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The GSA Study:

Results of National Surveys About Students' and Advisors' Experiences in Gender and Sexuality Alliance Clubs

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The GSA Study:

Results of National Surveys About Students' and Advisors' Experiences in Gender and Sexuality Alliance Clubs

by Nhan L. Truong, Ph.D.
Caitlin M. Clark, Ph.D.
Sarah Rosenbach
Joseph G. Kosciw, Ph.D.

National Headquarters
110 William Street, 30th Floor
New York, NY 10038
Ph: 212-727-0135 Fax: 212-727-0254

DC Policy Office
Make Office K Street
6th Floor, Attn: GLSEN
1015 15th Street, NW
Washington, DC, 20005
Ph: 202-347-7780 Fax: 202-347-7781

glsen@glsen.org

www.glsen.org

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GLSEN is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students. Established in 1990, GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. GLSEN seeks to develop school climates where difference is valued for the positive contribution it makes to creating a more vibrant and diverse community. For more information on our educator resources, research, public policy agenda, student leadership programs, or development initiatives, visit www.glsen.org.

Cover photo collage descriptions from left to right:

First row: 2020 GSA of the Year, Ilima intermediate school's Rainbow Royales GSA taken by the Hawaii State Teachers Association; Nantucket High School's GSA students march; and 2005 GLSEN Chicago march.

Second row: 2019 GSA of the Year, LAMP High School's Spectrum GSA; Students from Ponderosa High School's GSA; and Students from GLSEN's No Name Calling Week.

Third row: Members of GLSEN's 2016–2017 National Student Council; Gabrielino High School's GSA in 2018; and GLSEN contingent in the 2017 NYC Pride parade.

Graphic design: Adam Fredericks

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PREFACE

Since our founding in 1990, GLSEN has understood GSA (Gender and Sexuality Alliance, or Gay-Straight Alliance) clubs as one of four supports key to LGBTQ+ student success. GSAs create valuable and necessary spaces for LGBTQ+ youth and their allies to exist, dream, connect, affirm each other and lead in safe environments without hindrances. It is for this reason that GLSEN supports the formation of elementary, middle, and high school student clubs and actively works with thousands of student-led GSA clubs in support of the leadership opportunities they provide to LGBTQ+ and allied youth while creating safer and more inclusive learning communities for all.

GLSEN is committed to a future where every student has access to education that is safe, affirming, *liberated* and *liberating*. We believe that schools must be liberated spaces: free from harm, full of safety, and where the conditions each student requires to thrive is the baseline. We also believe education must be a liberating experience where learners understand and engage with the world more deeply, understand themselves, their community and their social context more fully, and feel empowered and grounded in an understanding of the world and their place in it. GSAs are most successful when they serve as a microcosm of this experience.

For over 20 years, GLSEN has invested in and been committed to building the evidence base for action on LGBTQ+ issues in K-12 schools, and tracking the impact of efforts to improve the lives and life prospects of LGBTQ+ students. GLSEN programming has led the way in supporting the creation and operation of GSAs across the country. The GLSEN Research Institute's biennial National School Climate Survey consistently finds that GSAs provide important support to LGBTQ+ students and serve to improve school climates for these youth. Up until now, the knowledge base about GSAs has been limited to measuring the *existence* of GSAs in schools, and the related effects of these groups on the whole school climate. This current GSA study report contributes to the evidence that GSAs are related to improved mental health and school belonging among LGBTQ+ youth.

Despite this ever-growing knowledge about the benefits of the presence of GSAs in school, we've been missing important knowledge about the nuances of GSAs including a better understanding of the students and advisors who make up GSAs and specifically how GSAs serve the student body and school community. We are proud that this report works to address this gap in knowledge. The GLSEN Research Institute conducted a national study that sought to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' and advisors' experiences with their school's GSA club.

There is important work being done across this country to transform educational spaces that have historically replicated social inequity and marginalization into spaces of liberation and justice that GLSEN is proud to be a part of. GLSEN has always understood that GSAs provide supportive and potentially liberatory spaces for LGBTQ+ youth and their allies. This report provides data and evidence that affirms this belief and outlines the many ways GSAs, and the students and adults they are comprised of, are working to make space and build power with and for students so often ignored, overlooked, and harmed by an education system that is not yet built to meet their needs.

GSAs provide space where all LGBTQ+ students, including transgender, nonbinary and LGBTQ+ youth of color who are doubly marginalized, are affirmed and supported. Though previous research has led many to believe that GSAs are not inclusive or welcoming for LGBTQ+ youth of color, this report includes promising evidence that LGBTQ+ youth of color are just as likely to seek and receive refuge, safety, and affirmation in their schools' GSAs as are their white peers.

Liberatory education spaces not only provide community for LGBTQ+ students, but spaces for youth agency and organizing. As The GSA Study report finds, GSAs are an important space for collective activism and advocacy, and individual leadership. The majority of GSAs represented in the survey engaged in activism or advocacy activity, such as working with school districts and organizing advocacy events at school to create positive change in their schools. Through leadership roles, GSAs lift the voices of students regularly silenced. Findings from this report suggest that GSAs promote leadership for transgender and

nonbinary students who were more likely to be active members and leaders of their school's GSA. In our current cultural moment of backlash and legislative aggression towards transgender and nonbinary youth, GSAs offer important necessary leadership opportunities.

GSAs create community among diverse student groups, where LGBTQ+ students from different backgrounds and experiences can come together. Data from this report find that ensuring inclusivity towards students of color and transgender and nonbinary students were not the most often reported challenges at their school's GSA. Further, in GSAs that did face these challenges of inclusivity, they were challenges with relatively high rates of resolution. In particular, inclusivity of transgender and nonbinary students at their school's GSA was the challenge with the highest rate of resolution relative to all other challenges for students.

GSAs are critical and liberatory spaces. They are spaces for LGBTQ+ students to provide support and foster healing for each other, to grow awareness of LGBTQ+ issues in their schools and communities, and work to improve their school climate. When LGBTQ+ students are able to be who they are without worrying about harassment, it allows them to focus on doing their best and to thrive in school. Student leaders and advisors, school district officials and administrators, and community organizations must work to support GSAs in the efforts to create safer and more inclusive schools for all LGBTQ+ students.

Melanie Willingham-Jaggers
Interim Executive Director
GLSEN

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The authors first wish to thank the students and advisors who participated in the GSA student and advisor surveys, the primary data source for this report. We also wish to thank the students who participated in the *2019 National Student Climate Survey* and the *From Teasing To Torment: School Climate Revisited* survey, the secondary data sources for this report. We wish to acknowledge the organizations that helped disseminate information about the GSA student and advisor surveys, including the LGBTQ youth services and programs that invited their constituents to participate in the surveys as well as GLSEN's Chapter network. We are thankful for GLSEN's National Student Council members and our former GLSEN staff in Education and Youth Programs, as well as Senior Youth Programs Manager, a.t. Furuya, for their thoughtful feedback throughout the development of the GSA student and advisor surveys. We are also thankful for our GLSEN colleagues' continual support throughout the project. The authors would also like to thank our former GLSEN Director of Research, Emily Greytak, for her early contributions to this project. Finally, much gratitude goes to GLSEN's former Executive Director, Eliza Byard, and GLSEN's Interim Executive Director, Melanie Willingham-Jaggers, for their support throughout the development of this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

GSAs, originally known as Gay-Straight Alliances and now commonly known as Gender and Sexuality Alliances, were first started over 30 years ago in the United States. These school clubs focus on providing LGBTQ students a safe and affirming space within a school environment that they may otherwise experience as hostile. Beginning with our *2001 National School Climate Survey*, GLSEN's research has tracked the availability of GSAs and has demonstrated a significant rise in the number of these clubs – from 31.1% of LGBTQ students in 2001 having a GSA to 61.6% in 2019. Further, GLSEN's research has examined the utility of these clubs and has consistently found that the presence of GSAs at school can have a positive impact on the experiences of LGBTQ students and can help alleviate the negative effects of a hostile school climate experienced by these youth.[1] Further, GSA participation has been found to be related to greater feelings of connectedness to the school community among LGBTQ students.[2] In that GSAs are an important and growing resource for LGBTQ students at school, the purpose of the current study is to provide a better understanding of LGBTQ students' and advisors' experiences with GSAs at their school. Using original and secondary data sources, we specifically examine:

- The demographic composition of GSAs, including race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender;
- How often students participate in GSAs, benefits of GSA participation, and other non-GSA school-sponsored extracurricular activities that GSA students participate in;
- Activities that GSAs engage in, and the impact that these different activities have on LGBTQ students' experiences with school climate and their psychological well-being;
- Resources that GSA students and advisors use and find helpful, as well as resources that they need;
- Challenges that students and advisors face in their GSA, and how they resolve challenges;
- Experiences and perspectives of GSA leaders, including student leaders and advisors; and
- Advisors' professional development and feelings of competence working with LGBTQ students, including LGBTQ students of color.

Methods and Sample

The GLSEN Research Institute conducted the *GSA Student Survey* and the *GSA Advisor Survey*, and used data from the *2019 National School Climate Survey* and the *From Teasing to Torment: School Climate Revisited* survey.

GSA Student and Advisor Surveys. From April to June 2020, GSA students were asked to complete the *GSA Student Survey* online, and GSA advisors were asked to complete the *GSA Advisor Survey* online, which asked about their experiences with GSAs at their school. Youth were eligible to participate in the survey if they were at least 13 years of age, attended a K–12 school in the U.S. during the 2019–20 school year, and identified as a member of their school's GSA. Adults were eligible to participate if they were an advisor of their school's GSA in a K–12 school in the U.S. during the 2019–20 school year. For both surveys, notices and announcements were sent through email to GLSEN's national and local chapter networks and national, regional, and local organizations that provide services to or advocate on behalf of LGBTQ youth, SMS messages to GLSEN constituents, and postings on GLSEN's social media pages including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Additionally, to reach GSA students and advisors who may not be connected to GLSEN or other national, regional, and local LGBTQ-serving organizations, we conducted targeted outreach and advertising through social media sites.

The final sample of GSA students consisted of a total of 998 students between the ages of 13 and 19. Students came from 45 states and the District of Columbia. The majority of student participants (70.0%) were White, and the most commonly endorsed gender and sexual orientation identities among the student sample were cisgender (46.1%) and gay or lesbian (28.7%). Students were in grades 6 to 12, and most participants were in 10th and 11th grades. The majority of GSA members attended public schools (92.5%) and over half (56.6%) attended suburban schools. The final sample of GSA advisors consisted of a total of 468 participants from 41 states. The majority of advisor participants were White (87.7%) and cisgender (92.5%), and the most commonly endorsed sexual orientation identities were heterosexual (45.4%) and gay or lesbian (29.3%). The majority of GSA advisors were from public schools (91.1%) and nearly half (48.2%) were from suburban schools.

From Teasing To Torment: School Climate Revisited. To examine GSA participation among allies (cisgender heterosexual students),[3] we used data from a 2015 national study of the general population of U.S. secondary students, *From Teasing to Torment: School Climate Revisited* (*FTTT*). The original online survey study for *FTTT* was conducted by Harris Poll on behalf of GLSEN. The subset of the *FTTT* study sample used for the current study consisted of 432 cisgender heterosexual students between the ages of 13 and 18 in schools that had a GSA. Students came from 35 states and the District of Columbia. Half of participants were White (49.5%) and 60.4% were female. Students were in grades 6 to 12, with the largest numbers in grades 10 and 12. Most participants (95.4%) attended public schools, and just under half (48.8%) attended suburban schools. Of the cisgender heterosexual students who attended a school that had a GSA, 13.9% participated in their school's GSA.

2019 National School Climate Survey. To examine the impact of GSA activities on LGBTQ students' experiences with hostile school climate and psychological well-being, we used data from the GLSEN *2019 National School Climate Survey* (*NSCS*), a biennial national survey of LGBTQ secondary school students. Participants in the *NSCS* study were 16,713 LGBTQ students age 13–21 who attended a middle or high school in the United States during the 2018–19 school year. Students came from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and major U.S. territories. The majority of participants were White (69.2%), and the most commonly endorsed gender and sexual orientation identities were cisgender female (42.4%) and gay or lesbian (40.8%). Students were in grades 6 to 12, and with the largest numbers in grades 9, 10, and 11. Almost all participants (93.0%) attended public schools and over half (52.4%) attended suburban schools. Of the LGBTQ students who attended a school that had a GSA, 61.8% participated in their school's GSA.

Key Findings

Demographic Composition of GSAs and GSA Participation

GSA students and advisors play a critical role in efforts to provide a safe and affirming space for LGBTQ students and to improve the climate in their schools. Thus, it is important to better understand who participates in GSAs. Part One of this report assesses the demographic composition of GSAs and engagement in GSAs.

Demographic Composition of GSAs (based on the GSA Student Survey)

Race/Ethnicity

- The majority of GSA students (60.5%) reported that the racial/ethnic composition in their school's GSA was mostly White; and
- A quarter (25.8%) reported that about half were students of color and about half were White.

Gender

- Over two-fifths of GSA students (44.2%) reported that the gender composition in their school's GSA was half transgender or nonbinary and half cisgender; and
- Two-fifths (41.9%) reported that most were cisgender.

Sexual Orientation

- The vast majority of GSA students (92.5%) reported that the sexual orientation composition in their school's GSA was mostly or only LGBQ students; and
- Less than a tenth (6.1%) reported that half were LGBQ and half were heterosexual.

Participation in GSAs

GSA Meetings and Attendance (based on the GSA Student Survey and GSA Advisor Survey)

- Nearly all GSAs met at least once a month (94.9% of students; 97.6% of advisors).
- The majority of GSAs met once a week (55.1% of students; 58.5% of advisors).
- Nearly half of students (46.6%) reported attending every meeting.
- A third of students (33.1%) reported attending most meetings.

Benefits of GSA Participation (from the 2019 National School Climate Survey)

Among LGBTQ students, attending GSA meetings more often was related to:

- Greater feelings of school belonging;
- Slightly higher levels of self-esteem; and
- Slightly lower levels of depression.

Differences in GSA Participation by LGBTQ Students' Demographic Characteristics (from the 2019 National School Climate Survey)

- Queer, asexual and pansexual students attended GSA meetings more often than gay or lesbian and bisexual students (51.2% queer, 50.8% asexual, and 47.0% pansexual students attended meetings vs. 36.5% gay or lesbian and 30.2% bisexual students).
- Transgender, nonbinary, gender questioning, and other non-cisgender students attended GSA meetings more often than cisgender students (45.3% transgender, 44.1% nonbinary, 40.0% gender questioning, and 50.0% other non-cisgender students attended meetings vs. 30.0% cisgender students).
- Frequency of meeting attendance did not differ by race/ethnicity for LGBTQ students.

Differences in LGBTQ Students' GSA Participation by School Characteristics (from the 2019 National School Climate Survey)

LGBTQ students who attended:

- Middle school attended GSA meetings more often than students in high school (51.6% vs. 33.8% often or frequently);

- Religious schools and private non-religious schools attended GSA meetings more often than students in public schools (47.8% and 48.9% vs. 36.2% often or frequently, respectively);
- Rural schools attended GSA meetings more often than students in urban and suburban schools (44.1% vs. 36.6% and 34.1% often or frequently, respectively); and
- Schools in the Northeast and Midwest attended GSA meetings more often than students in the South and West (41.7% and 38.1% vs. 34.2% and 33.9% often or frequently, respectively).

Differences in GSA Participation for Allies (from the From Teasing to Torment: School Climate Revisited survey)

Among cisgender heterosexual students (allies):

- Female students were more likely to be a GSA member than male students;
- Older students were more likely to be a GSA member of their school's GSA than younger students; and
- Students who had at least one close LGBTQ friend were more likely to be a GSA member than those who did not (26.4% vs 6.9%).

GSA Students' Involvement in Extracurricular Activities in School (based on the GSA Student Survey)

- The vast majority of GSA students (90.3%) also participated in non-GSA school-sponsored extracurricular activities;
- The majority of GSA students (71.2%) spent more time participating in non-GSA school-sponsored extracurricular activities than in GSA activities; and
- A quarter of GSA students (25.7%) spent most or all of their time on GSA activities.

GSA Activities, Resources, and Challenges

Part Two of this report examines the types of activities that GSAs engage in and the benefits of advocacy-oriented GSA activities. Further, we assess how students and advisors decide what GSA activities to engage in through their use of resources. We also assess challenges that students and advisors face in their school's GSA and resolution of those challenges.

GSA Activities

Importance of GSA Activities (based on the GSA Student Survey)

Students reported that it was most important that their GSAs provide:

- A space to discuss or learn about LGBTQ topics (85.0% rated this as very or extremely important);
- A space to work with school staff to create a safer school environment for LGBTQ students (79.6% of students reported this as very or extremely important); and
- A space to talk about their experiences with harassment and discrimination at school (77.6% of students reported this as very or extremely important).

Most Common GSA Activities (based on the GSA Study Survey and GSA Advisor Survey)

Both GSA students and advisors reported that their GSAs most commonly conducted:

- General socializing (90.9% for students and 87.9% for advisors); and
- Providing students with emotional support (70.6% for students and 85.8% for advisors).

GSA students also reported most commonly having discussions and learning about LGBTQ topics (87.6%).

Advisors also reported most commonly:

- Helping GSA members address incidents of harassment and discrimination (62.3%); and
- Working with school staff to create safer school environments (57.5%).

Least Common GSA Activities (based on the GSA Student Survey and GSA Advisor Survey)

Both students an advisors reported that the least common GSA activities were:

- Collaborating with other student-led clubs or organizations on events or advocacy work (30.7% for students, 31.8% for advisors).
- Working with district officials to advocate for district-wide LGBTQ-inclusive policies or staff training (15.9% for students, 23.5% for advisors).

GSAs' and Advisors' Successfulness in Meeting Student Needs (based on the GSA Student Survey)

Students reported that their GSAs and advisors were most helpful in activities that included:

- Providing a space for students to meet new people and socialize (77.7% for GSA, 76.5% for advisor); and
- Discussing or learning about LGBTQ topics (74.4% for GSA, 75.2% for advisor).

Students reported that their GSAs and advisors were least helpful in activities that included:

- Working with district officials to advocate for district-wide LGBTQ-inclusive policies or staff training (23.7% for GSA, 35.6% for advisor); and
- Collaborating with other student-led clubs or organizations on events or advocacy work (29.3% for GSA, 38.4% for advisor).

The activities that students reported their GSAs and advisors were more helpful in general, were also the activities that students' GSAs most frequently participated in. The activities that students reported their GSAs and advisors were least helpful were also the activities that students' GSAs less frequently participated in.

Benefits of GSA Activities on LGBTQ Student Experiences (from the 2019 National School Climate Survey)

Among LGBTQ GSA students:

- Nearly all GSA students (97.2%) reported that their GSA engaged in at least one socializing and support activity; and
- Six in ten (64.8%) reported that their GSA engaged in at least one advocacy activity.

Among LGBTQ GSA students, participating in a GSA that engaged in any advocacy activities was related to:

- Being less likely to experience anti-LGBTQ discriminatory school policies and practices;
- Having more supportive peers and educators; and
- Having more visible displays of support for LGBTQ students.

Resources

Awareness, Use, and Helpfulness of GSA Resources (based on the GSA Student Survey and GSA Advisor Survey)

- Nearly three-fourths of GSA students (71.5%) and nearly all advisors (95.3%) were aware of at least one online resource on GSA-related topics.
- GSA students were most likely to use resources on GSAs in general (69.4%) and advisors were most likely to use resources on what to do in a GSA (79.3%).
- GSA students and advisors were least likely to use resources on sustaining a GSA over time (36.6% of students; 38.2% of advisors).
- Overall, the majority of GSA students and advisors found resources on GSA topics to be very or extremely helpful.

Needs for Additional Resources (based on the GSA Student Survey and GSA Advisor Survey)

Students and advisors most commonly reported needing resources on the following topics:

- General meeting suggestions (25.2% of students; 35.8% of advisors);
- Strategies for advocacy (31.7% of students; 16.7% of advisors); and
- Information and support for certain groups of students, such as LGBTQ students with disabilities, and students of color (10.6% of students; 22.5% of advisors).

GSA Challenges

GSA students and advisors were less likely to report external challenges than internal challenges.

Internal Challenges (based on the GSA Student Survey and GSA Advisor Survey)

The most significant challenges according to the students were:

- Lack of GSA attendance from students (73.8%);
- Disorganized GSA meetings (62.1%); and
- Fundraising for the GSA (53.1%).

The most significant challenges according to the advisors were:

- Lack of follow-through from GSA students (89.0%);
- Disorganized GSA meetings (82.9%); and
- Lack of GSA attendance from GSA students (79.2%).

Although many students and advisors reported challenges by their GSA, fewer reported that these challenges had been resolved or attempted to be resolved.

External Challenges (based on the GSA Student Survey and GSA Advisor Survey)

- Compared to students, advisors more commonly reported pushback from:
    - Other students (64.0% of advisors; 59.2% of students);
    - Parents (58.0% of advisors; 27.9% of students);
    - Other educators (44.8% of advisors; 14.0% of students);
    - Principals (25.3% of advisors; 10.6% of students); and
    - Other administrators (23.3% of advisors, 16.4% of students).
- The majority of GSA students who faced pushback about their GSA did not report that their GSA resolved these challenges.
- The majority of advisors who reported pushback from students and school personnel (principal, other administrators, other educators) reported that their GSA worked to resolve these challenges.
- The minority of advisors who reported pushback from parents reported that their GSA worked to resolve this challenge.

Challenges with Diversity Inclusion (based on the GSA Student Survey and GSA Advisor Survey)

Diversity inclusion was not the most often cited challenge, including making the GSA inclusive of:

- Students of color (17.7% of students; 50.7% of advisors); and
- Transgender and nonbinary students (11.8% of students; 33.6% of advisors).

However, making the GSA inclusive of transgender and nonbinary students was the challenge with the highest rate of resolution of all the challenges for students (58.1%), and the second highest rate of resolution of all the challenges for advisors (68.1%).

How Students' and Advisors' Challenges are Resolved (based on the GSA Student Survey and GSA Advisor Survey)

The most common methods of resolving challenges in their school's GSA were:

- Improved communication processes and systems (31.0% of students; 32.5% of advisors);
- Implementing changes to the organization and structure of the GSA (28.8% of students; 30.5% of advisors); and
- Recruitment efforts (15.7% of students; 26.7% of advisors).

GSA Leadership and Preparation

Both student leaders and advisors are critical in creating and sustaining a GSA. Part Three of this report examines the demographic characteristics of students who are not only members, but also leaders in their GSA (student leaders and advisors). We also assess the paths that advisors take to become advisors, their perceived roles in their GSA, and their preparation and perceived competency in working with diverse groups of students.

GSA Leadership

Demographics of GSA Leaders (from the 2019 National School Climate Survey)

- Transgender students and nonbinary students were more likely to be a leader or officer of their school's GSA than were cisgender students (39.9% transgender students and 36.9% nonbinary students vs. 29.3% cisgender students).
- Queer students were more likely to be a leader or officer of their school's GSA compared to gay or lesbian students, pansexual students, bisexual students, and asexual students (47.3% queer students vs. 36.6% gay or lesbian students, 36.1% pansexual students, 28.6% bisexual students, and 22.0% asexual students).
- Being a GSA student leader or officer did not differ by race/ethnicity.
- Most advisors were White (87.7%) and cisgender (92.5%).
- Advisors' most commonly endorsed sexual orientation identities were heterosexual (45.4%), followed by gay or lesbian (29.3%).

Paths to Becoming an Advisor and Perceived Advisor Roles (based on the GSA Advisor Survey)

- The most common path that advisors took to become the staff sponsor for their GSA was taking over from a previous advisor or joining an already functioning GSA (32.5%).
- The most common role that advisors played in their GSA was facilitator or moderator (71.7%).
- Other common advisor roles were:
    - Providing a safe space and sounding board for students (34.1%);
    - Providing support for student leaders and members when they do not follow through or need assistance with GSA activities (21.5%); and
    - Serving as a liaison between students and administration (18.4%).
- The least common advisor roles were:
    - Educating student members about LGBTQ issues (8.6%);
    - Encouraging or assisting in advocacy work (8.4%); and
    - Developing student leadership (3.8%).

Helpfulness of GSA Advisors to Students (based on the GSA Student Survey)

Students reported that their GSA advisors were most helpful in providing a space:

- For students to meet new people and socialize; and
- To discuss or learn about LGBTQ topics.

Students reported that their GSA advisors were less helpful in:

- Working with district officials to advocate for district-wide LGBTQ-inclusive policies or staff training; and
- Collaborating with other student-led clubs or organizations on events or advocacy work.

GSA students' reports of how helpful their advisors were in helping to meet their GSA students' needs aligned with advisors' reports of the common roles that they play in their GSA.

GSA Advisor Preparation and Perceived Competency (based on the GSA Advisor Survey)

Formal Education

The majority of advisors felt that they had very little or no professional education on topics related to:

- LGBQ youth (53.8%);
- Transgender youth (64.4%); and
- LGBTQ youth of color (70.1%).

Many advisors rated their professional education as "poor" in how well it prepared them to work with the diverse population of students, and notably, about half said that their preparation was poor for transgender students (49.0%) and students of color (50.2%).

Continuing (Non-formal) Education

The majority of advisors reported that their preparation and training for their role as GSA advisor came from outside of their formal education. The most common were:

- Reading literature on their own (88.5%);
- Websites or online forums (85.9%); and
- Working with representatives from an organization (e.g., GLSEN) (79.5%).

Perceived Feelings of Competency

Overall, advisors felt:

- Very competent to extremely competent working with LGBQ and transgender students; and
- Moderately to very competent working with LGBTQ students of color.

For all three groups (LGBQ students, transgender students, and students of color), advisors felt:

- Most competent advocating or speaking on students' behalf to other teachers and administrators and other students at school; and
- Least competent talking about the unique experiences that these groups of students face.

Advisors felt more competent with issues that aligned with their own identity. Specifically:

- LGBQ advisors felt more competent on issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity/expression than heterosexual advisors;
- Transgender/nonbinary advisors felt more competent on issues related to transgender student issues than cisgender advisors; and
- Advisors of color felt more competent on issues related to LGBTQ students of color than White advisors.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Findings presented in this report build on prior research and provide a better understanding of the experiences of students and advisors with GSAs in their schools. Our findings demonstrate the benefits of participating in GSAs, and identify areas of strength among these clubs across the U.S. Our findings also highlight challenges, suggesting more that can be done to equip GSA leaders and advisors to best support their GSA and the LGBTQ students in their school. Findings from this study provide important insight for student leaders, educators, school administrators, advocates and education policy-makers in secondary schools across the U.S. Based on the findings, we recommend the following measures to support GSAs and efforts to create safer and more inclusive schools for LGBTQ students:

For GSA Students and GSA Advisors

- Work to ensure that GSAs better meet the needs of the students they serve by assessing the needs of the student members of their GSA and implementing and adjusting GSA activities accordingly.
- Prioritize identifying and resolving common challenges in GSAs, such as attendance problems and pushback from other students in the school.
- Work to ensure GSAs are inclusive of both students of color and transgender and nonbinary students.

For School District Officials and School Administrators

- Support advisors and GSAs who face pushback from parents and other educators by taking a strong supportive stance and provide opportunities for parents and staff to learn about the importance of LGBTQ students having a GSA at their school.
- Provide GSAs with greater support and resources in engaging in advocacy activities, such as resources about how to advocate to school districts, and guides to planning advocacy or awareness-raising events.
- Provide formal professional development and resources on LGBTQ youth-specific content and LGBTQ youth of color-specific content so that educators do not have to solely rely on resources and training opportunities that they seek out on their own, and to increase advisors' self-efficacy working with these diverse groups of students.

For Organizations that Support GSAs

- Provide resources for GSAs with specific activity suggestions, particularly those on how to sustain your GSA, and engage in effective advocacy efforts.
- Provide support for GSAs to better equip members and advisors with the skills to successfully work through and resolve internal challenges such as interpersonal conflict and organizational skills.
- Provide resources for GSAs on diversity inclusion in their GSA, including inclusivity of transgender and nonbinary students and inclusivity of LGBTQ students of color.

GSAs play a critical role in improving school climate for LGBTQ students. Implementing these measures will go a long way in helping to create safer and affirming school environments for LGBTQ youth.

INTRODUCTION

GSAs, originally known as Gay-Straight Alliances, and now commonly known as Gender and Sexuality Alliances, were first started over 30 years ago in the United States. These school clubs focus on providing LGBTQ students a safe and affirming space within a school environment that they may otherwise experience as hostile.[4] Findings from our biennial survey on LGBTQ students' experiences, GLSEN's *National School Climate Survey (NSCS)*, has consistently shown that LGBTQ youth face high levels of biased language, harassment and assault, and anti-LGBTQ discrimination at school that negatively impact their educational experiences and psychological well-being.[5] Our research also suggests that GSAs and other LGBTQ affirming school resources and supports can have a positive impact on the experiences of LGBTQ students.[6] GLSEN's research has shown that among LGBTQ students, the presence of GSAs at school was related to fewer indicators of negative school climate, such as fewer anti-LGBTQ remarks from peers, less anti-LGBTQ victimization, and lower likelihood of feeling unsafe and missing school for safety reasons.[7] We also previously found that LGBTQ students in schools with GSAs reported greater well-being, specifically a greater sense of belonging to their school community, higher levels of self-esteem, and lower levels of depression.

Although a growing body of research has examined the impact of GSAs in schools for LGBTQ students, less is known about the experiences of GSA members.[8] There is some evidence that GSA participation confers benefits for LGBTQ students. GSA involvement has been linked to having a higher GPA, a greater likelihood of graduating high school, and greater involvement in community activism for LGBTQ youth.[9] Researchers have also found that GSA participation may be linked to several psychosocial benefits. LGBTQ students with greater levels of participation in their GSA report greater feelings of school belonging, stronger interpersonal relationships, greater peer validation, higher comfort levels with their sexual orientation, a sense of empowerment, and reduced depressive and anxiety symptoms.[10] Further, youth who are more actively engaged in their GSA report greater levels of self-efficacy with engaging in advocacy.[11]

Research has previously examined the types of GSA activities that LGBTQ students engage in, and has shown that GSA activities most commonly provide a space or events to meet and socialize and provide emotional support, and less commonly engage in advocacy work, such as collaborating with other student-led clubs or organizations on events and advocacy, and working outside of their school to advocate on LGBTQ issues.[12] In addition, GSAs that engaged in more socializing activities also engaged in more advocacy activities. Other research has also examined the relationship between hostile school climate and participation in advocacy activities in their school's GSA, and show that youth who experience more hostile school climates engage in more advocacy activities in their GSA.[13]

Although they provide a space for students to socialize and engage in activism, not all LGBTQ students have access to a GSA. According to GLSEN's *National School Climate Survey*, GSA availability varied by various school characteristics.[14] Students who attended public schools were more likely to have a GSA in school than students at private non-religious schools, and students who attended private religious schools were the least likely to have a GSA in school. Students at rural schools reported fewer GSAs than those in suburban or urban schools, and students in the South had less access to GSAs than students from other regions of the U.S. Of course, having a GSA in school does not guarantee participation, as findings from our *2019 National School Climate Survey* found that some LGBTQ students do not attend their school's GSA. The most common reasons for not attending were interpersonal dynamics, such as having conflicts with other GSA members, scheduling and logistic issues, and concerns about other people knowing they are LGBTQ if they attended GSA meetings.[15] Less common reasons for not attending included issues with the functioning of their GSA, such as lack of organization, and the GSA not meeting their needs.

Adult advisors can play a critical role in GSAs, as they serve as their school's GSA sponsor, support GSA student members and leaders, and help to sustain their school's GSA. Yet little is known about the experiences of GSA advisors. Some studies have highlighted advisor characteristics and experiences that are related to specific benefits for youth members. Members whose advisors had served longer in their role as a GSA advisor report greater well-being, namely greater self-esteem, greater sense of purpose, and greater mastery.[16] Advisors with longer tenures may have more experience in navigating the politics and dynamics

of their school in ways that benefit youth. Further, when advisors reported longer years of service in their role, devoted more time to GSA efforts each week, and employed some structure in GSA meetings, members engaged in more advocacy activities through their GSA.[17]

Advisors' demographic characteristics may also be related to their ability to effectively work with diverse groups of GSA students. Emerging research has found that GSA advisors tend to be demographically homogenous, whereby the majority are heterosexual, female, White, and educated at the graduate school level. Although the majority are heterosexual cisgender advisors, those advisors who are part of the LGBTQ community might be better equipped to respond to and support LGBTQ youth, particularly transgender youth. Specifically, lesbian, gay, and bisexual advisors report greater efficacy than heterosexual advisors to address issues pertinent to transgender youth, and both groups report lower self-efficacy to work with LGBTQ youth of color than with transgender youth.[18]

Building on the existing literature, this study further develops our understanding of who goes to GSAs, what GSAs do, and the role that students and advisors play in their school's GSA. We hope these findings will inform educators and school administrators in their efforts to provide a more affirming school environment for LGBTQ students, and will help guide GLSEN's support and advocacy efforts on behalf of GSAs across the country.

In *Part One* of the report, we assess the demographic composition of GSAs in schools, and student participation in GSAs. *Part Two* assesses activities that GSAs engage in, their use of resources, and challenges that students and advisors face in their GSAs. *Part Three* examines the demographic characteristics of student leaders or officers, and the role of advisors in GSAs, as well as GSA advisors' preparation and training in their formal education and continuing education. The report concludes with actionable recommendations for members of the school community and organizations, like GLSEN, who seek to effectively support GSAs and their critical work.

METHODS AND SAMPLE

This study draws from multiple data sources, as well as previously conducted online surveys on the experiences of other LGBTQ and cisgender heterosexual students in schools with GSAs.

GSA Student and Advisor Surveys. We conducted two online surveys specifically for this study – one for students who were members of GSAs and one for adult advisors of GSAs. Both surveys included questions about GSA activities, involvement and leadership, challenges and barriers, and GSA-related resources.

Secondary Data from From Teasing to Torment. In order to examine allies' (cisgender heterosexual students) participation in their school's GSA, we used data from GLSEN's *From Teasing to Torment: School Climate Revisited,* a U.S. national sample of secondary school teachers and students.[19]

Secondary Data from National School Climate Survey. We used data from the *2019 National School Climate Survey,* a U.S. national study on the school experiences of LGBTQ secondary school students to examine LGBTQ students' participation in their school's GSA, GSA leadership among LGBTQ students, and benefits of GSA participation for LGBTQ students.[20]

GSA Student Survey and GSA Advisor Survey

Youth were eligible to participate in the *GSA Student Survey* if they were at least 13 years of age, attended a K–12 school in the United States during the 2019–20 school year, and identified as a member of their school's GSA. Adults were eligible to participate in the *GSA Advisor Survey* if they were an advisor of their school's GSA in a K–12 school in the United States during the 2019–20 school year. Data collection for both surveys occurred between April and June 2020.

For both surveys, notices and announcements were sent through GLSEN's email and chapter networks, SMS messages to GLSEN constituents, and posted on GLSEN's social media pages on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Additionally, national, regional, and local organizations that provide services to or advocate on behalf of LGBTQ youth posted notices about the survey on listservs, websites, and social media accounts. Local organizations serving LGBTQ youth and GLSEN chapters also notified their participants about the online survey via email and social media. To reach GSA students and advisors who may not be connected to GLSEN or other national, regional, and local LGBTQ-serving organizations, we conducted targeted outreach and advertising through social media sites. To target GSA students, we advertised the survey on Facebook and Instagram to U.S. users between 13 and 18 years of age who had interests aligned with LGBTQ communities and issues, and we also posted information about the survey on social media sites with significant LGBTQ youth content or LGBTQ youth followers. To target GSA advisors, we advertised the survey on Facebook and Instagram to U.S. users above 22 years of age who had interests aligned with both K–12 education and LGBTQ communities and issues, and we also posted information about the survey on social media sites with significant LGBTQ educator followers.

The final sample of GSA students consisted of 998 students between the ages of 13 and 19. Students came from 45 states and the District of Columbia. Table M.1 presents student participants' demographic and educational characteristics. As shown in Table M.1, the majority of student participants (70.0%) were White, and the most commonly endorsed gender and sexual orientation identities were cisgender (46.1%), and gay or lesbian (28.7%). Students were in grades 6 to 12, with the largest numbers in grades 10 and 11. Information about the characteristics of the GSA students' schools can be found in Appendix 1. Most of the GSA students (92.5%) attended public schools and over half (56.6%) attended suburban schools.

The final sample of GSA advisors consisted of 468 participants. Advisors came from 41 states and the District of Columbia. Table M.2 presents advisors' demographic characteristics. As shown in Table M.2, the majority of advisor participants were White (87.7%) and cisgender (92.5%), and the most commonly endorsed sexual orientation identities were heterosexual (45.4%), followed by gay or lesbian (29.3%). Information about the characteristics of the GSA advisors' schools can be found in Appendix 2. Most of the GSA advisors (91.1%) worked in public schools and nearly half (48.2%) worked in suburban schools.

Table M.1 Demographic and Educational Characteristics of GSA Student Survey Participants

Sexual Orientation[21] (n = 902)	
Gay or Lesbian	28.7%
Bisexual	24.2%
Pansexual[22]	16.0%
Queer	13.1%
Asexual[23]	6.7%
Heterosexual	2.2%
Questioning	2.4%
Another Sexual Orientation (e.g., demisexual, omnisexual)	6.8%

Race and Ethnicity[24] (n = 900)	
White	70.0%
Hispanic or Latinx,[25] any race	12.3%
African American or Black	2.2%
Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiian	3.4%
Arab American, Middle Eastern, or North African	2.6%
Native American, American Indian or Alaska Native	0.8%
Multiracial	8.7%

Sex at Birth (n = 904)	
Assigned Male	9.4%
Assigned Female	90.5%
Intersex (regardless of assigned sex)	0.1%

Gender[26] (n = 905)	
Cisgender	46.1%
Female	*40.1%*
Male	*5.7%*
Nonbinary/Genderqueer	*0.2%*
Transgender	26.1%
Female	*0.9%*
Male	*11.7%*
Nonbinary/Genderqueer	*7.8%*
Unspecified	*5.7%*
Nonbinary	22.7%
Nonbinary or Genderqueer Only	*16.4%*
Nonbinary or Genderqueer Female	*1.7%*
Nonbinary or Genderqueer Male	*0.3%*
Other Nonbinary Gender Identity (e.g., demigirl, genderfluid)	*4.3%*
Questioning	5.1%

Grade in School (n = 901)	
6th	0.4%
7th	4.3%
8th	8.0%
9th	17.3%
10th	22.9%
11th	30.2%
12th	16.8%
Other grade (e.g., "6th/7th")	0.1%

Average Age (n = 899) = 15.9 years

Table M.2 Demographic Characteristics of GSA Advisor Survey Participants

Sexual Orientation[27] (n = 464)	
Heterosexual	45.4%
Gay or Lesbian	29.3%
Bisexual	12.1%
Pansexual[28]	5.2%
Queer	4.5%
Asexual[29]	2.2%
Questioning	1.1%
Another Sexual Orientation (e.g., "fluid")	0.2%

Race and Ethnicity[30] (n = 465)	
White	87.7%
Hispanic or Latinx, any race	6.2%
African American or Black	0.6%
Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiian	2.2%
Arab American, Middle Eastern, or North African	0.9%
Native American, American Indian or Alaska Native	0.4%
Multiracial	1.9%

Sex at Birth (n = 464)	
Assigned Male	18.1%
Assigned Female	81.9%
Intersex (regardless of assigned sex)	0.0%

Gender[31] (n = 464)	
Cisgender	92.5%
Female	*75.2%*
Male	*17.0%*
Nonbinary/Genderqueer	*0.2%*
Transgender	1.5%
Female	*0.0%*
Male	*0.2%*
Nonbinary/Genderqueer	*0.9%*
Unspecified	*0.4%*
Nonbinary	5.4%
Nonbinary or Genderqueer Only	*3.9%*
Nonbinary or Genderqueer Female	*1.5%*
Nonbinary or Genderqueer Male	*0.0%*
Other Nonbinary Gender Identity (e.g., agender, demigender)	*0.0%*
Questioning	0.6%

Average Age (n = 462) = 43.7 years

Secondary Data: From Teasing to Torment

To examine the experiences of student allies, we used a subset of data from *From Teasing to Torment: School Climate Revisited (FTTT)*, a general population survey of 1,367 U.S. secondary school students (middle or high school grades) age 13–18 conducted in 2015 by GLSEN.[32] More information about the survey instrument and data collection methods can be found in the *From Teasing to Torment: School Climate Revisited* report.

The *FTTT* subsample consisted of 432 cisgender heterosexual students between the ages of 13 and 18 who reported that they attended a school with a GSA. Participants came from 35 states and the District of Columbia. As shown in Table M.3, 49.5% of participants were White and 60.4% were female. Students were in grades 6 to 12, with the largest numbers in grades 10 and 12. Of the cisgender heterosexual students who attended a school that had a GSA, 13.9% participated in their school's GSA. Information about the characteristics of the participants' schools can be found in Appendix 3. Almost all of the participants (95.4%) attended public schools and nearly half (48.8%) attended suburban schools.

Table M.3 Demographic and Educational Characteristics of Heterosexual Cisgender Students in Schools with GSAs

Race and Ethnicity (n = 432)	
White	49.5%
Hispanic or Latinx, any race	24.5%
African American or Black	8.8%
Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiian	12.7%
Multiracial	0.9%
Another Race	1.9%
Sex at Birth (n = 432)	
Assigned Male	39.6%
Assigned Female	60.4%
Gender (n = 432)	
Cisgender	100.0%
Female	*60.4%*
Male	*39.6%*
Grade in School (n = 432)	
6th	0.2%
7th	0.7%
8th	1.4%
9th	19.0%
10th	26.6%
11th	25.2%
12th	26.9%
Average Age (n = 432) = 15.9 years	
Participated in School's GSA	13.9%

Secondary Data: National School Climate Survey

We used data from the *2019 National School Climate Survey (NSCS)* to examine benefits of GSA participation for LGBTQ students. The original online survey for *NSCS* was conducted by GLSEN. Participants in the *NSCS* were 16,713 LGBTQ students age 13–21 who attended a middle or high school in the United States during the 2018–19 school year. The survey and survey outreach materials were available in English and Spanish. More information about survey outreach and the survey instrument can be found in the *2019 National School Climate Survey* report.[33]

To examine benefits of GSA participation for LGBTQ students, we used a subsample of the *NSCS* data, consisting of 10,276 LGBTQ youth between the ages of 13 and 21 who reported that they attended a school with a GSA, and came from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and major U.S. territories. As shown in Table M.4, the majority of student participants were White (69.2%) and cisgender (52.0%), and the most commonly endorsed sexual orientation identity was gay or lesbian (40.8%). Students were in grades 6–12, with the largest numbers in grades 9–11. The majority (61.8%) participated in their school's GSA. Information about the characteristics of the participants' schools can be found in Appendix 4. Almost all of the participants (93.0%) attended public schools and over half (52.4%) attended suburban schools.

Table M.4 Demographic and Educational Characteristics of LGBTQ Students in Schools with GSAs	
Sexual Orientation (n = 10204)	
Gay or Lesbian	40.8%
Bisexual	33.1%
Pansexual	16.7%
Queer	4.2%
Asexual	1.7%
Heterosexual	0.9%
Questioning or Unsure	2.1%
Another Sexual Orientation (e.g., "abrosexual," "I don't have a label")	0.5%
Race and Ethnicity (n = 10232)	
White	69.2%
Hispanic or Latinx, any race	14.0%
African American or Black	2.5%
Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiian	3.8%
Arab American, Middle Eastern, or North African	1.5%
Native American, American Indian or Alaska Native	0.4%
Multiracial	8.5%
Sex at Birth (n = 10256)	
Assigned Male	13.3%
Assigned Female	86.7%
Intersex (regardless of assigned sex)	0.0%
Gender (n = 10234)	
Cisgender	52.0%
Female	*42.4%*
Male	*9.5%*
Nonbinary/Genderqueer	*0.2%*
Transgender	28.5%
Female	*1.3%*
Male	*17.2%*
Nonbinary/Genderqueer	*6.0%*
Unspecified	*4.0%*
Nonbinary	14.5%
Nonbinary or Genderqueer Only	*9.4%*
Nonbinary or Genderqueer Female	*2.6%*
Nonbinary or Genderqueer Male	*0.5%*
Other Nonbinary Gender Identity (e.g., agender, demigender)	*2.0%*
Questioning	5.1%
Grade in School (n = 10232)	
6th	0.6%
7th	3.9%
8th	8.0%
9th	23.9%
10th	26.2%
11th	23.1%
12th	14.2%
Another Grade (e.g., "I take higher classes than the grade I'm in")	0.1%
Average Age (n = 10276) = 15.8 years	
Participated in School's GSA	61.8%
Participated as Leader or Officer in School's GSA	34.1%

PART ONE: DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION OF GSAS AND GSA PARTICIPATION

Student Composition of GSAs

Little is known about the student demographic composition of GSAs in U.S. schools. Some prior research that has examined the racial/ethnic demographics of students who participate in GSAs and barriers to participation suggests that LGBTQ students of color may be less likely to participate in GSAs than White LGBTQ students.[34] In the *GSA Student Survey*, we asked participants about the race/ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual orientation of members of their GSA. The majority of students (60.5%) reported that the racial/ethnic composition of their GSA was mostly White, and a quarter (25.8%) reported that it was half students of color and half White students (see Figure 1.1). Less than a tenth (6.7%) reported that the GSA at their school was composed mostly of students of color. When asked about how the demographic composition of their GSA reflected their school's demographic composition, the majority of students (73.9%) indicated that the racial/ethnic composition of their GSA was moderately, very, or extremely reflective of their school's racial/ethnic composition (see Figure 1.2).

We also asked students about the racial/ethnic composition of the student body at their school, and found that in schools that were majority White and in schools that did not have a majority racial/ethnic student body, the majority of GSA members were White (see Figure 1.3).[35] However, for schools that were majority students of color, the racial/ethnic composition of GSAs was more evenly distributed. It may be that the racial/ethnic distribution of GSA students reflects the racial/ethnic population of the school. Alternatively, our finding may also suggest that White LGBTQ students are more comfortable joining their school's GSA than LGBTQ students of color.

With regard to the gender identity composition of GSAs, four in ten GSA students (44.2%) reported that the GSA at their school was composed of half transgender/nonbinary students and half cisgender students (see Figure 1.4). A similar portion (41.9%) reported that their GSA was composed of mostly cisgender students. A tenth (10.8%) reported that the GSA members at their school were mostly transgender/nonbinary students. With regard to the sexual orientation composition of GSAs, the vast majority of students (92.5%) reported that the GSA at their school was composed of mostly or only LGBQ students (see Figure 1.5). Specifically, the majority of the LGBQ identities were bisexual (36.8%) or gay/lesbian (26.5%).[36] Less than a tenth (6.1%) reported that their GSA was half LGBQ and half heterosexual students.

Conclusions

According to student reports, the demographic composition of GSAs was predominantly White, cisgender, and gay or lesbian and bisexual students. This is consistent with the majority race and sexual orientation of our sample of GSA student respondents and somewhat consistent with the majority gender of our sample of GSA student respondents (see *Methods and Sample* section). As we found, the gender composition of GSAs may simply be a reflection of the demographic majority

Figure 1.1 GSA Students' Reports of Racial Composition of GSAs

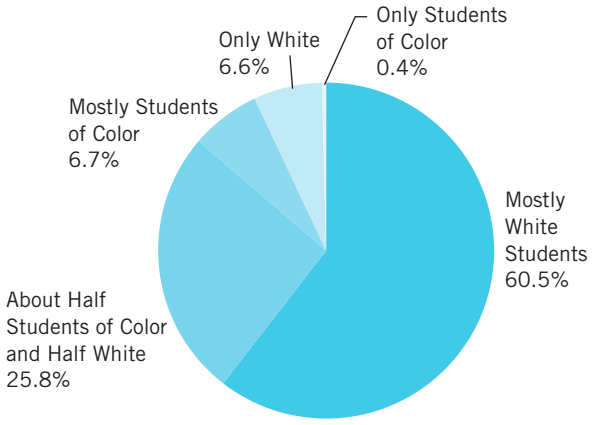
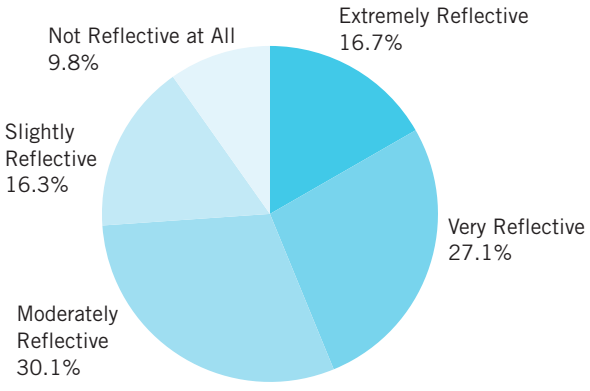


Figure 1.2 Students' Reports of How Much Racial/Ethnic Composition of GSA Reflects School Racial/Ethnic Composition



of students in their school. However, with regard to race/ethnicity, the findings were more nuanced. Given that 70.0% of GSA students in our sample were White, it may be that GSAs do not necessarily reflect the racial composition of U.S. secondary schools. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in Fall 2018, slightly less than half of the students enrolled in middle and high schools (48.1%) were White.[37] It is possible that White students are more likely to participate in their GSA. It may also be that GSAs are more common in predominantly White schools.

Figure 1.3 GSAs' Racial/Ethnic Composition by Schools' Racial/Ethnic Composition, Reported by GSA Students

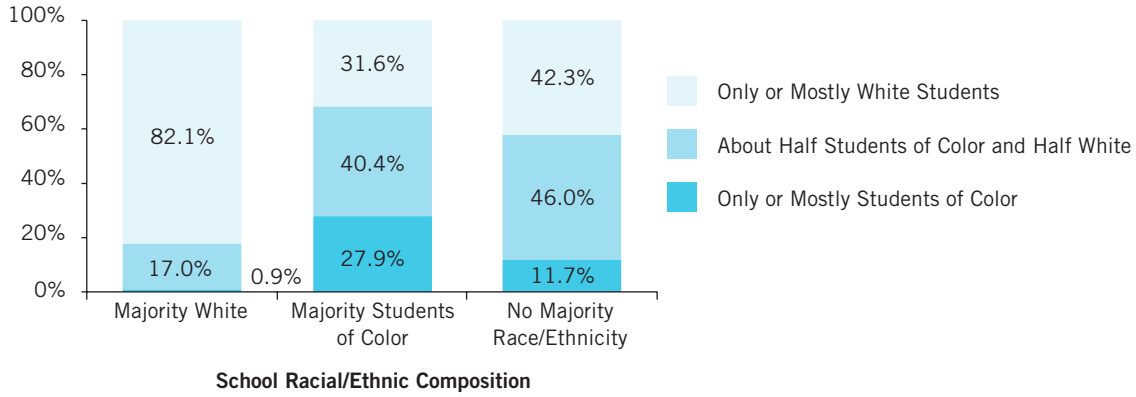


Figure 1.4 Gender Identity Composition of GSAs, Reported by GSA Students

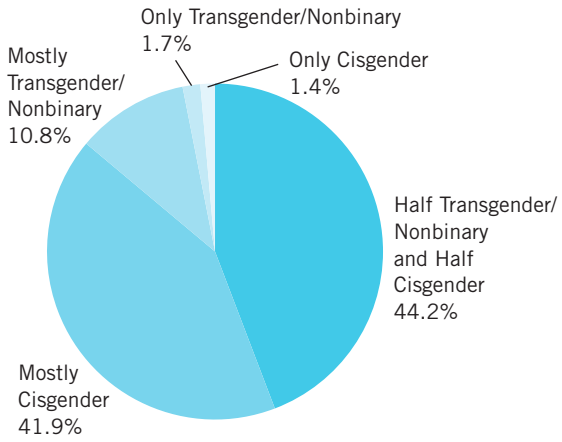
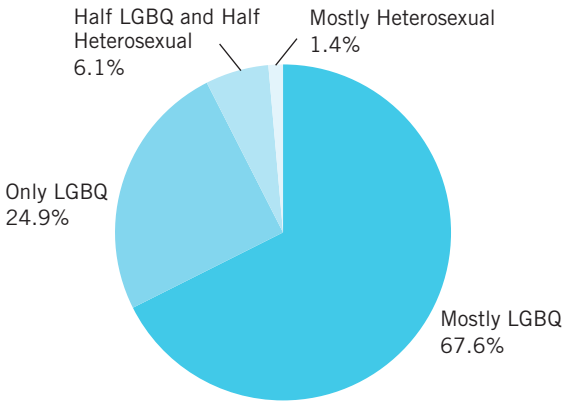


Figure 1.5 Sexual Orientation Composition of GSAs, Reported by GSA Students



Student Participation in GSAs

Prior research has shown that participating in GSAs confers benefits for LGBTQ students, including greater perceived safety at school, improved academic performance, and greater feelings of school belonging.[38] We examined students' and advisors' GSA meeting frequency and attendance in their school's GSA based on data from the GSA student and advisor surveys. We also examined whether student demographics played a role in frequency of GSA participation, including students' race/ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual orientation, based on data from the *2019 National School Climate Survey*. In that the school context surrounding GSAs may also play a role in frequency of GSA participation, we examined whether students' GSA participation was related to school characteristics, including school level (middle, high school), school type (public, private, non-private religious), locale (urban, suburban, rural), and region (South, Midwest, West, Northeast), using data from the *2019 National School Climate Survey*. Given that allies (cisgender heterosexual students) play an important role in supporting LGBTQ students, we also examined potential factors related to their participation in GSAs. Specifically, using data from the *From Teasing to Torment: School Climate Revisited* survey, we assessed whether allies' GSA membership was related to demographic characteristics, school characteristics, and interpersonal relations with LGBTQ students at school. Finally, extracurricular activities outside of GSAs may also play a role in the duration of time spent in GSAs for students. Therefore, we examined GSA students' involvement in school-sponsored extracurricular activities, using data from the *GSA Student Survey.*

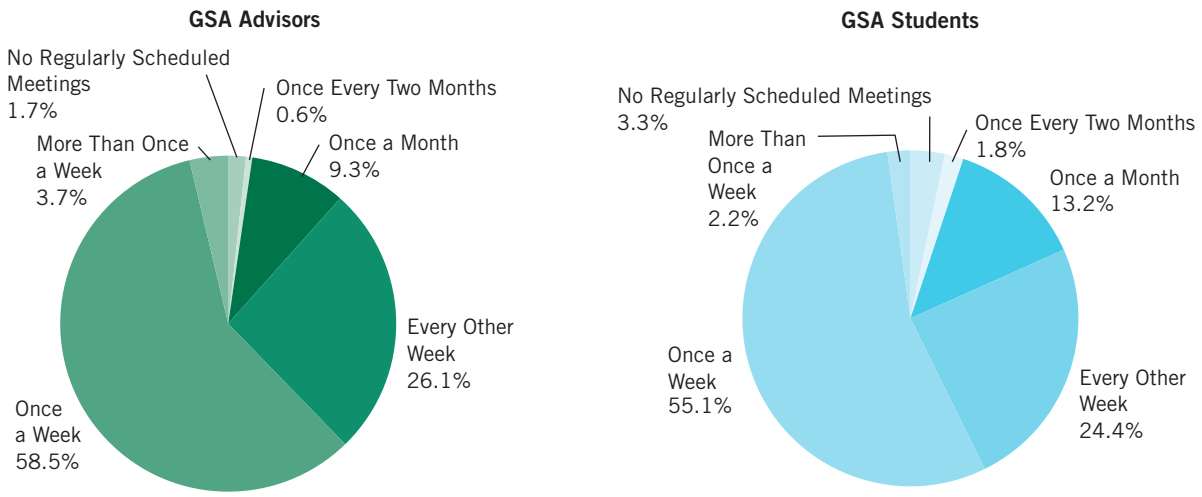
GSA Meetings and Attendance

According to GSA students and advisors, almost all GSAs (94.9% students; 97.6% advisors) met at least once a month, and the majority (55.1% students; 58.5% advisors) met once a week (see Figure 1.6). Students in our sample reported regularly attending GSA meetings – nearly half (46.6%) reported that they attended every meeting, and a third (33.1%) reported that they attended most meetings (see Figure 1.7). According to GSA advisors, the average GSA size in the previous year was between 18 and 19 students (*average*=18.9 students) and nearly as many members regularly attended meetings (*average*=17.5 students). Thus, based on both student and advisor reports, it appears that the vast majority of GSA students regularly attended their GSA.

Benefits of GSA Participation

Previous research has examined benefits of GSA participation, and found that LGBTQ students' greater involvement in GSAs has been associated with higher GPA, a greater likelihood of graduating high school, and greater involvement in community activism.[39] Researchers have also found that greater involvement in GSAs may be linked to several psychosocial benefits for LGBTQ students, including greater feelings of school belonging, stronger interpersonal relationships, greater peer

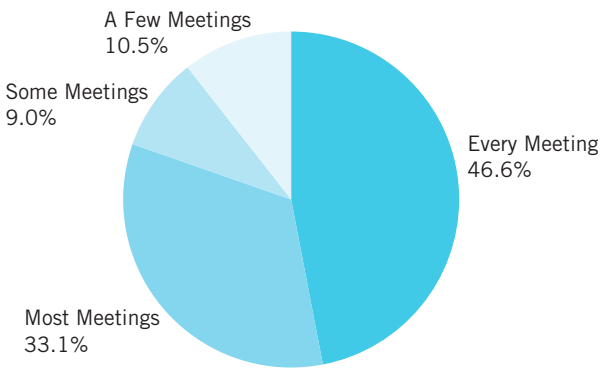
Figure 1.6 GSA Students' and Advisors' Reports of Frequency of Meetings at Their GSA



validation, higher comfort levels with their sexual orientation, a sense of empowerment, and reduced depressive and anxiety symptoms.[40] Using data from the *2019 National School Climate Survey*, we examined the associations between LGBTQ students' frequency of attending GSA meetings at their school and well-being, missing school due to feeling unsafe, and GPA.[41] LGBTQ students may attend GSA meetings because they experienced victimization based on their sexual orientation, victimization based on gender expression, and/or LGBTQ discriminatory school policies and practices, and therefore we accounted for these negative experiences in our analysis. We found that greater participation was related to greater feelings of school belonging, which is consistent with other research findings.[42] We also found marginal differences in psychological well-being, such that greater participation was related to slightly higher self-esteem and slightly lower depression. GSA participation was not, however, associated with educational outcomes (i.e., missing school due to feeling unsafe, and GPA).

Participation in GSAs can be directly beneficial for LGBTQ students, as shown above, but participation in GSAs may also offset the negative effects of victimization on their well-being. Therefore, we examined whether GSA participation lessened the negative effects of victimization based on sexual orientation and victimization based on gender expression on LGBTQ students' self-esteem, depression, and school belonging.[43] We found that attending GSA meetings was beneficial on school belonging for LGBTQ students who experienced high levels of gender expression based victimization, whereas attending GSA meetings was not beneficial on school belonging for LGBTQ students who experienced low levels of gender expression based victimization. Specifically, LGBTQ students who experienced high levels of gender expression based victimization and attended GSA meetings had greater feelings of school belonging than LGBTQ students who experienced high levels of gender expression based victimization but did not attend GSA meetings, and LGBTQ students who experienced low levels of gender expression based victimization did not differ on school belonging regardless of whether they attended or did not attend GSA meetings.

Figure 1.7 GSA Students' Reports of the Frequency of Their Attendance at GSA Meetings



GSA Participation by Students' Personal Characteristics

Differences in GSA Participation by LGBTQ Students' Demographic Characteristics.

Little is known about LGBTQ students' likelihood to participate in their GSA by student demographics. A recent study showed that among LGBTQ students, students of color attended GSA meetings less frequently than their White peers.[44] Another study showed that among LGBTQ students, cisgender students attended GSA meetings less frequently than their transgender peers, but there were no differences by sexual orientation between gay or lesbian students and bisexual students on frequency of attending GSA meetings.[45] Using data from the *2019 National School Climate Survey*, we examined, among LGBTQ students that have a GSA at their school, whether GSA participation differed by student demographics including race/ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Contrary to prior research, there was only a marginal difference in GSA participation by race/ethnicity.[46] Latinx students attended GSA meetings slightly less frequently than their White peers. However, when accounting for their age and how out they were to their peers and teachers, Latinx and White students no longer differed in GSA participation. There were no differences in participation between White students and any other racial/ethnic group.[47]

Regarding sexual orientation, consistent with prior research, gay or lesbian students did not differ from bisexual students on frequency of attending GSA meetings (see Figure 1.8). However, we did find that queer students, asexual students, and pansexual students attended GSA meetings more frequently than gay or lesbian students and bisexual students (51.2% queer students, 50.8% asexual students, and 47.0% pansexual students vs. 36.5% gay or lesbian students and 30.2% bisexual

students).[48] Consistent with prior research, we found that GSA participation also differed by gender identity, whereby transgender students, nonbinary students, students who were questioning their gender, and students with another non-cisgender identity attended GSA meetings more frequently than cisgender students (45.3% transgender students, 44.1% nonbinary students, 40.0% gender questioning students, and 50.0% other non-cisgender students vs. 30.0% cisgender students) (see also Figure 1.8).[49]

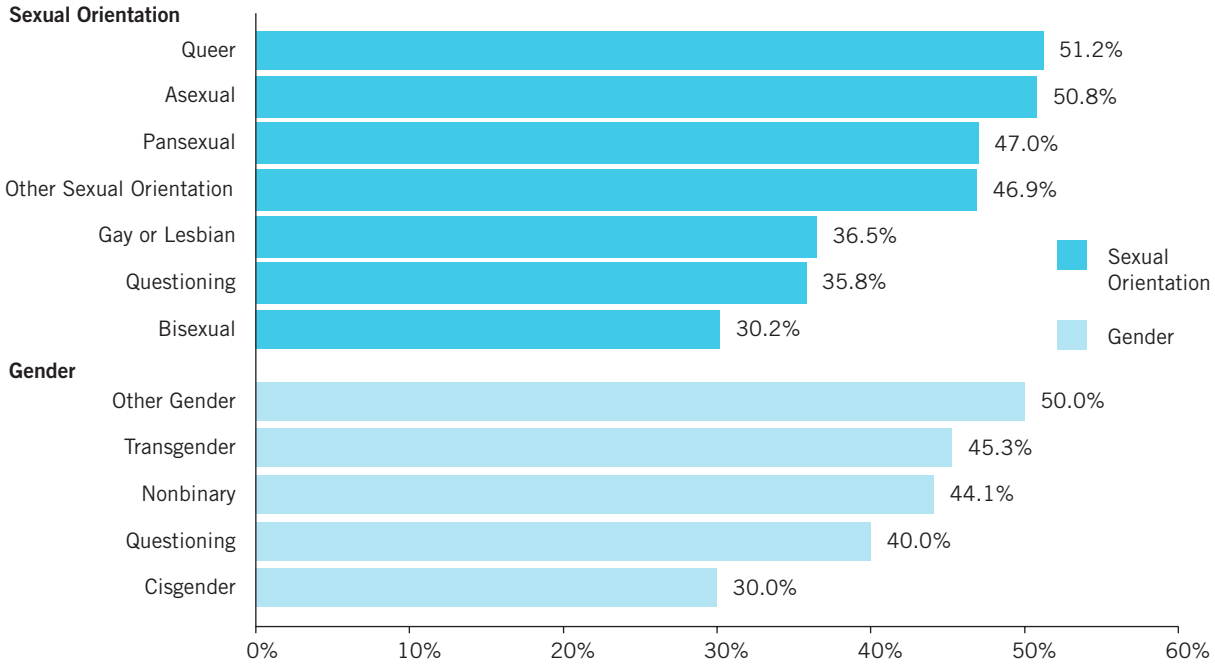
The above mentioned differences in participation may be due to differences in school climate experiences among LGBTQ students. Prior research has found that among LGBTQ students, pansexual students and non-cisgender students were more likely to experience victimization and discrimination at school.[50] Thus, it is possible that these students are more likely to seek out a space that they perceive as safe and affirming of their sexual orientation and gender identity, such as a GSA. However, after accounting for experiences with anti-LGBTQ victimization and anti-LGBTQ discriminatory school policies and practices, the differences by sexual orientation and gender identity remained.[51] Further research is warranted to examine underlying factors that contribute to differences in GSA participation by gender and sexual orientation.

Reasons Why LGBTQ Students Do Not Attend GSAs

Previous research, as reported in the *2019 National School Climate Survey*, examined the reasons why LGBTQ students do not participate in GSAs at their school.[52] The most common reasons were: interpersonal dynamics, such as having conflicts with other GSA members; scheduling and logistics issues; and issues with outness related to attending GSA meetings. Less commonly reported reasons were: issues with the functioning of their GSA, such as lack of organization; that their GSA did not meet their needs; personal concerns associated with attending their GSA, such as fear or discomfort and social awkwardness; and potential repercussions, such as fear of being victimized if other students found out that they were participating in the GSA. A small portion of students identified other specific reasons, such as not initially being aware of a GSA at their school.

In light of some of the demographic differences we found in GSA participation, we examined whether or not reasons for not attending GSAs differed by race/ethnicity and gender among LGBTQ students who had a GSA in their school, using the *2019 National School Climate Survey* data.[53] With regard to race/ethnicity, we did not find differences between LGBTQ students of color

Figure 1.8 GSA Participation by Sexual Orientation and Gender
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students who Attend GSA Meetings "Often" or "Frequently')



and White LGBTQ students on reasons for not attending a GSA at their school.[54] With regard to gender, there were few differences in reasons for not attending their GSA between cisgender and transgender/nonbinary students. Transgender/nonbinary students were more likely than cisgender students to say they did not attend because of fear of repercussions, such as being victimized, and because of interpersonal dynamics (see Figure 1.9), whereas cisgender students were more likely to say they did not attend because of scheduling and logistical reasons, and because of not being out in school (see also Figure 1.9).[55]

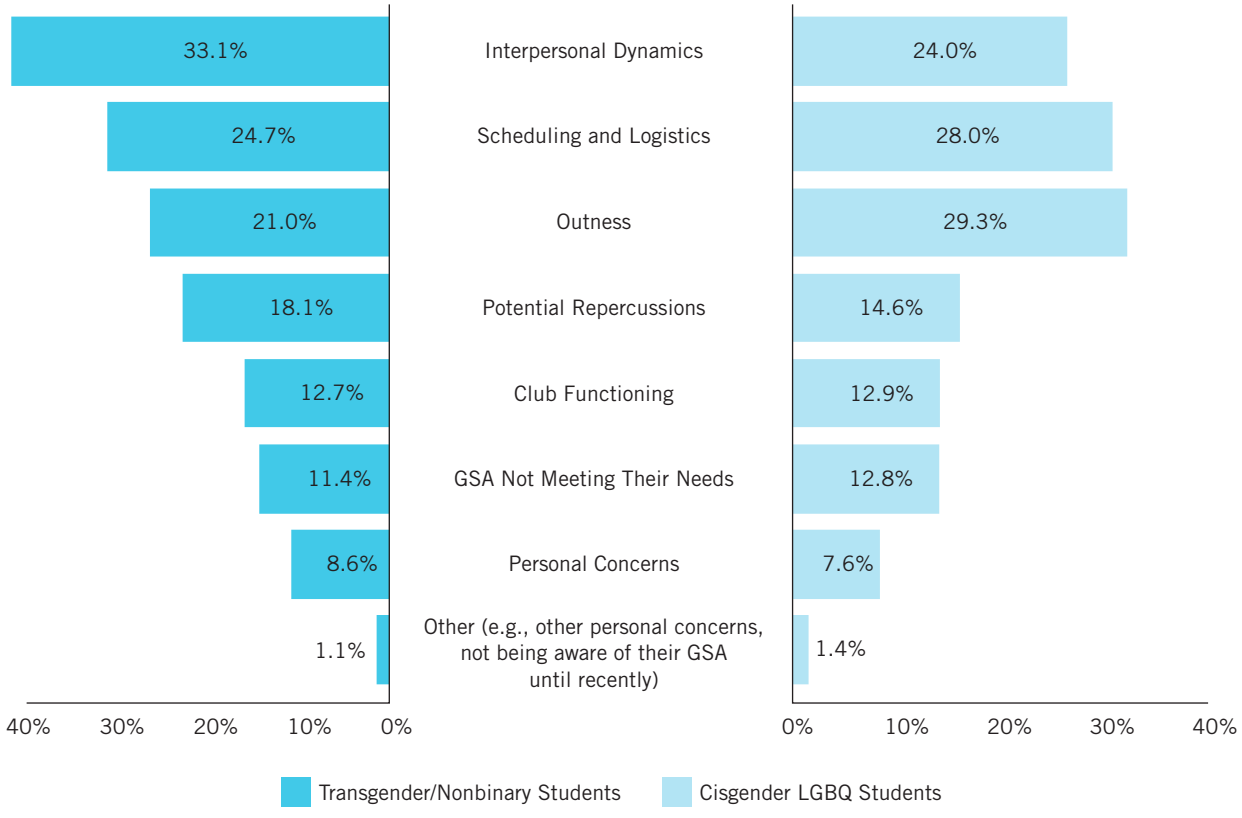
Differences in LGBTQ Students' GSA Participation by School Characteristics

GLSEN previously found that the presence of GSAs varied by school level (middle, high school), school type (public, private non-religious, religious), locale (suburban, urban, rural), and region (South, Midwest, West, Northeast). Overall, LGBTQ middle school students, students in religious schools, students in rural schools, and students in the South were the least likely to have a GSA at their school. In this section, using both previously reported findings and new analysis of data from the *2019 National School Climate Survey*, we examine whether participation varied by school level, school type, locale, and region.

School Level

In GLSEN's *2019 National School Climate Survey* report, we examined differences in frequency of GSA participation by school level (i.e., middle school vs. high school). We found that LGBTQ students in middle school attended meetings more often than LGBTQ students in high school, even though GSAs appeared to be less common in middle school (see Figure 1.10).[56] Perhaps because LGBTQ middle school students experience more hostile school climates than LGBTQ high school students, they feel a greater need to participate in GSAs, and thus, LGBTQ middle school students who have a GSA at their school may attend meetings more often than LGBTQ high school students who have a GSA at their school.

Figure 1.9 LGBTQ Students who Reported the Following Reasons for Not Attending the GSA at Their School by Gender



School Type

Using data from the *2019 National School Climate Survey*, we found that LGBTQ students who attended religious schools and private non-religious schools attended GSA meetings more often than those in public schools (see Figure 1.10).[57] Research shows that students who attend religious and private schools are less likely to have a GSA at school.[58] For religious schools, given that LGBTQ students in these schools often report more negative climate, the GSA may be a more valuable, safe haven. LGBTQ students in private schools often report more positive school climates, so their attendance may reflect the school's commitment and encouragement of attendance. Also, private schools in general (religious or not) may have fewer extracurricular activities, which might increase interest and attendance in GSAs. More research is warranted to better understand the underlying mechanisms that contribute to differences in GSA participation by school type.

Locale

Students who attended rural schools attended GSA meetings more often than students in urban and suburban schools (see Figure 1.10).[59] Given LGBTQ students who attend rural schools are more likely to experience hostile school climates than LGBTQ students who attend urban and suburban schools, it is possible that LGBTQ students who attend rural schools attend GSA meetings more often for reasons of safety and support.

Region

Students who attended schools in the Northeast and the Midwest attended GSA meetings more often than students in the South and West (see

Figure 1.10 GSA Participation by School Characteristics
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students who Attend GSA Meetings "Often" or "Frequently")

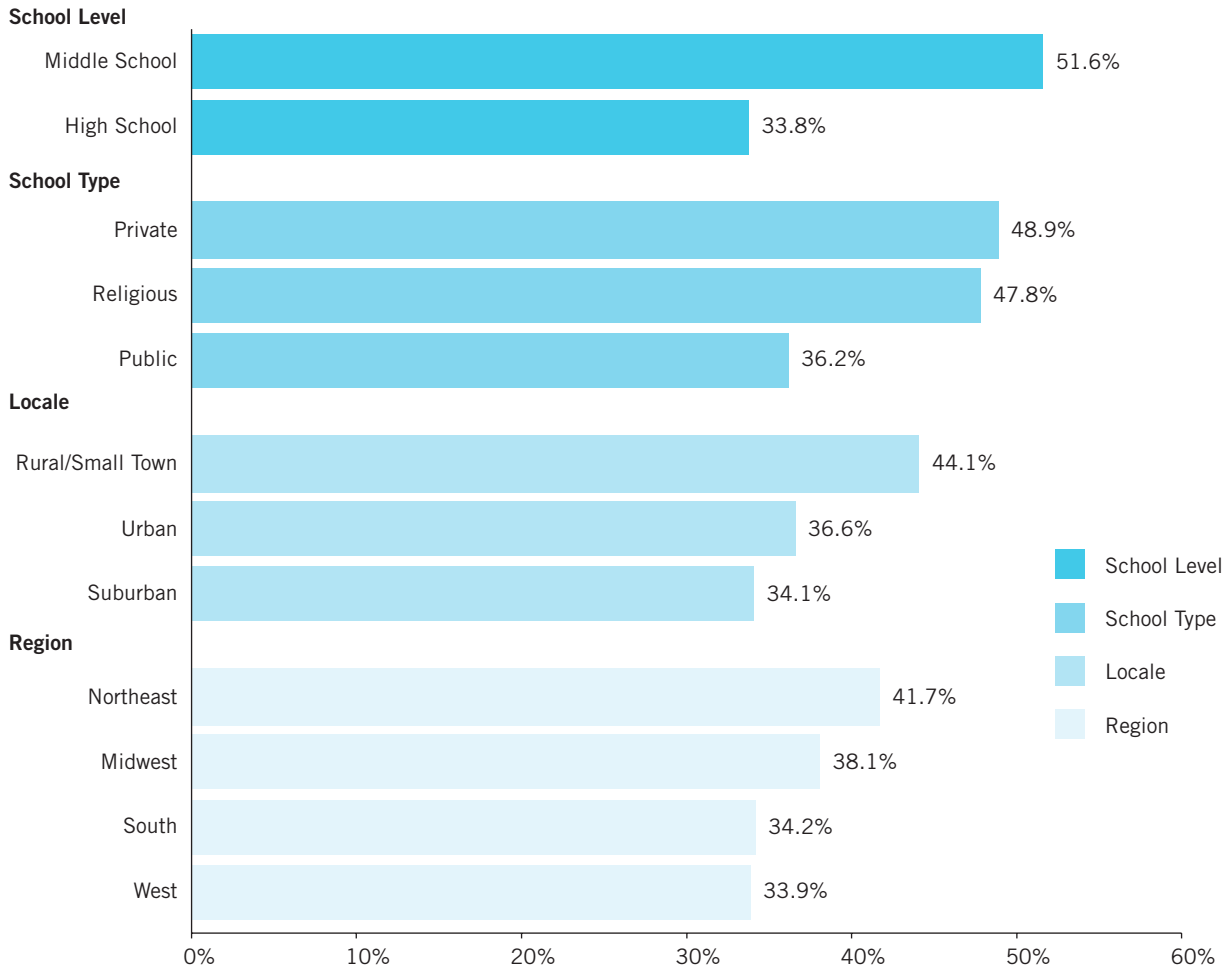


Figure 1.10).[60] Prior research suggests that LGBTQ students who attend schools in the South experience more hostile school climates than LGBTQ students in the Northeast and West. Thus, perhaps LGBTQ students in the South are more likely to feel that participating in their school's GSA poses a risk to their safety than LGBTQ students in other regions.[61] However, LGBTQ students in the West historically report less hostile school climates than those in the Midwest and those in the South, and as such, the same possible explanation about school safety would not apply here.[62] It may be that for some students, such as those in the Midwest, having a less safe school experience may motivate students to find a safe space in their GSA, but for some other students, it may pose a risk. It is also possible that because California has had more inclusive laws regarding the LGBTQ student experience,[63] that students in this region may feel less of a need to be part of a group supporting LGBTQ students at their school. Further research is warranted to examine these regional differences in GSA participation.

Differences in GSA Participation for Allies

While most students who attend GSAs are LGBTQ, cisgender heterosexual students (allies)[64] also attend GSAs. Emerging research has indicated some reasons why cisgender heterosexual students become GSA members, including interest in learning about LGBTQ issues and advocating for human rights, and having empathy toward marginalized groups.[65] To build on this prior research, we wanted to understand further what factors might result in a greater likelihood of GSA membership among cisgender heterosexual students. Using data from the *From Teasing to Torment: School Climate Revisited* survey, a national survey of the general population of secondary school students, we examined whether certain personal characteristics were related to a greater likelihood of GSA membership, including race/ethnicity, gender, and age. We found that GSA membership was not related to cisgender heterosexual students' race/ethnicity.[66] However, cisgender heterosexual females were more likely to be a GSA member than their male counterparts, and older cisgender heterosexual students were more likely to be a GSA member.[67] This is consistent with prior research that indicates that cisgender heterosexual female youth and older youth are more likely to have favorable attitudes toward LGBTQ people than cisgender heterosexual male youth[68] and younger youth.[69]

We also examined whether GSA participation varied by the type or location of the school that cisgender heterosexual students attended, including school level, school type, locale, and region. Unlike our findings for LGBTQ students, GSA membership was not related to characteristics of the school cisgender heterosexual students attended.[70]

Lastly, given the finding in prior research that participation in GSAs was related to having empathy toward marginalized groups for cisgender heterosexual students, we also examined whether knowing an LGBTQ person, or having LGBTQ friends was related to GSA membership. We found that simply knowing an LGBTQ student was not related to GSA membership among cisgender heterosexual students.[71] However, having at least one close personal LGBTQ friend was related to a greater likelihood of GSA membership (26.4% of those who had a close LGBTQ friend vs. 6.9% of those who did not).[72] Therefore, it may be that ally students in GSAs join along with or because of an LGBTQ friend. Further research is warranted to understand other factors that might contribute to cisgender heterosexual students' participation in their school's GSA.

GSA Student Involvement in Extracurricular Activities in School

We were interested in knowing the nature and depth of extracurricular participation of GSA students by examining what other extracurricular activities they participated in. The vast majority of students (90.3%) were involved in other school-sponsored extracurricular activities, in addition to their GSAs.

To understand the level of involvement of students in school extracurricular activities, we asked students how much time they spent with their GSA as well as with other extracurricular activities. Overall, most students (81.2%) spent 14 hours a week or less with all school-sponsored activities, including GSAs. Regarding GSAs only, most students (88.3%) spent four hours a week or less on GSA activities, and students who were GSA leaders spent more hours per week (3.0 hours per week on average) on GSA activities than non-leader students (2.5 hours per week on average).[73] The majority of GSA students (71.2%) spent more time participating in non-GSA school-sponsored extracurricular activities than in GSA activities, yet a quarter of students (25.7%) spent most or all

of their extracurricular time on GSA activities (see Figure 1.11).[74]

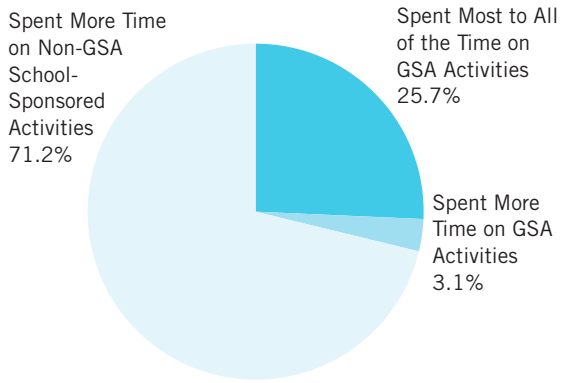
Conclusions

GSA participation confers benefits for LGBTQ students. Our findings suggest that LGBTQ students may participate in their school's GSA because they experienced anti-LGBTQ victimization and discrimination at school, and when they do attend GSA meetings more often, they have greater well-being. We also found that among LGBTQ students, participating in their school's GSA lessens the negative effects of gender expression based victimization on feelings of school belonging.

GSAs may be an important source of support for all LGBTQ students, yet it is important to explore whether participation in GSAs differs across different populations of LGBTQ students. Contrary to prior research suggesting LGBTQ students of color are less likely to participate in GSAs than their White LGBTQ peers,[75] we did not find a difference between White LGBTQ students and LGBTQ students of color on GSA participation, suggesting that LGBTQ students of color may find attending GSA meetings just as valuable as their White LGBTQ peers.

Regarding gender identity and sexual orientation, we found that non-cisgender students were more likely to participate in GSAs than cisgender students, and queer, pansexual, and asexual students were more likely to participate than gay/lesbian and bisexual students. It may be that non-cisgender students and queer and pansexual students rely more on GSAs for support than cisgender LGBQ students and gay/lesbian or bisexual students because they generally face a more hostile school climate.[76] For asexual students, it may be that they rely more on GSAs for support than gay/lesbian or bisexual students because they feel less connected with their school community due to a general lack of visibility and knowledge of asexual identities.[77]

Figure 1.11 Comparison of Time Spent Between GSA Activities and Other School Sponsored Activities Among GSA Student Members



Our findings regarding differences in GSA participation among LGBTQ students by school characteristics appear complex. Regarding region, students in the South and West were less likely to participate in their school's GSA, compared to students in all other regions. We might expect that LGBTQ students in hostile school climates are more likely to participate in their school's GSA because it would be a safe haven. However, it is also possible that students in more hostile environments feel that participating in their school's GSA makes them a target for victimization. Our research has historically shown that students in the South and Midwest report more negative school experiences than students in the Northeast and West, and students in the South generally report more negative school experiences than students in the Midwest.[78] It is unclear why students in the particularly hostile school environments of the Midwest are more likely to participate, whereas students in even more hostile school environments of the South are less likely to participate. Given that students in the South generally experience more hostile school environments than students in the Midwest, the relationship between hostile school climate and GSA participation may not be linear. It may be that in extreme hostile environments, participating in their school's GSA can pose a risk to their safety, whereas in moderate hostile environments, GSAs can serve as a safe haven. Regarding school type, students in religious and private non-religious schools were more likely to participate in their school's GSA than students in public schools. It may be that in some school environments that have been found to be more negative for LGBTQ students as in religious schools, GSAs can serve as a safe haven, whereas in other school environments that have been found to be less negative for LGBTQ students as in private non-religious schools, students may feel more comfortable attending GSA meetings.[79] Further research is warranted to understand the underlying mechanisms that help explain the association between LGBTQ student participation in GSAs and school characteristics.

In addition to LGBTQ student participation in GSAs, GSA participation among allies is also important as allies play an integral role in supporting LGBTQ youth and reducing discrimination experienced by LGBTQ youth. When examining factors related to cisgender heterosexual youth's participation in their school's GSA, we found that simply knowing someone at their school who is LGBTQ was not related to GSA participation. However, having a close LGBTQ friend was related; those who had one were more likely to participate in their school's GSA than those who did not. This is consistent with emerging research on engagement of allies in GSAs that indicate that allies who currently have more LGBTQ friends are more likely to engage in their GSA.[80]

Most GSA students participated in other non-GSA extracurricular activities at school, and the majority of these students spent more time on non-GSA school-sponsored extracurricular activities than on GSA activities. In that most GSA students engage in other non-GSA school sponsored extracurricular activities, this may be an opportunity for GSA students to explore ways to collaborate with other clubs, especially academic and service clubs.

PART TWO: GSA ACTIVITIES, RESOURCES, AND CHALLENGES

GSA Activities

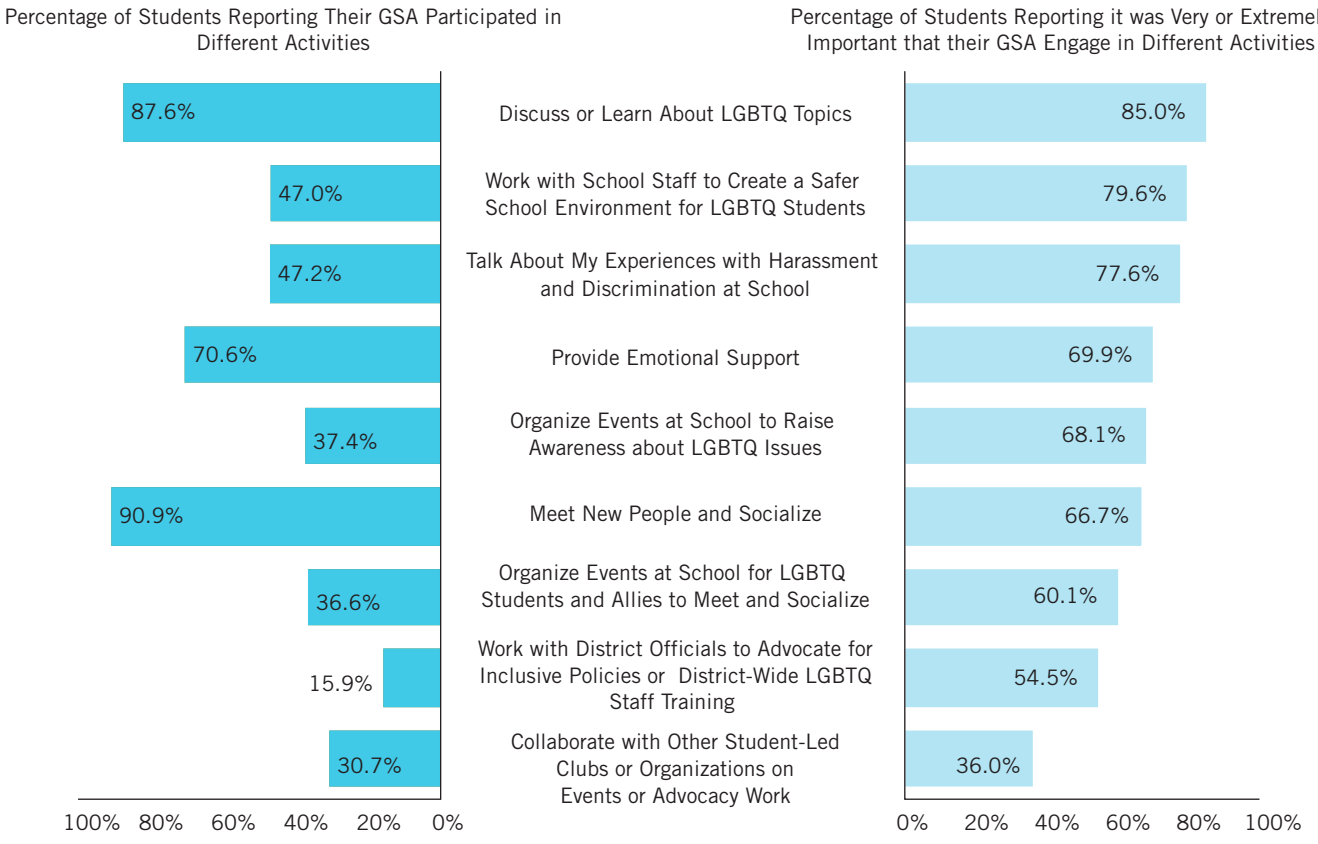
Prior research has shown that GSAs may serve a number of functions, including providing support and counseling; offering a safe space for students; and raising awareness, increasing visibility, and educating about LGBTQ issues in school.[81] As such, students generally engage in GSA activities that involve receiving support, socializing, gaining information and resources, and advocacy.[82] Nevertheless, little is known about the actual operation and activities of GSAs in schools across the U.S., and the research that does exist is regionally limited, and does not include national data. Because of this, we asked students and advisors about the activities of their GSA, including the different kinds of activities their GSA engaged in and how important they believed these activities to be. Additionally, given participation in extracurricular activities in general, and participation in GSAs in particular, is related to various benefits including positive school belonging and school experiences and improved peer relationships and support,[83] we explored possible benefits of specific GSA activities for GSA members.

Importance of and Engagement in GSA Activities

As shown in Figure 2.1, the most common activities students reported occurring in their GSA were general socializing (90.9%) and having discussions or learning about LGBTQ topics (87.6%), followed by providing students with emotional support (70.6%).[84] For all other activities, fewer than half of students reported that their GSA engaged in them. For example, 47.2% of students reported that their GSA helped members address incidents of harassment and discrimination at school and 47.0% reported that their GSA worked with school staff to create a safer school environment. The least common GSA activity was working with district officials to advocate for district-wide LGBTQ-inclusive policies or staff training, with only 15.9% of students reporting that their GSA engaged in this kind of activity.

We asked students not only about what activities their GSA engaged in, but also how important it was to them that their GSA did engage in these activities. Students were most likely to rate providing a space to discuss or learn about LGBTQ

Figure 2.1 Students' Reports of GSA Activity Participation and Importance

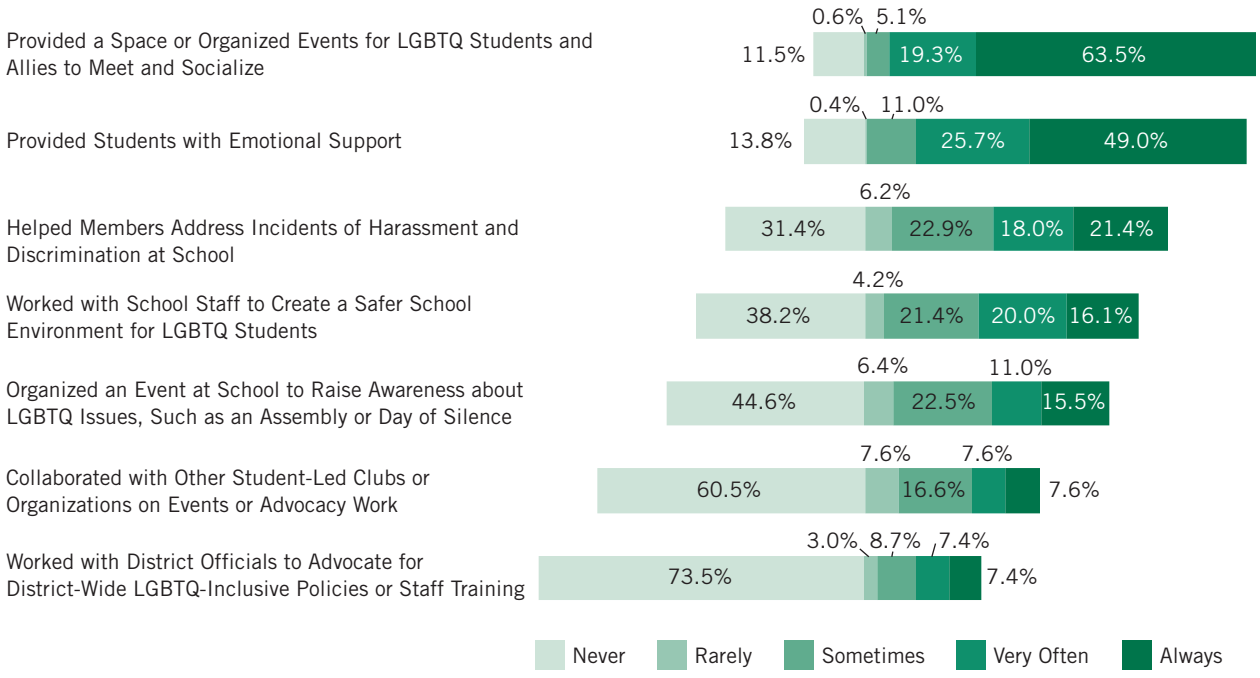


topics as important, with 85.0% of students reporting that it was very or extremely important to them (see Figure 2.1).[85] Over three-fourths (79.6%), also believed that it was very or extremely important that their GSA provide a space for them to work with school staff to create a safer school environment for LGBTQ students. A similar portion believed it was very or extremely important that their GSA provide a space to talk about their experiences with harassment and discrimination at school (77.6%). It was least important to students that their GSA allowed them to collaborate with other student-led clubs or organizations on events, although over a third (36.0%) of students still rated this as very or extremely important to them.

It is interesting to note that the activities that students believed were most important did not wholly correspond to the most commonly occurring activities in GSAs. Students rated having discussions and learning about LGBTQ topics as the most important reason they go to their GSA, and this activity was also one of the two most common GSA activities. The other most commonly reported GSA activity was general socializing. However, socializing was not among the activities rated most important by students. Additionally, although working with school staff to create safer school environments for LGBTQ students and talking about experiences with harassment and discrimination at school were of high importance to students, less than half of students in our sample (47.0% and 47.2%, respectively) reported that their GSA did either of these kinds of activities. The least likely activity to be reported by students was working with district officials to advocate for district-wide LGBTQ-inclusive policies or staff training (15.9% of students reported their GSA engaging in this type of activity), which was also an activity ranked relatively low in importance to students (see Figure 2.1).[86]

We also asked GSA advisors about the activities that their GSA engaged in, and how often they engaged in them. Overall, advisors' reports of GSA activities aligned with students' reports. As shown in Figure 2.2, advisors reported that their GSAs most frequently provided a space or organized events for LGBTQ students and allies to meet and socialize (87.9% reported this activity sometimes, very often, or always), followed by providing students with emotional support (85.8% reported sometimes, very often, or always).[87] Helping GSA students address incidents of harassment and discrimination and working with school staff to create safer school environments were also frequently reported activities by advisors. Similar to students, advisors reported that collaborating with other student-led clubs or organizations on events or advocacy work was an infrequent activity, as was working with district officials to advocate for district-wide LGBTQ-inclusive policies or staff training.

Figure 2.2 Frequency of GSA Activities, Reported by Advisors



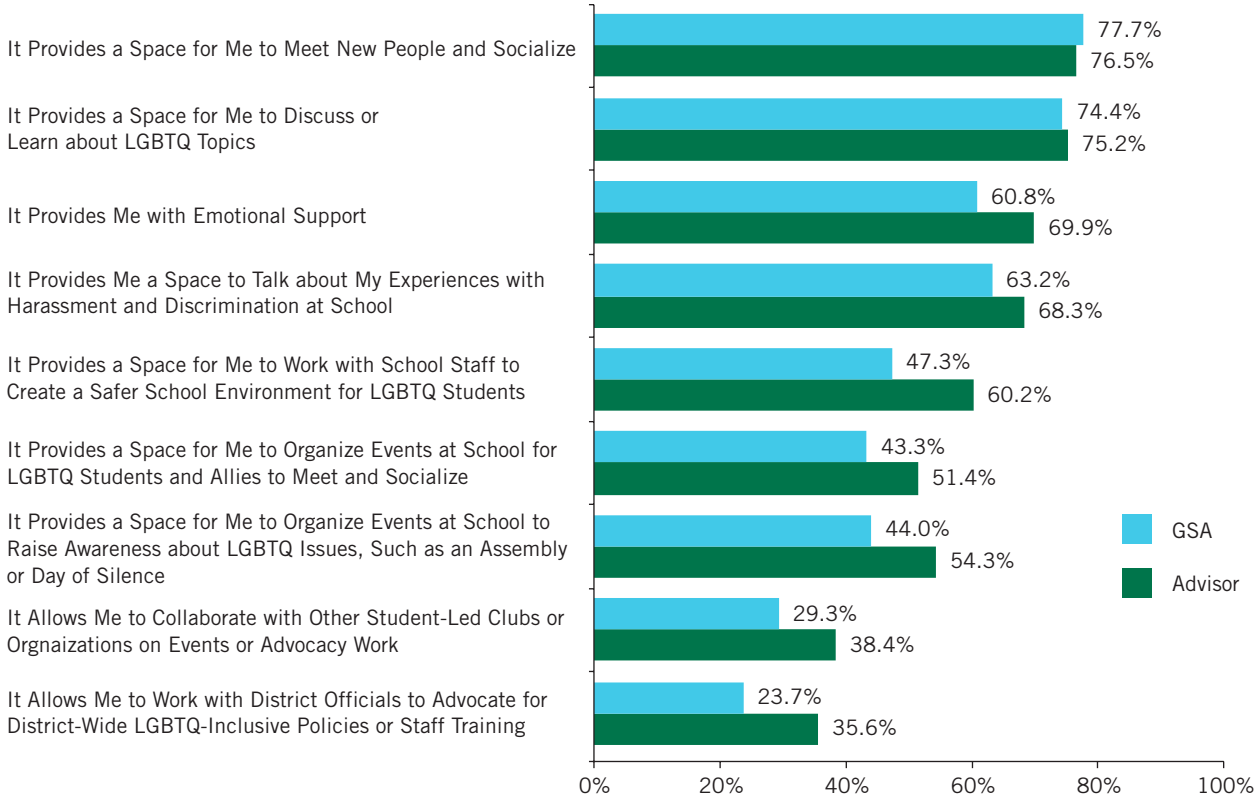
GSAs' and Advisors' Successfulness in Meeting Student Needs

In addition to exploring which activities students thought were important, and which activities their GSA actually participated in, we were interested in better understanding how successful GSAs and advisors were in meeting students' needs through these activities. Students were asked about which needs (defined as reasons they participated in their school's GSA) their GSA was most helpful in meeting through the activities that their GSA engaged in. Students reported that their GSAs were most helpful in providing a space for students to meet new people and socialize, and discussing or learning about LGBTQ topics.[88] Students were also asked about which needs their GSA advisors were most helpful in meeting through the GSA activities, and they provided similar responses — providing a space for meeting people and socializing, and discussing or learning about LGBTQ topics.[89] As noted above, these were also the most common activities (see Figures 2.1 and 2.2).

Students reported that their GSAs were least helpful in providing a space for students to work with district officials to advocate for district-wide LGBTQ-inclusive policies or staff training, and to collaborate with other student-led clubs or organizations on events or advocacy work. Similarly, the needs that students found advisors were least helpful with were providing a space for students to collaborate with other student-led clubs or organizations, and to work with district officials. These activities were also among the least common and least important GSA activities according to students. Interestingly, these two activities were the only ones that involve collaboration with other groups, organizations, or people, which suggest that GSAs may operate in a more insular fashion. Overall, it appears that GSAs and advisors capitalize on their strengths; the activities that GSAs and advisors are more successful at implementing and engaging in are the activities that they frequently participate in. In contrast, they are less likely to engage in activities that they are least successful in.

Figure 2.3 Students' Ratings of GSA and Advisor Helpfulness in Meeting Students' Needs

How helpful has your GSA and advisor been in addressing the following reasons for joining the GSA?



Differences in GSA Activities by School Characteristics

GSA practices and activities may vary based on school characteristics, including school level (middle, high school), school locale (urban, suburban, rural), and region of the U.S. (Northeast, South, Midwest, West). We examined whether GSA activities differed based on these characteristics, among both students and advisor reports. Overall, there were few differences in GSA activities by school characteristics. With regard to school level, middle school and high school students were similar in their reports of the types of activities their GSAs conducted.[90] However, advisors of high school GSAs were more likely than advisors of middle school GSAs to report that their GSA organized an event at school to raise awareness about LGBTQ issues (e.g., an assembly or Day of Silence), collaborated with other student-led clubs or organizations on events or advocacy work, and worked with district officials to advocate for district-wide LGBTQ-inclusive policies or staff trainings.[91] With regard to school region, the only significant difference was that students in the Northeast were more likely than students in all other regions to report that their GSA organized events at school to raise awareness about LGBTQ issues.[92] However, advisors' reports of GSA activities did not differ by region.[93] With regard to school locale, advisors in rural schools were less likely than those in urban and suburban schools to report that their GSA collaborated with other student-led clubs or organizations on events or advocacy work, but there was no difference in this activity reported among students.[94]

Benefits of GSA Activities on LGBTQ Student Experiences

Much of the previous research on the benefits of GSAs has only looked at whether students benefit simply from having a GSA in their school.[95] Prior research indicates that GSA participation may be related to greater support from peers and staff and a less hostile school climate.[96] To better understand how GSAs benefit LGBTQ students, we examined whether various GSA activities were beneficial for improving LGBTQ GSA students' experiences in school.

Using data from the *2019 National School Climate Survey*, we found that GSA activities fell into two broad categories for LGBTQ GSA students–socializing/support and advocacy.[97] Activities that fell under socializing and support included providing a space or organizing events for LGBTQ students and allies to meet and socialize, providing students with emotional support, and helping student members address incidents of harassment and discrimination at school. Advocacy activities included organizing school events to raise awareness of LGBTQ issues (such as GLSEN's Day of Silence), collaborating with other student-led clubs or organizations on events or advocacy work, working with district officials to advocate for district-wide LGBTQ-inclusive policies or staff trainings, and working outside of school to advocate for change or raise awareness around LGBTQ issues. Nearly all LGBTQ GSA students (97.2%) reported that their GSA engaged in socializing and support activities, but only six in ten students (64.8%) reported that their GSA engaged in advocacy activities.[98] For this reason, we examined the possible benefits of advocacy activities regarding school climate indicators using data from the *2019 National School Climate Survey.*[99] Overall, we found that GSA advocacy activities were related to better experiences in school for LGBTQ GSA students.[100] Engaging in at least one advocacy activity was related to being less likely to experience anti-LGBTQ discriminatory school policies and practices, more supportive peers and educators, and more visible displays of support for LGBTQ students. Given the benefits of engaging in advocacy activities, it may be important for organizations that provide support to GSAs, such as GLSEN, to increase their focus on providing resources to support GSA advocacy activities.

Previous research has found that GSAs vary in the level of activities they engage in, and that participating in a GSA benefits LGBTQ students' sense of school belonging, but less is known about the benefits of participating in more active GSAs.[101] We explored whether the level of activity of a GSA was associated with greater benefits of participation for student members. Using data from the *2019 National School Climate Survey*, we examined the relationship between GSA activity level (number of different activities their GSA engaged in) and LGBTQ student well-being, including self-esteem, school belonging, and depressive symptoms. We found that LGBTQ student members of GSAs that engaged in more activities reported greater feelings of school belonging and greater levels of self-esteem, but there were no differences on depression.[102] More

active GSAs may provide students with more opportunities to build their sense of independence and responsibility (through organizing events and advocacy actions), which is beneficial for their well-being.[103]

Conclusions

Students overall believed that it was important that their GSA engage in activities that create and foster safe and supportive spaces for LGBTQ students, both within the GSA itself and in the greater school-wide climate. For example, students believed it was most important that their GSA provide a space for them to discuss and learn about LGBTQ topics. Additionally, they believed it was important that their GSA also provide a space to talk about the LGBTQ-based harassment and discrimination they faced at school. In the context of the greater school environment, students believed it was important that their GSA worked with school staff to ensure a safe school environment for LGBTQ students.

Discussing or learning about LGBTQ topics was rated as one of the most common activities, and also one of the activities that GSAs and advisors were most successful in addressing. However, other activities that were reported as some of the most common and most successfully achieved were not rated as most important, such as meeting new people and socializing. Although it is important that GSAs engage in activities with which they are competent and successful, GSA leaders and advisors should build skills and competencies to engage in the other activities that youth believe are most important. It is important to note that there are certain activities that students had expected their GSA to engage in, or they had joined a GSA to engage in, that were not commonly conducted by GSAs, including working with school staff to create a safer school environment for LGBTQ students and talking about experiences with harassment and discrimination at school. Thus, it may be important for advisors and GSA leaders to assess the needs of the student members of their GSA and make changes to the GSA's activities accordingly to ensure that their GSA is responsive to the needs of the students it serves.

Advisors themselves reported a similar ranking of frequency of many of the activities that their GSA engaged in. Both students and advisors reported that providing a space or organized events for LGBTQ students and allies to meet and socialize was the most common GSA activity and that external work, including collaborating with other student-led clubs or organizations and working with district officials were less frequent. However, students and advisors differed in their reports of frequency of helping GSA students address incidents of harassment and discrimination and working with school staff to create safer school environments, as advisors more commonly reported their GSA engaged in these activities. It is possible that these activities, which involve working with school staff to address incidents or create safer school environments, rely more on help and assistance from advisors than other activities, and advisors may be more cognizant of these activities than are GSA students.

According to our findings, GSAs are more likely to engage in activities that involve socializing and support for LGBTQ youth and are less likely to engage in more advocacy-oriented activities. However, our findings also show that supporting GSAs in advocacy-oriented activities could result in improved school climate for LGBTQ students, perhaps because these activities can potentially have an impact on changing the culture, policies and practices of their school to be less hostile toward LGBTQ students. Such support may include providing GSAs with guides to planning events or resources about how to advocate with school districts. It is important that GSAs provide a space for LGBTQ youth to socialize and find support, but it is also important that GSAs are equipped with the skills to engage in other kinds of activities.

Our findings show that, overall, GSA activities are associated with more positive school experiences and better well-being outcomes for LGBTQ GSA students. Advocacy activities were related to fewer negative indicators of school climate, and a higher number of GSA activities was associated with benefits to school belonging and psychological well-being. It is important to note that our measure of activity level (number of different types of activities that their GSA engaged in) is a proxy for highly active GSAs. Further research is warranted in examining time spent on GSA activities and number of activities that GSAs engage in, and the benefits of both time spent on activities and number of activities for LGBTQ students. Future work should also provide greater understanding of why GSAs engage in some activities over others, and the benefits of these activities for allies.

Resources

To better understand GSA resources and GSAs' use of them, we asked GSA students and advisors about: 1) the resources they use to plan meeting activities; 2) their awareness, use, and the helpfulness of online resources on GSA-related topics; and 3) their needs for additional resources.

Resource Types Used When Developing Meeting Activities

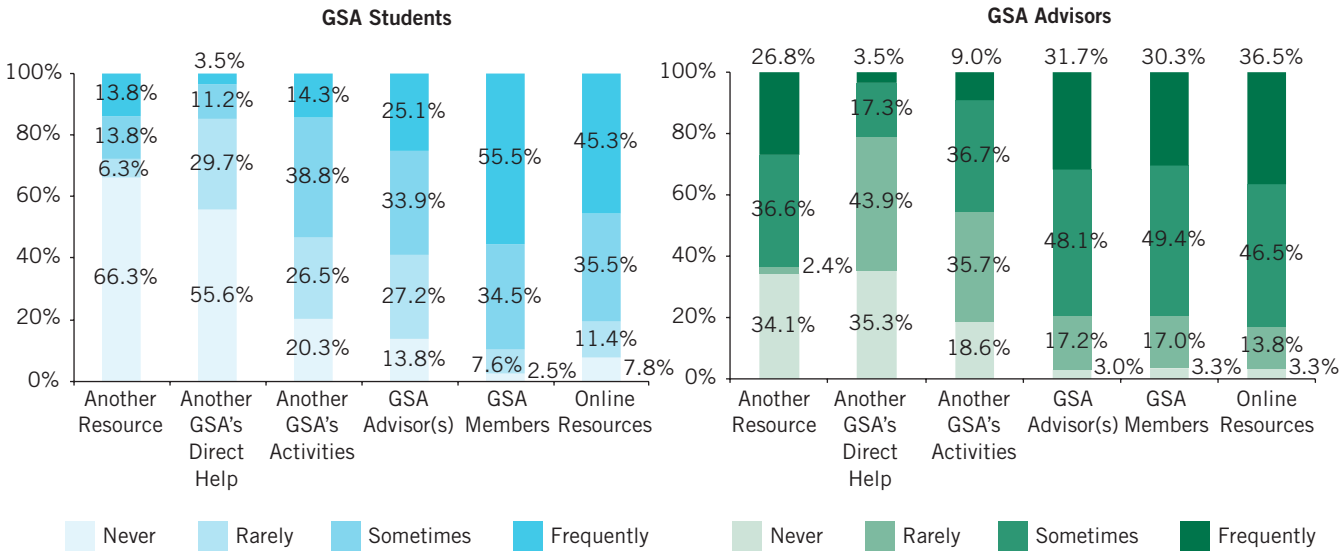
We asked students and advisors how often their GSA used certain resources when developing GSA activities (see Figure 2.4). The vast majority of GSA students reported that the students regularly (frequently or sometimes) developed activities themselves (90.0%), and also regularly used online resources for GSAs (80.8%). Over half of students reported that their advisor regularly provided them with activities (59.0%), and that they regularly used activities they saw from another GSA (53.1%). About one-quarter (27.6%) of students reported using another resource regularly, such as an outside speaker or organization focused on LGBTQ issues. Fewer students (14.7%) reported that they regularly received direct help from another GSA when deciding on activities to do.

Advisors reported a similar pattern of resource usage when compared to GSA students (see Figure 2.4). The majority of advisors said that their GSA regularly (frequently or sometimes) used online resources (83.0%), the students created the activities themselves (79.7%), and they or another advisor provided the students with activities (79.8%). Almost two-thirds of advisors (63.4%) reported regularly using another resource, such as an outside speaker or organization focused on LGBTQ issues. About half of advisors (45.7%) reported regularly using activities they saw from another GSA. Two in ten advisors (20.8%) regularly received direct help from another GSA when deciding what to work on in their own GSA.

Interestingly, GSA students reported that they developed activities themselves more frequently than advisors reported that students developed activities.[104] Similarly, advisors reported providing students with activities more frequently than students reported that their advisors provided activities for them. It is possible that advisors take an active role in scaffolding decision-making processes for youth by offering a limited range of activities, action steps, or program options from which GSA students could choose. As such, both groups may perceive that they have ownership over their GSA's activities. It is also possible that advisors may not be as aware of the level of effort that the GSA leaders are expending on their club, and that the GSA students are not fully aware of their advisors' efforts.

GSA advisors reported getting help directly from another GSA and using another resource, such as an outside speaker or organization, more frequently than did GSA students. These differences may reflect the access of advisors to colleagues in other

Figure 2.4 Frequency of Resources Used When Developing Meeting GSA Activities as Reported by GSA Students and Advisors



schools (e.g., through district-wide professional development) and community resources and of students to their peers in other schools. Students reported that they used activities that they saw from another GSA more frequently than advisors did. Advisors may not realize when students are using ideas that they thought of themselves or ideas they saw from another GSA.

Familiarity and Use of Online Resources about GSAs

As discussed above, the majority of GSA students and advisors use online resources to assist with planning meeting activities. Given one focus of GLSEN's work is to provide resources for GSAs, we also asked GSA students and advisors about their familiarity with and use of online resources on the following topics related to GSAs:

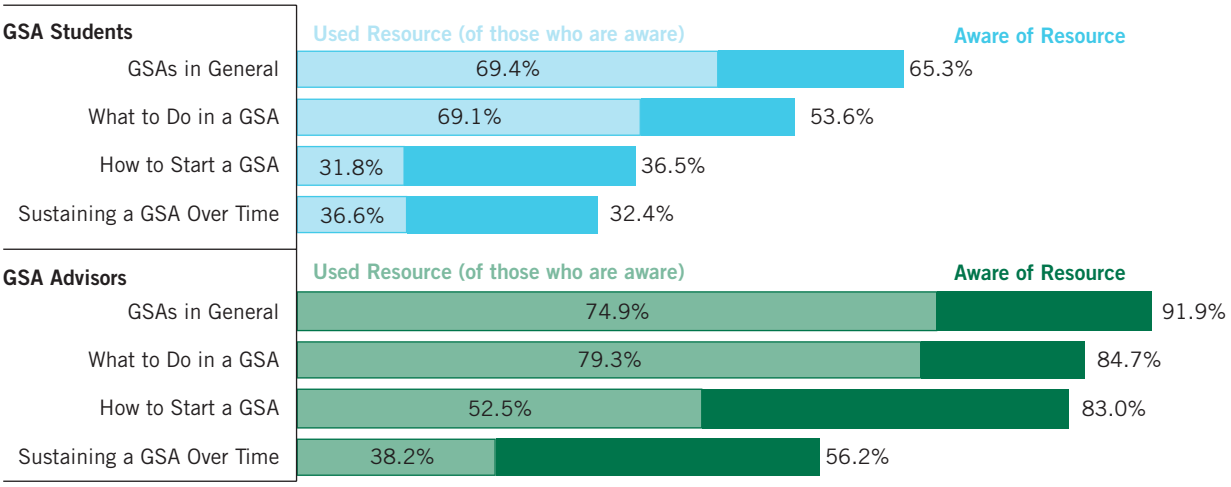
- GSAs in general (i.e., what a GSA is, how GSAs function)
- What to do in a GSA (e.g., GSA activities, striving to make your GSA inclusive)
- How to start a GSA
- Sustaining a GSA over time (e.g., transitioning leadership, fundraising)

We found that nearly three-fourths of GSA students (71.5%) and almost all GSA advisors (95.3%) were aware of at least one online resource on these GSA-related topics. We also asked follow-up questions to assess whether GSA students and advisors who were familiar with resources on each topic actually used resources on that topic, and found that the majority of both students and advisors (83.7% and 87.4%, respectively) had used at least one online resource on these topics.

As seen in Figure 2.5, GSA advisors were more aware of online resources across all GSA-related topics than students were, but the pattern of awareness by topic was the same for advisors and students.[105] GSA advisors and students were most aware of resources about GSAs in general (91.9% of advisors; 65.3% of students), followed by what to do in a GSA (84.7% of advisors; 53.6% of students). GSA advisors and students were least aware of resources about sustaining a GSA over time (56.2% of advisors; 32.4% of students). Additionally, as seen in Figure 2.5, the pattern of use by topic was similar for advisors and students.[106] GSA students were most likely to use resources on GSAs in general (69.4% of the students who were aware of these resources) and GSA advisors were most likely to use resources on what to do in a GSA (79.3% of advisors who were aware of resources on what to do in a GSA). Both students and advisors were least likely to use resources on sustaining a GSA over time (36.6% of the students who were aware of these resources; 38.2% of the advisors who were aware of these resources). Advisors reported using resources about how to start a GSA and what to do in a GSA more frequently than did students.[107]

Advisors may be more aware of resources in GSA-related topic areas because they seek these

Figure 2.5 Percentage of GSA Students and Advisors Who Are Aware of and Use Online Resource on GSA Topics



resources out more frequently than students, similar to how advisors might seek out other education-related online resources as part of their role as an educator. In addition, advisors may have served in their role longer than students have been members. Thus, advisors may have had more time to seek out resources on various GSA-related topics, such as starting a GSA or what to do in a GSA. Surprisingly, a smaller proportion of GSA students and GSA advisors used resources on sustaining a GSA over time, even when they were aware of resources on that topic. It may be that GSA students and advisors are focused more on running a successful meeting or event and less on the longevity of the GSA. Alternatively, there may be less focus on longevity if a GSA has been stable over many years. Future research is warranted to better understand factors that are associated with GSA students' and advisors' use of resources on sustaining a GSA over time.

Helpfulness of Online Resources about GSAs

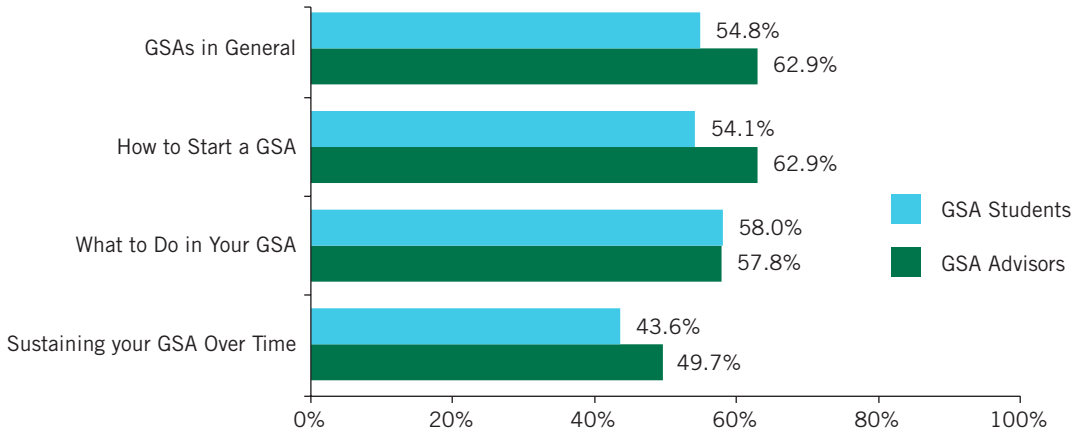
We were interested in learning about advisors' and students' perceptions of the helpfulness of resources on GSA topics they have used. Overall, the majority of GSA students and advisors found these resources on GSA topics to be very or extremely helpful (Figure 2.6). GSA students and advisors did not differ in their ratings of the helpfulness of the resources they used.[108]

Needs for Additional Resources

In order to best serve the development and functioning of GSAs, it is important to understand what additional resources advisors and student members need for their GSAs. Thus, we asked participants to reflect on their needs for additional resources in an open-ended question. As shown in Table 2.1, the most common types of informational content requested by GSA students included strategies for advocacy (31.7%) and general meeting activity or topic discussion suggestions (25.2%). The least common types of informational content requested by GSA students were sustaining a GSA (4.1%) and other informational resources, such as books (1.6%). The most commonly requested topics by GSA advisors were general meeting suggestions (35.8%) and information and support for certain groups of students (22.5%). The least common types of informational content requested by advisors were on sustaining a GSA (0.8%) and other resources, such as templates for flyers (5.0%).

Few GSA students and advisors mentioned about other types of additional resources outside of informational content, including greater connections within and outside their school (12.7% of students; 16.8% of advisors) and trainings for students/advisors (6.3% of students; 5.8% of advisors).

Figure 2.6 Percentage of GSA Students and Advisors who Rated Online Resources on GSA Topics as Very or Extremely Helpful



Conclusions

Based on feedback from GSA advisors and GSA students, organizations such as GLSEN that provide support to GSAs should consider developing more resources for GSAs with activity suggestions, particularly those that support GSA students' advocacy in their schools. Information and resources on general meeting activities, advocacy strategies, and information and support for marginalized groups of students can be helpful to a successful GSA. When developing GSA activities, students and advisors often came up with activity ideas themselves. Nevertheless, they frequently turned to online resources for information on GSAs in general, how to start a GSA, what to do in a GSA, and sustaining a GSA over time. Advisors were more likely than students to be aware of and to use online resources; therefore, organizations supporting GSAs may want to pay particular attention to educators when creating resources. Alternatively, advisors and organizations could encourage student leadership by introducing youth to GLSEN's and similar organizations' online resources for GSAs. With these resources, GSAs will continue to lead the way in creating safer and more LGBTQ-inclusive schools.

Table 2.1 Informational Resource Needs Reported by GSA Students (n = 123) and Advisors (n = 120)

Type of Resources Needed*	GSA Students	GSA Advisors
General Meeting Suggestions (e.g., "Club activity suggestions")	25.2%	35.8%
Advocacy Support (e.g., "Ideas on how to bring up LGBTQ+ problems to our school")	31.7%	16.7%
Information and Support for Certain Groups of Students (e.g., "Resources to help be more inclusive towards queer people with disabilities, POC")	10.6%	22.5%
Sustaining a GSA (e.g., "How to sustain a GSA")	4.1%	0.8%
Other (e.g., "books; templates for flyers")	1.6%	5.0%

*Because respondents could indicate multiple resources, categories are not mutually exclusive. Percentages may not add up to 100%.

GSA Challenges

GSAs may face challenges in being able to develop, support, and sustain their ongoing club activities, or in simply existing and operating as a club in their school. Thus, we asked students and advisors about their experiences with various kinds of challenges, and how they were resolved.

Challenges Experienced by GSA Students and Advisors

GSA Students

The vast majority of GSA students (95.8%) reported that their GSA had experienced some challenge in the last school year, but there were significant differences in how commonly they were reported across the types of challenges.[109] As shown in Figure 2.7, students most commonly reported GSA attendance as a significant challenge (73.8%), followed by disorganized GSA meetings (62.1%), pushback from other students about the GSA (59.2%), and fundraising for the GSA (53.1%). Of these most common challenges, the minority of students reported that they had been resolved by their GSA. Further, the most common challenge of meeting attendance was the challenge with the lowest rate of resolution. Overall, the most commonly resolved challenges were those that were not commonly reported among students. For example, as shown in Figure 2.7, only 11.8% reported that making their GSA inclusive of transgender and nonbinary students was a challenge, yet it had the highest rate of resolution, with 58.1% saying they had resolved it.

As also shown in Figure 2.7, less than a fifth of students reported challenges with pushback from adults at school: administrators (16.4%), other educators (14.0%) and the principal (10.6%). It is interesting to note that students reported greater pushback from other students than any category of adults at school. It may be that GSAs more frequently face pushback from students than from adults in school because adults in schools may either be supportive or not vocal about their issues with having a GSA at school relative to students. However, it is also possible that students interact more frequently with other students than with adults in school, particularly principals and administrators, and are thus more aware of challenges from other students than from adults. Further, pushback from parents was more often seen as a challenge for GSAs (27.9%) than pushback from adults within the school, suggesting that adults within the school may be more supportive of GSAs than parents. However, it is important to note that these students already have a GSA at their school, and therefore do not reflect pushback from adults in schools that do not have a GSA, where the level of pushback may be different. For instance, in schools that do not have a GSA and where students are fighting to start a GSA, there may be pushback from adults within the school.

The majority of students who faced pushback from adults did not report that their GSA had resolved this problem – 25.4% of students reported resolving pushback from parents, 37.7% reported resolving pushback from principals, 35.6% reported resolving pushback from other administrators, and 30.2% reported resolving pushback from other educators (see Figure 2.7). Similarly, the minority of students (22.1%) reported that their GSA resolved the challenge of pushback from other students.

Less than a quarter of students reported challenges with making the GSA inclusive of students of color (17.7%) and making it inclusive of transgender and nonbinary students (11.8%). However, a higher percentage of students reported challenges with students of color inclusion than transgender and nonbinary student inclusion. Further, whereas over half of students (58.1%) who reported challenges with transgender and nonbinary student inclusion said it had been resolved, only a quarter (26.6%) of students who reported challenges with students of color inclusion said it had been resolved. In fact, challenges with transgender and nonbinary student inclusion had the highest rate of resolution of any of the reported challenges. Thus, it would appear that GSAs are more successful in making their GSAs inclusive of transgender and nonbinary students than of students of color, and that more support is needed for GSA students and advisors on issues of racial/ethnic diversity.

It is possible that making the GSA inclusive of students of color and transgender and nonbinary students may be reported as an infrequent challenge, not because it is a challenge that students consciously face on a rare occasion, but instead because students are unaware that their GSA is not inclusive of these students to begin with. It could also be that many students attend schools that are homogenous in racial/ethnic and

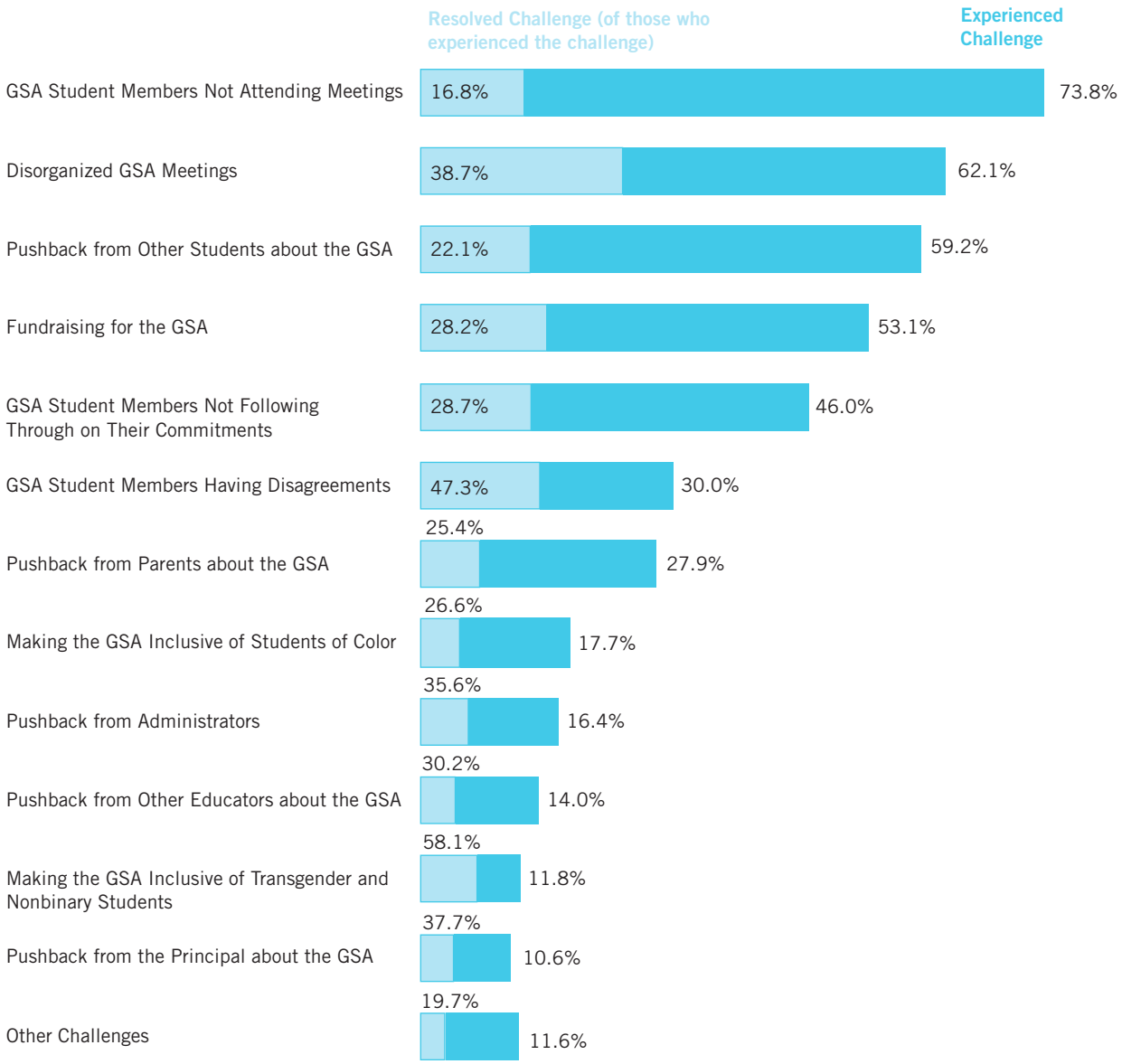
gender demographics, resulting in it being less of a concern to make their GSA inclusive for students who may not attend their school. Finally, for some students, making one's GSA inclusive of youth of color and transgender and nonbinary youth may not have been challenges because their GSA was already inclusive of these students.

In general, certain internal challenges, specifically poor attendance and disorganization, were most common. As such, the findings indicate that these are areas that GSAs may need the greatest support and resources on how to address these issues.

GSA Advisors

Nearly all advisors (98.6%) in our study reported that their GSA had faced some challenge in the last school year, and there were nevertheless differences in how common each challenge was reported to be.[110] As shown in Figure 2.8, the most common challenges reported by advisors were internal challenges, specifically, lack of follow-through from GSA members (89.0%), GSA meetings being disorganized (82.9%), and a lack of meeting attendance from GSA members (79.2%). When asked if their GSA had done

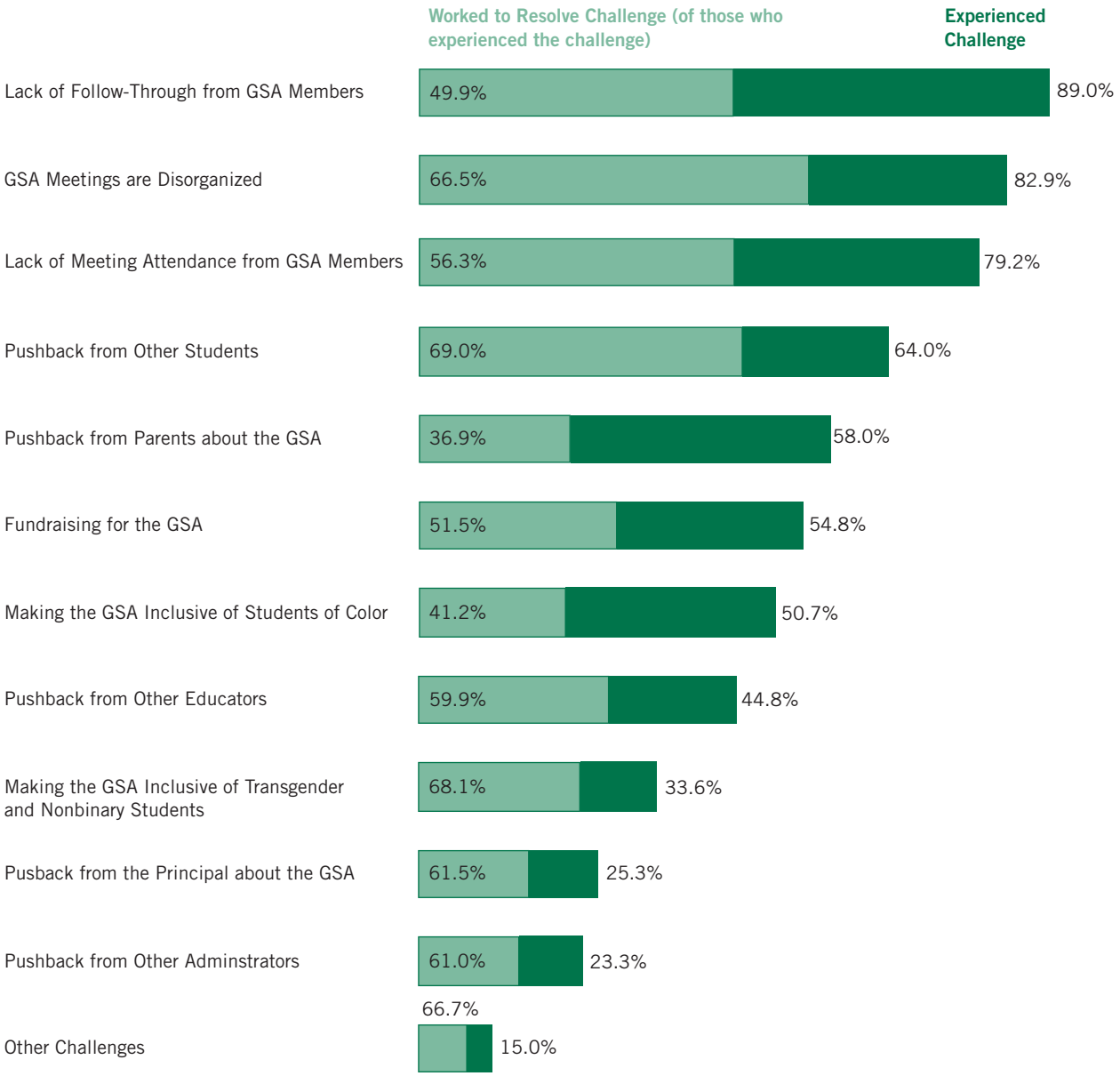
Figure 2.7 Percentage of Students Reporting Challenge, and Percentage of those Students Reporting that the Challenge Was Resolved



anything to address these challenges, half (49.9%) reported that work had been done to address lack of follow-through, two-thirds (66.5%) reported that work had been done to address meetings being disorganized, and over half (56.3%) reported that work had been done to address lack of meeting attendance. Although not all advisors reported that their GSA worked to resolve the challenges they most frequently engaged in, it appears that the majority of GSAs who faced these challenges attempted to address and resolve them.

With regard to pushback from members of the school community, the majority of advisors reported pushback from other students (64.0%) and pushback from parents (58.0%) as challenges, but less than half (44.8%) reported facing pushback from other educators, and only about a quarter reported pushback from the principal (25.3%) and pushback from other administrators (23.3%). The majority of advisors who reported pushback from students, principals and other administrators, and other educators, reported that their GSA worked to resolve these challenges (see Figure 2.8). Although

Figure 2.8 Percentage of Advisors Reporting Challenge, and Percentage of those Advisors Reporting their GSA Did Something to Resolve that Challenge



advisors reported facing more frequent pushback from parents than other adults in school, they were much less likely to report that the problems had been addressed.[111] Just over a third of advisors who reported this challenge (36.9%) also reported that their GSA had done something to address this challenge.

Similar to what we found among students, making the GSA inclusive of students of color and of transgender and nonbinary students were not the most often reported challenges, and making the GSA inclusive for students of color was more frequently reported as a challenge by advisors than was making it inclusive for transgender and nonbinary students.[112] Further, more than two-thirds (68.1%) of advisors who reported that making their GSA inclusive of transgender and nonbinary students was a challenge also reported that their GSA had done something to address this problem. However, with regard to making the GSA inclusive of students of color, less than half (41.2%) of those who reported this challenge also reported that their GSA had worked to resolve this challenge.

How Students' and Advisors' Challenges Are Resolved

GSA students and advisors were asked an open ended response question about how their GSA resolved the challenges they faced. Tables 2.2 and 2.3 show for students and advisors, respectively, how they resolved challenges, and the most common methods were communication, organization and structure, and recruitment.

Communication

Almost a third of GSA students' responses (31.0%) mentioned improving communication between GSA members to help navigate disagreements. For example, one student wrote: "We sat down, talked through it, and came up with a plan to settle disputes easily," and another wrote: "We tried to have an open dialogue where everyone felt they were being listened to." Others mentioned improving communication of information about meetings and scheduling to members of the GSA, through various methods including social media pages and posts, group chats, and Google groups. As one student responded: "We figured out more and better ways to communicate to all students and staff."

Similar to students, when advisors were asked how their GSAs' challenges were resolved, a third of advisors (32.5%) mentioned better communication among the group. For example, one advisor wrote: "We ask about students' opinion and strive to engage in more discussions." Another responded that their GSA "discussed ways to encourage greater participation," using improved communication to improve attendance. Implementing new communication strategies among GSA students to remind each other of meetings and responsibilities were mentioned by advisors. One advisor wrote: "We have social media and an online presence to remind people about meetings and events." Another said that "The GSA has created a texting group by mobile phone. They stay in contact that way and motivate each other to attend meetings, etc. They keep the lines of communication open too."

Organization and Structure

GSA students also often mentioned organizational and structural changes that their GSA implemented to resolve problems, with over a quarter of responses (28.8%) mentioning such changes. Examples of organizational changes included scheduling more meetings and events, creating regular meeting schedules, and having agendas for meetings. Structural changes included adding leadership positions, changing who were in certain leadership positions, or assigning new responsibilities to students. Other students wrote generally about implementing more structure and order to their GSA in order to address its disorganization. For example, one student responded: "We did a lot of organizing this year in an attempt to make the GSA more fun and intriguing for everyone to want to participate!" Another student wrote: "Students created plans before meetings to provide structure and wrote out goals for what we wanted to accomplish each time."

Less than a third of advisors (30.5%) wrote about resolving challenges by improving organization and structure in the GSA, such as implementing agendas for each meeting, establishing regularly scheduled meetings, and improving meeting structures. One advisor wrote: "We settled on a routine for the club that cut down on disorganization." Some advisors' responses related to organization and structure mentioned leadership development and motivating student leaders to

take a greater leadership role in their GSA. Some advisors wrote about curtailing more of their own active involvements to allow for students to take over that leadership role. One advisor, for example, commented: "We as advisors are trying to let them lead and not step in." Other advisors discussed ways that they collaborated with student leaders to help resolve their GSA's challenges. For example: "We had 'work' meetings to discuss how to overcome these challenges. I have met with our officers to address them too." Another advisor wrote: "To organize meetings more, I meet with officers a few days before our GSA meeting to plan out fun activities."

Recruitment

GSA students less commonly mentioned solutions for recruitment (15.7%), such as increasing their advertising efforts, attracting more students in general to the GSA, or making the GSA more welcoming and inclusive for all students. More specifically, with regard to recruiting a diverse population of students, students reported various ways their GSA worked to make recruitment inclusive of transgender and nonbinary students and students of color. These included creating resources on pronouns to ensure that GSA members and the school community respected students' names and pronouns, planning activities during Black History Month, and learning about LGBTQ icons who are people of color. Some students also wrote about making sure their GSA was welcoming to and inclusive of students who were not LGBTQ and making sure it was seen as a space for all students.

Over a quarter of advisors (26.7%) mentioned implementing new recruitment methods to increase their membership. Examples included hanging posters around the school, displaying rainbow flags in their classroom, and planning events to attract new members. More specifically, to address recruitment of a diverse population of students, some advisors spoke about making the GSA more welcoming and inclusive for youth of color and transgender and nonbinary youth. One advisor responded: "Spread the word about the inclusivity of GSA – that EVERYONE is welcome."

In general, advisors' responses often included information about the work they did as an individual to help resolve their GSA's challenges. Students spoke more to the actions of their GSA as a collective. Although the question asked about collective GSA action, it is likely that advisors answered this way because of their unique vantage point as leaders of the club as opposed to students who reported as members of the GSA. Additionally, advisors more often mentioned working with other adults within the school and school systems, such as advocating for the GSA to their colleagues and school leadership and educating school community members on LGBTQ student issues.

Table 2.2 How GSAs Resolved Challenges, Reported by Students (N=452)	
Communication	31.0%
"We had group meetings and online discussions about things that had to get done"	
Organization and Structure	28.8%
"Created agendas and lesson plans for the new meetings"	
Recruitment	15.7%
"Engagement with other clubs and through emails sent out to the school to gain more members"	
Fundraising	11.3%
"Our fundraising issue was solved by participating in more activities that helped us make money for our group"	
Interpersonal Problem-Solving	11.1%
"We sat down, talked through it, and came up with a plan to settle disputes easily"	
Work with Adults	11.1%
"We had the principal send out an email to parents in support of GSA"	
Expectations and Accountability	10.0%
"We also made sure that the ones who committed to something went through with it"	
Advocacy and Education	9.7%
"Educating the student body to dissipate the stigmas/misinformation around the LGBT+ community"	
Ensure Privacy to Members (from parents, other students)	3.5%
"We don't call it 'the GSA' to families, we mention it as a 'social club', so as to allow kids with unaccepting families to join"	
Turned to Advisor for Help	2.7%
"Sometimes, we brought in our adult advisor to assist"	
Collaborate with Other Organization or Club	2.7%
"We have resolved the issue of being unsure what we stand for by having a local lgbt youth organization help guide us"	
Grit and Determination	2.4%
"We just had to keep pushing for our club"	

Table 2.3 How GSAs Resolved Challenges, Reported by Advisors (N=292)	
Communication	32.5%
"Had honest discussions and identified issues"	
Organization and Structure	30.5%
"We created agendas that are posted at each meeting"	
Recruitment	26.7%
"Posted information and flyers about the GSA around the school so that other students know about what we do"	
Advocacy and Education	19.2%
"Worked to get more training and education for staff and families"	
Interpersonal Problem Solving	11.6%
"We brainstorm as a group what we want to do and then create a plan"	
Fundraising	8.2%
"Made t-shirts and collected pre-orders"	
Expectations and Accountability	7.9%
"Established group norms"	
Collaborate with Other Organization or Club	6.5%
"We collaborated with the diversity club on intersectionality and black history month"	
Ensure Privacy to Members (from parents, other students)	3.1%
"Students were worried about their parents not giving them permission to stay after school so we spoke to admin and they allowed us to not have to have a permission slip to have meetings after/before school hours"	
Incentives	2.7%
"Incentives such as food and fun activities"	

Conclusions

Although advisors and students reported different rates of specific challenges, in general, students and advisors agreed on the challenges that GSAs most commonly face. Many students and advisors reported challenges faced by their GSA. However, fewer reported that these challenges had been resolved or attempted to be resolved.

Findings about resolution of challenges suggest that GSAs may need more support in how to successfully resolve the challenges their GSAs face. Overall, the majority of advisors who reported that their GSA faced a challenge also reported that their GSA worked to resolve the challenge. However, in general, when asked about which challenges had been resolved, students reported low rates of successful resolution, especially among the most frequently faced challenges, such as attendance problems and pushback from other students. This suggests that many GSAs may attempt to address challenges and resolve challenges but are not successful in their efforts. This may indicate a need to better equip GSA members and advisors with the skills to successfully work through and resolve challenges, especially the internal challenges frequently reported by students and advisors.

Overall, according to both GSA students and advisors, GSAs more commonly faced challenges internal to the GSA, such as disorganization, disagreements, member follow-through and attendance. However, diversity and inclusion of GSA membership is also an internal GSA issue that was less commonly reported, specifically, making GSAs more inclusive of students of color and of transgender and nonbinary students. Yet making the GSA inclusive of students of color was more commonly reported to be a challenge by students and advisors than making their GSA inclusive of transgender and nonbinary students. This is perhaps unsurprising, considering that GSAs are spaces specifically designed to address the needs of LGBTQ students, which includes transgender and nonbinary students, and students and advisors are likely to have a base level of knowledge and understanding of LGBTQ people and issues. However, students and advisors may not have knowledge and understanding about racism and intersectionality, which may help them increase their capacity to support students of color, thereby ensuring that their GSA is welcoming and safe for those students. Additionally, compared to students, a larger percentage of advisors reported that making the GSA inclusive to both students of color and transgender and nonbinary students was a challenge their GSA faced. It may be that advisors are more cognizant of the unique experiences and needs of each of these groups of students.

Although pushback from members of the school community was not a very common occurrence, both advisors and students reported pushback from other students and parents as more frequent challenges than pushback from principals, administrators, and other educators. These findings suggest that those who work in schools may be more accepting of GSAs than other members of the school community. Additionally, in general, advisors reported pushback from adults at higher rates than did students, perhaps because advisors are more likely to encounter other adults in their everyday work.

When discussing how challenges were resolved, both students and advisors most often reported improved communication processes and systems, implementing changes to the organization and structure of the GSA, and implementing new recruitment methods. Many students reported that their GSA collectively worked together to discuss and solve problems and challenges. In comparison, advisors' responses about resolving challenges were often about the actions that they took as a leader, such as talking to other educators or administrators. It is possible that students and advisors play different roles in resolving the challenges faced by their GSA, with advisors doing more outward facing work, and work that involves interaction and negotiation with other adults while students focus more on internal processes and dynamics to improve the inner workings of the GSA.

PART THREE: GSA LEADERSHIP AND PREPARATION

Leadership

Both student leaders and advisors are critical in creating and sustaining a GSA. To understand the composition of GSA student leaders, we examined how likely LGBTQ students were to be leaders in their school's GSA by demographic characteristics, including gender, sexual orientation, and race/ethnicity. We also examined the paths that GSA advisors took to become advisors, what they perceive their advisor roles to be, and how helpful they were in addressing their GSA students' needs.

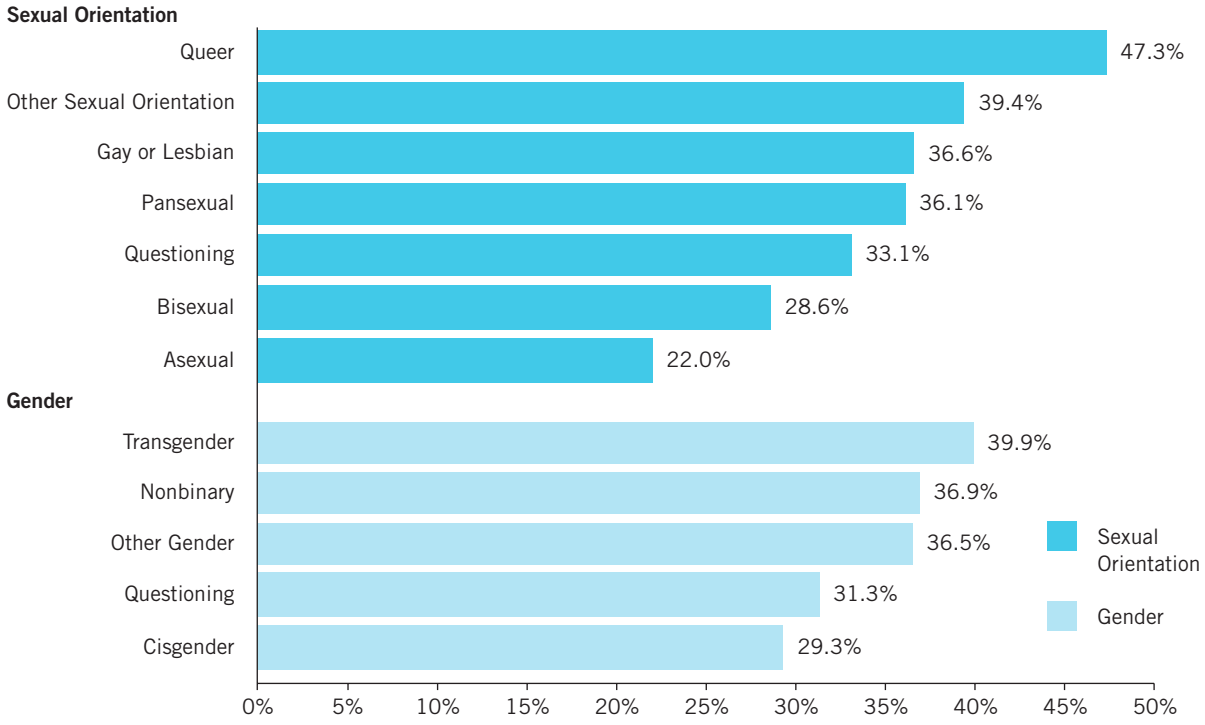
GSA Student Leaders

We examined whether student leadership involvement differed by gender, sexual orientation, and race/ethnicity using data from the *2019 National School Climate Survey*. We found that cisgender students were less likely to be a leader or officer of their school's GSA than transgender and nonbinary students (29.3% cisgender students vs. 39.9% transgender students and 36.9% nonbinary students) (see Figure 3.1).[113] We also found that, overall, queer students were more likely to be a leader of their school's GSA compared to most other sexual orientations, with the exception of questioning students and those indicating another sexual orientation: (47.3% for queer students vs. 36.6% for gay or lesbian students, 28.6% for bisexual students, 36.1% for pansexual students, and 22.0% for asexual students), and asexual students were less likely to be a leader of their school's GSA compared to most other sexual orientations, with the exception of bisexual students and those indicating another sexual orientation (see Figure 3.1).[114] Further, pansexual and gay or lesbian identified students were more likely than bisexual students to be a leader of their school's GSA (see also Figure 3.1). With regard to race/ethnicity, there were no differences between racial/ethnic groups on likelihood of being a leader or officer.[115]

GSA Advisors

As shown earlier in this report, the majority of advisors were White (87.7%) and cisgender (92.5%), and the most commonly endorsed sexual orientation identity was heterosexual (45.4%), followed by gay or lesbian (29.3%) (see *Methods and Sample* section). We asked GSA students how many faculty advisors that they had in their GSA (see Figure 3.2). Over half of students (56.5%) had one advisor, a third (32.8%) had two advisors, and a tenth (9.8%) of students reported that they had three or more advisors in their GSA. GSA

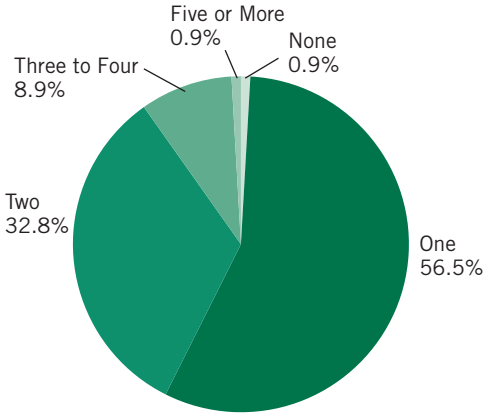
Figure 3.1 Students who Participated as a Leader or Officer of Their GSA by Sexual Orientation and Gender



advisors, on average, reported having served in their advisor role for about 5 years (*average* = 5.3 years, *range* = 0.3 to 28.5 years).

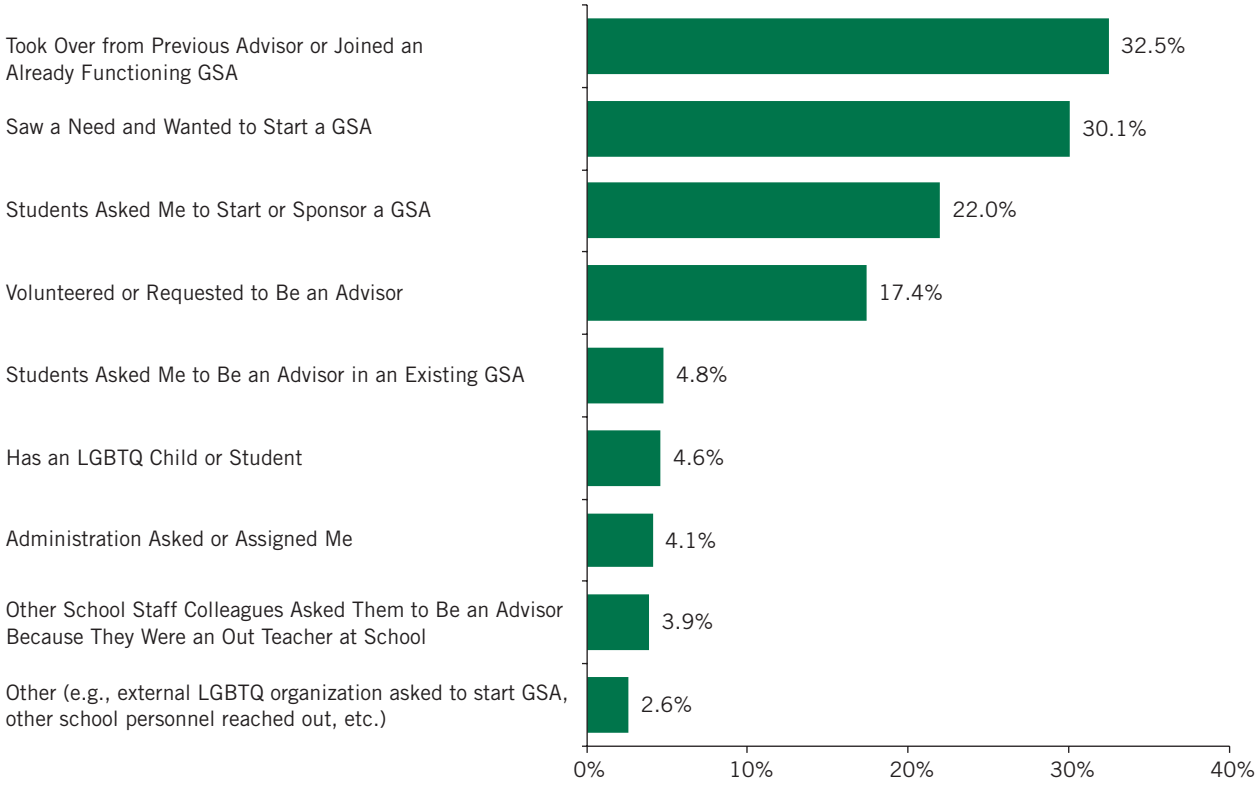
We asked GSA advisors how they became an advisor (see Figure 3.3), and the most common paths were: taking over from a previous advisor or joining an already functioning GSA (32.5%); seeing a need to start a GSA (30.1%); students asking them to start or sponsor a GSA at their school (22.0%); and volunteering or requesting to be an advisor (17.4%).[116] Few reported other paths not listed (2.6%), including external LGBTQ organizations asking them to start a GSA at their school, and other school personnel reaching out to them.

Figure 3.2 Number of Adult Advisors in GSAs Among GSA Student Members



To understand the nature and depth of their involvement in the student club, we asked GSA advisors how much time they spent with their GSA, and what they perceived as their role within their GSA. With regard to duration of time spent, advisors spent an average of 3.2 hours a week on GSA-related work. With regard to their own perceptions of their role, as shown in Figure 3.4, the most common role that advisors played was facilitator or moderator, which included activities such as fielding questions or concerns and facilitating meetings (71.7%). Other common roles that advisors played were providing a safe space and sounding board for students (34.1%), providing support for student leaders and members when they do not follow through or need assistance with GSA activities (21.5%), and serving as a liaison between students and administration (18.4%).[117] The least common roles

Figure 3.3 Paths by Which GSA Advisors Become an Advisor
(Percentage of GSA Advisors who Reported the Following Ways They Became an Advisor)



that advisors played in the GSA were educating student members about LGBTQ issues (8.6%), encouraging or assisting in advocacy work (8.4%), and developing student leadership (3.8%).

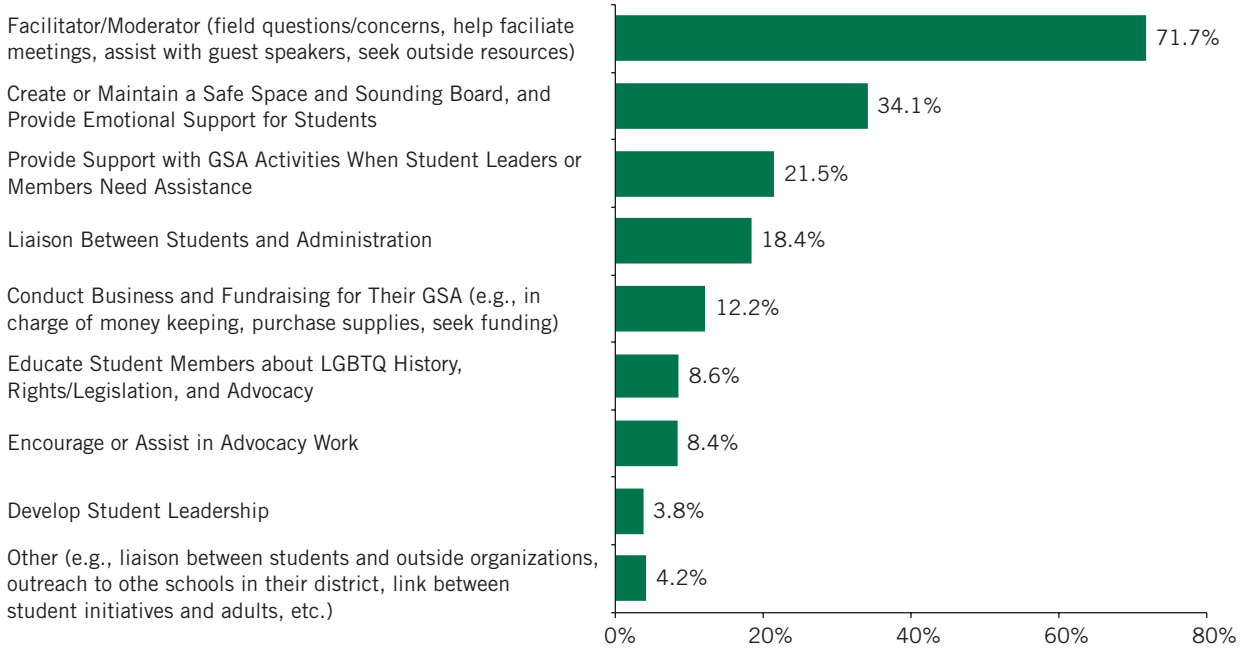
We asked students about how helpful their advisors were in addressing their needs through various GSA activities. Students reported that their GSA advisors were most helpful in providing a space for students to meet new people and socialize, and to discuss or learn about LGBTQ topics.[118] Students rated advisors as less helpful in working with district officials to advocate for district-wide LGBTQ-inclusive policies or staff training, and collaborating with other student-led clubs or organizations on events or advocacy work.

Conclusions

Our findings showed that certain demographics of students were more likely to be leaders of their school's GSA. Transgender and nonbinary students were more likely to be a GSA leader than cisgender students, and queer students were more likely to be a GSA leader than most other sexual orientations. It may be that transgender and nonbinary students are more invested in their GSA because they experience more anti-LGBTQ victimization than cisgender students. In regard to our findings about queer students, while the term "queer" had historically been used as a pejorative identity term for LGBQ and gender-nonconforming individuals, it has since been reclaimed by LGBTQ scholars and activists.[119] Therefore, students who identify as queer may indicate more interest in advocacy or activism for students, which can lead to greater interest in GSA leadership. It is interesting to note that asexual identified students were less likely to be a GSA leader than most sexual orientations, but they attended GSA meetings more often than gay or lesbian and bisexual students, as shown earlier in this report (see *Student Participation in GSAs* section). Given that existing qualitative research suggests that some asexual people choose to not come out in order to avoid negative responses such as LGBTQ-based victimization,[120] they may be less likely to be a GSA leader because GSA leaders may be more visible as LGBTQ than GSA non-leader members, and thus GSA leaders may be more likely to be targeted for anti-LGBTQ victimization than GSA non-leader members.

The most common path that advisors reported taking to becoming an advisor was taking over from a previous advisor or joining an already functioning GSA. The second most common path for becoming an advisor was that they saw a need to start a GSA at their school. Advisors also mentioned that they volunteered to be an advisor, and fewer mentioned

Figure 3.4 Advisors' Involvement with Their GSA
(Percentage of GSA Advisors who Reported the Following Roles as an Advisor)



that they were assigned by their administrator. Our findings suggest that educators became advisors because they care for their LGBTQ students, are aware that there is a need for LGBTQ students to have a safe space at their school, and want to provide the support that LGBTQ students need to feel safe and affirmed. Therefore, schools should provide the necessary resources for advisors to successfully start and maintain a GSA at their school.

GSA students' reports of how helpful their advisors were in addressing their needs through GSA activities, as discussed earlier in this report (see *GSA Activities* section), aligned with advisors' reports of the common roles that they play in their GSA. The majority of GSA advisors perceived their role as a facilitator. Many advisors also reported that they had to step in and support student leaders and members when they did not follow through on GSA activities or needed assistance because they lacked the necessary leadership skills, or because they were not interested in leading the activities. Only a small percentage of GSA advisors actually believed their role was to develop leadership. Thus, it may be important for organizations that work to support GSAs, like GLSEN, to provide resources and training opportunities for advisors on developing leadership. Further, advisors should make efforts to have professional development training or seek leadership-building resources to help their student members with the skills to lead their GSA.

Advisor Preparation and Perceived Competency

In that advisors play an important role in the functioning of GSAs, and in supporting students in the club, advisors should be equipped to work with diverse groups of GSA students. Therefore, we examined advisors' experiences with professional development on issues related to LGBTQ students, including LGBTQ students of color, using the *GSA Advisor Survey* data. We also examined their feelings of competence working with LGBTQ students, including LGBTQ students of color.

Advisors' Professional Development Experiences

To understand the professional development experiences of advisors, we asked advisors about their previous professional education that covered topics related to LGBQ youth, transgender youth, and LGBTQ youth of color. Overall, the majority of advisors felt that they had very little or no professional education across all three groups of students, but they were more likely to have had training on LGBQ youth than transgender youth and youth of color.[121] As shown in Figure 3.5, 46.2% of advisors had somewhat or extensive training on LGBQ youth, whereas 35.5% had the same amount of training on transgender youth and 29.9% had the same amount of training on LGBTQ youth of color. Similarly, when asked about how well their professional education prepared them to work with each of these groups of students, over 40% of advisors said that their professional education was poor regarding each of the three groups of students (see Figure 3.6). However, advisors reported better professional education on LGBQ youth than the other groups, and poorer professional education on LGBTQ youth of color than the other groups.[122] As shown in Figure 3.6, 24.0% of advisors reported that they had very good or excellent professional education on LGBQ students compared to 18.3% of advisors on transgender students and 15.0% of advisors on LGBTQ students of color.

In addition to receiving adequate preparation in working with diverse groups of GSA students, it may be important for advisors to receive continuing professional development experiences that enhance their competencies in supporting the well-being of LGBTQ students. Research has shown that LGBTQ-related educator training can have a meaningful impact on competencies, confidence, and behaviors related to supporting LGBTQ students.[123] Therefore, we asked advisors where they received information outside of their professional education that has informed their role as a GSA advisor. As shown in Figure 3.7, the most common types of information were from reading literature on their own (88.5%), websites or online forums (85.9%), and working with representatives from an organization (79.5%).[124] Less common types of information were from former colleagues, friends, and family who work at other schools (45.1%), and from other colleagues at school (45.1%). Some advisors reported other types of information not listed, such as from trainings and conferences, students, family and friends, and from their own experiences (26.6%).

Figure 3.5 Extent that Advisors' Professional Education Cover Topics Related to LGBQ Youth, Transgender Youth, and LGBTQ Youth of Color

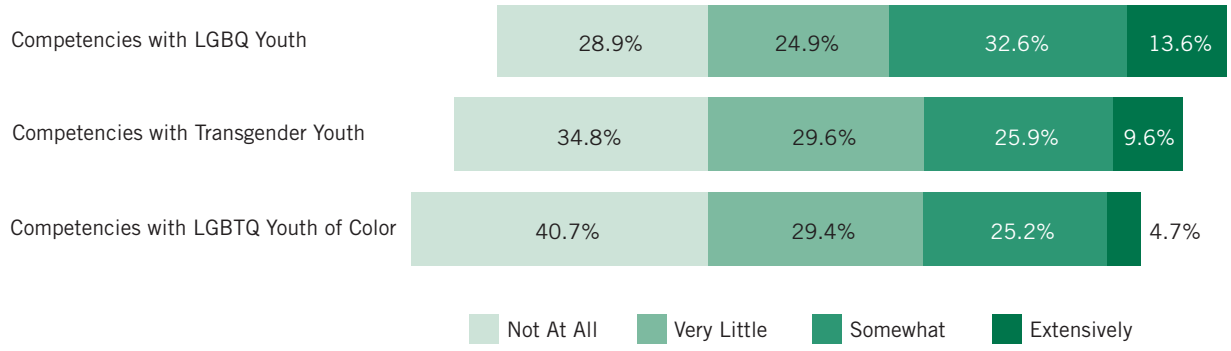


Figure 3.6 Advisors' Self-Rating of Their Professional Education in Preparation to Work With LGBQ Students, Transgender Students, and LGBTQ Students of Color

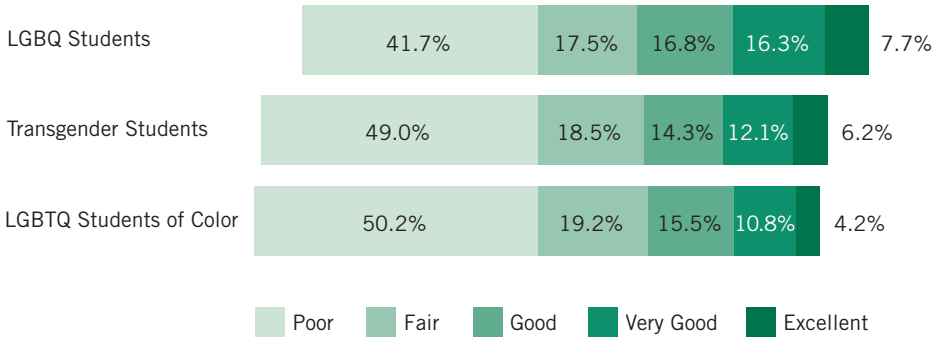
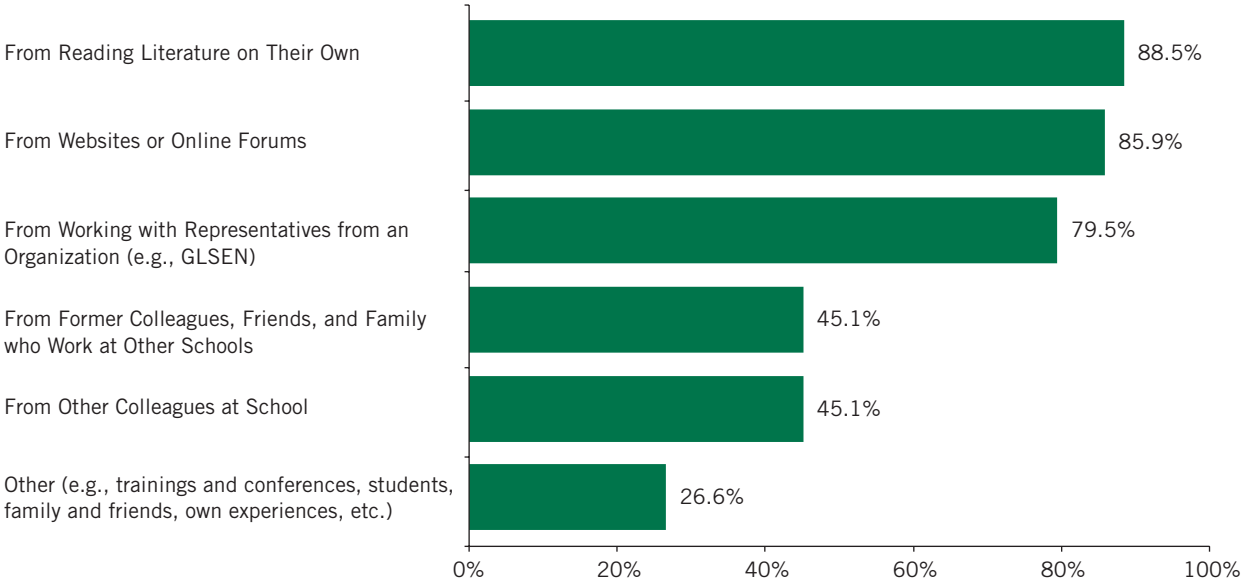


Figure 3.7 Percentage of Advisors who Received the Following Types of Information Outside of Their Professional Education that has Informed Their Advisor Role



Advisors' Perceived Competence in Working with GSA Students

In the school context, a GSA advisor may be one of the few supportive adults that LGBTQ students have access to. Thus, we asked advisors about their feelings of competency working with various groups of students, including LGBQ students, transgender students, and LGBTQ students of color.[125]

Overall, advisors felt most competent working with LGBQ students, and least competent working with LGBTQ students of color.[126] Figure 3.8 shows levels of GSA advisors' competency with regard to various aspects of providing support to LGBTQ students. Across all three groups, advisors felt most competent advocating or speaking on students' behalf to other teachers and administrators, and to other students at the school, and least competent talking about the unique experiences that LGBQ students, transgender students, and LGBTQ students of color face.[127] It is interesting that advisors felt competent advocating for LGBTQ students and LGBTQ students of color, but they did not feel as competent speaking or teaching about topics regarding LGBTQ and youth of color issues. Advisors may have to frequently navigate the school system and advocate for their students in their role as teachers, and thus, may be more equipped to advocate for LGBTQ students and students of color specifically. However, as discussed earlier in this section, they have little to no professional education on LGBQ youth, transgender youth, and youth of color related topics, which may prevent them from feeling competent teaching about these topics.

Prior research has shown differences in feelings of self-efficacy in working with transgender youth by advisors' sexual orientation, whereby lesbian, gay, and bisexual advisors had greater feelings of self-efficacy in working with transgender youth than heterosexual advisors, but did not differ on working with LGBTQ youth of color.[128] Other advisor demographics, such as gender and race/ethnicity, may also play a role in their feelings of self-efficacy in working with these diverse groups of students. As described in the *Methods and Sample* section, nearly half of the advisors (45.4%) in our sample were heterosexual, and the majority were cisgender (92.5%) and White (87.7%). Advisors whose personal identities align with LGBTQ students and students of color may experience fewer challenges in working with these students and may feel more competent working with these diverse groups of students, compared to advisors whose identities differ from LGBTQ students and students of color. Therefore, we examined differences in advisors' feelings of self-efficacy by sexual orientation, gender, and race/ethnicity.

Advisor's sexual orientation

LGBQ advisors, compared to heterosexual advisors, felt more competent:

- Discussing the unique experiences that LGBQ and transgender students face;
- Supporting LGBQ and transgender students on sexual orientation and gender identity/ expression related issues; and
- Discussing unique experiences and addressing unique issues that LGBTQ students of color face.[129]

There were, however, no differences by sexual orientation in perceived competency in advocating on behalf of LGBQ and transgender students, and supporting LGBTQ students of color on race-related issues and advocating for LGBTQ students of color.

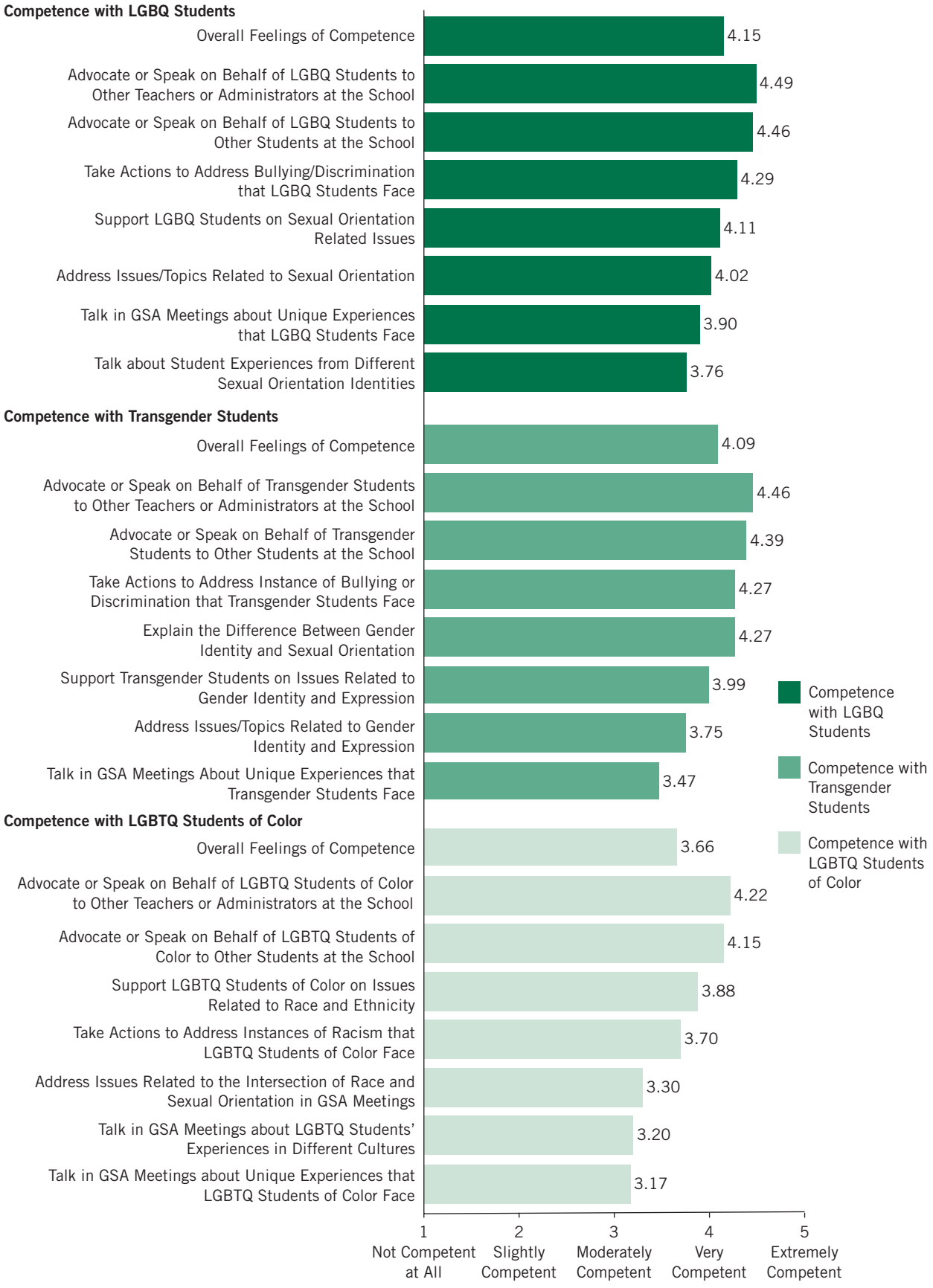
Advisor's gender

Although our sample of advisors had very little gender diversity (92.5% cisgender and 7.5% transgender/nonbinary), we wanted to understand differences between transgender/nonbinary and cisgender advisors on feelings of competency in working with LGBQ students, transgender students, and LGBTQ students of color.[130] Transgender/ nonbinary advisors felt more competent than cisgender advisors in discussing the unique experiences that LGBQ and transgender students face, but did not differ on advocating for LGBQ and transgender students. Further, transgender/ nonbinary advisors felt more competent than cisgender advisors in supporting transgender students on gender identity and expression related issues, and advocating on behalf of LGBTQ students of color to other school personnel.

Advisor's race/ethnicity

The only significant difference in perceived competency between advisors of color and White advisors was that advisors of color felt more competent than White advisors in talking about the unique experiences that LGBTQ students of color face.[131]

Figure 3.8 Advisors' Feelings of Competence in the Following Actions When Working with LGBQ Students, Transgender Students, and LGBTQ Students of Color
(Mean Level of Competence)



Conclusions

The majority of advisors in our study received little to no professional education regarding LGBTQ youth and LGBTQ youth of color populations. Our findings are consistent with previous research that suggests that educators and school mental health professionals receive little to no training in graduate programs on LGBTQ-related issues.[132] This is concerning, as prior research has shown that LGBTQ-related educator training can have a meaningful impact on competencies, confidence, and behaviors related to supporting LGBTQ students.[133] Given that advisors are not often trained on LGBTQ topics and issues related to youth of color, it is perhaps unsurprising that advisors felt least competent discussing issues that LGBQ students, transgender students, and LGBTQ students of color face. However, we did find that advisors felt most competent advocating on behalf of LGBQ students, transgender students, and LGBTQ students of color with other students, teachers, or administrators. The greater competency in these areas may be, in part, because they are more consistent with an advisor's role as an educator, whereby they commonly navigate the school system and advocate on behalf of students.

It is encouraging that many advisors reported engagement in continuing education activities related to supporting LGBTQ students. As we found, the majority of advisors' training that informed their role as a GSA advisor came from outside of their formal education. However, this underscores a possible need for schools to provide formal education on LGBTQ youth-specific content and youth of color-specific content so that educators do not have to solely rely on resources and training opportunities that they seek out on their own. Further, providing professional development training and resources on LGBTQ youth and youth of color specific content may help to increase their self-efficacy on issues related to each of these groups of students.

We also found that the demographics of advisors played a role in their feelings of competency working with these groups of students, in that advisors felt more confident with issues that aligned with their own identity, primarily with regard to gender identity and sexual orientation—transgender/nonbinary advisors with transgender/nonbinary student issues and LGBQ advisors with LGBQ student issues. Although an advisor's personal identity connection may play an important role with regard to their feelings of competency, it does not necessarily mean that they are competent working with students who align with their own identity. Future research is warranted to examine underlying factors related to sexual orientation and gender differences on advisors' self-efficacy working with these three groups of students.

DISCUSSION

Limitations

This study is the most comprehensive national study on the perspectives and experiences of GSA members and GSA advisors to date. However, the study does have a number of limitations that are important to consider when interpreting the findings. Although we sent announcements about the *GSA Student Survey* and *GSA Advisor Survey* through social media, such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, and through email listservs to national, regional, and local organizations that provide services to or advocate on behalf of LGBTQ youth, the participants of these surveys may be more representative of those who are familiar with GLSEN and not of the general population of GSA members and advisors. Additionally, the participants of the *GSA Student Survey* and the *GSA Advisor Survey* were affiliated with school-based GSAs and the findings from this study may not translate to other GSAs, such as those that are community-based.

While we strove to recruit a sample that was representative in regard to race/ethnicity, the actual representation in our sample may serve as a limitation. Given that the majority of the students in our sample were White, it does not represent the student population of U.S. secondary school students.[134] Finally, the survey was only offered in English, limiting participation of GSA members and advisors who are not proficient in English. Thus, these members and advisors may also be underrepresented in our survey samples.

In this report we also used data from the *2019 National School Climate Survey* and the *From Teasing to Torment: School Climate Revisited* survey *(FTTT)*. Limitations of those data are discussed in detail in the associated reports.[135]

Timing of data collection for the GSA student and advisor surveys may have inadvertently biased the results. The surveys were available from April to June of 2020, when most if not all schools were closed in the U.S. due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although we instructed participants to consider only their experiences in the 2019–2020 school year up to March 2020, some respondents may have reflected on the entirety of the school year until the point they took the survey, including time when their GSA was operating virtually, or not operating because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We only collected data at one point in time, and therefore we cannot determine causality. For example, although we can say that there was a relationship between GSA advocacy activities and school climate experiences among LGBTQ students, we cannot know for certain whether GSA advocacy activities cause changes in school climate experiences among LGBTQ students or whether changes in school climate experiences cause GSAs to engage in more or less advocacy.

Despite these limitations, this study provides useful data on the activities and needs of GSA students and advisors, and the important role that a GSA plays in K–12 schools. These findings also provide important guidance on steps that can be taken to improve GSAs and school climate for all students, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Conclusions and Recommendations

LGBTQ students continue to face hostile school climates across the U.S. that negatively impact their learning environment and psychological well-being. Therefore, it is important that educators and school administrators provide safer and more affirming learning environments for these students. Prior research has indicated that the presence of a GSA at school is related to LGBTQ students experiencing less hostile school climate and improved well-being, and participation in GSAs is related to LGBTQ students greater feelings of school belonging.[136] Findings presented in this report build on this prior research and provide the first comprehensive examination of the experiences of students and advisors with GSAs in their schools on a national level. Specifically, this study provides insight into the demographics of GSAs and GSA participation, the activities that GSAs engage in, the challenges that GSAs face, the resources that GSAs use, and advisors' preparation and competency working with diverse groups of students. Our findings demonstrate successes that GSA students and advisors experience with their school's GSA. However, our findings also show challenges that GSA students and advisors face with their GSA, and opportunities for improvement and growth to ensure GSAs are equipped to best support LGBTQ students.

One aspect of what GSAs do well, as demonstrated by our findings, is inclusion of student groups

that are not the majority in GSAs. Given that the majority of GSAs were composed of cisgender, LGB, and White students, we would expect that GSAs would experience challenges and difficulty around being inclusive of transgender and nonbinary students, students with sexual orientations other than LGB, and LGBTQ students of color. However, we found transgender and nonbinary students were especially involved in their GSAs; they were both more likely to participate in their GSAs and serve as a leader of their school's GSA than were cisgender LGBQ students. Queer students were also more likely to participate in and be GSA leaders than gay or lesbian and bisexual students. Further, in contrast to prior research, which suggests that LGBTQ students of color are less likely to participate in GSAs, we found that LGBTQ students of color in our sample were just as likely as White LGBTQ students to participate in their GSAs. We did find, however, that the racial/ethnic composition of GSAs varied by the racial/ethnic composition of their school. In schools that were majority White and in schools that did not have a majority racial/ethnic student body, the majority of GSA members were White, and in schools that were majority students of color, the racial/ethnic composition of GSAs was more evenly distributed. Furthermore, few students reported challenges with making GSAs inclusive of transgender and nonbinary students and inclusive of students of color, and when they were seen as challenges, they were most often reported as issues that had been resolved. However, it is important to note that, as compared to GSA students, advisors seemed to be more cognizant of the unique experiences of students of color and transgender and nonbinary students, and the specific attention and care for these groups of students. We found that advisors were more likely to report making the GSA inclusive of both students of color and transgender and nonbinary students as a challenge that their GSA faced than students were. It may be important to document how GSAs are successful at being inclusive of these groups of students as resources for GSAs who may be struggling with these issues.

One of the strengths of GSAs, as demonstrated in our findings, is the benefits to well-being for LGBTQ students. We found that among LGBTQ students, those who attended GSA meetings more often had greater school belonging, slightly greater self-esteem, and slightly lower depression. This suggests that LGBTQ students may attend GSA meetings at their school because they experience anti-LGBTQ victimization and discrimination at school, and when they do attend GSA meetings more often, they have greater well-being. We also found that GSA participation can offset the negative effects of experiences with high levels of gender expression based victimization on school belonging, whereby the negative effects were lessened for LGBTQ students who attended GSA meetings at their school, compared to those who did not attend GSA meetings.

We found that GSAs most commonly engaged in meeting and socializing with new people, providing a space for students to discuss and learn about LGBTQ topics, and providing students with emotional support. However, we also found that the activities that GSAs engaged in were not always the same activities that students believed were most important, or were the activities that students intended to participate in when they joined their school's GSA. This suggests that GSAs may not be entirely meeting the needs of the members. The one exception was discussing or learning about LGBTQ topics, which was both the most common activity and the highest in importance among the vast majority of students. However, many other activities that students rated as high in importance were activities that a minority of students reported their GSA engaged in, such as working with school staff to create a safer school environment for LGBTQ students, and talking about experiences with harassment and discrimination at school. It is important for advisors and groups who support GSAs to consider how to better meet the wants and needs of students who join GSAs, and to work to engage in more activities that students believe are important.

Nearly all GSAs engage in socializing and supporting students, and the majority of GSAs engage in advocacy. We found that GSAs that engaged in advocacy-oriented activities were beneficial for LGBTQ students above and beyond socializing activities. Not all GSAs have the capacity to engage in advocacy or may even want to engage in advocacy activities. However, GSAs that do have the capacity and want to engage in these activities may need more support in doing so.

Students and advisors frequently used online resources for information on GSAs in general, how to start a GSA, what to do in a GSA, and sustaining a GSA over time, and the majority of students and advisors found these GSA resources to be

helpful. However, they often created their own resources when developing GSA activities. Both students and advisors reported that they needed additional resources, and the most common were general meeting suggestions, advocacy support, and information and support for certain groups of students such as LGBTQ students with disabilities and students of color.

In examining challenges that students' and advisors' GSAs faced, we found that most were internal. Students most commonly reported that attendance was a significant challenge. The majority of students also reported challenges around the general operation of their GSA, including disorganized GSA meetings, conflict among GSA students, and fundraising for the GSA. While GSA students and advisors reported experiencing these and other challenges with their GSAs, resolution rates of GSA challenges were generally low. GSA students and advisors who were able to resolve their challenges used a variety of strategies, the most common of which were improving communication, implementing greater organizational structure, and implementing new recruitment methods. Greater support should be provided to GSAs to equip students and advisors with the skills to successfully work through and resolve challenges, which can include learning from other GSAs' resolution of the challenges that students and advisors frequently reported. It is interesting to note that whereas prior literature has shown that external challenges are among the primary challenges that GSAs face, such as pushback from outside of the GSA and people preventing GSAs from operating, we largely found challenges to be internal.[137] The contradictory findings between our study and prior research may partly be due to our study possibly reflecting more established GSAs that are not as likely to experience pushback from external groups. In addition, there may also be a historical effect, whereby our study's findings may reflect more positive attitudes over time toward LGBTQ people relative to prior studies, and therefore students and advisors in our study are not as likely to experience external pushback. Our findings suggest that organizations such as GLSEN and others who support GSAs should provide GSAs with support and resources on conflict resolution and general club organizational strategies to address these internal challenges.

Our findings from GSA advisors indicate a greater need for professional development on LGBTQ student issues. We found that the large majority of advisors had little to no professional development or education regarding LGBTQ students or more specifically, LGBQ students, transgender students, and LGBTQ students of color. Although advisors felt most competent advocating on behalf of LGBTQ students, they felt least competent discussing LGBTQ issues. The findings indicate a need for professional development for educators to better understand and address the unique challenges and experiences of these populations of students. Heterosexual and cisgender advisors felt even less competent discussing topics related to LGBQ and transgender students than did LGBQ and transgender/nonbinary advisors, and White advisors felt less competent discussing topics related to LGBTQ students of color than did advisors of color. Regardless of the identity of advisors, feelings of competence on transgender and LGBTQ student of color issues were lower in general compared to feelings of competence on LGBQ student issues, indicating a need for professional development on LGBQ student issues, and an even greater need for professional development on transgender student issues and LGBTQ students of color issues.

Findings from this study also provided insight into the role of GSA advisors and the challenges that their role entails. According to advisors' responses, we found that advisors wanted their GSAs to be student-led, but did not believe that students had the necessary skills to lead their GSA and/or that they were primarily interested in socializing. Even though the majority of GSA advisors perceived their role as one of a facilitator, many advisors also felt that they had to step in and support student leaders and members when they did not follow through on GSA activities, needed assistance because they lacked the necessary leadership skills, or were not interested in leading the activities. However, only a small percentage of advisors reported that one of their roles as advisor was to develop student leadership. Our findings suggest that advisors should make efforts to have professional development training or seek leadership building resources to help their student members with the skills to lead their GSA.

Results from the current study indicate several successes and challenges that GSA students and advisors experience in their schools' GSAs that provide important insight for student leaders, educators, school administrators, advocates, and education policy-makers on how to support GSAs in secondary schools across the U.S. Based on the findings, we recommend the following measures:

For GSA Students and GSA Advisors

- Work to ensure that GSAs better meet the needs of the students they serve by assessing the needs of the student members of their GSA and implementing and adjusting GSA activities accordingly.
- Prioritize identifying and resolving common challenges in GSAs, such as attendance problems and pushback from other students in the school.
- Work to ensure GSAs are inclusive of both students of color and transgender and nonbinary students.

For School District Officials and School Administrators

- Support advisors and GSAs who face pushback from parents and other educators by taking a strong supportive stance and provide opportunities for parents and staff to learn about the importance of LGBTQ students having a GSA at their school.
- Provide GSAs with greater support and resources in engaging in advocacy activities, such as resources about how to advocate to school districts, and guides to planning advocacy or awareness-raising events.
- Provide formal professional development and resources on LGBTQ youth-specific content and LGBTQ youth of color-specific content so that educators do not have to solely rely on resources and training opportunities that they seek out on their own, and to increase advisors' self-efficacy working with these diverse groups of students.

For Organizations that Support GSAs

- Provide resources for GSAs with specific activity suggestions, particularly those on how to sustain your GSA, and engage in effective advocacy efforts.
- Provide support for GSAs to better equip members and advisors with the skills to successfully work through and resolve internal challenges such as interpersonal conflict and organizational skills.
- Provide resources for GSAs on diversity and inclusion in their GSA, including inclusivity of transgender and nonbinary students and inclusivity of LGBTQ students of color.

By implementing these measures, more support can be provided to GSAs, enabling them to continue to serve as an important supportive resource for LGBTQ students. While GSAs are vitally important, they are but one of several elements necessary to ensure safe and welcoming schools for LGBTQ students.[138] Therefore, it is important to also provide LGBTQ-related supportive resources in school for LGBTQ students beyond GSAs by enacting inclusive anti-bullying policies, training teachers and other staff in supporting LGBTQ students, and implementing LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum. Providing more support to GSAs will help to create school environments where all youth can thrive and succeed regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Endnotes

1 Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., Truong, N. L., & Zongrone, A. D. (2020). *The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN. https://www.glsen.org/research/2019-national-school-climate-survey

2 Truong, N. L. & Zongrone, A. D. (2021). The role of participation, victimization based on sexual orientation, and race on psychosocial well-being among LGBTQ secondary school students. *Psychology in the Schools*.

3 While the term "ally" has been broadly defined as any person (cisgender heterosexual or LGBTQ) who supports and stands up for the rights of LGBTQ people, for the purposes of this report, "ally" refers to any non-LGBTQ (cisgender heterosexual) student who attends their school's GSA, with the assumption that as voluntary members of their school's GSA, these students support and advocate for their LGBTQ peers who are targeted and discriminated against. Additionally, considering the developmental age of our participants and the development of sexual orientation and gender identities we believe the term "ally," compared to "non-LGBTQ," is more inclusive of students who did not identify as LGBTQ at the time of the survey but did or will identify as LGBTQ in the future.

4 Greytak, E. A., Kosciw, J. G., Villenas, C. & Giga, N. M. (2016). *From teasing to torment: School climate revisited, A survey of U.S. secondary school students and teachers.* New York: GLSEN. https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2019-12/From_Teasing_to_Tormet_Revised_2016.pdf

5 Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., Truong, N. L., & Zongrone, A. D. (2020). The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools. New York: GLSEN. https://www.glsen.org/research/2019-national-school-climate-survey

6 Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., Truong, N. L., & Zongrone, A. D. (2020). *The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN. https://www.glsen.org/research/2019-national-school-climate-survey

7 Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., Truong, N. L., & Zongrone, A. D. (2020). *The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN. https://www.glsen.org/research/2019-national-school-climate-survey

8 Poteat, V. P., Yoshikawa, H., Calzo, J. P., Russell, S. T., & Horn, S. (2017). Gay-straight alliances as settings for youth inclusion and development: Future conceptual and methodological directions for research on these and other student groups in schools. *Educational Researcher*, *46*(9), 508–516. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X17738760

9 Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Zongrone, A. D., Clark, C. M., & Truong, N. L. (2018). *The 2017 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools.* New York: GLSEN.

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Walls, N. E., Kane, S. B., & Wisneski, H. (2010). Gay-straight alliances and school experiences of sexual minority youth. *Youth & Society, 41*(3), 307–332.

10 Lee, C. (2002). The impact of belonging to a high school gay/straight alliance. *The High School Journal, 85*(3), 13–26.

Mayberry, M. (2006). The story of a Salt Lake City gay-straight alliance: Identity work and LGBT youth. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education, 4*(1), 13–31.

Poteat, V. P., Calzo, J. P., Yoshikawa, H., Lipkin, A., Ceccolini, C. J., Rosenbach. S. B., O'Brien, M. D., Marx, R. A., Murchison, G. R., & Burson, E. (2019). Greater engagement in gender-sexuality alliances (GSAs) and GSA characteristics predict youth empowerment and reduced mental health concerns. *Child Development*, *91*(5), 1509–1528.

Russell, S. T., Muraco, A., Subramaniam, A., & Laub, C. (2009). Youth empowerment and high school gay-straight alliances. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 38*(7), 891–903.

Toomey, R. B., & Russell, S. T. (2013b). Gay-straight alliances, social justice involvement, and school victimization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer youth: Implications for school well-being and plans to vote. *Youth & Society, 45*(4), 500–522.

Truong, N. L., & Zongrone, A. D. (2021). The role of GSA participation, victimization based on sexual orientation, and race on psychosocial well-being among LGBTQ secondary school students. *Psychology in the Schools.*

11 Poteat, V. P., Yoshikawa, H., Calzo, J. P., Gray, M. L., DiGiovanni, C. D., Lipkin, A., Mundy-Shephard, A., Perrotti, J., Scheer, J. R., & Shaw, M. P. (2015). Contextualizing gay-straight alliances: Student, advisor, and structural factors related to positive youth development among members. *Child Development*, *86*(1), 176–193.

12 Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Zongrone, A. D., Clark, C. M., & Truong, N. L. (2018). *The 2017 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools.* New York: GLSEN.

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13 Poteat, V. P., Yoshikawa, H., Calzo, J. P., Gray, M. L., DiGiovanni, C. D., Lipkin, A., Mundy-Shephard, A., Perrotti, J., Scheer, J. R., & Shaw, M. P. (2015). Contextualizing gay-straight alliances: Student, advisor, and structural factors related to positive youth development among members. *Child Development*, *86*(1), 176–193.

14 Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., Truong, N. L., & Zongrone, A. D. (2020). *The 2019 national school climate survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. GLSEN. https://www.glsen.org/research/2019-national-school-climate-survey

15 Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., Truong, N. L., & Zongrone, A. D. (2020). *The 2019 national school climate survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. GLSEN. https://www.glsen.org/research/2019-national-school-climate-survey

16 Poteat, V. P., Yoshikawa, H., Calzo, J. P., Gray, M. L., DiGiovanni, C. D., Lipkin, A., Mundy-Shephard, A., Perrotti, J., Scheer, J. R., & Shaw, M. P. (2015). Contextualizing gay-straight alliances: Student, advisor, and structural factors related to positive youth development among members. *Child Development*, *86*(1), 176–193.

17 Poteat, V. P., O'Brien, M. D., Yang, M. K., Rosenbach, S. B., & Lipkin, A. (2021). Youth advocacy varies in relation to adult advisor characteristics and practices in gender-sexuality alliances. *Applied Developmental Science*.

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19 Greytak, E.A., Kosciw, J.G., Villenas, C. & Giga, N.M. (2016). *From Teasing to Torment: School Climate Revisited, A Survey of U.S. Secondary School Students and Teachers.* New York: GLSEN.

20 Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., Truong, N. L., & Zongrone, A. D. (2020). *The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools.* New York: GLSEN.

21 Sexual orientation was assessed with a multi-check item (i.e., gay, lesbian, straight/heterosexual, bisexual, pansexual, queer, and questioning) with an optional write-in item for sexual orientations not listed. Youth were allowed to endorse multiple

options. Mutually exclusive categories were created at the data cleaning stage so that analyses could compare youth across sexual orientation categories using the following hierarchy: gay/lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, queer, questioning, and straight/heterosexual. Thus, as an example, if an individual identified as "gay" and "queer" they were categorized as "gay/lesbian"; if an individual identified as "bisexual" and "questioning," they were categorized as "bisexual."

22 Pansexual identity is commonly defined as experiencing attraction to some people, regardless of their gender identity. This identity may be distinct from a bisexual identity, which is commonly described as either experiencing attraction to some male-identified people and some female-identified people or as experiencing attraction to some people of the same gender and some people of different genders.

23 Students who indicated that they were asexual and another sexual orientation were categorized as another sexual orientation.

24 Race/ethnicity was assessed with a single multi-check question item (i.e., African American or Black; Asian or South Asian; Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; Native American, American Indian, or Alaska Native; White or Caucasian; Hispanic or Latino/ Latina/Latinx; and Arab American, Middle Eastern, or North African) with an optional write-in item for race/ethnicities not listed. Participants who selected more than one race category were coded as multiracial, with the exception of participants who selected either "Hispanic or Latino/Latina/Latinx" or "Arab American, Middle Eastern, or North African" as their ethnicity. Participants who selected either one ethnicity were coded as that ethnicity, regardless of any additional racial identities they selected. Participants who selected both ethnicities were coded as multiracial.

25 Latinx is a variant of the masculine "Latino" and feminine "Latina" that leaves gender unspecified and, therefore, aims to be more inclusive of diverse gender identities, including nonbinary individuals. To learn more: https://www.meriam-webster.com/wordsat- play/word-history-latinx

26 Gender was assessed via two items: an item assessing sex assigned at birth (i.e., male or female) and an item assessing gender identity (i.e., cisgender, transgender, nonbinary, genderqueer, male, female, questioning, and an additional write-in option). Based on responses to these two items, students' gender was categorized for these analyses as: Cisgender (including cisgender male, cisgender female, cisgender nonbinary/genderqueer, or unspecified male or female [while unspecified was a potential category, no one in the sample identified under this category]), Transgender (including transgender male, transgender female, transgender nonbinary/genderqueer, and transgender only), Nonbinary/Genderqueer (including nonbinary, genderqueer, nonbinary/genderqueer male, nonbinary/genderqueer female, or another nonbinary identity (i.e., those who wrote in identities such as "genderfluid," "agender" or "demigender") and Questioning. Students in the "nonbinary/genderqueer" group did not also identify as "transgender."

27 Sexual orientation was assessed with a multi-check item (i.e., gay, lesbian, straight/heterosexual, bisexual, pansexual, queer, and questioning) with an optional write-in item for sexual orientations not listed. Advisors were allowed to endorse multiple options. Mutually exclusive categories were created at the data cleaning stage so that analyses could compare advisors across sexual orientation categories using the following hierarchy: gay/lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, queer, questioning, and straight/heterosexual. Thus, as an example, if an individual identified as "gay" and "queer" they were categorized as "gay/lesbian"; if an individual identified as "bisexual" and "questioning," they were categorized as "bisexual."

28 Pansexual identity is commonly defined as experiencing attraction to some people, regardless of their gender identity. This identity may be distinct from a bisexual identity, which is commonly described as either experiencing attraction to some male-identified people and some female-identified people or as experiencing attraction to some people of the same gender and some people of different genders.

29 Advisors who indicated that they were asexual and another sexual orientation were categorized as another sexual orientation.

30 Race/ethnicity was assessed with a single multi-check question item (i.e., African American or Black; Asian or South Asian; Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; Native American, American Indian, or Alaska Native; White or Caucasian; Hispanic or Latino/ Latina/Latinx; and Arab American, Middle Eastern, or North African) with an optional write-in item for race/ethnicities not listed. Participants who selected more than one race category were coded as multiracial, with the exception of participants who selected either "Hispanic or Latino/Latina/Latinx" or "Arab American, Middle Eastern, or North African" as their ethnicity. Participants who selected either one ethnicity were coded as that ethnicity, regardless of any additional racial identities they selected. Participants who selected both ethnicities were coded as multiracial.

31 Gender was assessed via two items: an item assessing sex assigned at birth (i.e., male or female) and an item assessing gender identity (i.e., cisgender, transgender, nonbinary, genderqueer, male, female, questioning, and an additional write-in option). Based on responses to these two items, advisors' gender was categorized for these analyses as: Cisgender (including cisgender male, cisgender female, cisgender nonbinary/genderqueer, or unspecified male or female), Transgender (including transgender male, transgender female, transgender nonbinary/genderqueer, and transgender only), Nonbinary/Genderqueer (including nonbinary, genderqueer, nonbinary/genderqueer male, nonbinary/genderqueer female, or another nonbinary identity (i.e., those who wrote in identities such as "genderfluid," "agender" or "demigender") and Questioning. Advisors in the "nonbinary/genderqueer" group did not also identify as "transgender."

32 Greytak, E.A., Kosciw, J.G., Villenas, C. & Giga, N.M. (2016). *From Teasing to Torment: School Climate Revisited, A Survey of U.S. Secondary School Students and Teachers.* New York: GLSEN.

33 Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., Truong, N. L., & Zongrone, A. D. (2020). *The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

34 McCready, L.T. (2004). Some challenges facing queer youth programs in urban high schools. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Issues in Education, 1*(3), 37–51.

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35 To test whether students' school racial/ethnic composition differed from the racial/ethnic composition of the GSA at their school, a chi-square test was conducted. Students' school racial composition differed significantly from their GSA racial/ethnic composition: $\chi^2 = 239.38$, df = 8, $p<.001$, Cramer's V = .37.

36 Of the students who reported that their GSA was composed of majority LGBQ, the full breakdown of sexual orientation identities were the following: 36.8% bisexual, 26.5% gay/lesbian, 12.4% pansexual, 10.3% heterosexual, 5.5% other sexual orientation, 4.1% queer, 3.4% questioning, and 1.0% asexual.

37 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD). (2020). *State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary/Secondary Education, 1999–2000 through 2018–19*. Retrieved March 25, 2021 from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d20/tables/dt20_203.65.asp.

38 Ioverno, S., Belser, A. B., Baiocco, R., Grossman, A. H., & Russell, S. T. (2016). The protective role of gay-straight alliances for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and questioning students: A prospective analysis. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity, 3*(4), 397–406.

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39 Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Zongrone, A. D., Clark, C. M., & Truong, N. L. (2018). *The 2017 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools.* New York: GLSEN.

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40 Lee, C. (2002). The impact of belonging to a high school gay/straight alliance. *The High School Journal, 85*(3), 13–26.

Mayberry, M. (2006). The story of a Salt Lake City gay-straight alliance: Identity work and LGBT youth. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education, 4*(1), 13–31.

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Toomey, R. B., & Russell, S. T. (2013b). Gay-straight alliances, social justice involvement, and school victimization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer youth: Implications for school well-being and plans to vote. *Youth & Society, 45*(4), 500–522.

Truong, N. L., & Zongrone, A. D. (2021). The role of GSA participation, victimization based on sexual orientation, and race on psychosocial well-being among LGBTQ secondary school students. *Psychology in the Schools.*

41 To examine the relationship between GSA participation (how often students attended GSA meetings) and well-being (self-esteem, depression, school belonging), missing school due to feeling unsafe, and GPA, while controlling for victimization based on sexual orientation (composite weighted variable based on severity of sexual orientation based harassment with more weight given to more severe forms of harassment, whereby physical assault received the most weight, followed by physical harassment and verbal harassment), victimization based on gender expression (composite weighted variable based on severity of gender expression based harassment), and LGBTQ discrimination (experienced any anti-LGBTQ discriminatory school policies and practices), partial correlations were conducted. The more often students attended GSA meetings, the greater their school belonging: $r(9584) = .06$, $p<.001$. Marginal differences were found for self-esteem and depression: the more often students attended GSA meetings, the greater their self-esteem: $r(9584) = .02$, $p<.05$; the more often students attended GSA meetings, the lower their depression: $r(9584) = -.03$, $p<.05$.

42 Truong, N. L., & Zongrone, A. D. (2021). The role of GSA participation, victimization based on sexual orientation, and race on psychosocial well-being among LGBTQ secondary school students. *Psychology in the Schools.*

43 To examine whether GSA participation (attended GSA meetings vs. never attended GSA meetings) moderates the effects of victimization based on sexual orientation, victimization based on gender expression, and experiences with any anti-LGBTQ discriminatory school policies and practices on well-being (self-esteem, depression, and school belonging) among LGBTQ students, three separate two-way analyses of variance (ANCOVAs) for each well-being dependent variable were conducted, with victimization and anti-LGBTQ discrimination as the independent variables, self-esteem, depression, and school belonging as the dependent variables, GSA participation as the moderator variable, GSA participation X sexual orientation based victimization, GSA participation X gender expression based victimization, and GSA participation X anti-LGBTQ discrimination as the interaction terms, and anti-LGBTQ victimization and discrimination as covariates.

For self-esteem, the overall model was significant: $F(7, 9654) = 108.99$, $p<.001$. The interaction terms were not significant.

For depression, the overall model was significant: $F(7, 9653) = 255.17$, $p<.001$. The interaction terms were not significant.

For belonging, the overall model was significant: $F(5, 9757) = 577.98$, $p<.001$. The GSA participation X gender expression based victimization interaction term was significant, $F(1, 9757) = 9.27$, $p<.01$.

To test whether LGBTQ students differed on school belonging by GSA attendance for those who experienced low levels of gender expression based victimization, and for those who experienced high levels of gender expression victimization, two separate independent samples t-tests were conducted, one for those who experienced low levels of victimization and one for those who experienced high levels of victimization, with GSA attendance (attended vs. never attended) as the independent variable and school belonging as the dependent variable. For LGBTQ students who experienced low levels of gender expression based victimization, the effects were not significant at $p<.05$. For LGBTQ students who experienced high levels of gender expression based victimization, the effects were significant at $p<.01$: $t(1263.13) = 2.69$.

44 Poteat, V. P., Yoshikawa, H., Calzo, J. P., Gray, M. L., DiGiovanni, C. D., Lipkin, A., Mundy-Shephard, A., Perrotti, J., Scheer, J. R., & Shaw, M. P. (2015). Contextualizing gay-straight alliances: Student, advisor, and structural factors related to positive youth development among members. *Child Development, 86*(1), 176–193.

45 Diaz, E. M. (2010). *Demographic differences in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth's participation in school-based Gay-Straight Alliances in the United States.* [Master's thesis, George Washington University]. ProQuest.

46 Using the *2019 National School Climate Survey* data, we conducted an ANOVA (analysis of variance) to test whether GSA participation (for students who had a GSA at their school) differed by race/ethnicity (White, Black, Asian/Pacific Islander, Latinx, Native and Indigenous, Arab/Middle Eastern, and multiracial), with frequency of GSA participation as the dependent variable and race/ethnicity as the independent variable. The main effect for race/ethnicity on GSA participation was marginally significant: $F(6, 20206) = 2.75$, $p=.011$. Pairwise comparisons indicated a marginally significant difference between Latinx and White students at $p<.05$: Latinx students attended GSA meetings less frequently than White students. No other differences were found.

47 Using the *2019 National School Climate Survey* data, we conducted an ANCOVA (analysis of covariance) to test whether GSA participation (for students who had a GSA at their school) differed by race/ethnicity (White, Black, Asian/Pacific Islander, Latinx, Native and Indigenous, Arab/Middle Eastern, and multiracial), with frequency of GSA participation as the dependent variable and race/ethnicity as the independent variable. Covariates included age, outness to peers, and outness to teachers because these variables differed by race/ethnicity and GSA participation. The main effect for race/ethnicity on GSA participation was not significant.

48 Using the *2019 National School Climate Survey* data, we conducted an ANCOVA (analysis of covariance) to test whether GSA membership (for students who had a GSA at their school) differed by sexual orientation (gay/lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, queer, questioning, asexual, and other sexual orientation), with GSA participation as the dependent variable and sexual orientation as the independent variable. Covariates included age, outness to peers, and outness to teachers because these variables differed by sexual orientation and GSA participation. The main effect for sexual orientation on GSA participation was significant: $F(5, 9873) = 32.69$, $p<.001$. Pairwise comparisons indicated significant differences for the following at $p<.001$: Compared to gay/lesbian students, pansexual, queer, and asexual students attended GSA meetings more frequently. Compared to bisexual students, pansexual, queer, and asexual students attended GSA meetings more frequently. No other differences were found. In Figure 1.8, questioning students appear to attend GSAs less often than queer, pansexual, asexual, and other sexual orientation identified students, but they were not significantly different. Also in Figure 1.8, other sexual orientation identified students appear to attend GSAs more often than gay/lesbian, bisexual, and

questioning students, but they were not significantly different. This may be due to low statistical power due to small sample sizes for the questioning and other sexual orientation identified groups. Percentages are for illustrative purposes.

49 Using the *2019 National School Climate Survey* data, we conducted an ANCOVA (analysis of covariance) to test whether GSA participation (for students who had a GSA at their school) differed by gender (cisgender, transgender, nonbinary, questioning, and other gender). Covariates included age, outness to peers, and outness to teachers because these variables differed by gender and GSA participation. The main effect for gender identity on GSA participation was significant $F(4, 10170) = 41.19$, $p<.001$. Pairwise comparisons indicated significant differences for the following at $p<.001$: Compared to cisgender students, students who identify as transgender, nonbinary, another gender identity, and questioning attended GSA meetings more frequently. No other differences were found. Percentages are for illustrative purposes.

50 Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., Truong, N. L., & Zongrone, A. D. (2020). *The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

51 Using the *2019 National School Climate Survey* data, we conducted an ANCOVA (analysis of covariance) to test whether GSA membership (for students who had a GSA at their school) differed by sexual orientation (gay/lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, queer, questioning, other sexual orientation), with GSA participation as the dependent variable and sexual orientation as the independent variable. Covariates included age, outness to peers, outness to teachers, victimization based on sexual orientation (composite weighted variable based on severity of sexual orientation based harassment with more weight given to more severe forms of harassment, whereby physical assault received the most weight, followed by physical harassment and verbal harassment), victimization based on gender expression (composite weighted variable based on severity of gender expression based harassment), and having experienced any discriminatory school policy or practice. The main effect for sexual orientation on GSA participation was significant: $F(5, 9412) = 27.50$, $p<.001$. Pairwise comparisons indicated significant differences for the following at $p<.01$: Compared to gay/lesbian students, pansexual and queer students attended GSA meetings more frequently. Compared to bisexual students, pansexual and queer students attended GSA meetings more frequently. No other differences were found.

Using the *2019 National School Climate Survey* data, we conducted an ANCOVA (analysis of covariance) to test whether GSA participation (for students who had a GSA at their school) differed by gender (cisgender, transgender, nonbinary, questioning, and other gender). Covariates included age, outness to peers, outness to teachers, victimization based on sexual orientation (composite weighted variable based on severity of sexual orientation based harassment with more weight given to more severe forms of harassment, whereby physical assault received the most weight, followed by physical harassment and verbal harassment), victimization based on gender expression (composite weighted variable based on severity of gender expression based harassment), and having experienced any discriminatory school policy or practice. The main effect for gender identity on GSA participation was significant $F(4, 9690) = 28.22$, $p<.001$. Pairwise comparisons indicated significant differences for the following at $p<.01$: Compared to cisgender students, students who identify as transgender, nonbinary, another gender identity, and questioning attended GSA meetings more frequently. No other differences were found.

52 Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., Truong, N. L., & Zongrone, A. D. (2020). *The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

Among LGBTQ students in general, the most common reasons for not attending GSAs at their school were interpersonal dynamics, such as having conflicts with other GSA members (27.4%), scheduling and logistics issues (26.7%), and issues with outness related to attending GSA meetings (26.2%). The least common reasons for not attending were with issues with the functioning of their GSA such as lack of organization (12.8%), that their GSA did not meet their needs (12.3%), and personal concerns associated with attending their GSA such as fear or discomfort and social awkwardness (8.1%).

53 We did not examine differences by sexual orientation (LGBQ vs heterosexual) on reasons why students did not attend their GSA by sexual orientation because we were specifically interested in demographic differences within LGBTQ students.

54 Mean differences in the frequencies across types of reasons for not attending a GSA at their school by race/ethnicity (students of color vs. White students) among LGBTQ students were examined using a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (RMANOVA). The interaction between reasons for not attending a GSA and race/ethnicity (students of color vs. White students) was not significant. LGBTQ students of color did not differ from LGBTQ White students on their reasons for not attending a GSA at their school.

55 Mean differences in the frequencies across types of reasons for not attending a GSA at their school by gender (non-cisgender students vs. cisgender students) among LGBTQ students were examined using a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (RMANOVA). The model was significant: Pillai's Trace = .23, $F(6, 3643) = 177.42$, $p<.001$. The interaction between reasons for not attending a GSA and gender was significant: Pillai's Trace = .02, $F(6, 3643) = 12.51$, $p<.001$.

A series of chi-square tests of independence were conducted to assess whether transgender/nonbinary students differed from cisgender students on reasons for not attending the GSA at their school. Significant differences were found. Compared to cisgender LGBQ students, transgender/nonbinary students were more likely to not attend their GSA because of interpersonal dynamics with members or the advisor, and because of fear of potential repercussions: Interpersonal dynamics: $\chi^2(1) = 35.33$, $p<.001$, $\phi = .10$; Fear of repercussions: $\chi^2(1) = 8.04$, $p<.01$, $\phi = .05$. Compared to transgender/nonbinary students, cisgender LGBQ students were more likely to not attend their GSA because of scheduling or logistical reasons, and because of not being out: Scheduling and logistical reasons: $\chi^2(1) = 4.65$, $p<.05$, $\phi = -.04$; Not being out: $\chi^2(1) = 30.46$, $p<.001$, $\phi = -.09$. No other differences were found.

56 Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., Truong, N. L., & Zongrone, A. D. (2020). *The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

57 Using the *2019 National School Climate Survey* data, we conducted an ANOVA (analysis of variance) to test whether GSA participation (for students who had a GSA at their school) differed by school type (public, religious, private non-religious), with GSA participation (how often they attended GSA meetings) as the dependent variable, and school type as the independent variable. The main effects on GSA participation for school type was significant: $F(2, 10160) = 28.64$, $p<.001$. Pairwise comparisons indicated significant differences for the following at $p<.01$: Compared to public schools, students who attended religious schools and private schools attended GSA meetings more often. No other differences were found. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.

58 Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., Truong, N. L., & Zongrone, A. D. (2020). *The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

59 Using the *2019 National School Climate Survey* data, we conducted an ANOVA (analysis of variance) to test whether GSA participation (for students who had a GSA at their school) differed by school locale (urban, suburban, rural), with GSA participation (how often they attend GSA meetings) as the dependent variable, and school locale as the independent variable. The main effect on GSA participation for locale was significant: $F(2, 10155) = 33.05$, $p<.001$. Pairwise comparisons indicated significant differences for the following at $p<.01$: Compared to suburban and urban schools, students who attended rural schools attended GSA meetings more often. No other differences were found. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.

60 Using the *2019 National School Climate Survey* data, we conducted an ANOVA (analysis of variance) to test whether GSA participation (for students who had a GSA at their school) differed by school region (Northeast, South, Midwest, West), with GSA participation (how often they attend GSA meetings) as the dependent variable, and school region as the independent variable. The main effect on GSA participation for region was significant: $F(3, 10253) = 17.65$, $p<.001$. Pairwise comparisons indicated significant differences for the following at $p<.01$: Compared to the South, students who attended schools in the Northeast and

Midwest attended GSA meetings more often. Compared to the West, students who attended schools in the Northeast and Midwest attended GSA meetings more often. No other differences were found. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.

61 Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., Truong, N. L., & Zongrone, A. D. (2020). *The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

62 Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., Truong, N. L., & Zongrone, A. D. (2020). *The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

63 Senator Mark Leno. (2013). California's FAIR Education Act: Addressing the bullying epidemic by ending the exclusion of LGBT people and historical events in textbooks and classrooms. *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking*, 105–110. doi:10.14321/qed.0105

64 While the term "ally" has been broadly defined as any person (cisgender heterosexual or LGBTQ) who supports and stands up for the rights of LGBTQ people, for the purposes of this report, "ally" refers to any non-LGBTQ (cisgender heterosexual) student who attends their school's GSA, with the assumption that as voluntary members of their school's GSA, these students support and advocate for their LGBTQ peers who are targeted and discriminated against. Additionally, considering the developmental age of our participants and the development of sexual orientation and gender identities we believe the term "ally", compared to "non-LGBTQ", is more inclusive of students who did not identify as LGBTQ at the time of the survey but did or will identify as LGBTQ in the future.

65 Lapointe, A. A. (2015). Standing "straight" up to homophobia: Straight allies' involvement in GSAs. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 12*, 144–169.

66 Using the *From Teasing to Torment: Revisited* data, we conducted a chi-square test of independence to determine whether cisgender heterosexual students' GSA membership (for those who had a GSA at their school) differed by race/ethnicity (White vs students of color), with GSA participation (participated vs did not participate) as the dependent variable and race/ethnicity as the independent variable. White cisgender heterosexual students and cisgender heterosexual students of color did not differ on GSA membership.

67 Using the *From Teasing to Torment: Revisited* data, we conducted a chi-square test of independence to determine whether cisgender heterosexual students' GSA membership (for those who had a GSA at their school) differed by gender (male, female), with GSA membership (participated vs did not participate) as the dependent variable and gender as the independent variable. The chi-square test was significant at $p<.01$: χ^2 (1) = 9.53. Cisgender heterosexual females were more likely to participate in their school's GSA than cisgender heterosexual males.

Using the *From Teasing to Torment: Revisited* data, we conducted a logistic regression to determine whether cisgender heterosexual students' GSA membership (for those who had a GSA at their school) differed by age, with GSA participation (participated vs did not participate) as the dependent variable and age as the independent variable. The main effect for age on GSA participation was significant at $p<.01$: Odds Ratio (OR) = 0.69. Older cisgender heterosexual students were more likely to participate in their school's GSA than their younger counterparts.

68 Poteat, V. P., & Anderson, C. J. (2012). Developmental changes in sexual prejudice from early to late adolescence: The effects of gender, race, and ideology on different patterns of change. *Developmental Psychology, 48*(5), 1403–1415.

69 Horn, S. S. (2006). Heterosexual adolescents' and young adults' beliefs and attitudes about homosexuality and gay and lesbian peers. C*ognitive Development, 21*(4), 420–440.

70 Using the *From Teasing to Torment: Revisited* data, we conducted four separate chi-square tests of independence to test whether cisgender heterosexual students' GSA membership (for those who had a GSA at their school) differed by school characteristics: school level (middle school, high school); school type (public, religious, private non-religious); school locale (urban, suburban, rural); school region (Northeast, South, Midwest, aWest). There were no significant differences for any of the school characteristics.

71 Using the *From Teasing to Torment: Revisited* data, we conducted a logistic regression to test whether cisgender heterosexual students' GSA membership (for those who had a GSA at their school) differed by whether they knew a student at school who is LGBTQ, with GSA participation (participated vs did not participate) as the dependent variable and knowing a student at school who is LGBTQ (knowing vs not knowing) as the independent variable. Having a close personal friend who is LGBTQ was included as a covariate. The main effect was not significant. GSA participation did not differ by whether cisgender heterosexual students knew a student at school who is LGBTQ.

72 Using the *From Teasing to Torment: Revisited* data, we conducted a logistic regression to test whether cisgender heterosexual students' GSA membership (for those who had a GSA at their school) differed by whether they had a close personal friend at school who is LGBTQ, with GSA membership (participated vs did not participate) as the dependent variable, and having a close personal LGBTQ friend at school (having vs. not having) as the independent variable. Knowing a student at school who is LGBTQ was included as a covariate. Compared to cisgender heterosexual students who did not have a close personal friend who is LGBTQ, cisgender heterosexual students who had a close personal friend at school who is LGBTQ were more likely to participate in the GSA at their school: Wald (1) = 29.30, $p<.001$; odds ratio (OR) = 0.20, β = 1.59, $p<.001$.

73 To test differences in time spent in their GSA between GSA leaders and non-leader members, an independent samples t-test was conducted with GSA member status (leader vs non-leader member) as the independent variable, and number of hours spent per week with their GSA as the dependent variable. The effect was significant: $t(748.99) = 8.60$, $p<.001$. Cohen's $d = 0.61$.

74 A new difference score variable was computed between two categorical variables, number of hours spent on all school-sponsored activities and on GSA activities (number of hours spent on all school-sponsored activities minus number of hours spent on GSA activities), to obtain percentages of GSA students who spent more time on non-GSA school-sponsored activities than on GSA activities, more time on GSA school sponsored activities than on non-GSA school-sponsored activities, and most or all of their time on GSA activities.

75 Poteat, V. P., Yoshikawa, H., Calzo, J. P., Gray, M. L., DiGiovanni, C. D., Lipkin, A., Mundy-Shephard, A., Perrotti, J., Scheer, J. R., & Shaw, M. P. (2015). Contextualizing gay-straight alliances: Student, advisor, and structural factors related to positive youth development among members. *Child Development, 86*(1), 176– 193.

76 Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., Truong, N. L., & Zongrone, A. D. (2020). *The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

77 Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Zongrone, A. D., Clark, C. M., & Truong, N. L. (2018). *The 2017 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

78 Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., Truong, N. L., & Zongrone, A. D. (2020). *The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

79 Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., Truong, N. L., & Zongrone, A. D. (2020). *The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

80 Scheer, J. R., & Poteat, V. P. (2016). Factors associated with straight allies' current engagement levels within gay-straight alliances. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 43*, 112–119.

81 Griffin, P., Lee, C., Waugh, J., & Beyer, C. (2004). Describing roles that gay-straight alliances play in schools: From individual support to school change. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education*, *1*(3), 7–22.

82 Poteat VP, Calzo JP, & Yoshikawa H. (2016). Promoting youth agency through dimensions of gay-straight alliance involvement and conditions that maximize associations. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 45, 1438–1451.

Poteat, V. P., Scheer, J. R., Marx, R. A., Calzo, J. P., & Yoshikawa, H. (2015). Gay-straight alliances vary on dimensions of youth socializing and advocacy: Factors accounting for individual and setting-level differences. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 55(3–4), 422–432.

83 Lee, C. (2002). The impact of belonging to a high school gay/straight alliance. *The High School Journal*, *85*(3), 13–26.

Mayberry, M. (2013). Gay-straight alliances: Youth empowerment and working toward reducing stigma of LGBT youth. *Humanity & Society, 37*(1), 35–54.

Poteat, V. P., Calzo, J. P., Yoshikawa, H., Lipkin, A., Ceccolini, C. J., Rosenbach, S. B., O'Brien, M. D., Marx, R. A., Murchison, G. R., & Burson, E. (2019). Greater engagement in gender-sexuality alliances (GSAs) and GSA characteristics predict youth empowerment and reduced mental health concerns. *Child Development*, *91*(5), 1509–1528.

Russell, S. T., Muraco, A., Subramaniam, A., & Laub, C. (2009). Youth empowerment and high school gay-straight alliances. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *38*(7), 891–903.

Toomey, R. B., & Russell, S. T. (2013). Gay-straight alliances, social justice involvement, and school victimization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer youth: Implications for school well-being and plans to vote. *Youth & Society*, *45*(4), 500–522.

84 To examine mean differences in students' reports of activity occurrence a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (RMANOVA) was conducted among the following variables: discuss or learn about LGBTQ topics (discuss and learn), work with school staff to create a safer school environment for LGBTQ students (work with staff), talk about my experiences with harassment and discrimination at school (talk harassment), provide emotional support (support), organize events at school to raise awareness about LGBTQ issues (awareness events), meet new people and socialize (socialize), organize events at school for LGBTQ students and allies to meet and socialize (social events), work with district officials to advocate for district-wide LGBTQ-inclusive policies or staff training (work with district), collaborate with other student-led clubs or organizations on events or advocacy work (collaborate). The multivariate effect was significant, Pillia's Trace = .84, $F(9, 991) = 570.03$, $p<.001$, $\eta_p^2 = .84$. Pairwise comparisons were considered at $p<.01$. All variables were significantly different with the following exceptions: Discuss and learn and socialize were not different; talk harassment and work with staff were not different; Social event was not different from social event or collaborate.

85 To examine mean differences in students' reported importance of different GSA activities a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (RMANOVA) was conducted among the following variables: discuss or learn about LGBTQ topics (discuss and learn), work with school staff to create a safer school environment for LGBTQ students (work with staff), talk about my experiences with harassment and discrimination at school (talk harassment), provide emotional support (support), organize events at school to raise awareness about LGBTQ issues (awareness events), meet new people and socialize (socialize), organize events at school for LGBTQ students and allies to meet and socialize (social events), work with district officials to advocate for district-wide LGBTQ-inclusive policies or staff training (work with district), collaborate with other student-led clubs or organizations on events or advocacy work (collaborate). The multivariate effect was significant, Pillia's Trace = .55, $F(8, 920) = 142.27$, $p<.001$, $\eta_p^2 = .55$. Pairwise comparisons were considered at $p<.01$. All variables were significantly different with the following exceptions: Talk harassment and work with staff were not different; socialize, awareness events, and emotional support were not different; work with district and social events were not different.

86 To examine mean differences in students' reported importance of different GSA activities a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (RMANOVA) was conducted among the following variables: discuss or learn about LGBTQ topics (discuss and learn), work with school staff to create a safer school environment for LGBTQ students (work with staff), talk about my experiences with harassment and discrimination at school (talk harassment), provide emotional support (support), organize events at school to raise awareness about LGBTQ issues (awareness events), meet new people and socialize (socialize), organize events at school for LGBTQ students and allies to meet and socialize (social events), work with district officials to advocate for district-wide LGBTQ-inclusive policies or staff training (work with district), collaborate with other student-led clubs or organizations on events or advocacy work (collaborate). The multivariate effect was significant, Pillia's Trace = .55, $F(8, 920) = 142.27$, $p<.001$, $\eta_p^2 = .55$. Pairwise comparisons were considered at $p<.01$. All variables were significantly different with the following exceptions: Talk harassment and work with staff were not different; socialize, awareness events, and emotional support were not different; work with district and social events were not different.

87 To examine mean differences in advisors' reports of the frequency of different GSA activities a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (RMANOVA) was conducted among the following variables: work with school staff to create a safer school environment for LGBTQ students (work with staff), help members address incidents of harassment and discrimination at school (help harassment), provide students with emotional support (support), organize an event at school to raise awareness about LGBTQ issues (awareness events), provided a space or organized events for LGBTQ students and allies to meet and socialize (socialize), work with district officials to advocate for district-wide LGBTQ-inclusive policies or staff training (work with district), collaborate with other student-led clubs or organizations on events or advocacy work (collaborate). The multivariate effect was significant, Pillia's Trace = .78, $F(7, 464) = 232.32$, $p<.001$. Pairwise comparisons were considered at $p<.01$. All variables were significantly different with the following exceptions: Work with staff and help harassment were not different; collaborate and work with district were not different.

88 To examine mean differences in students' reports of helpfulness of their GSA in meeting their different needs, a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (RMANOVA) was conducted among the following variables: discuss or learn about LGBTQ topics (discuss and learn), work with school staff to create a safer school environment for LGBTQ students (work with staff), talk about my experiences with harassment and discrimination at school (talk harassment), provide emotional support (support), organize events at school to raise awareness about LGBTQ issues (awareness events), meet new people and socialize (socialize), organize events at school for LGBTQ students and allies to meet and socialize (social events), work with district officials to advocate for district-wide LGBTQ-inclusive policies or staff training (work with district), collaborate with other student-led clubs or organizations on events or advocacy work (collaborate). The multivariate effect was significant, Pillia's Trace = .66, $F(8, 767) = 183.79$, $p<.001$, $\eta_p^2 = .66$. Pairwise comparisons were considered at $p<.01$. All variables were significantly different from each other with the following exceptions: Talk harassment was not different from support or social events; work with staff was not different from awareness events; work with district was not different from collaborate.

89 To examine mean differences in students' reports of helpfulness of their GSA advisor in meeting their different needs a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (RMANOVA) was conducted among the following variables: discuss or learn about LGBTQ topics (discuss and learn), work with school staff to create a safer school environment for LGBTQ students (work with staff), talk about my experiences with harassment and discrimination at school (talk harassment), provide emotional support (support), organize events at school to raise awareness about LGBTQ issues (awareness events), meet new people and socialize (socialize), organize events at school for LGBTQ students and allies to meet and socialize (social events), work with district officials to advocate for district-wide LGBTQ-inclusive policies or staff training (work with district), collaborate with other student-led clubs or organizations on events or advocacy work (collaborate). The multivariate effect was significant, Pillia's Trace = .51, $F(8, 728) = 93.35$, $p<.001$. Pairwise comparisons were considered at $p<.01$. All variables were significantly different with the following exceptions: Talk harassment was not different from support; collaborate was not different from awareness events or work with district.

90 Chi square tests were performed to examine whether engagement in each activity differed by whether students were in middle school or high school. There were no significant differences.

91 Chi square tests were performed to examine whether engagement in each activity differed by whether advisors taught at a middle school or high school. High school advisors were more likely than middle school advisors to report that their GSA organized an event at school to raise awareness about LGBTQ issues: $\chi^2 = 9.57$, df = 1, $p<.01$; to report that their GSA collaborated with other student-led clubs or organizations on events or advocacy work: $\chi^2 = 13.339.57$, df = 1, $p<.001$; and to report that their GSA worked with district officials to advocate for district-wide LGBTQ-inclusive policies or staff trainings: $\chi^2 = 7.53$, df = 1, $p<.01$.

92 Chi square tests were performed to examine whether engagement in each activity differed by whether students went to school in the Northeast, Midwest, South, or West. Students from schools in

the Northeast were more likely to report that their GSA organized an event at school to raise awareness about LGBTQ issues than students in all other regions: $\chi^2 = 26.89$, df = 3, $p < .001$.

93 Chi square tests were performed to examine whether engagement in each activity differed by whether advisors taught at schools in the Northeast, Midwest, South, or West. There were no significant differences.

94 Chi square tests were performed to examine whether engagement in each activity differed by whether advisors' schools were in urban, suburban, or rural locales. Advisors in rural school were less likely than advisors in urban and suburban schools to report that their GSA collaborated with other student-led clubs or organizations on events or advocacy work: $\chi^2 = 9.42$, df = 2, p <.011.

Chi square tests were performed to examine whether engagement in each activity differed by whether students' schools were in urban, suburban, or rural locales. There were no significant differences.

95 Poteat, V. P., Yoshikawa, H., Calzo, J. P., Russell, S. T., & Horn, S. (2017). Gay-straight alliances as settings for youth inclusion and development: Future conceptual and methodological directions for research on these and other student groups in schools. *Educational Researcher, 46*(9), 508–516. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X17738760

96 Marx, R. A. & Kettrey, H. H. (2016). Gay-straight alliances are associated with lower levels of school-based victimization of LGBTQ+ youth: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *45*(7), 1269–1282. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-016-0501-7

Mayberry, M. (2013). Gay-straight alliances: Youth empowerment and working toward reducing stigma of LGBT youth. *Humanity & Society*, *37*(1), 35–54. https://doi.org/10.1177/0160597612454358

Poteat, V. P., Scheer, J. R., Marx, R. A., Calzo, J. P., & Yoshikawa, H. (2015). Gay-straight alliances vary on dimensions of youth socializing and advocacy: Factors accounting for individual and setting-level differences. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 55*(3–4), 422–432. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-015-9722-2

97 An 8-item scale was created for the *2019 National School Climate Survey* that measured GSA members' experience with certain GSA activities: providing a space or organized events for LGBTQ students and allies to meet and socialize; providing students with emotional support; organizing an event at school to raise awareness about LGBTQ issues, such as an assembly or Day of Silence; helping members address incidents of harassment and discrimination at school; working with school staff to create a safer school environment for LGBTQ students (for example, advocating for inclusive school policies or met with teachers to increase LGBTQ-supportive practices); collaborating with other student-led clubs or organizations on events or advocacy work; working with district officials to advocate for district-wide LGBTQ-inclusive policies or staff trainings; and working outside of school to advocate for change or raise awareness around LGBTQ issues.

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted in SPSS (Principal Component Analysis, Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization) on all activity types to identify underlying patterns in the items. The analysis suggested a two-factor solution. Four items loaded on Factor 1 (advocacy activities): organizing an event at school to raise awareness about LGBTQ issues, such as an assembly or Day of Silence; working with district officials to advocate for district-wide LGBTQ-inclusive policies or staff trainings; collaborating with other student-led clubs or organizations on events or advocacy work; and working outside of school to advocate for change or raise awareness around LGBTQ issues. Three items loaded on Factor 2 (socializing/emotional support): providing a space or organizing events for LGBTQ students and allies to meet and socialize; providing students with emotional support; and helping members address incidents of harassment and discrimination at school. One item loaded on both factors: working with school staff to create a safer school environment for LGBTQ students. The cross-loading item did not improve the reliability of either Factor 1 or Factor 2, so it was dropped,

98 Results were similar in the current GSA study: 98.1% of GSA members reported that their GSAs engaged in at least one socializing/support activity, and 59.0% of GSA members reported that their GSAs engaged in at least one advocacy activity.

99 We did not test differences in LGBTQ student outcomes by GSA socializing/support activities because nearly all students reported that their GSA engaged in socializing/support, and therefore there is little to no variance for this type of GSA activity.

100 To test differences in LGBTQ student outcomes by GSA advocacy activities (a composite score of the activity items that loaded in the Advocacy factor from the factor analysis; 1 = if ever participated in any of the advocacy activities in the 2018–2019 school year), a series of multivariate analyses of variance (MANCOVAs) were conducted. For the MANCOVA investigating hostile school climate, the dependent variables included experiences of anti-LGBTQ victimization (three weighted victimization variables for victimization based on sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender) and experiencing any anti-LGBTQ discrimination (a combined variable of whether the student experienced any of the 11 discriminatory actions assessed in the Discriminatory Practices and Policies section of *2019 National School Climate Survey*). For the MANCOVA investigating positive school climate, the dependent variables were student acceptance of LGBTQ people, number of supportive educators, supportiveness of school administration, visible displays of support for LGBTQ students (e.g., GLSEN's Safe Space Stickers), student intervention regarding homophobic remarks, staff intervention regarding homophobic remarks, student intervention regarding negative remarks about gender expression, and staff intervention regarding negative remarks about gender expression. The independent variable for all MANCOVAs was the composite score of engaging in advocacy activities. Covariates remained the same across both MANCOVAs: region (South, Midwest, West, Northeast), school type (public, private, religious), locale (urban, suburban, rural), school level (middle school, high school), sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity, and race/ethnicity, and outness (to peers and to staff).

The multivariate effect for GSA advocacy activities on hostile school climate was significant at $p<.001$: Pillai's trace = .006, $F(4, 4914) = 6.895$, $p < .001$. The univariate effects of GSA advocacy activities on experiencing any anti-LGBTQ discrimination was significant at $p < .01$: $F(1, 4917) = 27.00$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .005$. Advocacy activities was not associated with victimization based on sexual orientation, victimization based on gender, and victimization based on gender expression.

The multivariate effect for GSA advocacy activities on positive school climate was significant at $p<.001$: Pillai's trace = .053, $F(8, 3351) = 127.62$, $p < .001$. The univariate effects of GSA advocacy activities on student acceptance of LGBTQ people, number of supportive educators, supportiveness of school administration, visible displays of support for LGBTQ students (e.g., GLSEN's Safe Space Stickers), student intervention regarding homophobic remarks, staff intervention regarding homophobic remarks, and staff intervention regarding negative remarks about gender expression were significant at $p<.01$ – number of supportive educators: student acceptance of LGBTQ people: $F(1, 3358) = 45.22$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.013$; number of supportive educators: $F(1, 3358) = 86.75$, $p <. 001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.025$; supportiveness of school administration: $F(1, 3358) = 72.53$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.021$; visible displays of support for LGBTQ students: $F(1, 3358) = 94.53$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.027$; student intervention regarding homophobic remarks: $F(1, 3358) = 9.38$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.003$; staff intervention regarding homophobic remarks: $F(1, 3358) = 34.81$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.010$; staff intervention regarding negative remarks about gender expression: $F(1, 3358) = 27.73$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.008$.

101 Poteat, V. P., Scheer, J. R., Marx, R. A., Calzo, J. P., & Yoshikawa, H. (2015). Gay-straight alliances vary on dimensions of youth socializing and advocacy: Factors accounting for individual and setting-level differences. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 55*(3–4), 422–432. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-015-9722-2

Truong, N. L. & Zongrone, A. D. (2021). The role of participation, victimization based on sexual orientation, and race on psychosocial well-being among LGBTQ secondary school students. *Psychology in the Schools*.

102 To test differences in GSA member well-being outcomes by GSA activities, three multiple regression analyses were conducted, one for each of the well-being outcomes (self-esteem, depression, school belonging). The dependent variables were school belonging, self-esteem, and depression, and the independent variable was the number of GSA activity types. Covariates included: region (South, Midwest, West, Northeast), school type (public, private, religious),

locale (urban, suburban, rural), school level (middle school, high school), sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity, and race/ethnicity, and outness (to peers and to staff). The main effects for self-esteem and school belonging were significant at $p<.001$: Self-esteem: $F(10, 5078) = 12.12$, $\beta = .02$; School belonging: $F(10, 5129) = 34.03$, $\beta = .04$. Depression did not differ by number of GSA activities.

103 Poteat, V. P., Yoshikawa, H., Calzo, J. P., Gray, M. L., DiGiovanni, C. D., Lipkin, A., Mundy-Shephard, A., Perrotti, J., Scheer, J. R., & Shaw, M. P. (2015). Contextualizing gay-straight alliances: Student, advisor, and structural factors related to positive youth development among members. *Child Development, 86*(1), 176–193. https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12289

104 Mean differences in the frequencies of resource types used by GSA members and by GSA advisors were examined using a series of independent samples t-tests. The differences for GSA members making up activities themselves, the advisor(s) giving students activities to do, getting direct help from another GSA, and another resource were significant at $p<.001$ – GSA members making up activities themselves: $t(1334) = -8.092$, Cohen's $d = .48$; advisor(s) giving students activities to do: $t(1338) = 6.849$, Cohen's $d = .43$; getting direct help from another GSA: $t(1331) = 5.371$, Cohen's $d = .32$; another activity source: $t(119) = 3.607$, Cohen's $d = .68$. Percentages are for illustrative purposes.

105 A series of chi-square tests were conducted to compare GSA members and GSA advisors in their familiarity with online resources about certain GSA-related topics. The results for all tests were significant, with the exception of other GSA-related topics. GSAs in general: $\chi^2 = 102.759$, $df = 1$, $p<.001$, $\phi = -.275$; how to start a GSA: $\chi^2 = 246.140$, $df = 1$, $p<.001$, $\phi = -.426$; what to do in a GSA: $\chi^2 = 118.090$, $df = 1$, $p<.001$, $\phi = -.295$; sustaining a GSA over time: $\chi^2 = 67.100$, $df = 1$, $p<.001$, $\phi = -.222$. Percentages are for illustrative purposes.

106 A series of chi-square tests were conducted to compare GSA members and GSA advisors in their use of online resources about certain GSA-related topics. The results for resources on how to start a GSA and what to do in a GSA were significant. How to start a GSA: $\chi^2 = 45.574$, $df = 1$, $p<.001$, $\phi = -.205$; what to do in a GSA: $\chi^2 = 13.377$, $df = 1$, $p<.001$, $\phi = -.111$. Percentages are for illustrative purposes.

107 A series of chi-square tests were conducted to compare GSA members and GSA advisors in their use of online resources about certain GSA-related topics. The results for resources on how to start a GSA and what to do in a GSA were significant. How to start a GSA: $\chi^2 = 45.574$, $df = 1$, $p<.001$, $\phi = -.205$; What to do in a GSA: $\chi^2 = 13.377$, $df = 1$, $p<.001$, $\phi = -.111$. Percentages are for illustrative purposes.

108 Mean differences in the helpfulness of resources used by GSA members and by GSA advisors were examined using a series of independent samples t-tests. None of the differences were significant at $p<.001$. Percentages are for illustrative purposes.

109 To examine mean differences in students' reported occurrence of GSA challenges a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (RMANOVA) was conducted among the following variables: pushback from parents about the GSA (Parents), pushback from the principal about the GSA (Principal), pushback from other administrators about the GSA (Administrators), pushback from other educators about the GSA (Educators), pushback from other students about the GSA (Students), fundraising for the GSA (Fundraising), making the GSA inclusive of students of color (SOC), making the GSA inclusive of transgender and nonbinary students (Trans/NB), GSA students not attending meetings (Attendance), GSA students not following through on their commitments (Follow-through), GSA student members having disagreements (Disagreements), disorganized GSA meetings (Disorganized). The multivariate effect was significant, Pillia's Trace = .74, $F(11, 989) = 254.11$, $p<.001$, $\eta 2=.74$. Pairwise comparisons were considered at $p<.01$. All variables were significantly different with the following exceptions: Disorganized and Students were not different; Students and Fundraising were not different; Follow-through and Fundraising were not different; Parents and Disagreements were not different; SOC was not different from Educators and Administrators; Trans/NB was not different from Principal, Educators, Administrators; Administrators was not different from Educators, and Educators was not different from Principal.

110 To examine mean differences in advisors' reported occurrence of GSA challenges a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (RMANOVA) was conducted among the following variables: pushback from parents about the GSA (Parents), pushback from the principal about the GSA (Principal), pushback from other administrators about the GSA (Administrators), pushback from other educators about the GSA (Educators), pushback from other students about the GSA (Students), fundraising for the GSA (Fundraising), making the GSA inclusive of students of color (SOC), making the GSA inclusive of transgender and nonbinary students (Trans/NB), GSA students not attending meetings (Attendance), GSA students not following through on their commitments (Follow-through), disorganized GSA meetings (Disorganized). The multivariate effect was significant, Pillia's Trace = .68, $F(10, 408) = 88.27$, $p<.001$, $\eta 2=.68$. Pairwise comparisons were considered at $p<.01$. All variables were significantly different with the following exceptions: Disorganized was not different from Attendance or Follow-through; SOC was not different from Students, Parents, Fundraising, or Educators; Trans/NB was not different from Principal or Administrators; Fundraising was not different from Students, Parents, or Educators; Students and Parents were not different; Administrators and Principal were not different.

111 To test if advisors reported different challenges were resolved at different rates, a series of non-parametric Wilcoxin signed rank sum tests were conducted. Compared to pushback from parents, pushback from principals, administrators, and educators were resolved more: principals, $Z = -4.11$, $p < .001$, $r=.21$; administrators, $Z = -2.71$, $p < .01$, $r=.14$; educators, $Z = -4.81$, $p < .001$, $r=.23$; students, $Z = -7.42$, $p < .001$, $r=.32$.

112 To examine mean differences in advisors' reported occurrence of GSA challenges a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (RMANOVA) was conducted among the following variables: pushback from parents about the GSA (Parents), pushback from the principal about the GSA (Principal), pushback from other administrators about the GSA (Administrators), pushback from other educators about the GSA (Educators), pushback from other students about the GSA (Students), fundraising for the GSA (Fundraising), making the GSA inclusive of students of color (SOC), making the GSA inclusive of transgender and nonbinary students (Trans/NB), GSA students not attending meetings (Attendance), GSA students not following through on their commitments (Follow-through), disorganized GSA meetings (Disorganized). The multivariate effect was significant, Pillia's Trace = .68, $F(10, 408) = 88.27$, $p<.001$. Pairwise comparisons were considered at $p<.01$. All variables were significantly different with the following exceptions: Disorganized was not different from Attendance or Follow-through; SOC was not different from Students, Parents, Fundraising, or Educators; Trans/NB was not different from Principal or Administrators; Fundraising was not different from Students, Parents, or Educators; Students and Parents were not different; Administrators and Principal were not different.

113 Using the *2019 National School Climate Survey* data, we conducted a logistic regression to test whether participation in a GSA as a leader or officer (for students who attended the GSA at their school) differed by gender (cisgender, transgender, nonbinary, questioning, and other gender), with participation in a GSA as a leader or officer (participated vs did not participate) as the dependent variable and gender as the independent variable. Covariates included age, outness to peers, and outness to teachers because these variables may be related to GSA participation as a leader or officer conceptually and based on prior research. The main effect for gender on participation as a leader or officer was significant: Wald (4) = 21.08, $p<.001$. Compared to cisgender GSA members, GSA members who identify as transgender and nonbinary were more likely to participate as a leader or officer: Transgender: odds ratio (OR) = 1.30, $\beta = 0.26$, $p<.01$; Nonbinary: odds ratio (OR) = 1.29, $\beta = 0.25$, $p<.01$. No other differences were found. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.

114 Using the *2019 National School Climate Survey* data, we conducted a logistic regression to test whether participation in a GSA as a leader or officer (for students who attended the GSA at their school) differed by sexual orientation (gay/lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, queer, questioning, asexual, other sexual orientation), with participation in a GSA as a leader or officer (participated vs did not participate) as the dependent variable and sexual orientation as the independent variable. Covariates included age, outness to peers, and outness to teachers because these variables may be related to GSA participation as a leader or officer conceptually and based on prior research. The main effect for sexual orientation on participation as a leader or officer was

significant: Wald (6) = 43.84, $p<.001$. Compared to queer GSA members, GSA members who identified as gay or lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, and asexual were less likely to participate as a leader or officer: Gay/lesbian: odds ratio (OR) = 0.68, $\beta = -0.39$, $p<.01$; Bisexual: odds ratio (OR) = 0.54, $\beta = -0.61$, $p<.001$; Pansexual: odds ratio (OR) = 0.70, $\beta = -0.36$, $p<.01$; Asexual: odds ratio (OR) = 0.34, $\beta = -1.08$, $p<.001$. Compared to asexual GSA members, GSA members who identified as questioning, pansexual, and gay/lesbian were also more likely to participate as a leader or officer: Questioning: odds ratio (OR) = 2.58, $\beta = 0.95$, $p<.01$; Pansexual: odds ratio (OR) = 2.05, $\beta = 0.72$, $p<.01$; Gay/lesbian: odds ratio (OR) = 1.99, $\beta = 0.69$, $p<.01$. Compared to bisexual GSA members, GSA members who identified as pansexual and gay or lesbian were more likely to participate as a leader or officer: Pansexual: odds ratio (OR) = 1.29, $\beta = 0.25$, $p<.01$; Gay/lesbian: odds ratio (OR) = 1.24, $\beta = 0.22$, $p<.01$. No other differences were found. In Figure 3.1, questioning identified students appear to be less likely to be a GSA leader than queer students and other sexual orientation identified students, but they are not significantly different. Also in Figure 3.1, asexual students appear to be less likely to be a GSA leader than other sexual orientation identified students, but they are not significantly different. This may be due to low statistical power due to small sample sizes for the questioning and other sexual orientation identified groups. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.

115 Using the *2019 National School Climate Survey* data, we conducted a logistic regression to test whether participation in a GSA as a leader or officer (for students who attended the GSA at their school) differed by race/ethnicity (White, Black, Asian/Pacific Islander, Latinx, Native and Indigenous, Arab/Middle Eastern, and multiracial), with participation in a GSA as a leader or officer (participated vs did not participate) as the dependent variable and race/ethnicity as the independent variable. Covariates included age, outness to peers, and outness to teachers because these variables may be related to GSA participation as a leader or officer conceptually and based on prior research. The main effect for race/ethnicity on participation in a GSA as a leader or officer was not significant.

116 To examine mean differences in the frequencies across paths that advisors took to become advisors, a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (RMANOVA) was conducted among the following variables: took over from previous advisor or joined an already functioning GSA (Took Over/Joined), saw a need and wanted to start a GSA (Need), students asked me to start or sponsor a GSA (Students Asked Start), volunteered or requested to be an advisor (Volunteer), students asked them to be an advisor in an existing GSA (Students Asked Be), has an LGBTQ child or student (LGBTQ Child/Student), administration asked or assigned me (Administration), other school staff colleagues asked them to be an advisor because they were out at school (Out), and other paths not listed (Other). The multivariate effect was significant. Pillai's Trace = .66, $F(8, 451) = 107.89$, $p<.001$, and differences were significant for most comparisons between paths that advisors took at $p<.05$: Took Over/Joined was higher than most paths, with the exception of Need whereby they did not differ. Need was higher than most paths with the exception of Took Over/Joined. Students Asked Start was higher than Students Asked Be, higher than LGBTQ Child/Student, higher than Administration, higher than Out, and higher than Other. Volunteer was higher than Students Asked Be, higher than LGBTQ Child/Student, higher than Administration, higher than Students Asked Be, higher than Out, and higher than Other. No other differences were found. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.

117 To examine mean differences in the frequencies across types of perceived advisor roles, a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (RMANOVA) was conducted among the following variables: facilitator/moderator (Facilitate), create or maintain a safe space and sounding board and provide emotional support for students (Safe Space/Emotional Support), provide support with GSA activities when student leaders or members need assistance (Need Assistance), liaison between student and administration (Liaison), conduct business and fundraising for their GSA (Business), educate student members about LGBTQ topics (Educate), encourage or assist in advocacy work (Advocacy), develop student leadership (Student Leadership), and other roles not listed (Other). The multivariate effect was significant. Pillai's Trace = .74, $F(8, 444) = 158.70$, $p<.001$, and differences were significant for most comparisons between advisor roles at $p<.05$: Facilitator was higher than all others, followed by Safe Space/Emotional Support; Need Assistance; and Liaison. Student Leadership and Other were lower than all others, followed by Advocacy; Educate; and Business. Liaison did not differ from Need Assistance. Student Leadership did not differ from Other. Advocacy, Educate, and Business did not differ from each other. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.

118 To examine mean differences in students' reports of helpfulness of their GSA in meeting their different needs through various GSA activities a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (RMANOVA) was conducted among the following variables: discuss or learn about LGBTQ topics (Discuss and Learn), work with school staff to create a safer school environment for LGBTQ students (Work with Staff), talk about my experiences with harassment and discrimination at school (Talk Harassment), provide emotional support (Support), organize events at school to raise awareness about LGBTQ issues (Awareness Events), meet new people and socialize (Socialize), organize events at school for LGBTQ students and allies to meet and socialize (Social Events), work with district officials to advocate for district-wide LGBTQ-inclusive policies or staff training (Work with District), collaborate with other student-led clubs or organizations on events or advocacy work (Collaborate). The multivariate effect was significant, Pillia's Trace = .056, $F(8, 849) = 6.24$, $p<.001$, $\eta_p^2 = .056$. Pairwise comparisons were considered at $p<.01$. All variables were significantly different with the following exceptions: Work with District was not different from Collaborate or Social Events; Collaborate was not different from Awareness Events, Work with Staff, or Talk Harassment; Awareness Events was not different from Work with Staff, Social Events, Talk Harassment, Support, or Discuss and Learn; Work with Staff was not different from Social Events, Talk Harassment, Support, or Discuss and Learn; Social Events was not different from Talk Harassment, Support, or Discuss and Learn; Talk Harassment was not different from Support, or Discuss and Learn; Support was not different from Discuss and Learn or Socialize; Discuss and Learn was not different from Socialize.

119 Morandini, J. S., Blaszczynski, A., & Dar-Nimrod, I. (2016). Who adopts queer and pansexual sexual identities. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 1–12.

120 Robbins, N. K., Low, K. G., & Query, A. N. (2015). A qualitative exploration of the "coming out" process for asexual individuals. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 45*(3), 751–760.

121 Mean differences in the frequencies across types of professional development working with different groups of youth (LGBQ youth, transgender youth, LGBTQ youth of color) were examined using a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (RMANOVA). The multivariate effect was significant. Pillai's Trace = .29, $F(2, 403) = 82.31$, $p<.001$, and differences were significant for all types of professional development at $p<.05$: LGBQ youth professional development was greater than all others. LGBTQ students of color professional development was lower than all others. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.

122 Mean differences in the frequencies across self-ratings on preparation for working with different groups of youth (LGBQ youth, transgender youth, LGBTQ youth of color) were examined using a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (RMANOVA). The multivariate effect was significant. Pillai's Trace = .24, $F(2, 403) = 62.33$, $p<.001$, and differences were significant for all types of preparation at $p<.05$: Self-ratings on preparation for working with LGBQ youth was greater than all others. Self-ratings on preparation for working with LGBTQ students of color was lower than all others. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.

123 GLSEN, ASCA, ACSSW, & SSWAA. (2019). *Supporting safe and healthy schools for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students: A national survey of school counselors, social workers, and psychologists.* New York: GLSEN.

124 To examine mean differences in the frequencies across types of outside professional development, a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (RMANOVA) was conducted among the following variables: reading literature on their own (Literature), websites or online forums (Online), working with representatives from an organization (Organization), former colleagues, friends, family, who work at other schools (Other Schools), other colleagues at school (Same School), and other outside professional development not listed (Other). The multivariate effect was significant. Pillai's Trace = .66, $F(5, 404) = 159.85$, $p<.001$, and differences were significant for most comparisons between types of outside professional development at $p<.05$: Online and Literature were both higher than all others. Other was lower than all others.

Organization was higher than Same School, and higher than Other Schools. No other differences were found. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.

125 The survey questions on advisors' feelings of competency working with LGBQ students, LGBTQ students of color, and transgender students were scale items that were adapted from the following source:

Poteat, V. P. & Scheer, J. R. (2016). GSA advisors' self-efficacy related to LGBT youth of color and transgender youth, *Journal of LGBT Youth, 13*(4), 311–325.

126 Mean differences in the frequencies across the three types of competency (LGBQ students, transgender students, and LGBTQ students of color) were examined using a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (RMANOVA). The multivariate effect was significant. Pillai's Trace = .40, $F(2, 393) = 133.35$, $p<.001$, and differences were significant for all comparisons between types of competency. Advisors felt most competent working with LGBQ students compared to transgender students and LGBTQ students of color. They felt least competent working with LGBTQ students of color. Mean levels are shown for illustrative purposes.

127 To examine mean differences in the frequencies across types competency working with LGBQ students, a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (RMANOVA) was conducted among the following variables: feeling competent with advocating on behalf of LGBQ students to other students (Advocate to Other Students), advocating on behalf of LGBQ students to other school personnel (Advocate to Staff), talking in GSA meetings about unique experiences that LGBQ students face (Talk LGBQ Experiences), addressing sexual orientation related issues and topics (Address Sexual Orientation Topics), talking about students' experiences from different sexual orientation identities (Talk Sexual Orientation), supporting LGBQ students on sexual orientation related issues (Support Sexual Orientation), and taking actions to address bullying and discrimination that LGBQ students face (Action). The multivariate effect was significant. Pillai's Trace = .40, $F(6, 411) = 44.85$, $p<.001$, and differences were significant for nearly all comparisons between types of competency working with LGBQ students at $p<.05$. Advocate to Other Students and Advocate to Staff were both higher than all others. Talk Sexual Orientation were lower than all others. Action was higher than Talk LGBQ Experiences, higher than Address Sexual Orientation Topics, and higher than Support Sexual Orientation. Support Sexual Orientation was higher than Talk LGBQ Experiences, and higher than Address Sexual Orientation Topics. Address Sexual Orientation Topics was higher than Talk LGBQ Experiences. Advocate to Other Students and Advocate to Staff did not differ. Mean levels are shown for illustrative purposes.

To examine mean differences in the frequencies across types of types of competency working with transgender students, a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (RMANOVA) was conducted among the following variables: advocating on behalf of transgender students to other school personnel (Advocate to Staff), talking in GSA meetings about unique experiences that transgender students face (Talk Trans Experiences), addressing gender identity and expression related issues and topics (Address Gender Topics), explaining differences between gender identity and sexual orientation (Explain Gender/Sexual Orientation), supporting transgender students on gender identity and expression related issues (Support Trans), taking actions to address bullying and discrimination that transgender students face (Action), and advocating on behalf of transgender students to other students (Advocate to Other Students). The multivariate effect was significant. Pillai's Trace = .53, $F(6, 401) = 73.77$, $p<.001$, and differences were significant for nearly all comparisons between types of competency working with transgender students at $p<.05$: Advocate to Staff was higher than all others. Talk Trans Experiences was lower than all others. Advocate to Other Students were higher than Address Gender Topics, higher than Explain Gender/Sexual Orientation, higher than Support Trans, and higher than Action. Explain Gender/Sexual Orientation was higher than Address Gender Topics, and higher than Support Trans. Support Trans was higher than Address Gender Topics. Explain Gender/Sexual Orientation did not differ from Action. Mean levels are shown for illustrative purposes.

To examine mean differences in the frequencies across types of competency working with LGBTQ students of color, a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (RMANOVA) was conducted among the following variables: advocating on behalf of LGBTQ students of color to other school personnel (Advocate to Staff), talking in GSA meetings about unique experiences that LGBTQ students of color face (Talk POC Experiences), addressing issues related to the intersection of race and sexual orientation in GSA meetings (Address Race/Sexual Orientation Issues); talking in GSA meetings about LGBTQ students' experiences in different cultures (Talk Culture), taking actions to address instances of racism that LGBTQ students of color face (Action), supporting LGBTQ students of color on race related issues (Support POC), and advocating on behalf of LGBTQ students of color to other students (Advocate to Other Students). The multivariate effect was significant. Pillai's Trace = .51, $F(6, 395) = 67.84$, $p<.001$, and differences were significant for most comparisons between types of competency working with LGBTQ students of color at $p<.05$: Advocate to Staff were higher than all others. Talk POC Experiences and Talk Culture were both lower than all others. Advocate to Other Students were higher than Address Race/Sexual Orientation Issues, higher than Action, and higher than Support POC. Support POC was higher than Address Race/Sexual Orientation Issues, and higher than Action. Action was higher than Address Race/Sexual Orientation Issues. Talk POC Experiences did not differ from Talk Culture. Mean levels are shown for illustrative purposes.

128 Poteat, V. P. & Scheer, J. R. (2016). GSA advisors' self-efficacy related to LGBT youth of color and transgender youth. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 13*(4), 311–325.

129 To test differences in advisors' self-efficacy on working with LGBQ students, transgender students, and LGBTQ students of color by sexual orientation, a series of independent samples t-test was conducted with self-efficacy working with the three different groups (LGBQ, transgender, and LGBTQ students of color) as the dependent variables, and sexual orientation (heterosexual vs. LGBQ) as the independent variable. Heterosexual identified advisors felt less competent than LGBQ identified advisors on the following: Talking in GSA meetings about unique experiences that LGBQ students face: $t(417) = -12.51$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d = 1.22$; Addressing sexual orientation related issues and topics: $t(382.10) = -11.59$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d = 1.15$; Talking about students' experiences from different sexual orientation identities: $t(381.90) = -10.14$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d = 1.00$; Supporting LGBQ students on sexual orientation related issues: $t(417) = -6.76$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d = 0.66$; Talking in GSA meetings about unique experiences that transgender students face: $t(406.97) = -6.40$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d = 0.64$; Addressing gender identity and expression related issues and topics: $t(411) = -6.80$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d = 0.67$; Explaining the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation: $t(357.65) = -5.74$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d = 0.56$; Supporting transgender students on gender identity and expression related issues: $t(408) = -4.55$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d = 0.45$; Talking in GSA meetings about unique experiences that LGBTQ students of color face: $t(403) = -4.76$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d = 0.48$; Addressing issues related to the intersection of race and sexual orientation in GSA meetings: $t(402) = -5.40$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d = 0.53$; Talking in GSA meetings about LGBTQ students' experiences in different cultures: $t(402) = -4.34$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d = 0.44$; Taking actions to address instances of racism that LGBTQ students of color face: $t(373.45) = -2.98$, $p<.01$, Cohen's $d = 0.30$. No other differences were found.

130 The category transgender and nonbinary also included students who said that they were questioning their gender identity.

To test differences in advisors' self-efficacy on working with LGBQ students, transgender students, and LGBTQ students of color by gender identity, a series of independent samples t-test was conducted with self-efficacy working with the three different groups (LGBQ, transgender, and LGBTQ students of color) as the dependent variables, and gender identity (cisgender vs. transgender/nonbinary) as the independent variable. Cisgender advisors felt less competent than transgender/nonbinary advisors on the following: Talking in GSA meetings about unique experiences that LGBQ students face: $t(43.20) = -5.62$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d = 0.82$; Addressing sexual orientation related issues and topics: $t(416) = -3.30$, $p<.001$, Cohen's d = 0.69; Talking about students' experiences from different sexual orientation identities: $t(36.69) = -4.42$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d = 0.72$; Talking in GSA meetings about unique experiences that transgender students face: $t(36.94) = -6.59$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d = 1.07$; Addressing gender identity and expression related issues and topics: $t(39.99) = -6.19$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d = 0.93$; Explaining the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation: $t(44.23) = -4.14$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d = 0.58$; Supporting transgender students on gender identity and expression related issues: $t(407) = -2.69$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d =$

0.61; Advocating on behalf of LGBTQ students of color to other school personnel: $t(40.93) = -3.04$, $p<.01$, Cohen's $d = 0.45$. No other differences were found.

131 To test differences in advisors' self-efficacy on working with LGBQ students, transgender students, and LGBTQ students of color by race/ethnicity, a series of independent samples t-test was conducted with self-efficacy working with the three different groups (LGBQ, transgender, and LGBTQ students of color) as the dependent variables, and race/ethnicity (White advisors vs advisors of color) as the independent variable. White advisors felt less competent than advisors of color with talking in GSA meetings about unique experiences that LGBTQ students of color face: $t(403) = -2.85$, $p<.01$, Cohen's $d = 0.41$. No other differences were found.

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Appendix 1

Characteristics of GSA Students' Schools			
Grade Level (n = 879)		**School Type** (n = 878)	
K through 12 School	4.6%	Public School	92.5%
Lower School (elementary and middle grades)	0.9%	Religious-Affiliated School	1.5%
Middle School	8.9%	Other Independent or Private School	6.0%
Upper School (middle and high grades)	9.6%		
High School	76.1%	**Region** (n = 878)	
		Northeast	31.1%
School Locale (n = 869)		South	21.8%
Urban	20.3%	Midwest	23.2%
Suburban	56.6%	West	23.9%
Rural or Small Town	23.2%		

Appendix 2

Characteristics of GSA Advisors' Schools			
Grade Level (n = 464)		**School Type** (n = 464)	
K through 12 School	7.3%	Public School	91.1%
Lower School (elementary and middle grades)	3.0%	Religious-Affiliated School	1.9%
Middle School	8.9%	Other Independent or Private School	6.9%
Upper School (middle and high grades)	29.2%	**Region** (n = 464)	
High School	53.3%	Northeast	36.7%
School Locale (n = 464)		South	16.8%
Urban	31.3%	Midwest	22.0%
Suburban	48.2%	West	24.2%
Rural or Small Town	20.5%	Outside the U.S. and U.S. Territories	0.2%

Appendix 3

Characteristics of Heterosexual Cisgender Students' Schools with GSAs			
Grade Level (n = 432)		**School Type** (n = 432)	
K through 12 School	0.7%	Public School	95.4%
Elementary School	0.0%	Religious-Affiliated School	1.9%
Lower School (elementary and middle grades)	0.0%	Other Independent or Private School	2.8%
Middle School	3.2%	**Region** (n = 432)	
Upper School (middle and high grades)	0.9%	Northeast	30.1%
High School	95.1%	South	18.1%
School Locale (n = 432)		Midwest	22.9%
Urban	32.4%	West	28.9%
Suburban	48.8%		
Rural or Small Town	18.8%		

Appendix 4

Characteristics of LGBTQ Students' Schools with GSAs			
Grade Level (n = 10255)		**School Type** (n = 10173)	
K through 12 School	4.2%	Public School	93.0%
Elementary School	0.0%	Religious-Affiliated School	0.9%
Lower School (elementary and middle grades)	0.5%	Other Independent or Private School	6.1%
Middle School	8.8%	**Region** (n = 10274)	
Upper School (middle and high grades)	6.8%	Northeast	25.7%
High School	79.5%	South	22.6%
School Locale (n = 10167)		Midwest	24.5%
Urban	25.4%	West	27.1%
Suburban	52.4%		
Rural or Small Town	22.2%		

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GLSEN
110 William Street, 30th Floor
New York, NY 10038
www.glsen.org

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