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Out for Equity, A Case Study

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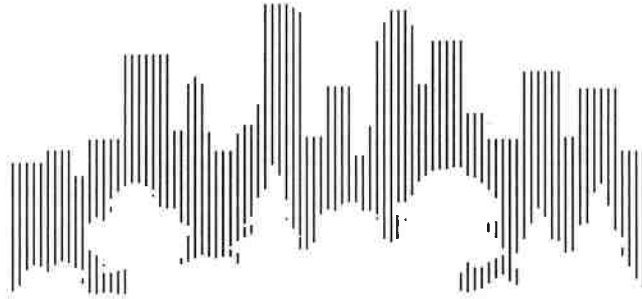
AUGSBURG

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MASTERS IN SOCIAL WORK THESIS

Erin Beaudry

Out for Equity, A Case Study

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OUT FOR EQUITY, A CASE STUDY

by

Erin Beaudry

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CERTIFICATE OF APPORVAL

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

OUT FOR EQUITY, A CASE STUDY.

BY
ERIN BEAUDRY

March 22, 1999

The purpose of the study is to explore the effectiveness of such a program and if found useful, to put forth information that can assist social workers in starting such a program in their school systems. Homosexuality has been a controversial subject in our society for many years. Society has reacted to the topic in many different ways including ignoring, condemning, or accepting gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals for who they are. The framework for this study is based on Systems Theory and focuses on the power the education system has in affecting the lives of gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth, parents, and teachers. Following a thorough literature review and reporting and discussing findings from research, recommendations for future research, policy and practice conclude the thesis.

I wanted to take the time to thank people who made my MSW a possibility. I would not have made it through this process without the help of three women that I admire dearly, Mary Caswell, Mary Agnew and my dearest Bootsie. Without you in my life this past year, I would not be where I am today. Thank You!

I am so grateful for my family, my mother, sisters and brothers. I have been blessed with their children also. Dad, I miss you, but feel your presence daily.

My program has given me a life that I never thought I could have. I hope that I can do for others what has been done for me. The people that have come into my life are a gift and a true joy.

Farly and Spiffy, you are the loves of my life. I desperately needed you and your simple presence lights up my life.

Susan you talked me into this whole thing, you also had faith in me throughout our time together. I will always be grateful to you for that. I hope that you can find joy in your life.

Finely to Maria Brown and Jacque Stratton, thank you both for your investment into my life and career. I learned so much from both of you and I hope someday I can be of service to you.

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I. **INTRODUCTION**

Statement of the Problem

Over the years homosexuals have often been seen as essentially immoral and, at times, mentally ill (Silverstein, 1991). Throughout the twentieth century the topic of homosexuality has been shrouded in secrecy due to religious, legal, and cultural repression (Herek, 1991, 1993). Many people have chosen to keep their sexual orientation a secret due to fear of losing family, friends, jobs and fear for their physical safety.

Social work as a profession strives to promote social justice, equality and respect for all individuals that it serves. Unfortunately, in this country, the homosexual community within the school systems continues to lack appropriate services to meet the special needs faced by GLB individuals. It is critical for both school social workers and social workers in general to become more aware of the needs of the GLB population within the school systems and the responsibility to begin to provide better services for them.

The climate in our society has begun to change in the recent past for homosexuals. Many more GLB individuals are coming "out" (revealing their sexual identity to those in their lives). There are now many support groups for gay, lesbian, and bisexual people. Laws are changing to reflect the rights and safety of homosexuals. Conflicts regarding sexual orientation including child custody, marriage, and domestic partnership, military service, the HIV epidemic, and other issues have been appearing publicly (Patterson, 1995). With increasing frequency, legislative bodies have considered issues regarding homosexuals and public awareness of gay, lesbian and bisexual issues has

increased (Patterson, 1995).

Homophobia and heterosexism continue to be widespread despite this recent increase in gay rights. Gay youth in particular are vulnerable to homophobia and heterosexism based on their dependence on their families and school (Travers & Schneider,1996). Youth tend to lack the individual as well as social support to deal with the rejection they face from society based on their sexuality. The stressors that gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth face include aggression, rejection, and alienation, suicide and substance abuse. In numerous studies more than half, and many times three quarters, of gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth report that they have been verbally or physically attacked because they were gay (Travers & Schneider). Consequently, many gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth are alienated and isolated because they lack social support as well as adult role models (Schneider, 1991).

It is estimated that 20% to 40% of gay and lesbian youth attempt suicide (Bradford & Ryan, 1987; Remafedi, 1987a; Rotheram-Borus, Hunter, & Rosario, 1992) and a significant portion have suicidal thoughts (Schneider, Farberow, & Kruks, 1989). The risk increases for youth who are rejected by family or peers, for those who feel isolated and/or negatively about their sexual orientation, or for those who are living on the street (Travers & Schneider; Hammelman, 1993; Kruks, 1991; Schneider et al., 1989).

It is important to address the issue of homosexuality in the school systems because school is a major part of adolescents' lives. Schools need to be attuned to the needs of gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth so they can, like their heterosexual counterparts, be assisted in this crucial developmental task of

clarifying sexual identity (MDE, pg. 7, 1994). It is crucial that our schools model acceptance and respect for *all* .

In 1994 a program began in the St. Paul public school system entitled "Out for Equity". The program began under the premise that schools should support its gay, lesbian and bisexual students, parents and teachers. It was believed that a greater effort needed to be made to assist gay, lesbian, and bisexual people in all areas of their lives. Out for Equity is a program designed for all GLB individuals within the school system, including adolescents, parents and educators and their families. The focus of the program is to provide a safe learning environment, to promote equality for all members of the school population and provide specific services for GLB persons and family members.

The goal of this thesis is to review programming such as "Out for Equity" within schools. I will accomplish this through analysis of the original objectives established for the program prior to the start of Out for Equity.

I became interested in this project after coming into contact with Out for Equity and then looking for other such programs within other schools. I was extremely concerned at the lack of such programming, a total of four within the United States at the time of printing of this thesis. I was also struck by the nature of Out for Equity and its fundamental social work nature. It was my belief that the knowledge I gained from studying Out for Equity was important to share with other social workers. The proceeding chapters will consist of a thorough literature review, discussion of methodology, a case study of Out for Equity followed by implications for further practice.

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Individual Identity Development

Erik Erickson wrote, "Someday, maybe there will exist a well informed, well-considered and yet fervent public conviction that the most deadly of all possible sins is the mutilation of a child's spirit" (MDE, 1991). This is a reasonable goal in our society; however, it is not yet a reality for gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth. These youth not only have the struggles of identity formation that other youth face, but added stress due to society's rejection of their sexuality.

For teenagers, adolescence is a time of discovery that will most likely result in their accomplishing certain fundamental tasks (Urbine, 1994). These include the establishment of a stable identity and enhanced self-esteem, adaptation to an adult sexual role, emancipation from the family, and the formulation of career or vocational goals (Bidwell, 1988; Hammar, 1982).

There is no evidence as of yet that indicates that adolescents that are homosexual differ from their heterosexual peers in their biological or cognitive development. The differences occur in the areas of psychological and social development (Edwards, 1996). Being out as gay, lesbian, or bisexual often brings consequences that other youth do not face such as what Goffman (1963) calls "spoiled identity" or managing social stigmatization, the cognitive discord (Festigner, 1957) that occurs from being a member of a hated and despised minority group, and the possible self-hatred that can develop from individuals internalizing homophobia (Edwards, 1996).

The most difficult task facing an individual homosexual is personal

adjustment in a generally hostile environment (Cox &Gallois, 1996). Although violence inflicted on lesbian and gay adults is well-documented, not much is known about violence inflicted upon the adolescent population. Remafedi (1987c) found that over half of his sample of gay male youth reported peer verbal abuse, and nearly one third had experienced physical attack. Nearly 40% of the male youths in a later study reported physical violence towards them (Remafedi, Farrow, & Deisher, 1991). Physical attacks were reported by 41% of the lesbian and gay youths surveyed by Hunter (1990), with half of the attacks arising from the youths' sexual orientation. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth are also at higher risk for suicide, and alcohol and drug use are significantly higher among gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth in comparison with heterosexual youth (Ramafedi, 1987a; Rotheram-Borus et al., 1992).

A particular area affecting the identity development of homosexuals is the issue of isolation. The literature reviewed subscribes to an ideology which indicates that many of the psychological and physical health concerns that were indicated previously are magnified by the isolation that gay, lesbian and bisexual youth encounter (Sears, 1989; Hunter & Schaecher, 1987; Newman, 1989; Decter, 1993; Sullivan & Scheider, 1987; Martin & Hetrick, 1988; Anderson, 1987). Isolation is seen as one of the most serious issues that gay,

lesbian, and bisexual youth face (Martin & Hetrick, 1988; Morrow, 1993; Hunter & Schaecher, 1987; Dempsey, 1994).

Cognitive isolation refers to the lack of information available to gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth in society; social isolation involves the discrimination and inferiority felt by many youth; and emotional isolation address the feelings of loneliness, anger and confusion regarding the sense of being different that gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth face (Martin & Hetrick, 1988). These areas of isolation can lead to one or all of the following; poor self-esteem, depression, self-defeating attitudes and self-abusive behaviors (Sanford, 1989; Dempsey, 1994; Martin & Hetrick, 1988; Remafedi, 1990).

It is reported that on average, lesbian women first begin to become aware of their same-sex attractions between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, and, on average, they have their first homosexual experience at age twenty. Gay males first report becoming aware of their same-sex attractions at an average age of thirteen years, and the majority of gay males have had homosexual experiences by the time they are fifteen years of age (Bell, Weinburg & Hammersmith, 1981). A goal of the identity development process comes in the evolvement of an individual's self-identity which includes acceptance and satisfaction in being homosexual (Troiden, 1988). Unfortunately, society in general is not supportive of homosexual identity development.

Involvement of the Family

Extensive sampling and follow-up at Kinsey's Institute for Sex Research has consistently found that ten percent of the general population has a basic same sex-orientation. This means that one in every five families has a gay or lesbian child (Dahlheimer & Feigal, 1991).

Parental rejection is a significant factor for many gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth. There is little data on the number of gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth who run away or are kicked out of their homes by their parents because of their sexual orientation , but it is believed that a significant portion of homeless youth are homosexual (Savin-Williams, 1994).

In various socially oppressed ethnic and cultural groups, the family typically serves as a focus of validation and teaching about what it is like to be a member of an oppressed group. For example, people of color teach their children what it is like to be a minority in our society. This is not the case for gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth (Morrow, 1993). These youth usually hide their sexual identity from their parents until they leave the home. In addition, children are usually raised by their parents with negative stereotypes about homosexuality, learning that it is sick, sinful, or illegal. Even if parents do not reject their homosexual child, heterosexual parents own life experience is not a sufficient guide in understanding the unique stresses that their gay, lesbian, or bisexual child face on a daily bases (Dahlheimer & Feigal, 1991).

Hershberger and D'Augelli (1995) indicate that there is little research on how the support of the family may be related to the harmful consequences of victimization on homosexual youth. They do indicate that several reports attest

to the overall importance of family (especially parental) support to lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths (Savin-Williams, 1989).

A biological family's responsibility towards its offspring include protecting, socializing, promoting self-esteem and identity, and teaching survival skills. But many heterosexual families-of-origin are ill-equipped to fulfill these responsibilities with their gay children. Dahlheimer and Feigal (1991) point out that many never make it through the initial phase of grieving following a child telling them that they are gay, therefore remaining permanently hostile. Other families wish to be supportive; however, they lack information that would allow them to be helpful to their child (Dahlheimer & Feigal, 1991). Many youth end up going outside of their family system to get the support that they need in accepting their homosexuality.

Homosexual Parents

Traditionally, families have been defined as nuclear, two-parent, child-centered, heterosexual units. Slater (1988), as well as others point out that such assumptions about families neglect a large portion of the population and deny legitimacy to the family forms and functions that exist among gay and lesbian families. Like many other diverse families gay, lesbian, and bisexual families have often been treated as though they were deviant and dysfunctional, or as if they did not exist at all.

A large number of children have at least one homosexual parent. Two surveys (Bell & Weinberg, 1978; Jay & Young, 1979) find about 20% of homosexual women and 10% of gay men have children. The numerical

estimates number in the low millions for the number of children with at least one gay parent (Bozett, 1987; Gottman, 1990).

A myth society holds in regards to homosexual parents is that they will not be able to raise normal, healthy, and productive children. Within a large group of studies researchers have posed questions concerning the children of homosexual parents cognitive and emotional development, peer relationships, self-concept, moral judgment, gender identity, gender role behavior, and sexual orientation (Gibbs, 1989; Golombok, Spencer, & Rutter, 1983; R. Green, 1978; R. Green, Mandel, Hotvedt, Gray, & Smith, 1986; Huggins, 1989; Kirkpatrick, Smith, & Roy, 1981; Puryear, 1983; Rees, 1979). Conclusions of these studies find that there is no empirical support for the proposition that the children of lesbian or gay parents are different from other children. In fact, it was found that in every evaluation there was no significant cognitive differences between the children of homosexual and heterosexual parents (Flaks, Ficher, Masterpasqua, & Joseph, 1995).

Another myth is that homosexual parents will raise homosexual children. A number of researchers (Bozett, 1981, 1987, 1989; Golombok et al., 1983; Hoeffer, 1981; Huggins, 1989; Kirkpatrick et al., 1981; Miller 1979; and Rees, 1979) have concluded that the sexual orientations/preferences of children of gay or lesbian parents do not differ from those whose parents are heterosexual (Baumrind, 1995).

Studies show that there are some special difficulties facing children of gay and lesbian parents such as social discrimination, ridicule, and even isolation. These adolescents are particularly vulnerable to peer pressure and harassment

as they struggle with the development of their own identities. Regardless of such difficulties, it has been shown children of gay and lesbian parents do not differ significantly from other children (Baumrind, 1995). The difficulties these youth face occur in regards to how society reacts to them rather than how they mature developmentally within their family system.

School involvement

In the two places where a child should feel safe and supported, gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth are most often disparaged: family and school. "Gay, lesbian, and bisexual adolescents are a socially oppressed group discriminated against by a heterosexist and homophobic society. Because of the negative stigma society places on lesbian, gay, and bisexual adolescents, they face numerous difficulties that require social support and intervention"(Morrow, 1993, p. 655). Because of their difficulty in building a strong identity these adolescents are an at risk population.

Educators have a clear professional mandate to address the needs of their sexual minorities. The school setting is a focal point in adolescent growth and development. Adolescents struggle with gaining acceptance from their peers and don't do well with any type of differences in one another. Many gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth find school to be an isolating and stressful experience, shying away from school-related activities or isolating themselves from others (Morrow, 1993). Peer harassment is particularly problematic for gay, lesbian, and bisexual adolescents. Given that much of it occurs in school, as schools tend to reinforce heterosexual norms, the consequences individuals

face include a range of academic difficulties such as truancy, poor grades, dropping out, and having to repeat a year. These difficulties have been noted in both anecdotal and in systematic research (Savin-Williams, 1994).

Urbine (1994) points out that homosexuality is a highly complex, controversial, and emotionally charged subject, and despite the educational establishments commitment to the health and well-being of its youth, issues of teen homosexuality have not been confronted. This in turn leaves the youngest, most vulnerable of the homosexual community entering puberty and our schools at their own peril.

There are many misconceptions circulating in regards to dealing with homosexuality within the school systems, the first being that adolescent homosexuality is a passing phase (Remafedi, 1987c; Roesler & Deisher, 1972). This belief that individuals will outgrow their homosexual feelings, which is prevalent within the school systems, devalues homosexual feelings and can actually intensify the anxiety level in gay, lesbian, or bisexual youth (Gonsiorek, 1988).

Another fear of educators is that by discussing homosexuality they will be promoting it. Mallon (1992) states that many professionals wrongly avoid addressing gay, lesbian, and bisexual orientation for fear that they would be seen as encouraging adolescents toward homosexual orientation.

These myths are compounded by other barriers including lack of courage on the part of gay and non-gay adults in standing up for the rights of homosexual adolescents, including a lack of information available about the needs of these young people; and the failure of school systems to confront controversial

matters in regards to sexuality issues (Bailey & Phariss, 1996).

If the issue of adolescent homosexuality is not dealt with in the homes or in school, then society will have to continue to deal with such statistics as Edwards (pg. 68) points out:

>*26% of gay youth are forced to leave
>home because of sexual identity.
>
>*68% of young gay men and 83% of lesbians
>report using alcohol and other drugs on a
>regular basis.
>
>*41% of lesbian and gay youth suffer violence
>from their families, peers, and strangers.
>
>*30% of youth suicides are committed by lesbian
>and gay people.
>
>*20% of all persons infected with AIDS/HIV were
>most likely infected as teenagers (Herschberger
>1995, Savin-Williams 1994; Anderson,1987).

Treadway and Yoakam (1992) point out that gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth thrive when supported in the school environment. These youth need to feel safe, knowing that abusive language as well as physical assault towards them based on their sexual orientation will not be tolerated. School professionals can play a key role in supporting these students by creating a safe environment for them to learn. Support should also include addressing the serious problems that many of these youth face. Support groups and peer education groups can be life-saving for gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth and can assist them in affirming a positive identity (Treadway &Yoakam, 1992;

Hershberger & D'Augelli, 1995; Baumrind, 1995; Edwards, 1996).

Systems Theory

As social workers and other school-based professionals address the development of school programs, a systems perspective offers a model of understanding how the perpetuation of discrimination towards gay, lesbian and bisexuals can occur and how this discrimination impacts healthy identity development. Systems theory believes that not only should the individual be focused on in regards to dealing with social service and social change but also the community they live . In regards to gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals within the school systems this perspective emphasizes the importance of the role schools play in assisting the well being of homosexuals (Morrow, 1993; Hunter & Schaecher, 1987; Schneider, 1991; Uribe & Harbeck, 1993).

Systems theory illustrates how allowing the discrimination of gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals affects healthy identity development. When societies continue to remain silent they condemn gay, lesbian, and bisexuals to become psychosocial cripples and foster the futileness of their hidden lives. Gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals are deprived of opportunities to develop self-esteem and the social skills that become second nature for heterosexuals (Anderson, 1994). This oppression and discrimination of gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals develops into a larger communityissue with the number of suicides, homelessness and psychosocial problems faced by these individuals (Sanford, 1989).

System theory for gay, lesbian and bisexuals addresses not only the

individual's need to receive help for their issues, but also society's responsibility to assist in changing views on homosexuality.

Limitations in the literature

Literature focusing on gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth is limited as most of the articles were not research based but rather based on the author's personal or philosophical knowledge. There was limited literature that was longitudinal in nature therefore making it difficult to learn the long-term effects of discrimination and oppression that these young people face in school.

Another limitation in the literature was the lack of information on the unique stresses faced by gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth of color. This factor is disturbing considering the fact that young black gay males, as indicated by recent statistics, are attempting and committing suicide at a higher rate then other gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth (Baumrind, 1995).

Summary of literature review

The literature review focuses on several key areas; Individual Identity, Family, Parenting, and school involvement because these are the area's that the Out For Equity program focuses on. The literature review was an attempt to focus on whether or not there was a need for such a program for gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth.

The review of the literature emphasized a need for such programs within school systems. It did not focus on what is currently out there for gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth, as this will be addressed later within the case

study portion of this paper. The next chapter will focus on the methodology used for this research.

III. METHODOLOGY

I first came into contact with the Out for Equity program in the spring of 1996 during the process of searching for an internship for the Masters in social work program at Augsburg College. The Director of Out for Equity, Mary Tinucci, was unable to provide a masters level internship, but it was at this time that I became interested in her program. I was especially impressed with the elements of social change and innovation in equality the program offered to lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals within the school systems. I also became aware of the importance of the program when I began discussing with Mary why she began Out for Equity. She shared with me some things that had happened in her life that was the driving force for starting this program. I was extremely impressed with an individual who was willing to put her career on the line for such a worthy cause.

Initially I was going to create and utilize a questionnaire and complete research on the information I received. The questionnaire was to be passed out to current participants of the Out for Equity program and the participants were to assess how well the program was working for them. Considering the majority of the participants of Out for Equity are under the age of 18, I was required to submit a proposal to the Review Board at Augsburg College stating my intentions for the research and what would be involved for the participants of the study. The Review Board determined that if I were to administer such a questionnaire I must first send out a letter to all of the parents of children attending school in the St. Paul school system. The purpose of the letter was to

indicate that a research project was being conducted within the St. Paul School systems to measure the success of the Out for Equity program. The letter was to contain a statement indicating that their child may or may not be a member of Out for Equity, but if their child was a member would it be all right for them to participate in the study.

Based on the sensitivity of the subject (as not all of Out for Equity members were open about their sexual orientation to their parents) and the importance of anonymity for members of Out for Equity, I decided to take another approach with this project.

I decided to do a case study of Out for Equity utilizing interviews with Mary, literature review, pamphlets from the program, an independent evaluation and Marys initial proposal that she used to begin the program. There has been no other studies done on Out for Equity. A literature search was completed using clicnet, the inter net, social work abstracts and education abstracts to search for studies on any of the other school based programming for GLB individuals. Words such as gay, lesbian, bisexual students, homosexuality, adolescents, school based programming for GLB were used in the search. I was unable to find actual studies on the other programs, but there were some articles on them.

The first step was to interview Mary Tinucci, director and creator of Out for Equity. We discussed how the program was created, implemented and its goals. Mary was more than willing to have any type of research on Out for Equity completed as long as the safety of its members was insured. Mary and I met on four other occasions after our initial meeting to discuss the history of the program, current events, and to assure the accuracy of the information utilized

within this paper.

Next I completed a literature review that focuses on the topic areas that Out for Equity concentrates on. I was able to find plenty of literature that supports the purpose of the program but a minimal amount on other such programs within the public school system. There are four other programs within the United States that support gay, lesbian and bisexual students, staff and parents within the public school (Urbine & Harbeck, 1992).

The program that Out for Equity is based on is a program entitled PROJECT 10 which was developed to provide in-school, supportive programming and education for gay, lesbian and bisexual youth, and to heighten awareness of students and staff to gay, lesbian and bisexual issues (Uribe & Harbeck, 1992). As part of the program, which was piloted in Los Angeles, California in 1985-86, training was presented to a group of educators, counselors, administrators, etc.; information and counseling were openly publicized; and groups were established as a forum for discussion regarding gay, lesbian and bisexual youth.

The effectiveness of Project 10 is illustrated in a study completed by Uribe & Harbeck (1992). The overall findings of this research highlighted the fact that education and awareness were two of the key pieces in minimizing homophobia and discrimination against GLB persons. The other school programs are out East and are highlighted in articles by Bennett (1997) and Anderson (1997).

After completing the literature review I began to analyze the existing data. I was looking to see if Out for Equitys initial goals for the program were being

reached, what kind of impact the program was having on the St. Paul Public school systems and what may be done in the future to enhance the current program and perhaps start other such programs in other areas.

Using information received from Out for Equity, including an independent evaluation, pamphlets, brochures, literature and supporting information from Systems Theory, intent of this thesis is to further explore the need for school based programming for gay, lesbian and bisexual youth, parents and educators.

IV. Program History, Overview and Goals

KEY ISSUES FOR GLB STUDENTS

According to both government and academic studies, gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth are the most often victimized groups in the nation, frequently suffering harassment, dropping out of school, suicide, drug abuse, and homelessness (MDE, 1994). It is crucial to understand that this harassment and high risk behavior are not inherent in the sexual orientation of these young people, but rather a result of isolation and the hostile, homophobic environments in which they live and go to school (Hershberger & D'Augelli, 1995).

While Out for Equity benefits gay, lesbian, and bisexual students, staff and families directly, all those served at the high school level benefit. In an increasingly diverse society, the importance of learning to live peacefully and respectfully with others is central to the well being of our communities. Creating a more informed and inclusive environment benefits all within the school community.

PURPOSE

The purpose of Out for Equity is to provide information, resources and services regarding gay, lesbian, and bisexual people to all students, staff and families at the senior high school level in St. Paul Public Schools.

More specifically, Out for Equity works to:

-reduce harassment of gay, lesbian, and bisexual
students

-reduce high risk behaviors among gay, lesbian
and bisexual youth

-create school environments that fosters the
valuing of diversity(Tinucci, 1997).

Problem

Unfortunately, schools are not generally supportive of gay, lesbian and
bisexual adolescents when they are in the process of identity development
(Dempsey, 1994), and therefore, many adolescents find school a place that is
isolating and stressful, where they feel they are outsiders in their own
community (Morrow, 1993). Uribe & Harbeck (1993) note that adolescents who
are not receiving support during identity development may be at higher risk for
dysfunction, especially if they are lacking adequate positive role models, lacking
identification with a peer group, are experiencing negative pressures from
society, or have a dependence on parents and educators who may not be
supportive of them. All of these factors can lead to internalized homophobia or
self-hatred, which increases a homosexual youth's sense of being "different", as
well as one's feelings of hopelessness and shame (Remafedi, 1990).

Being "out" as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, (or being perceived as such), is
often very negative in schools and in the larger community. Society pays a
price for schools ignoring the needs of their GLB population with increase in
violence towards gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals that the schools serve.
Additional research supports the fact that gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals

routinely experience being the target of verbal abuse, physical threats and physical violence (D'Augelli,1989).

As a result of this hostile reality, a student's sexual orientation becomes a precious secret. Due to this stress of keeping this secret, the gay, lesbian, bisexual student is likely to feel isolated, have low self-esteem, and is likely to engage in high risk behaviors. More specifically, "gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth are two to three times more likely to attempt suicide than other young people. They may comprise up to 30 percent of completed youth suicides annually"(MDE, 1994). Other responses to this stress and hostility include using/abusing chemicals, dropping out of school, having high levels of absenteeism, and running away.

Gay, lesbian, and bisexual parents often want to support their children's education, but likely fear many of the same negative consequences noted earlier. They have concerns about the repercussions for themselves and for their children if their sexual orientation is known.

Likewise, gay, lesbian, and bisexual staff face similar issues. GLB educators have faced many barriers in their professions, including harassment and discrimination. They could be positive role models for gay, lesbian, and bisexual students, but are often silent. They are unclear as to their job security and administrative support with regard to being open about their sexual orientation.

Clearly, the lack of social support, accurate information and resources, clear inclusive policies and visibility within the school system regarding sexual minorities work contrary to the goals and objectives of effective education.

While no single system carries the blame for the oppression and discrimination faced by gay, lesbian, and bisexual people, many systems, including schools, must assume the responsibility to change, to create environments that foster positive self esteem, and truly celebrate diversity (MDE, 1994).

Studies completed during the 1980's and early 90's documented a range of difficulties confronting gay, lesbian and bisexual (GLB) youth. Problems included family conflicts, dropping out of school, homelessness, prostitution, drug abuse and suicide. Harassment related to sexual orientation was identified as a factor related to poor school attendance among some GLB youth.

Concerned St. Paul Public School staff and community professionals began addressing issues facing GLB youth during the 1980s. These efforts led to the creation of a formal program, Out for Equity, in the Department of Guidance and Counseling, which was approved in March 1994 by the School Board. Start-up monies were granted by the Saint Paul Foundation, the F.R. Bigelow Foundation, the Mardag Foundation, and The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Department of Health and Human Services, via the Minnesota Department of Education Prevention and Risk Reduction Unit. Funding for the 1995-1997 school years was obtained from the Minnesota Department of Education (now the Department of Children, Families and Learning).

In 1993, St. Paul Public School social worker Mary Tinucci proposed Out for Equity in response to these needs. Jay Ettinger, Assistant Director for Guidance and Counseling (since retired), agreed to house the project in his Department. Despite opposition from a few community members, Out for Equity was

approved in March 1994 by the School Board .

The first several years of the program saw significant conflict over the program. A protest against the content of the program, organized by the anti-gay nonprofit groups "Eagles Wings Ministry" and "Outpost", was presented in August 1994. The Catholic Defense League mounted a major effort against Out for Equity, utilizing the mass media, in early 1995. A community forum was held where individuals from the community could come and express their concerns about Out for Equity. These organizations continued to mount protest towards Out for Equity for several years. Their fear was that such programming would encourage young people into homosexuality, affect the institution of the family and go against individuals religous beliefs.

The public remained strong in support for Out for Equity. Opposition by several school board candidates during the fall of 1995 failed to attract significant interest; three of four successful candidates supported the program, including one openly gay man.

Initial start -up funding of $16,560 was received in the fall of 1994 from The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Department of Health and Human Services, via the Minnesota Department of Education Prevention and Risk Reduction Unit. This enabled the hiring of Mary Tinucci as a full time Interim Program Specialist to coordinate the program in September, 1994.

In November 1994, first year funding totaling $36,500 was received from The Saint Paul Foundation, the F.R. Bigelow Foundation, and the Mardag Foundation. These grants covered the balance of project costs through June 1995. Funding to cover the 1995-97 school years was obtained from the

Minnesota Department of Education (now the Department of Children, Families and Learning).

In December 1996, SPPS Superintendent Curman Gaines sent a written statement to all district employees stating that discrimination (including that against GLB individuals) would not be tolerated. Such a statement had been requested by program staff and recommended in previous program evaluations. This sign of active support from the SPPS administration encouraged continuing development of a safe environment for GLB students and employees. In the summer of 1997, the program was incorporated into the overall SPPS operating budget.

OBJECTIVES

There were three main objectives that Mary Tinucci set out to accomplish with Out for Equity. Following is a summary of those objectives, the activities that would be implemented to obtain the objectives and a brief summary and analysis on my part as to whether the objectives had been reached.

OBJECTIVE #1

To increase the availability and coordination of support services for lesbian, gay and bisexual students, staff and families within the St. Paul senior high schools(Tinucci, 1994).

To obtain this objective, Mary planned to implement support groups for GLB students within the high schools in the St. Paul School district. Establish safe staff who would be identified as individuals that GLB students could go to for support. To actively build a resource network with community based programs

that support GLB individuals, in particular, youth agencies.

OBJECTIVE #2

To increase awareness on the part of school staff on the pervasiveness of homophobia and the affect i has on the school system. Furthermore, it was felt that once staff became aware of the problem, they would be able to create and maintain a supportive school environment for all students, including GLB youth (Tinucci,1994).

Out for Equity would achieve this objective through training of high school staff in collaboration with community agencies working towards similar ends. The training would include information about the harmful effects of homophobia, as well as strategies for providing a more positive learning environment for all learners. There would also be literature available that would addressing GLB issues within each high school.

OBJECTIVE #3

To develop and coordinate a central clearing house of information and appropriate bibliographies regarding GLB people for their school libraries (Tinucci, 1994).

This objective would be accomplished through analyzing the existing resources and documenting requests for such information from students, parents and teachers. Feedback from the librarians would also assist to determine the need for such information.

Looking at objective one it is evident from all sources that this goal has been met. Initially there were already two such groups within the St. Paul school high

schools. By the end of 1997 there was a GLB support group in each of the St. Paul High Schools, there were at least 3 identified safe staff in each school that met on a monthly basis and Out for Equity is currently utilizing such community organizations as P-FLAG and District 202.

Objective two has been and is currently being met through Mary Tinucci visiting the high schools for presentations. During the 1998-99 school year Mary accompanied twelve of her guest speakers into twenty five different classrooms throughout the twin cities area. Mary will also visit any middle school or grade school that requests her. There were nineteen requests from district employees and fifty five requests from outside of the district (Tinucci, 1999). Mary attempted to fullfill all requests for her services this past year, however was unable to meet seven of the requests made due to lack of time as she is the only employee of Out for Equity thus far. Requests that were unable to be filled by Out for Equity were referred to such programs as District 202 and The Youth AIDS Project. The demand for Marys services indicates a strong interest on the part of educators to understand the needs facing GLB youth within their schools.

Thus far, Mary has indicated that there has been a large out pouring of support and inquir about Out for Equity, much more than she had initially anticipated. Mary also ensures that there is plenty of literature made available for each high school and any other education system that is requesting information.

Finally, the third objective appears to be the least successful of the three objectives indicated. There is information regarding GLB issues available

within each of the high schools, but according to Mary Tinucci the overall incorporation of GLB friendly literature within the school libraries and classroom curriculum is lacking. According to my last interview with Mary, this issue will be the main goal for the 1999-2000 school year (Tinucci, 1999).

Overall, Out for Equity appears to have been very successful in its first 4 years of operation. Examples of out for Equitys' success are as followed:

1.) Out for Equity was initially funded through grants and by the end of its third. year it was a part of the yearly budget in the St. Paul School District.

2.) There was a consistent number of safe staff and a consistent attendance by these staff at the monthly check in meetings.

3.) Teachers and students alike reported to Mary Tinucci and Tom Cytron-Hysom that attitudes within the classrooms changed markedly after an Out for Equity presentation.

4.) Out for Equity has exceeded its original goals with programs such as Early Childhood Family Education, which offers GLB parenting classes for preschool parents in the St. Paul area.

5.) Most importantly, in the 1996-1997 the St. Paul Public Schools Superintendent sent a letter to all district employees, stating discrimination of any kind (including against GLB individuals) would not be tolerated.

SUMMARY

The experience of gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth by self report and research available is one primarily of isolation and fear. Also by research and self report, the impact of available information, resources, support and services dramatically improves (or would have improved) the quality of the school experience for gay, lesbian, and bisexual people. By continued silence, GLB

students are deprived of opportunities to develop self-esteem and the social skills that become second nature for heterosexual students. To this end, Out for Equity strives to improve the quality of life and educational experience of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth as well as improve school climate for all those involved.

V EFFECTIVENESS

The creation, implementation, and growth of Out for Equity is part of much larger social and educational trend. Examples include a national campaign by Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, and a landmark legal case in which a gay student won significant damages from Wisconsin school administrators for harassment.

Data detailed in the report provided by Tom Cytron-Hysom, MA, LSW and Mary Tinucci indicate that Out for Equity has had significant success in providing support services for students, as well as educating students and staff about GLB issues and concerns. This is indicated by marked increase in the number of persons served by Out for Equity. From 1994-1997 there were 907 students and 988 adults served by Out for Equity (Tinucci, 1999). In 1999 alone 2,012 students and 918 adults were served through Out for Equity (Tinucci, 1999). Overall awareness of GLB students and their needs appears to have increased.

Dealing with GLB persons and concerns remains highly emotionally charged for many individuals. Strong cultural and religious beliefs often elicit strong emotions regarding discussion and provision of GLB programming. The Saint Paul Public Schools and Mary Tinucci can take pride in the leadership role they have assumed in providing a safe, affirming environment for GLB students.

The scope of the Out for Equity service delivery has expanded each of the last several years. In the independent study conducted by Tom Cytron-Hysom, MA, LSW in December of 1997 he found that during 1996-1997, seven high school support groups served 53 youth; 30 classroom presentations educated

854 students on GLB issues; 21 GLB parents received assistance; 340 SPPS staff were trained; 88 inquiries for information external to the school system were logged; and 7 volunteers contributed 523 hours of services (Cytron-Hysom, 1997). The variety, range and depth of services delivered is especially remarkable given that only Mary Tinucci was assigned to the program. Out for Equity has leveraged resources through the use of interns, volunteers, and other volunteering to serve as Safe Staff.

By 1997 the number of individuals served by Out for Equity had grown from 907 students and 988 adults served from 1994-1997 to 2,012 students and 918 adults served in the 1997-1998 school year. This increase includes the number of students served in the K-12 classrooms, the number of teachers that invited Out for Equity into their classes, support groups, individuals served by mental health services, GLB employee network, staff training and presentations and the parent network (Tinucci, 1998).

From 1994 through 1997 Tom Cytron-Hysom gathered data, completed surveys and analyzed the program Out for Equity. Written surveys were administered students participating in support groups within SPPS senior high schools. In the program evaluation completed by Tom Cyton-Hysom, students are able to cite specific benefits obtained from the group, including greater comfort within themselves, a sense of belonging, and increased ability to cope with harassment from other students. There was a decrease in the number of students utilizing support group during the 1996-1997 school year, however an evaluation of the statistics for the 1997-1998 year reveals that the number of support groups has stabilized at six within the school district.

The Safe Staff portion of Out for Equity has demonstrated good results in helping create a safe learning climate for students and in providing a direct source of information and support for individual students. This is seen with the continued increase in the number of safe staff and by self report of students during Cytron-Hysom's evaluation. In 1994-1995 the safe staff program included 125 participants and by the end of the 1998 school year the membership has increased to 268 participants (Tinucci, 1998). These individuals work within the school district and identify themselves as individuals who are able and willing to support gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals.

Classroom attitudes and behavior regarding GLB students and issues improved markedly following Out for Equity presentations. Teachers verbalized to Mary that they found the trainings effective in accomplishing presentation objectives, and they reacted favorably towards trainings (Tinucci, 1999). One ongoing concern that continues to affect GLB students is a general concern for their safety, as many have experienced verbal and physical harassment due to their sexual orientation.

Out for Equity has fostered and influenced positive changes in SPPS beyond the K-12 levels. The program continues to be invited into schools outside of the St. Paul school district to present to staff and students alike.

The role taken by school principles appears crucial in determining effectiveness and follow through in dealing with homophobic language and behavior. Mary Tinucci indicated that her experience was schools in which principels take a clear, proactive approach to such problems, with clear and consistently applied sanctions, appear to develop a healthier, more supportive

climate for programming such as Out for Equity and GLB individuals.

SPPS has specific policies and procedures to protect staff from discrimination related to sexual orientation. Summary information obtained from the SPPS Human Rights office and included in Tom Cytron-Hysoms evaluation was not adequate to assess whether these policies were effective. There was an incident a few years back within the school district in which a lack of clarity in resolving an incident in which there was a perception that a student teacher was terminated for being openly gay was cited repeatedly by staff as problematical. Informants who participated in the individual evaluation by Mr. Cytron-Hysom indicate safety remains a concern for many GLB staff.

Out for Equity clearly reached most of the goals that it originally set out to reach. The following section focuses on how the Out for Equity may increase the effectiveness of its program in the future.

VI IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The following recommendations come from a combination of the analysis of the literature review, an independent evaluation completed by Tom Cytron-Hysom, interviews with Mary Tinucci, statistics provided by both Tinucci and Cytron-Hysom and assessment of the data by myself.

The program would benefit from continued attention to strengthening Safe Staff support resources within each building, by helping Safe Staff become more self-sustaining, providing a program representative, and other similar means. It is also felt that by continuing to build safe staff, more gay, lesbian and bisexual educators will come-out within the work place, if they feel supported by their co-workers (Tinucci, 1999). Mary reports there is still a great fear with in the GLB community of educators that if they "come out" (this means to identify that one is gay, lesbian or bisexual) within the work place they will lose their jobs. Mary verbalized that if a combined force of educators come out at the same time, chances are good that the school system would be less likely to terminate them.

One content area identified within the individual evaluation completed by Cytron-Hysom as needing improvement involved increasing students' understanding of SPPS harassment policies. By self report of the participants in the evaluation they indicated a lack of understanding of their rights and the procedures to take in regards to harassment. Future training should stress this content area.

The positive response of teachers and students, coupled with evidence

(found in the literature review) that training leads to concrete positive behavioral changes regarding harassment and related issues, indicates training should be provided to all SPPS students. It is clear that Out for Equity needs to expand further into the larger community. Out for Equity and supporting literature indicates that the more individuals are introduced to homosexual individuals the less likely they are to fear homosexuality. Out for Equity needs to strive for state wide outreach as a pilot program for other school districts. Out for Equity should create a program guide to assist in creating similar programs throughout the state.

Affording a place to GLB people in the curriculum does not require lengthy committee meetings, new curriculum guides, or large amounts of money. The key concept in regards to this issue is *inclusion.* Out for Equity should educate teaching staff on ways to incorporate GLB literature into their teaching. On a small scale a music teacher might mention that Tchaikovsky was gay, or a history teacher saying the same of Alexander the Great. In a more systemic way a social studies teacher could include the gay rights movement with the civil rights movements of this century, or note societies in which homosexuality was an accepted norm of the culture. The simplicity of including GLB information within the cirriculum needs to be pointed out to school administrators.

The next area Out for Equity needs to continue to focus on includes St. Paul Public School administration and Out for Equity emphasizing training and support to assist building principals in dealing appropriately with homophobic language, behavior and inclusion of literature within the curriculum. Leadership continues to be the key in assuring the inclusion of GLB needs within the school

systems. Performance reviews for principals should consider their efforts and success in creating a healthy, safe learning environment for GLB students.

SPPS should pro actively enforce anti-discrimination employment policies. GLB educators need to begin to feel safe in their work environment. Allowing GLB educators to come out within the schools would serve as a valuable resource for GLB students and would also dispell many of the stereotypes surrounding same-sex orientation. Decreased prejudice toward GLB individuals is a clear benefit of GLB educators being identified.

Grievances related to GLB issues need to be resolved in a timely and complete manner so as to help create a safer environment for all gay, lesbian and bisexual participants within the St. Paul Public school systems.

To support a social systems approach, Out for Equity should continue to look at the needs of the individual, family and community it serves as well as the needs of other communities. So far individuals within the St. Paul public school system appear to be receiving appropriate attention from Out for Equity and the school district. The family and the community served by Out for Equity are two areas that would benefit from continued support from the program and the school district. Family counseling or groups should be offered within the school systems for families of GLB students. Increase in the number of paid staff in Out for Equity would allow for one to one counseling for families. Increased staff would also allow for expanding the program into other school districts state wide.

PROVIDING CONTEXT: SOCIAL CHANGE

Since Out for Equity began in 1994, there have been significant local and national changes regarding recognition of GLB students needs. There is widespread acknowledgement that public schools are responsible for providing safe, respectful learning environments for all students. Acknowledging that there is a problem is the first step in making changes nationwide.

Professionals within the school systems continue to question the wisdom of actively exploring sexual orientation with adolescents, the fear involves the idea that if adolescents are exposed to homosexual issues they would be swayed into adopting a homosexual lifestyle. Out for Equity has been successful thus far in addressing the fact that there is no evidence that one can be effectively converted from one sexual orientation to another.

These changes stem from many factors, including greater acceptance in society of GLB persons; increased organization and visibility among GLB educators and others willing to advocate for GLB youth; legal cases involving liability of anti-gay harassment of students; and the success of school based programs serving GLB students (Cytron-Hysom, 1997). Out for Equity reflects and enhances these developments.

SUMMARY

Once again, studies completed during the 1980's and early 1990's documented a range of difficulties confronting gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) youth. Problems identified included family conflicts, dropping out of school, homelessness, prostitution, drug abuse and suicide. Harassment related to

sexual orientation was identified as a factor making school attendance challenging for GLB youth.

A Twin Cities study of gay, lesbian youth, conducted by a research team led by Dr. Gary Ramafedi of the Youth and AIDS Project at the University of Minnesota, was published during the summer of 1997 in the American Journal of Public Health. This study indicated 28.1% of gay and bisexual male youth attempt suicide - a figure seven times that of their heterosexual counterparts.

The data collected from the independent evaluation completed by Cytron-Hysom indicate Out for Equity solidified and strengthened program services during the 1995-96 school year. The number of support groups nearly tripled, with groups organized in all city high schools. The Safe Staff effort expanded, while the number of students benefiting from organized support services grew by 167%. Program staff successfully undertook an effort to focus and prioritize service and support efforts.

It was clear after analyzing Out for Equity that several techniques were successful that could be utilized in any school setting. Some of the suggestions are as follows:

A.) Use inclusive language in the learning setting. Include words such as gay, bisexual, or partner in regards to couples.

B.) Provide speakers within the classrooms. This is to reinforce the fact that the more individuals are exposed to actual GLB individuals, the less likely they are to fear or discriminate against GLB's.

C.) Staff that are friendly to GLB individuals should display some type of gay positive symbol as a sign of safety.

D.) Educators (straight or GLB) need to confront homophobic remarks where ever they hear them.

E.) Educators should provide positive GLB role models within their classroom, past and current.

F.) Provide in service training for all staff within the school settings.

G.) Create social situations that would include GLB students instead of exclude them. An example would be having a "teen night" instead of a dance.

Following is a list of local and state resources that are utilized by Out for Equity.

Library Materials

FOR ADOLESCENTS

Nonfiction:

Alyson. S. Young, 1986. *Gay and Proud.* Boston: Alyson Publications.

Beam, J. ed., 1986. *In the Life: A Black Gay Anthology.* Boston: Alyson Publications.

Duberman, M., Vicinus, M. and Chauncy, G., 1989. *Hidden From History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past.* New York: Penguin.

Fricke, A., 1981. *Reflections of a Rock Lobster: A Story about Growing Up Gay.* Boston: Alyson Publications.

Heron, A., 1981. *One Teenager in Ten: Writings by Gay and Lesbian Youth.* Boston: Alyson Publications.

Rench, J. E., 1990. *Understanding Sexual Identity: A Book for Gay Teens and Their Friends.* Minneapolis: Lerner.

Scanzoni, L. and Mollenkott, V.R., 1980. *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?* San Francisco: Harper and Row.

Fiction:

Brown, R.M.,1973. *Rubyfruit Jungle.* New York: Bantam.

Cunningham M.A., 1986. *A Home at The End of The World.* New York.

Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1990.

Reid, J., 1976. *The Best Little Boy in The World.* New York: Random House.

Scopperttone, S., 1978. *Happy Endings Are All Alike.* Boston: Alyson.

Scopperttone, S., 1974. *Trying Hard to Hear You.* Boston: Alyson.

Snyder, A., 1981. *The Truth About Alex.* New York: Signet.

For Children:

Bosche, S., 1983. *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin.* Boston: Alyson Publications. (Grades K-6).

DePaola, T., 1979. *Oliver Button is a Sissy.* Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich. (Grades K-4).

Heron, A., and Maran, M., 1991. *How Would You Feel If Your Dad Was Gay?* Boston: Alyson Publications. (Grades 3-6).

Jordan, M. K., 1989. *Losing Uncle Tim.* (related to AIDS) Morton Grove, IL, 1-800-255-7675. (Grades K-4).

Newman, L., 1991. *Gloria Goes to Gay Pride.* Boston: Alyson Publications. (Grades K-4).

Newman, L. and Diana S., 1989. *Heather Has Two Mommies.*
North Hamptom, MA: In Other Words Publications. (Grades K-4).

Willhoite, M., 1991. *Daddy's Roomate.* Boston: Alyson
Publications. (Grades K-4).

Willhoite, M., 1991. *Families: A Coloring Book.* Boston: Alyson
Publications. (Grades K-5).

Resource People and Services:

AIDS/HIV/STD/UP Prevention Unit
Minnesota Department of Education   612/296-5825
550 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55101

St. Paul School Consultation Group
on Homophobia in the Schools   651/690-6934
Mary Tinucci

Antihomophobia and
HIV/AIDS Training Program   651/641-5584
Anita Hill and Jonathan Hanft
Family Service of St. Paul
425 Aldine Street
St. Paul, MN 55104

Youth and AIDS Projects
John Yoakam, M.Div.   612/627-6820
Taylor Wilcox, BA
U of M Adolescent Health Program/YAP
428 Oak Grove Street
Minneapolis, MN 55403

Minnesota Task Force for Gay   651/291- 0108
and Lesbian Youth (scholarship fund)
341 S. Pascal Street
St. Paul, MN 55104-7034

VII CONCLUSION

The issues facing gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth, parents, and teachers is indeed a problem deserving the attention of the greater public. It is not a problem that can be ignored and is an issue social workers need to take the lead on. Concealing their core identity from family, friends teachers, or religious leaders leads GLB individuals to feel isolated, alone, and alienated from the support needed to survive. One's self concept consists of two aspects: social identity, and personal identity, therefore it is critical that society works towards accepting GLB individuals for who they are.

Providing individuals with information and a forum for discussion of GLB issues does not "make" anyone gay, it lessens the amount of homophobia and discrimination faced by GLB individuals. However, if society continues to ignore the needs of GLB youth, by the time they reach adolescence, they are much more likely than heterosexual youth to turn to drugs, alcohol, drop out of school, run away or attempt to kill themselves.

The author addressed the question-Is there a need for programing such as Out for Equity within the public school systems? In answering this question the areas focused on were: Identity development of gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth; gay, lesbian, and bisexual parents with youth in the public school systems; gay, lesbian, and bisexal educators within the school systems. There was then an overview of the Out for Equity program, including its' functions, analysis of the goals, as well as a history of how the program began. Finally, there was a section that looked at implications for practice.

It was determined through the evaluation process that there is indeed a

need for further services within our public school systems for GLB youth, their families, GLB educators and parents.

Further work needs to be done with other school social workers. There is a need for services in each school for GLB individuals and as social workers it is our responsibility to recognize the need for such services and implement them within our workplace. Out for Equity should offer a yearly in service for social workers interested in finding out about the program and how to implement it within their schools, or workplace.

Services for families with a GLB member could be enhanced by Out for Equity starting a family program. This program would include information, support and services for any family members with a GLB member. A day long in service that includes explanations of the needs and concerns facing GLB persons and their families, speakers from local resource facilities and one to one contact with other people who are dealing with the same issue of having a GLB family member would be the focus of the program. The program could be held three times during the school year.

Increased paid staff for Out for Equity would allow for growth outside the SPPS. Sharing the success of Out for Equity with other school districts would become an easier goal to obtain if staff were available. It is critical for Out for Equity to continue to grow and not become a silent entity of its own. Educators and social workers need to realize the importance of serving the needs of all their students and Out for Equity provides an excellent opportunity to do so.

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