more reticent to try it. To my surprise, they took to it like it was a new game and they had fun playing it. They identified three of the seven *Participant Generated Questions* that they were interested in talking about.

When I asked how they wanted to proceed, the exchange went like this:

I: Got it? Okay, so in terms of time... we have about 30 minutes say... so we could go 10 minutes for 3 questions or 15 minutes for 2 questions.

AE2: Let's go 10 for 3.

I: Want to do that?

AE2: That's my thought. I'd like to hit all 3 of them.

AE1: I concur.

I: That's fine with me.

AE3: I'm a little nervous about leading one of them.

AE2: That's okay.

I: About what?

AE3: About leading one of them.

I: Oh, got it.

AE3: Presenting.

I: It's really....

AE1: It's not like you answer the question and then people....

AE2: Yeah, right. You just ask the question.

AE1: Yeah, and you are the first person to talk about it. Right?

I: Right.

AE3: I'm still nervous.

AE1: Want me to hold your hand?

AE3: I'll just eat all the chocolate.

This is what one reader meant when she referred to the Sharevision format as "affirmative action for the shy" (L. Hoffman, personal communication, 2013). It was so touching to see the person with the least formal status in the school be so vulnerable and have her colleagues be so kind to her. The other two athletic educators happen to work closely with one another. In contrast, the high school Special Education Teacher's Aid and middle school field hockey coach is isolated from the Athletic Department compared to them. She didn't have the same opportunities to spend quality time with her colleagues before this meeting.

As it turned out it was this nervous athletic educator who reported that she "found her voice" in this study's Sharevision meetings who became the champion for the study group participants to continue meeting over the summer after the study (Belenky, et al., 1986; Brafman & Beckstrom, 2006). She admitted she was afraid after all the talking they had done that their great ideas would be put on the back burner. She said:

...maybe we should get together over the summer to really solidify something because my high hope, and I tend to aim a little high, is that we would have something concrete and some idea to move forward for the fall. And we're not there yet and that's okay, I need to learn to be flexible. But I feel like we're all going to kind of slip backwards and we'll start at ground zero again if we wait until August/September. So I have lots of questions about whether we ought to meet again over the summer to pick maybe 3 things that are totally doable to get started.

Based on the evaluation forms completed at the end of the study, every participant reported that the Sharevision format enabled them to communicate more effectively. This

format increased their ability to listen intently and practice speaking more succinctly. Some said they thought it would take more practice with timed-talking to become more proficient at speaking succinctly. They said the Sharevision format did promote the expression of divergent ideas and thinking. They said they were able to be self-reflective and practice generating multiple perspectives on each question they discussed.

Interestingly, some members of this group had anticipated experiencing greater differences of opinion than in fact occurred. That might be due to the fact that the group was comprised of volunteers motivated to work together on bullying issues. An unintended benefit was that a few participants reported the Sharevision meetings dispelled their previously held stereotypes (counselors versus athletes). Participants also reported that the Sharevision format enabled them to build relationships with colleagues. They said they were able to practice reflective inquiry to share ideas and present questions for other people to respond to.

All of the participants who signed up for CEU's agreed that they had achieved their goals. Findings from this study support the following:

1. Creating a safe, confidential and supportive environment for exchanging ideas creates the conditions within which innovative ideas can emerge.
2. Sharevision can create a context in which members as a group reflect on their experiences which enriches how they think about issues discussed.
3. The practicing of this egalitarian relational process can serve as a model of communicating with others.

The results of this study show that when these high school counselors and athletic educators exchanged ideas using Sharevision, they felt relief from stress and were more enthusiastic about doing what they could to support LGBTQ high school students.

Additionally, because they had experienced the benefits of participating in Sharevision, a number were eager to introduce it in meetings with other colleagues and students at their high school.

### **Limitations**

This case study was comprised of a small group of six educators (three school counselors and three athletic educators) at one small regional high school in a rural district in Western Massachusetts. The student body is predominantly white and over 50% qualify for free and reduced lunch. The study group was comprised of all white, predominantly heterosexual and a majority were women. Participants volunteered and were given incentives including Continuing Education credits and a monetary stipend.

Participants can affect the outcome. Some participants may try to please the researcher, present themselves in a more favorable light to make themselves look better, or have mistaken memories. The results could be affected by the unrepresentative nature of this sample as well as the particular interview questions used. In this study, the researcher-interviewer can affect the outcome. The researcher-interviewer has a very strong bias toward the group meeting format the participants used and is one of the original developers of the Sharevision guidelines.

School counselors and athletic educators in a similar school setting might find the results of this study helpful and useful as they implement their school Anti-bullying policy. While the study is a small one, other schools in the state of Massachusetts share a lot in common: adhering to the Massachusetts Anti-bullying law; the recent DOE directives to incorporate Transgender students; insufficient funding and training to work

with LGBTQ students; and use of the Sharevision process has been successful in a variety of settings including several schools.



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

In order for high school counselors and athletic educators to acquire cultural and emotional competencies to effectively advocate on behalf of LGBTQ students they need on-the-job training and supervision (Hunter & Hickerson, 2003; Goleman, 1994).

Because clinical supervision is rarely provided to school counselors, peer supervision is the most likely way for them to get it. Sharevision is a good alternative to hierarchical top-down supervision. Hoffman (2002) described the origins of Sharevision in her book:

From talking to the group, I discovered they liked the idea of doing case consultation along reflecting team lines [Anderson, 1987, 1990]. We agreed on the need to depathologize our work and found the emphasis on stories rather than problems immediately helpful. Of course, one hazard of a staff that bright and democratic was that everyone was equal but not all were the same. Case discussions could be like religious debates, as the tensions between individual orientations and relational orientations played themselves out.

I suggested we try something new: we would go round the room and, instead of trying to give suggestions or advice to the person presenting a case we would come up with an image, a play, a movie, or a book. Personal experiences that resonated with the situation were encouraged. We would not engage in back-and-forth arguments, and we outlawed so-called constructive criticism, along with advice and suggestions of any sort. Baldwin was interested in narrative theory and other ideas that were coming out of the increasingly postmodern movement, so at first we called our process “narrative supervision.” Then Baldwin came up with “sharevision” (being somewhat of a software nut, he was inspired by the term “shareware”), and it stuck. (p. 186)

The results of this study support previous research finding that school staff are not adequately prepared to carry out this critical aspect of their job and an overwhelming majority want access to more training and educational programs (Sawyer et al., 2006; Wood, 2005). Schools need to provide affordable and feasible on-going professional staff in-service training and supervision in LGBTQ youth issues.

This case study brought high school counselors and athletics educators together in a collaborative inquiry process focused on preventing LGBTQ bullying. The study participants were introduced to some existing LGBTQ training and resources designed for school counselors and athletic educators. They discussed their questions through group meetings using Sharevision, a collaborative inquiry process effective as a strategy for promoting reciprocal adult learning (Thompson & Baldwin, 1989; Landis, 2010a; Mezirow, 2000; Yorks & Kasl, 2002).

The results of the study contribute knowledge about effective school-based professional development in LGBTQ youth issues. Given the opportunity to reflect on their experiences in a safe and supportive peer led discussion using Sharevision, participants learned better ways to advocate for LGBTQ youth in their school. The ideas generated in the study were congruent with those developed in previous research and were consistent with the NASW position and the ASCA National Standards (Whitcomb & Loewy, 2006).

### **Transgender Research still Lacking as Civil Rights Advance**

Gender-based harassment is a pressing problem. In this school there was no apparent institutional effort to deal with transgender students. There were no bathroom signs that indicated transgender students could use them. Research on transgender youth issues is desperately needed. The Healthy Gay Lesbian Bisexual Students Project (HGLBSP) training included no information on transgender students that would help guide school professionals; it was because their curriculum is based on existing research.

School professionals are not prepared for the rapidly advancing LGBTQ student rights. My local newspaper announced that “the Massachusetts Department of Education

on Friday [February 15, 2013] issued directives for handling transgender students, including allowing them to use the bathrooms or play on the sports teams that correspond to the gender with which they identify. The guidance was issued at the request of the State Board of Education to help schools follow the state's 2011 anti-discrimination law protecting transgender people" (Lindsay, AP, 2013). The next step is for the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) to adopt the DOE guidelines for integrating transgender students in high school athletics.

The law the article is referencing is: "An act relative to gender identity (Chapter 199 of Acts of 2011) The gender identity law amended M.G.L. c. 75 § 5, 2 to establish that no person shall be excluded from or discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town, or in obtaining the advantages, privileges and courses of study of such public school on account of gender identity, among other characteristics."

#### **State Funding Needed for Professional Training on LGBTQ Youth in Schools**

While school staff is required by law to receive professional training on LGBTQ youth issues, the infrastructure to provide that training is not fully funded by the state. State Senator Stanley Rosenberg responded to my inquiry about whether the state had budgeted for school staff training on transgender issues. He said that he was in the process of requesting an additional \$150,000 above the current base of \$100,000 being requested by the LGBT Youth Commission. He said "In the mid to late nineties when I chaired the Senate Ways and Means Committee there were a [one] million [dollars] appropriated to the DOE [Department of Education] for the Safe Schools and related programs. By a decade later the amount had dropped dramatically, first because the advocacy in and out of the Legislature had dropped significantly and [then] because of

pressure from outside of the Legislature to reduce spending on the area not because of MCAS as some suggest” (S. Rosenberg, personal communication, February 27, 2013).

Based on the fact Senator Rosenberg said the Massachusetts Legislature responds to outside advocacy, it would be in the best interest of school professionals across the state of Massachusetts to lobby for the funding to be appropriated to support the training in LGBTQ youth issues they need and want. This is an example of how school counselors and athletic educators can influence social policy that directly affects their work with LGBTQ students. The effort would require a simple phone call to their state Representatives.

Both the NASCA National Standards and the NASBE promoting and supporting standards for high school interscholastic athletics make the case for school counselors and athletic educators collaborating to support one another’s efforts to advocate for the needs of at risk youth in school. Sharevision collaboration between high school counselors and athletic educators is one way to develop a self-sustaining system of professional development.

This study shows that given an opportunity to practice collaborating using the Sharevision Model for structured group reflection, high school counselors and athletic educators can find ways to support each other on their own as they develop cultural diversity awareness and reciprocal relational skills. For example, high school counselors and athletic educators can form small study groups, like book clubs, and meet monthly to reflect on questions generated from their work and the readings they assign to educate themselves. When they create new ways to share what they are learning, the whole school community benefits.

Recommendations for questions to guide future research:

1. What are ways to get school staff to access online resources e.g. “HGLBS Toolbox”?
2. What can schools do to help LGBTQ Athletes come out, be visible and get support from their teams, coaches and school community?
3. What are ways that study group participants could build their relationships after the study is over?
4. How could pre-participation exams for athletes be used to assess mental health and stress management skills related to other issues e.g., family history that might impinge upon their performance?
5. How can ways to manage a stigmatized identity or multiple ones be addressed in Health classes for athletes? How do athletes manage these?
6. How can schools provide safe and full access to athletics as a resource for LGBTQ students?
7. What are the best ways to train coaches in LGBTQ issues?
8. What are the best whole school approaches to creating a positive school climate?
9. How can peer-led training be combined with expert information and live panel presentations for professional development?

## APPENDIX A

### INITIAL CONTACT EMAIL

**Subject:** seeking advice re: anti-bullying research study

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

As a doctoral student in Social Justice in Education at UMass, I am doing a research study on a professional development seminar I designed to promote collaboration between school counselors and athletic educators in high school anti-bullying/harassment initiatives. I thought you would be a great person to discuss the feasibility of my study and how best to approach prospective participants. I am attaching a draft participant invitation and if you have time and are so inclined, I would love your input. I am sure you are extremely busy, but I would love an opportunity to meet you in person some time that is convenient for you. Thanks in advance for your time. Lisa

---

*Lisa D. Thompson*, MSW LICSW Ed.D. Candidate Social Justice Education  
School of Education, University of Massachusetts Amherst

## APPENDIX B

### QUABBIN MEDIATION AND TRAINING ACTIVE BYSTANDERS

Quabbin Mediation "mediates disputes that arise in all areas of community life and teaches mediation, conflict resolution, and violence prevention skills with the intent of weaving the language and process of creative problem solving into the fabric of the community." (QuabbinMediation.org)

Training Active Bystanders (TAB) is a program for students and teachers to learn how to interrupt harmful situations with a variety of safe intervention techniques. Student-led trainings help students and teachers have the competence and confidence to intervene in negative situations and create a safer environment in the school. TAB was created by Quabbin Mediation, Creative Problem Solving in collaboration with Ervin Staub, Ph.D., an expert on why people help and harm others. According to Quabbin Mediation, TAB is a "Community Based Curriculum:

TAB engages youth in the teaching of the curriculum through a peer-education model. Teens are paired with adult members of the community to teach in pairs. The pairs share the responsibility of teaching as equals. Having teens teach the curriculum keeps students engaged. Utilizing adult volunteers from the community.

Quabbin Mediation conducts an 18-hour training wherein teen trainers work side by side their adult counter parts. Adult volunteers are chosen from various community agencies, groups and organizations to ensure full community participation in shifting the attitudes towards harm-doing and the promotion on active bystandership. The teens are selected by school personnel and peers and those with enough social capital to improve school climate through education and role modeling. Pairs of trained teen and adults teach the 6-lesson curriculum to full grades of students in variety of configurations. As these teens and community adults work together a relationship is created. Many of these adults go on to be personal references for youth on job and college applications. The shift towards a caring community begins in the formation of positive relationships between the trainers. These relationships become models of the evolution of a community towards caring more for one another." Retrieved from TAB Model under Curriculum Content at <http://www.trainingactivebystanders.org>

According to the Quabbin Mediation, Training Active Bystanders flyer, "TAB has been taught in schools, community settings, through employer groups and at public events, drawing a wide range of people learning how to take action in their own communities." <http://www.trainingactivebystanders.org>

Quabbin Mediation's main office is located at 13 South Main Street, Orange, MA 01364. The mailing address is PO Box 544, Athol, MA 01331. (978) 544-6142; (800) 924-2600. For more information contact: [info@quabbinmediation.org](mailto:info@quabbinmediation.org)

## APPENDIX C

### CONTINUING EDUCATION (CEU) APPLICATION

The School Counselor-Athletic Educators Collaboration Study will provide participants an opportunity to explore effective ways to collaborate in their efforts to address anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment in high school. Curriculum materials prepared by the Healthy Lesbian, Gay, & Bisexual Students Project, of which NASW is a collaborating member (Anderson & Porter, 2004); the Education Kit developed by It Takes A Team! Education Campaign for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues in Sport, of which NCAA is a collaborating member (Griffin, et al., 2002); and the Institute for Global Ethics report prepared for the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) report showcasing three different school-wide collaboration initiatives will be presented (Mirk, 2007). Other handouts will be presented as well.

A group discussion will be facilitated through a structured reflection group meeting format called Sharevision which directs participants to practice equitable and reflective communication. Participants will have an opportunity to compare notes on how they address student bullying from different perspectives. Participants will have an opportunity to review ways other schools have developed collaborative school-wide anti-bullying efforts and will be encouraged to identify ways they can collaborate with one another in their school setting.

Seven participants have been selected from one district high school representing school counseling, athletic educators and the Gay-Straight Alliance faculty Advisor. Each participant has agreed to participate in a (45-60 minute) in depth individual pre-training interview regarding their experiences with anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment both personally and in their professional roles; articulate what support they need in order to collaborate with colleagues to address it; and to identify their own professional development goals.

Participants have agreed to participate in three (90 minute) group training sessions where they will have the above-mentioned resource information presented to them (see reference list) and have an opportunity to discuss the issues with one another in a group discussion. Each participant will take turns presenting a question to the group, related to anti-LGBTQ bullying and/or gender-based harassment in the high school, to have their colleagues reflect upon in a go-round fashion.

Participants have agreed to then participate in a (45-60 minute) in depth individual debriefing interview to discuss how the initial interview, training presentations, and group discussions have impacted their ability to form collaborative relationships with one another to address anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment in their school. Participants will be contacted by telephone/email after the second interview to provide feedback on how the professional training experience has impacted their ability to advocate effectively on behalf of LGBTQ students and athletes in the high school.



### Learning Goals:

1. Participants will build greater awareness of the best practices resources available to them developed by experts in school counseling and athletics to effectively address anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment in school.
2. Participants will have an opportunity to learn from one another as they develop creative problem solving and effective communication skills discussing actual cases in their school.
3. Participants will have an opportunity to build collaborative relationships with their school counseling and athletic educator colleagues in a supportive environment.

### Reference List:

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3. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights. (2010, October 26). Dear Colleague letter: Harassment and bullying. Retrieved on October 27, 2010, from <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201010.pdf>
4. Eisenberg, M. E., & Resnick, M. D. (2006). Suicidality among gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth: The role of protective factors. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 39*, 662-668. doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2006.04.024.
5. Elsbree, A. R. (2002, April). Disruptive pedagogies: how teacher educators disrupt homophobia. EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. Wisconsin: Research report.
6. Griffin, P., Perrotti, J., Priest, L., & Muska, M. (2002). It takes a team! Making sports safe for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Athletes and Coaches. (Video and Education Kit) [www.ittakesateam.org](http://www.ittakesateam.org) Eisenhower Park, NY: Women's Sports Foundation.
7. Hoffman, L. (2002). Sharevision. Chapter 11 in *Family therapy: An intimate history* (pp. 185-200). New York: W.W. Norton

8. Mirk, P. (2007, August). Promoting and supporting standards for high school interscholastic athletics in an era of reform. The State Education Standard. <http://www.globalethics.org/resources/Promoting-and-Supporting-Standards-for-High-School-Interscholastic-Athletics-in-an-Era-of-Reform/199/>

## **APPENDIX D**

### **INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE**

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a unique opportunity to interact with your colleagues comparing notes on how your school is addressing student bullying and harassment. A group of colleagues from school counseling, guidance, health, physical education and athletics will be invited to meet together to support one another's efforts. CEU credits will be applied for on behalf of participants interested. Handouts and informational materials will be provided free of charge.

Doctoral student Lisa D. Thompson, LICSW has designed this 3 session seminar to study the benefits of collaboration between school counselors and colleagues in athletics in making schools safer for LGBTQ students. The seminar will introduce a group discussion format called Sharevision. It is a format for small group discussions where participants practice collaborative reflection. Talking and listening in a highly structured time sensitive format enables participants to efficiently elicit new and different ideas about their own work in a supportive environment.

All participants identities will be held confidential, as will research materials collected by Lisa D. Thompson, LICSW. Agreement to attend all three training meetings, completion of a brief pre-and post-participation interview/survey, consent to record the sessions, as well as two brief post-seminar follow-up phone interviews will be required for participation. Thank you in advance for your consideration. I hope you will be able to join this exciting study.

Lisa D. Thompson, MSW LICSW Ed.D. Candidate Social Justice Education  
School of Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

**APPENDIX E**  
**STUDY GROUP PARTICIPANT CONTACT SHEET**

---

Name Telephone/Extension Number

---

Title/Role Home Telephone Number

---

Email Address Cell-phone Number

---

Address at School (Mail Box & Room Number)

---

Home Address

---

Work Schedule/Hours

---

Times to Avoid Contacting You

---

Best Day/Time for Individual Interview (30-45 Minutes)

---

Best Day/Time for Individual Group Seminar Meeting (90 Minutes)

---

Best Day/Time to for Follow-up Phone Interview (15 Minutes)

OVER →

## Participant Demographics

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study. To provide a little background, it would be helpful if you complete the brief demographics questionnaire below.

Please fill in the circle to the LEFT of the response that most closely represents how you describe yourself.

For example: ● Black

---

**Your Gender:**  Man  Woman  Transgender/Gender Queer

**Your Race/Ethnicity:**  Black  White  Latino/a  Asian  Native American  
 Biracial/Multiracial  Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Sexual Orientation:**  Heterosexual  Lesbian  Gay  Bisexual  
 Questioning

**What are your parent's occupations?** Mother \_\_\_\_\_ Father \_\_\_\_\_

**What is your highest degree attained?**  BA/BS  RN  MA/MS  MSW   
 PhD/EdD  Other Degree \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Role:**  Administrator  Guidance Counselor  Adjustment Counselor  
 Nurse  Psychologist  Social Worker  Athletic Director  Coach  Assistant  
Coach  Athletic Trainer  Academic Advisor  Assistant Coach  Physical  
Education Teacher  Teacher  Other \_\_\_\_\_

**What is your certification/license?**  Teacher  Social Worker  School Counselor  
 Psychologist  List Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Sport(s):**  Baseball  Basketball  Cross Country Running  Field Hockey  
 Football  Golf  Gymnastics  Ice Hockey  Lacrosse  Rowing  Rugby  
 Skiing  Soccer  Softball  Swimming/Diving  Tennis  Track & Field  
 Volleyball  Wrestling  Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Please indicate which of the following best describes you.**

Paid full-time staff person  Paid part-time staff person  Volunteer

**How many years have you been in your current job?**

Less than 1 year  Between 1-3 years  More than 3 years  More than 6 years

## APPENDIX F

### DESCRIPTION OF STUDY EMAIL

Subject: School Counselor/Athletic Educator Collaboration Study

Hi first name of principal,

Thanks so much for returning my call today. Here is a brief description of my study for you to forward to your staff.

UMass Amherst Social Justice Education *School Counselor/Athletic Educator Collaboration Study* conducted by Doctoral Candidate Lisa D. Thompson, LICSW

The American School Counselor Association, (ASCA) and the National Association of School Boards of Education (NASBE) have called for School Counselors and Athletic Educators to form alliances to collaborate to ensure the safety of high school students and athletes. The recent disclosure of child sexual abuse covered up by PENN State officials is an example of how the lack of communication between school officials is dangerous for children.

The reason your high school was chosen for this research is that it is an exemplary case of how a school can address bullying and harassment prevention in a pro-active way. The goal of this research project is to collect school counselors and athletic educator's stories, ideas and experiences so they benefit educational colleagues in other schools. School Counselors and Athletic Educators willing to participate in individual interviews and three brief group meetings where they exchange ideas will make a tremendous contribution at a time when knowledge about effective approaches to ensuring student safety are desperately needed. My hope is that the results of this study will be providing a positive concrete example of a school that is getting it right.

I know that your staff is overextended as it is. I have applied for a grant to offer \$250 stipends to each of the six participants (three school counselors, three athletic educators) as an additional incentive. Do you think a monetary incentive would make a difference? The time commitment is approximately 6 hours total. A forty-five minute interview before and after three ninety-minute group meetings. Also, I will apply to Smith College to offer 7 Continuing Education Units (CEUs) as soon as we set the dates for the three group meetings.

I am wondering if it would be helpful for me to talk (for 5 minutes) to staff during your next Professional Development Delay. Please advise. Lisa

---

*Lisa D. Thompson*, MSW LICSW Ed.D. Candidate, Social Justice Education  
School of Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

## APPENDIX G

### PARTICIPANT GENERATED QUESTIONS

School Counselor-Athletic Educator Collaboration Study  
*Participant-Generated Questions* (from individual interviews)

1. How can we make sure bystander piece is talked about across the board?
2. What can we do to effect lives of kids? Winning isn't all that is important, life is more than that; we're in a position of power, we have the ability to help kids become better people.
3. What are new ways to combat it? To get painful words to stop? The language. How to get in-service training in school, bullying workshops that fit into our schedules?
4. What can we do for the bullies? Prevention focused.
5. What do other schools do? Do it differently? Proactive type programming is more important than reactive ones.
6. How can we make our school culture more safe and accepting? Is it safe for somebody on the football team to come out? Have we had openly gay boys on a football team? What would that be like?
7. How do we build a school culture where students are looking out for each other when teachers are not around?

## APPENDIX H

### REMINDER EMAIL TO PARTICIPANTS

Hi Everyone,

A reminder of your homework you agreed to do for the meeting,

Your mission... should you accept it is to.... skim over the assigned material enough to present what the key components of that program are, that caught your attention, and name one or two things you think could be tried at your high school.

Remember that I am prepared to cover anyone's assignment if you have been too busy to do yours.... Here's a reminder of what you have been assigned.....

**School Counselor 1:** T.A.B. Training and Article: *Promoting and Supporting Standards for HS Interscholastic Athletics in an Era of Reform*

**School Counselor 2:** Handout: *Teaching Tolerance Bullying and LGBT Students* and GLSEN Sports Project *Changing the Game* (see website)

**School Counselor 3:** *It Takes a Team! Education Kit* and watch DVD

**Athletic Educator 1:** *Sports Done Right! A Call to Action*

**Athletic Educator 2:** *Pursuing Victory with Honor*, national initiative and watch CD

**Athletic Educator 3:** *Just Play Fair*, statewide sportsmanship and citizenship program

Like I said before feel free to "trade" with someone else if you prefer to spend a little time on something other than what was assigned to you. I can always back you up so no need to spend too much time on this, just familiarize yourself enough to talk about it.

Take care, Lisa

**Lisa D. Thompson**, MSW LICSW Ed.D. Candidate, Social Justice Education  
School of Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst



## APPENDIX I

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANT EXIT INTERVIEWS

Research Questions:

1. How do you experience the responsibility of dealing with anti-LGBTQ bullying and gender-based harassment in your school?
2. How did you experience the Sharevision process of structured collaborative reflection in group discussions with your colleagues to exchange and generate ideas as you implement your school's anti-bullying policy?

## APPENDIX J

### LETTER FROM STUDY GROUP

Dear Lisa

Thank you so much for bringing the Sharevision process to us. I think we have all gained a new respect for the work each other does in our school and feel empowered to work on a common case to help our students. The whole experience has been so enjoyable and the stipend was a surprise, which I had forgotten all about! Thank you!

We had a wonderful meeting last week (AE1, SC2, SC3, and SC1). We used the Sharevision process to craft an outline for a proposal to the administration about making a LGBTQ safer school and assigned tasks to each other, including the recruitment of allies.

At the end of the meeting we all talked about how good we felt about the process of which we had now taken ownership. We have scheduled a meeting for July 10th and we all wanted you to know that we would love it if you would like to come. I have enclosed information.

Thank you again for getting us started on this project and for taking such good care of us throughout the whole process!

Sincerely,

SC1

## APPENDIX K

### ATHLETIC EDUCATOR'S PERSONAL STORY: BULLIED IN LOCKER ROOM

This material is discussed in the Results section under Research Question 1: Theme 1 Promoting Safety: Safe Spaces: The locker-room

#### Athletic Educator's Personal Story

One of the Athletic Educators (AE) described to the Interviewer (I) a personal experience he had as a youth being bullied in the locker room:

AE: In terms of anti-gay or sexist, I don't know how much. I know regular bullying. I was the "short, fat kid" in high school when I started off. So I definitely say that I was bullied when I was going from 8th grade to 10th grade. Luckily, when I was a freshman my brother was a senior in high school so then you could say that I saw the retaliation side of being bullied in that sense where I saw my brother and his friends, you know, sort of step in and try and intervene from what they saw what was happening with me.

In terms of sexist or anti-gay... more so the sarcasm of people using the word "gay" or "you're a fag" or stuff like that, is more so, you know, playing college athletics than playing high school athletics. The locker room is a hot spot. I mean even today in the locker room, I heard somebody call somebody else "gay" and I went off on a tirade. And it's just that's where I see it most. Especially having my office in a locker room, and being in a locker room for, you know, high school, junior high school, college... that's where I see a lot of harassment going on in terms of sexist remarks and stuff like that.

I: So when you say, "locker room," you are talking about a male locker room?

AE: Male locker room. Yes. Because I am, my office now is in between the middle school boy's locker room and the high school boy's locker room, so the door is open to both sides. So I get, you know, seventh graders perspective of what I hear and twelfth graders. So I've heard...yeah.

I: Can you tell me a little bit about what that's like for you? You know, like...when you were... Okay so when you were younger, you said you were bullied.

AE: Yes.

I: Not specifically around gender or sexual orientation...

AE: No.

- I: but like what kinds... how was that for you?
- AE: It was awful. I mean it was, for me it was traumatizing as a freshman in high school to have all the people... you know all the upper classmen, people on the team that you were supposed to look up to, and supposed to respect, and say "oh, that's who I'm supposed to role model my behavior after..." be the ones that are attacking you. It makes you feel helpless. It makes you feel like the person you are supposed to turn to, you know to help you, you know be a leader and learn the sport, and be that guidance is the same person who is knocking you down a peg.
- I: So why do you... can you explain why you think that is happening? What is the point of all of that?
- AE: I think it's just to show how tough they are. I think that they have a stigma that their older, they have to promote their dominance over the new group coming in so they can feel powerful. It's a class system. It's been through the ages. There have always been classes, and in medieval times... and it's still to this day. There's upper classmen, and lower class men. It's a... I'm trying to think of the word for it. It's a power struggle. They want to make sure they stay on top so they're going to do whatever they need to do to make sure that their dominance is shown.
- I: Did you experience any of the adults, or teachers, or staff intervening in any way?
- AE: Not once. When I was in high school – not once. The coaches never set foot in the locker room. It was the captains who controlled the area, and the captains are the ones who were behind half the stuff. So, it was... and it probably didn't help that I never went to anybody and said anything. Because at that point, that was the last thing you're going to do is, if you're a freshman, go say, "well I'm getting picked on by a senior." Not going to look good for you in terms of the team. So...
- I: And, can you explain why that is..? Like why would that make you look...?
- AE: Scared. You're afraid. You are coming into an established culture of a team. And, then you're the one who is going to try and throw a wrench into that, and say, "hey what you doing here isn't appropriate" and that makes you... it's almost feels like you're dividing the team, that team cohesion that's already there, you're going to try and mess with it...?
- I: So if you were to speak up and say, "Hey, I don't like the way I'm being treated..." you kind of have to suck it up. That's your understanding as a seventh grader?
- AE: Yes.
- I: That that's what is expected of you.

AE: Correct.

I: And there was no adult that told you otherwise?

AE: Nope.

I: Now you did say that as you got older, when your brother started sticking up for you...

AE: Yes.

I: How did that play out? How did your brother become aware of the fact that that's the way you were being treated?

AE: I think he was able to see how it affected me. He knew that I...

I: Can you describe that a little bit...?

AE: He knew that I didn't like going into the locker room. I had the locker next to my... I'll never forget his name... \_\_\_\_\_. I'll say it in this. He... I was petrified of the guy. And, my brother knew it. My brother knew that I didn't like going to my locker. I'd always be the first one in there, before he'd got in there, or I'd be the last one...

I: This guy...

AE: Yeah... or I'd wait until \_\_\_\_\_ left. And then at one point I remember my brother going in there and taking him by the back of the neck and saying, "if you talk to my brother one more time, there's going to be severe issues..." And, one of the other captains was my brother's best friend and then the next day said the same thing to the guy, "if you talk to him one more time, there's going to be issues." After that, it subsided, but they could see that I didn't want to be in the locker room. I loved playing the sport, I loved playing soccer, but the last thing I wanted to do was to go in there before and after practice.

I: And so what kind of things did they say to you?

AE: Oh, you know, I mean, it was more like, instead of saying...it was more of, you know, if I opened my locker, he'd immediately shut it. If I opened my locker and took my shoes out, one shoe would be thrown across the room. I can remember, even when I was in middle school, I was walking on the bus one time, and he took a bag of Doritos and smashed it over my head. And, it was just little stuff. It wasn't anything major. It wasn't hazing, it wasn't, you know, awful, but it was just the little things all added up.

I: Oh yeah.

AE: And that's, I see it, looking back on it now, I see it clear as day, all the steps, just leading towards what could have happened if nobody had intervened. You know, how far would he have taken it? Would he have been, you know, gone over the edge with things... physical harm, stuff like that? I don't know. So...

I: How about other students? Did you witness other students being treated similarly?

AE: Yes. I had a best friend at the time. He was the other "fat kid" and he also got ridiculed. Probably more than I did because he was bigger than I was. He was a goalie and they used to lay into him for being overweight. So... it wasn't just a one person on the team thing.

I: Do you think... I'm just curious; you mentioned that the other "fat kid," do you think that the adults looked the other way because they agreed with them around weight issues, like they want kids... I mean was there a motivation?

AE: I think that part of it is that, that they said, "well, you know if everyone is making fun of them, then maybe they'll realize it and start getting in better shape" or part of it I think is that they didn't want to deal with it.

I: The adults?

AE: The adults. You know out of the coach and staff of four people, there's only one person who was a teacher at the school. Everyone else was outsiders coming in. So, you know they're just coming in at two o'clock and they just want to get to practice and get home. So, I don't think they really were too invested into what was happening in the locker room. They were sort of there to show up, coach and go home.

I: And so how did it... did any of that play out in the field? Like while you were playing?

AE: No. At that time – no. Because I was a freshman, you know, I was younger at the time. And, he was playing varsity so I wasn't on varsity. So when we were out in the field that was sort of the break time for it. I have my own, you know, my own set of friends and they were over there and that was it. There was a divide there. But any time we did anything as a team together, it certainly came out again.

I: Um, hm. Got it.

AE: Yes.

I: So when you got older and you were, you said your brother kind of went up to him and the other team captain went up to him, and that is when it stopped. Were there other incidences of, you know, after that?

AE: No.

I: So that was the end of it?

AE: Not that I remember. It's just...

I: So it really just took your brother...

AE: It took somebody saying something.

I: So it took somebody... that is tremendous... you are talking about years of being mistreated...

AE: Probably about three years.

I: Three years of this, and it just took one or two people saying something that can turn the whole thing around...

AE: Yes.

I: That is pretty remarkable.

AE: It's the unbelievable when you think about it. And looking back on it I thank him until this day.

I: Yeah.

AE: Because I mean, it's just being a brother, so...

I: Yeah. Amazing. Wow.

AE: I'm one of the lucky ones I like to think, you know. What would have happened if I didn't?

I: Right, yeah.

AE: So...

I: Wow, that's amazing.

## APPENDIX L

### GROUP DISCUSSION ON PARTICIPANT-GENERATED QUESTION 6

This material is discussed in the Results section under Research Question 1: Theme 1 Promoting Safety: Safe Spaces: The locker-room

**How can we make our school culture more safe and accepting? Is it safe for somebody on the football team to come out? Have we had openly gay boys on a football team? What would that be like?**

Athletic Educator 1 volunteered to present the question, and each person present took turns in the go-round to reflect on the question posed. The Researcher Interviewer (I) helped facilitate the group so they could practice following the Sharevision guidelines and also participated in the go-round. The following is an excerpt of their discussion:

AE 1: Alright... So how can we make our school culture safer and accepting? Is it safe for somebody on the football team to come out? Have we had openly gay boys on the football team and what would that be like? Do you have something (to Interviewer)?

I: Sure, why does that question resonate for you and what are your thoughts about it?

AE1: I think that just making our school culture safer and accepting starts with the faculty and being role models and with the upperclassmen, too. Is it safe for someone on the football team to come out? I would hope so. I don't think we've ever had someone openly gay on the football team since I've worked here or when I went [to high school] here.

SC1: I can't think of anybody.

AE1: So, there are people who are openly gay but not necessarily on the football team. What would it be like? I don't know. I hope there would be no problem with it and it would just be normal but I don't know because I've never seen it here. But, yeah, that's where I'll start.

I: Can I add something to that question?

AE1: Sure.

I: So what do you think it would take for a football player to feel safe enough to be openly gay in this high school?



AE1: Probably just knowing that his coaches and teammates are supportive of that. And just how they react around other students and the issues in school that come up. I guess.

AE2: Are you done?

AE1: Yes.

AE2: I can go next. I think the coaches would have no problem with it. I don't think any of the coaches here at the school would ever make a big deal of it or anything like that. I think it's more the teammates and I can just think of what would happen in the locker room. Now, knowing that there are no openly gay people, I mean kids are running around naked all the time. I can remember there was this student who used to run around naked every day after school. And that's just what he did and I don't know how that would affect the culture of the team, if they knew that somebody on the team was gay, would they instantly everything would change in the locker room. Would everything... Would the world stop spinning if it happened? I don't know how high school kids would react to that. So I think it's more the reaction of their teammates is what would prevent someone from coming out.

SC1: I'm thinking that statistically, that we've definitely had kids that were gay on the football team.

AE2: Um, hmn.

SC1: And the fact that they're not, they weren't open, might just mean developmentally some kids weren't ready to take that step but also it may mean it wasn't feeling safe to them. Whether it was internal perceptions or group dynamics or whatever. I'm thinking that probably we've had kids that were gay and didn't feel okay being open about it. Does that make sense, statistically?

AE2: Yup. Yeah.

SC2: Um, hmn

SC3: As I've been thinking about this question, I think it actually relates to a lot of what I was thinking about when I thought about question 7 was the question I was thinking about originally and a lot of it came from concerns that I heard from my GSA kids about the locker room. I think that what I've heard is that the locker room is where a lot of the bullying seems to take place. That the word faggot gets tossed around... all the time... from what I hear. I don't know I'm not there. But it seems like a place that kids are probably unsupervised, I don't know what the policies are but I would assume so.

That the teachers aren't really able to be there supervising in the locker room. So I think that what tends to happen is that a lot of kids are... I think that a lot of kids feel really unsafe in the locker rooms and that would make it really hard for an openly gay kid to be on the football team or any team that I'm aware of because of that locker room time.

And, I think that's true for all the kids in gym class when they have to be in that locker room time they deal with that. I don't have solutions but that's kind of what I'm thinking about around this. It does seem like that it's a really problematic space and I'd love to find ways that we can change it. Maybe it means changing the school culture, right? To make that space safer for kids.

AE1: Can I add something to that real quick?

I: Well, let's get everybody in the go around. We'll probably have time.

AE1: Okay.

SC2: I agree with that only because I've had students come to me with issues of being in the locker room, one way or another. During gym class they've been great about letting the kid who has Asperger's [syndrome] who's uncomfortable changing in front of other kids, change in the other, the high school locker room when they're in middle school. . . that kind of thing. I have a 7th grade student who I found out after the football season felt, not that he's gay, I don't know if he is or not, but he quit the football team because of what was going on in the locker room coming from one particular 8th grade student to the 7th grade student. If I had known about that I would have told the coach during the season but I didn't know. So I can just only imagine that it would very difficult to be openly different in the locker room, if people knew you were openly different. I think it would be.

The other thing that I might mention is that when you were a student here, (to AE1) there was a very strong faculty in-service that went on around all the -isms [racism, sexism, heterosexism, etc.]. And when I arrived, I missed all the other -isms but when I got here 18 years ago they were in the middle of the gay ones for staff. We had in-services where there were panels of people talking about what it was like to be in high school... as a gay person in high school and that kind of thing... talking.

And I felt there was a very strong culture and expectation, that when you heard a homophobic put-down, the word gay, faggot, whatever, all those things are tossed around, that all the faculty knew how to interrupt it and knew that they should and they did. I felt that you didn't hear that in the school anywhere nearly as much as you do now.

And it's just not happening... for the past number of years, I've been trying to get the administration, but now we're tied up with NEASC (reaccreditation). But once that's over, I'm hoping, we're going to go back and have an in-service and get that going again for the faculty. Don't you feel it [heterosexist comment] was interrupted more when you were a student?

AE1: Can I talk?

I: Yeah, you're asking a question, (to SC2) but let's stay with the process...

SC2: Oh.

I: Because we haven't heard from AE3 yet (to AE1). You're doing great.

AE3: So, just remember the question (to AE1). I was thinking what SC1 was thinking, at first, that there must have, has to have been someone gay on the football team and either they weren't ready to come out because they just weren't ready, or they didn't feel comfortable.

The other thing I was thinking is that maybe people shy away from playing football because they're not comfortable playing. There's this kind of oppositional idea between being a football player and being gay or they're just not comfortable doing that. That was one thing I was thinking. I feel like SC2 was really hitting on something.... Like what do we do about it, basically, or how do we create that culture?

And, I feel like it's so socially acceptable now to be using the word gay or faggot or queer or things like that in just everyday common language and that, in the locker room or anywhere, could make anybody really, really uncomfortable. I hear Jew comments still and that just seems so archaic to me, like, it's over and done with. World War II is long gone, but... so I can understand that because it's so socially acceptable to talk like that 'cause that's how all your friends talk, it adds to that level of discomfort with being around people who talk like that.

And maybe if a team knew that a player was openly gay, maybe they wouldn't ridicule him to his face but it might get really awkward. And maybe that's what they want to avoid, that awkwardness of how do you act. "Do I get naked in front of them?" things like that. But the idea of doing more proactive stuff to really get it through to kids that it's not socially acceptable to talk like that.

They're kind of in a bubble here. If they really branch out, not just in Massachusetts but in other parts of the country, if they really, really branch out, I would like to think that it's not socially acceptable to be

talking like that in your peer group. I guess it feels like there's not enough done about it when you hear them talk like that and it gets really tiring trying to tell them to stop. And you can't go home with them either.

They're going to continue to talk that way with each other. Or have that attitude even when you're not here. They might modify it and clean it up when they're around you because they know you don't like it 'cause they're trying to be respectful or they just know they'll get in trouble but when you're not around that's a crucial time, too. To really teach them that you guys ought to be really socializing in a different way.

I think spending some more time and money to do in-service, and I don't know if in-service was just for faculty or they involved students in it but I think that would be a really good step in the right direction. To make it more embodied by the entire school and, again, demonstrated by the faculty that we're not going to tolerate that kind of behavior. I think if it wasn't so socially acceptable, that would help. Regardless of... you're entitled to your opinion and it's not about trying to change your opinion and tell you what to think, but how not to [behave]...

I: Let me just add a couple of things. It's so fascinating how we talk about the football team and immediately start talking about the locker room and how all of these issues are so intertwined. One of the things I have to say about locker rooms; I grew up in a community where girl's locker rooms were literally built differently than the boy's locker rooms so the girls' locker rooms had more privacy and the boy's locker rooms were more like a gauntlet. And I never really knew that until I went into a boy's locker room and I thought, "Oh, my G-d!" I don't think I could shower in a place like this because I had been used to this kind of private little thing.

So, having said that, I just want to say that statistically, one out of every four girls is sexually assaulted by the age of eighteen. One out of every six boys is sexually assaulted by the time they're eighteen. So if you have 10% of the population that is gay or questioning, there's all this stuff going on for these kids.

Then as you mentioned, you have a disabled population who have different kind of... you have Asperger's syndrome, and various issues and physical changes over time as people are maturing, and they're bodies are changing, they're getting hair, and developing, and people's gender identities are forming.

So, I just think it's so loaded and they really need help sorting through all that, so I think to me, being proactive is a really good point, and so if you have such a good program addressing issues of health, I wonder if we could address some of these questions like, "What is it like

being naked in front of your peers?” Anyway... Okay, you have the last say (to SC1).

SC1: I don't.

I: Then if we have time we can get back to. . . . (to AE1) Oh, you have the last say; you're the person who posed the question...

AE1: Yep. So, what I want to say to you is that during the day, I feel like those locker rooms are way more supervised than they are during practice. I mean, everyone that's in those locker rooms is coaching so there's no one in there, so who knows what goes on? I don't think the coaches go in there and stand in there. I know I don't. I'm not going to stand in there and wait for my girls. I'm out getting practice going or setting up equipment so that whole span from 2 whenever to 5 o'clock, there's no one in there, especially after practice when they're back in there. So you don't really know what happens.

And then, you asked about when I was here, I think the culture was completely different and I know I was in the GSA and I think there was more, I'm not sure how to say this, not prominent people in the school involved in the GSA but top athletes were in the GSA and I don't really see that now. Yes, some track girls do GSA but they're not like these number one state championship basketball players, like a [two student-athlete's names]. Those people are just not involved in it.

SC2: How many people were involved in the GSA when you were here?

AE1: Oh, a ton.

SC2: A hundred probably.

AE1: Yeah. We just did. It was a completely different thing when I was here and there's just not as many people involved in it now that were, you know, president of Student Council... or you know...

SC2: They were tied into the Peer Educators.

AE1: Kind of. It was two different and separate programs but there were just all these people involved that were pretty known names in school. And I feel like it's not that anymore. I don't know why that is.

AE2: So, for middle school, the locker room for classes now, I have to walk through the locker room while they're changing because there have been so many issues. So now I've taken upon I to walk around and I can't tell you how many times I hear, "Mr. M, you staring at me?" All the time.

“Nope, just making sure guys are okay back here” and just walk through. And, yes, it’s kind of awkward but it’s something that has to be done in order for them to feel a little better. Maybe somebody’s going to feel okay changing and now that there are shower curtains up so they can go into the showers to change, so they don’t have to change in front of other people. And she said it, when she said; they let them to go into the other locker room to change. I don’t want anyone to feel uncomfortable and I’d be dumb if I didn’t think the locker room wasn’t a hotbed of stuff going on.

And it’s something that definitely has to be dealt with and on a daily basis. Just having locker room doors open, it’s every two seconds, “Don’t say that,” “Come in here, yell at somebody else.” They don’t realize their voices carry and a lot of things I hear in the locker rooms that are said I wouldn’t want my worst enemy to hear. So, we do try our best but like she said, coaches after school, from 2 o’clock on, there’s nobody in there. We say [to coaches] try to keep track of your athletes but it normally doesn’t happen.

AE1: Because they are coaching.

AE2: Because they’re out coaching.

AE1: You can’t be in two places at once.

SC2: No. We need an Aid...

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