

## **LGBT Related Sexual Harassment in School<sup>1</sup>**

**Prepared by Lynda M. Sagrestano, Ph.D.,  
Director, Center for Research on Women, University of Memphis**

The Center for Research on Women recently conducted a study of 590 middle and high school students to examine sexual harassment in school. Although the survey did not ask students to identify their sexual orientation, two questions were asked concerning harassment related to sexual orientation (e.g., being called gay or lesbian by another student, and being called gay or lesbian by an adult). Students were asked to consider behavior at school, which had happened since starting at their current school. The following are results related to those two items:

### **Student-on-Student Harassment**

- 26.1% of students had been called gay or lesbian by a student while at their current school
  - 12.4% had been called a gay or lesbian once by a student while at their current school
  - 13.7% had been called gay or lesbian twice or more by a student while at their current school
- Students were equally likely to report being called gay or lesbian by male and female peers
- Boys were significantly more likely to be called gay or lesbian than girls (boys 31.7% vs. girls 23.9%)
- There were no significant differences between public and private school students, nor were there significant differences between middle and high school students
- Being called gay or lesbian by another student was correlated with feeling less safe at school, withdrawing from school activities, lower self esteem, more negative body image, and more psychological depression

### **Adult-on Student Harassment**

- 4.9% of students had been called gay or lesbian by an adult while at their current school
  - 2.8% had been called a gay or lesbian once by an adult while at their current school
  - 2.1% had been called gay or lesbian twice or more by a student while at their current school
- Students were equally likely to report being called gay or lesbian by male and female teachers
- Boys and girls were similarly likely to be called gay or lesbian (boys 4.2% vs. girls 5.3%)
- There were no significant differences between public and private school students, nor were there significant differences between middle and high school students
- Being called gay or lesbian by an adult was correlated with feeling less safe at school, lower self esteem, more negative body image, more psychological depression, and more sexual risk taking behavior

---

<sup>1</sup> This summary is a supplement to the report: Sagrestano, L. M. (2009). *Nowhere to hide: A look at the pervasive atmosphere of sexual harassment in Memphis middle and high schools*. Memphis, TN: University of Memphis, Center for Research on Women.