

How can young people be empowered to achieve justice when they experience homophobic crime?

A study of the nature and prevalence of homophobic crime committed against young lesbian, gay and bisexual people; and the measures that should be taken to tackle it.

Sally Averill
LLB (Hons.) Barrister at Law.

Introduction and Aims

This study will ask young lesbian, gay and bisexual (lgb) people about their experiences of homophobia and homophobic crime and discover from them the best ways to tackle homophobic incidents, support victims of homophobia and enable them to achieve justice.

There has been no national research into homophobic crime committed against young lgb people in the United Kingdom. There have been small regional victim surveys of young lgb people and national research into homophobic crime that has included a small percentage of young people. These studies indicate that since 1984, homophobic crime against young people has increased. This suggests that there has been no strategy to reduce homophobic crime or that any efforts that have been made have been ineffective.

The aim of this study is to identify the most appropriate forum for justice for young people who experience homophobic abuse and to discover ways in which access to justice and support services can be improved for young lgb people who experience homophobic crime. This group is at least doubly disadvantaged in the criminal justice system because of their age and sexuality and some young people may face further difficulty or discrimination on the basis of their gender, ethnicity, faith and physical or mental health.

The first step in achieving this aim is to discover the nature and extent of homophobic crime that is committed against young lgb people. This will include incidents that occur in school and behaviour that is labelled as bullying, provided that the acts complained of are criminal offences. The next stage is to consider whether the criminal justice system is acceptable and accessible to young victims of homophobic crime. This will involve ascertaining whether young victims report incidents to the police and identifying any barriers to their doing so. It will also identify other agencies and groups that young lgb victims approach and discover the reasons for seeking help from a group other than the police. The research will then establish whether victims can supply the police with

sufficient information to identify the perpetrator and begin the prosecution process. Finally, young people will be questioned to determine whether anti bullying policies are adequate to deal with homophobic crime that occurs in school.

The theory underlying this research is that there is substantial underreporting of homophobic crime committed against young people. It is not possible to test this theory by comparing victim surveys with official figures, as the Home Office does not yet record statistics for homophobic crime, because the criminal law in England and Wales does not create specific offences that are motivated by homophobia. A further difficulty is that none of the Home Office crime figures record the age of the victim. Individual Police Areas have begun to monitor homophobic crime and in the first six months of 2001, only 745 incidents of homophobic crime were reported to the Metropolitan Police. McManus and Rivers (2001: 8) estimate that between 5% of the population in rural areas and 25% of the population in places like Brighton and London is lesbian, gay, or bisexual. The population of London is approximately 7 million and if 25% are lgb then there are approximately 1.75 million lgb people in London, so it is unlikely that only 745 had been victims of crime. It is more likely that the victimisation rate is higher but that young people do not report homophobic crime to the police. This theory will be tested by the use of three hypotheses, which will either support or discredit it. It is implicit that if the hypotheses are correct then methods of increasing the reporting rate will be identified, which, if implemented will result in an increase in the prosecution and conviction rates for homophobic crime. It will be beyond the remit of this research to monitor these rates.

The first hypothesis for underreporting is that victims anticipate that the police and others within the criminal justice system will discriminate against them and treat them with disrespect and hostility because of their sexuality. The second hypothesis is that victims fear that reporting to the police will require or result in disclosure of their sexuality. Victims who are not already out or who have chosen to make their sexuality known only to a few people may choose not to pursue criminal justice to avoid the risk of discrimination and abuse from family, friends and teachers if they are outed. The final hypothesis is that young victims perception is that the police will trivialise their

complaints and will not take any action, particularly when the incident occurred at school. These hypotheses will be adapted so that they are posed as questions, which will be answered by the information from victim surveys to discover how young people can be empowered to achieve justice when they experience homophobic crime.

Background

Young people face two main barriers to accessing the criminal justice system, namely their age and the nature of their victimisation. Morgan (1988: 81) observes that:

“It is as though victim status has to be earned and that some people who suffer crime are more worthy of attention than others. Validation of the victim status also depends upon the precipitating acts being defined as criminal and sufficient to trigger official action.”

Many young people are victimised by their peers and because this victimisation occurs in or after school, their experience is classified as bullying and is not recognized as crime. Bullying is behaviour that is intended to intimidate the other person and can include verbal harassment, isolation, and physical violence. The Department for Education and Skills anti bullying campaign “Don’t Suffer in Silence”(2000, updated 2003) advises children who are being bullied to tell a teacher or another adult and to carry on telling until someone until the bullying is stopped. The only exception to this advice is when the bullying is by mobile phone, text, or e-mail when the child is advised to encourage their parents to report to the police. This implies that no other form of victimisation is sufficiently serious to justify police attention and that young people lack the status to report their own experiences of crime to the police. Jubb (2003: 4) comments that, “Given the status and situation of young people, it is not surprising that they are more likely than most adults to experience victimisation. They often find it difficult to voice their concerns to those with power (i.e. adults) and then to be taken seriously.”

Lawson (1994) divided victims of bullying into two categories namely passive and provocative in an attempt to assist parents to develop strategies to prevent or stop their child from being bullied. Passive victims are easy targets because they fail to defend themselves and crumple under taunts, threats and blows. They are advised to identify the issues or topics about which they are particularly sensitive so that they do not overreact when confronted with such behaviour. Provocative victims provoke bullying by

outrageous behaviour, their own fiery temperament or by creating conflict opportunities and then fighting back. Schools may regard all victims as provocative or label them natural victims, which deflects guilt and responsibility from the perpetrator and transfers blame to the victim.

This approach is reminiscent of early victimisation studies or victimology, which focused on the victim's role in crime, particularly violence, in order to increase understanding of the triggers for violence and reduce further offending. Von Hentig (1947) treated the victim as a participant in the crime and classified victims into six categories, with only one group being entirely innocent, but the others precipitating their fate to varying degrees. Mendelsohn (1948), a defence lawyer, also emphasised the behaviour of the victim in order to transfer responsibility for the crime to the victim and so secure an acquittal or reduce the punishment for the defendant. Matza (1957) identifies denial of the victim as one of five techniques of neutralisation used by offenders to avoid moral culpability and maintain self-respect while breaking the law. Neutralisation techniques enable perpetrators to expand official defences to excuse or justify their behaviour. Victims may be denied status if they are regarded as deserving their treatment or if they are also criminals.

Lawson does not specifically refer to homophobic bullying but suggests that it is inevitable that the "different child" particularly one with "racial differences," special needs or physical handicap will be taunted by that difference. She observes "racial name calling is pretty common in both primary and secondary multi racial schools, with around a third or more of pupils reporting that they had been teased about their colour." (1994: 27)

The use of the words "taunt" and "tease" trivialises and sanitises racism and wholly ignores the recommendations of the MacDonald Inquiry into racism and racial violence in Manchester Schools (the Burnage Report.) The Inquiry was conducted after Ahmed Iqbal Ullah; a 13-year-old Bangladeshi student was murdered by Darren Coulburn a 13-year-old white student in September 1986 in the playground of Burnage High School.

Two days before his death, Ahmed had intervened to help younger Bangladeshi boys who were being humiliated and bullied by Darren Coulburn. There was a culture of bullying in the school and although not all of the victims were Asian, the white victims were friends of minority ethnic pupils and were targets for bullying from other boys who regarded them as "nigger lovers." (27) MacDonald argues that "racism seems harmless at first, but if unchallenged can lead to terrible consequences, i.e. racist jokes, name calling, insults, bullying and racist attacks." The report found that the murder was racist, in the sense that the murder took place within a culture and context that mirrored the relative positions in the school of black and white students. Even if there had been no racist element, there was no programme in the school to create a less violent learning environment or to see whether there was racist name-calling and bullying as this may escalate to racist attacks.

Gilbert and Gilbert (1998) referring to racism and homophobia explain:

"It is important to see how these forms of discrimination work at both the interpersonal and the group level, so that we do not underestimate the importance of racist or homophobic harassment, explaining it away as some understandable comment from young people who don't know any better or who are just repeating what they've heard without really meaning it. To call someone a fag or a coon is not just a personal insult. It calls up and threatens a widespread public communal condemnation. It invokes a powerful discourse and immediately places the victim, not just as someone at odds with the perpetrator, but also as the sufferer of abuse by an entire community. It derogates not only themselves, but all those like them whom they know and love. In encouraging the acceptance of difference, we must not close our eyes to the viciousness with which it is sometimes attached."(165)

Sibbitt (1998) argues that to reduce racist violence, one needs effective action against the perpetrators, strategies to divert potential perpetrators and tackle racist attitudes in the wider community. The criminal justice agencies, namely the police, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), and the courts are adopting these tactics to tackle racist and

homophobic crime. The criminal justice system has traditionally been reluctant to recognise homophobically motivated incidents as crimes. This is because forty years ago, sexual activity between men was illegal and punishable with imprisonment. This would have deterred victims from reporting crime to the police for fear of self-incrimination and the police from investigating the complaints because of their perception that the victim was a criminal. The Sexual Offences Act 1967 decriminalised gay sex between two men provided that they were at least 21 years old and that the activity was consensual and took place in private. It remained illegal in Scotland until 1981 and in Northern Ireland until 1982. The age of consent was reduced to 18 in 1994 and to 16 in 2001 to achieve parity with the age of consent for heterosexual sex.

Relations between the police and the gay community improved following the sympathetic and successful investigation into the bombing of the Admiral Duncan Public House in Soho, London in April 1999. The Admiral Duncan was targeted because it was a well-known gay pub, and a number of the victims and survivors of the bombing were gay. Lesbian and Gay police officers played a prominent role in the investigation, by making contact with victims and providing understanding, assurance and support. The conviction of David Copeland for this crime, which was motivated by homophobia, resulted in attitudes and preconceptions of both the police and the lgb communities being challenged and changed.

The police continued their commitment to tackling homophobic crime by the inclusion of homophobic crime in the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) Guide to Identifying and Combating Hate Crime (September 2000) This document was produced as a response to the McPherson Inquiry into the investigation of the murder of the black teenager Stephen Lawrence that criticized the police for being institutionally racist. It sets out strategies to combat hate crime, which is defined as “ any crime where the perpetrators prejudice against an identifiable group of people is a factor in determining who is victimised.” The police acknowledge their duty to protect and respect human rights within a richly diverse society, and that they must be and be seen to be fair to every individual and to all sections of society including lgbt people.

The CPS consulted the police and lgb groups on the need for further support and action for victims of homophobic crime and then launched a policy on prosecuting cases with a homophobic element in November 2002. The policy regards a homophobically motivated offence as “any incident which is perceived to be homophobic or transphobic by the victim or by any other person.” This is based on the definition of racist crime that was adopted by the McPherson Inquiry. The CPS regards a homophobic element in a case as an aggravating feature and therefore extremely serious. Provided that there is sufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction and the victim is willing to give evidence, the public interest will almost always require a prosecution in a homophobic case.

Section 146 Criminal Justice Act 2003 has introduced a sentencing policy that will require judges to regard homophobic motivation for an offence as an aggravating feature that will require a longer sentence. This amendment also applies to disabled people and matches the provisions for offences that are racially aggravated. Even before the Act came into force, judges regarded any targeting of a victim as an aggravating feature. An offence would be regarded as particularly serious if the victim had been selected because of his actual or perceived race, religion, gender, sexuality, disability or age.

The case of *R v Bates and Richards (2003)* (unreported) was heard at Cardiff Crown Court on 6th November 2003. The two male defendants lured a 19-year-old gay man to a car park, grabbed him by the throat, and stole his cashpoint card. They obtained his pin number by threats of further violence before they left him naked and drove off. They admitted robbery and were sentenced to imprisonment for five and a half and six and a half years respectively. Judge Hale justified the sentence saying, “This is a very serious offence. It was done because of his sexuality. He was left scared and humiliated. It is hard to imagine anything more terrifying.” The express acknowledgment that the victim had been selected because he was gay shows the judicial commitment to punishing homophobic crime.

The courts have also shown themselves willing to impose severe sentences on school bullies, irrespective of a hate crime motive. In the case of

R v FA, MA and SA (2003) EWCA Crim 508 three 13 year old boys pleaded guilty to charges of theft, robbery and assault arising from a campaign of bullying fellow pupils. They threatened other 13-year-old boys with violence if they did not hand over their dinner money and punched and kicked those who resisted. One victim was held face down by two perpetrators so that the third could steal his watch and money. The Court of Appeal held that custodial sentences (Detention and Training Orders) of 6months were appropriate sentences for all three defendants, who had no previous convictions. The court sent out the message that “Pupils at school who indulge in a campaign of intimidation and violence, terrifying their fellow pupilscan expect to be dealt with severely. Only in this way can the court assist teachers in their attempt to stamp out the real evil, which such bullying represents. It is quite appalling that these three young boys should have been able to pursue their campaign of intimidation and violence for as long as they did, apparently unchecked.”

Despite the protection offered to lgb people by the criminal justice system, young victims of homophobia in schools have faced difficulty in achieving justice, largely because of the heterosexist and homophobic culture that prevails on an official and informal basis in schools. Section 28 Local Government Act 1988 was finally repealed in October 2003. This section made it unlawful for local authorities to promote the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship. It was never intended to apply to schools but was used as a barrier to delivering sex education that included an objective discussion of homosexuality in the classroom and the provision of counselling, guidance, and support to pupils who were or may be lgb. Until 1st December 2003 when the Employment Equality Regulations 2003 came into force lgb teachers had no protection from discrimination or dismissal at work on the grounds of their sexuality. Although this regulation does not apply to the treatment of lgb pupils, lgb teachers gain greater employment rights including the right not to be refused employment or dismissed because of their sexuality. This development may give lgb teachers more confidence to

be out at school and provide role models for lgb pupils and also challenge homophobic attitudes from pupils who know and respect that teacher.

Herek (1990) maintains that homophobia and anti gay violence is a logical extension of heterosexism, which is an ideological system that denies, denigrates and stigmatises any non-heterosexual forms of behaviour or identity. Kimmel and Mahler (2003) argue that homophobia among adolescents is far less about an irrational fear of gay people or the fear that one might actually be gay or have gay tendencies, and more about the fear that heterosexuals have that they may be perceived as gay i.e. a failed man. Duncan (1999) conducted a longitudinal study over a period of seven years in the 1990s in four comprehensive schools in England. He interviewed boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 16, with the aim of deconstructing homophobic attitudes. He found that young teenagers, particularly boys, display homophobic hostility and are the major perpetrators of homophobic crime against other adolescents. Verbal insults that referred to sexuality were prevalent among young people. The names that girls are called when sexually bullied denote a female who is not sexually appealing to a straight man. "Slag" or "tart" suggests that she is undesirable because she is promiscuous and "everybody's had her" and "frigid" or "lesbian" imply that she is unresponsive to men. The worst insult that can be levied at a boy is to label him "gay." This does not necessarily mean that he is attracted to other boys, in fact the more prevalent meaning is that he fails to measure up to the macho image of a lad, which could be because he is good at academic work, quiet or not interested in sport. This reinforces Mac An Ghail's "macho lads" who rejoiced in a stereotypical hegemonic masculinity that rejected academia in favour of being tough, which involved "fighting, fucking (females) and football" (1994: 85)

The use of derogatory terms such as "poof" and "gay" is also prevalent in football, which forms a major part of youth culture, particularly for boys. Graeme le Saux, a former England international player is heterosexual yet has been persistently called "gay" throughout his career on the rather thin evidential basis that he reads "The Guardian" newspaper and collects antiques. This middle class studious behaviour does not conform to the tough working class masculinity that prevails among footballers. During a

premiership match in 2000, he punched another player, Robbie Fowler, in the face, following a gesture from Fowler to suggest that Le Saux indulged in gay sex. The violence was considered justified by the match commentator, who regarded the suggestion that Le Saux was gay as a slur on his masculinity. The Football Association took a similar view and disciplined Le Saux with a one-match ban rather than the three-match ban that violence usually attracts on the basis that there had been extreme provocation.

In the autumn of 2003, the Football Association launched a campaign to kick out homophobia in football, following a similar campaign against racism, which has seen a reduction in racist chants and heckles at football matches. However, homophobic chants are still acceptable and the absence of any gay role models helps to maintain a heterosexual hegemonic masculinity. In 1999, Tony Banks who was then Minister of Sport urged gay footballers to come out in order to diffuse the hostility and homophobia at football matches. The only well known openly gay footballer was Justin Fashanu, the first black player to attract a transfer fee of £1 million. He came out in 1990, and was constantly referred to as a “bloody poof” by his club manager and was suspended for visiting gay clubs. He considered that he lost three years of his playing career because he was never accepted by any of his teams because of his sexuality. He committed suicide in 1998. Tatchell (1998) claimed that when Justin Fashanu came out in 1990, there were at least twelve top footballers who were gay or bisexual. Unsurprisingly, none have been brave enough to come out.

There is also a heterosexist hegemonic masculinity in rap and hip-hop music, which is another integral aspect of youth culture. Czyzelska (2003) cites some rap lyrics that appear to be homophobic, e.g. Eminem’s song “Killing” features the words,

“You faggots keep egging me on till I have you at knifepoint, then beg me to stop... Answer me or I’m a kill you,” and “My words are a dagger with a jagged edge that’ll stab you in the head whether you’re a fag or a lez.”

"Life Liquid" by Canibus includes the line,

“Bullets buzzin by your head... your masculinity is questionable, you probably a homosexual.”

Whether these are real threats or artistic license as some claim, the lyrics express hatred towards lesbians and gays and alienate young lgb people who may conceal their sexuality to avoid hostility and maintain their status and acceptability within a popular group of their peers. Social identity theory explains the derogatory use of the word gay as a means of boosting the self esteem of those who identify with an in group of macho lads or men's men like footballers and rappers by denigrating members of an out group by calling them gay. Tajfel and Turner (1986) defined an in-group as:

“A collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves, and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group and their membership of it.” (15)

The heterosexism of youth culture automatically makes lgb people a potential out-group. Social identity theory increases understanding of the reasons for prejudice, which can help to develop ways to prevent homophobic incidents. Young people who commit hate crime enjoy an ego boost by hurting the out-group. However, the ego boost is only temporary, and does not address the causes of low self esteem that motivate young people to gain their status or social identity by being in an in group. It would be possible to outweigh the benefit of homophobic crime to the perpetrators by increasing the risk of their being caught and punished.

However, the acceptability of homophobic attitudes among young people enables homophobic violence to be neutralized. Matza and Sykes (1957) advocated that juveniles would drift into delinquency if they could neutralise their actions. This theory is useful for explaining homophobic crime committed against young people, because the

perpetrators are also young and will drift into this behaviour if they can justify it and neutralise their criminality. Perpetrators will deny responsibility by claiming that they were forced to act because of peer pressure. The approval of their gang or group may be more important than the reaction of society, so the self-esteem that flows from being accepted by the group will neutralise criticism from the police and society. Violence will be regarded as justifiable if it can be regarded as a private matter that does not concern the police such as a gang fight or a playground incident. A young perpetrator of a homophobic offence committed against another young person may accept that technically he has committed an offence but neutralises that behaviour by insisting that the hurt or damage caused is not really an injury but retaliation or legitimate punishment. There are several examples of the criminal justice system in other jurisdictions contributing to the neutralisation process. Kelner (1989:152) reported that in Winnipeg, Canada, when victims of homophobia called police for assistance, the police refused to intervene, minimised the seriousness of the incident, blamed the victims, and joined in the harassment and verbal abuse of the victims. Berrill and Herrick (1992: 295) cite American judges and attorneys who publicly referred to lgb people as “queers,” “sick people” “volunteers for AIDs” and “flaming queens.” During a 1988 trial for the murder of an Asian gay man, the judge “jokingly” asked the prosecutor whether it was now a crime to beat up homosexuals and another judge justified passing a lenient sentence on a man convicted of murdering two gay men by explaining that he put prostitutes and queers at the same level and that he would be hard put to give someone life for killing a prostitute.”

The failure of those in positions of authority to take homophobic crime seriously can have devastating consequences. Young people are reliant on adults to behave properly and to intervene when children are being victimised and take effective action to stop homophobic bullying. Williams (2001: 17) observes that:

“ The spotlight which has been placed on child victims of sexual and violent crimes has not been carried over into the less dramatic victimisation of children: the routine but not trivial. Acts of violence committed against children both by

adults and other children (especially bullying)...and such acts as harassment. In these cases, their victimisation, though often ignored can cause great emotional distress.”

The tragic consequences of ignoring this distress are apparent from the inquest into the death of Darren Steele. Darren was fifteen when he hanged himself in March 1998, having been bullied in the two schools that he attended since leaving primary school. He suffered humiliation and verbal abuse, including being called "gayboy" and "poof" because he enjoyed cookery and drama. He was frequently assaulted and was unable to defend himself because he was a slight build. He was burned with cigarettes on one occasion outside school, and during a school lesson he was hit in the face with a schoolbook. Darren's headmaster claimed that neither Darren's family nor the school staff were aware what was going on. Whether or not his should have been apparent to at least one adult in his life, Darren felt unable to tell anyone and took his own life because he could not stand the pain of being bullied any longer.

Literature Review

The following keywords were used to search BIDs and the Internet: BULLYING, GAY, GAY BASHING, HATE CRIME, HOMOSEXUAL, HOMOPHOBIC CRIME, LESBIAN, QUEERBASHING, STONEWALL, VICTIMS.

Research Bias

Bridget's (2000) literature review found that most lgb research has occurred abroad and most of this has been biased towards gay men, to the detriment of lesbians and bisexual men and women. This is partly explicable because of the research into HIV and AIDs, which is an important issue but necessarily focuses on men. This is because men who have oral or anal sex with men are at the highest risk of infection, illness, and death from the disease. (Terence Higgins Trust / Stonewall 1998). The research has resulted in the provision of services for men, but has rendered young lesbian and bisexual women invisible and has ignored their support needs.

The male bias also applies to research concerning young people, especially to homophobia in schools in Australia (Gilbert and Gilbert 1998) and USA (Hetrick 1992) where an examination of hegemonic masculinities, and the disproportionate representation of young men as victims and perpetrators of violence has sought to explain homophobic crime. The UK research has also focused on young men and the majority of participants in research are male. The majority (68%) of the participants in Alexander's 1998 study were male (58% gay and 10% bisexual men) and 59% of Mullen's (1999) participants were male. Although sexuality is obviously an important issue in research, lesbians experience double discrimination and oppression because of their sexuality and their gender and it is not realistic to separate their experience as women and as lesbians.

There has been no national research into the experience of young lgbt people in the UK and very little into the victimisation of young people generally. The Youth Justice Board/MORI (YJB) survey 2002 is to be welcomed as a major development in

determining the victimisation of young people. However, only one out of seven chapters is concerned with the victimisation of young people. The majority of the report is concerned with rates of offending, truancy and substance misuse and tends to regard young people as perpetrators not victims of crime. The survey looks at bullying and racist abuse but there is no breakdown of the data on grounds of gender, nor is any other form of hate crime such as homophobic or religious motivation considered.

There are three main studies into young victims of homophobia in the UK.

The first was conducted by Trenchard and Warren (1984) who were commissioned by the London Gay Teenage Group to address the experiences of young gay and lesbian pupils in secondary schools in Greater London. There were four main objectives of the study:

- to offer an insight into the pressures lesbian and gay teenagers faced in schools around the capital
- to identify the ways in which they were discriminated against in the classroom
- to demonstrate the positive contribution they could make to the school environment and
- to offer recommendations on ways to challenge the traditionally held negative connotations of homosexuality prevalent within society.

The study was based on the reported experiences of 416 young gays and lesbians who returned self completed questionnaires. 39% reported that they has been bullied or had faced pressure to conform because of what was perceived to be gender atypical behaviour. Of the respondents who specified the nature of the bullying, 12% reported physical assault and 21% suffered verbal abuse.

The second study was sponsored by Stonewall. In 1996, Mason and Palmer conducted a national crime survey among lesbians and gay men in the UK. 4,200 participants completed questionnaires .It was found that 73% had experienced homophobic verbal abuse, 32% had been physically assaulted and 32% threatened with violence because they

were lgb. Less than two per cent of the sample was under 18, (80 respondents) and the victimisation rates were higher for this age group as 48% had been assaulted, 61% had been threatened and 90% had been subjected to verbal abuse because of homophobic motivation.

The third survey was in 1998. GALOP commissioned Alexander to research the needs of young lgb people in London so that recommendations could be made to the GALOP board to improve service provision. A total of 202 people aged 25 or under living in London completed questionnaires. 83% had experienced verbal abuse and 47% suffered physical abuse. School was the most likely place to be abused, with 47% of those suffering verbal abuse saying it happened at school, and 41% physical attacks occurred at school.

The London studies show that the percentage of young people experiencing homophobic physical and verbal abuse has risen from a total of 39% in 1984 (Trenchard and Warren) to 47% suffering physical abuse and 83% experiencing verbal abuse in 1998 (Alexander.) This suggests that either nothing has been done to stop homophobic crime committed against young people or that the methods that have been used have been ineffective.

The main themes concerning young lgb people are that:

Young people experience crime more frequently than adults, irrespective of sexuality.

The YJB survey in 2002 interviewed 5,500 children between 11 and 16 and found that over half of children in school and two thirds of children who had been excluded from school had been the victim of an offence in the last year. This is nearly twice the rate of victimisation among adults in the same year (BCS 2002) The YJB survey found that children were six times more likely than adults to be the victims of theft, three times as likely to have their property vandalized but the rates of physical assault were similar with 10% for children in school and 7% for adults. Nacro conducted youth surveys in 2002 in

three London boroughs. In Gospel Oak, 23% young people had been robbed, which is twenty times higher than the rate among adults for the same year (BCS 2002), and the survey in Camberwell showed that young people were twenty five times more likely than adults to be robbed.

Young lesbians, gays, and bisexuals experience crime more often than their straight peers.

Mason and Palmer (1996) found that lesbians and gays under 18 were particularly vulnerable to homophobic crime. 48% experienced violence, 61% experienced harassment, and 90% stated that they had been verbally abused because of their sexuality. Alexander (1998) records that 83% have been subjected to verbal abuse, 47% to physical abuse, 41% to sexual abuse, and 31% to harassment because of their sexuality. The YJB (2002) survey records lower rates of victimisation: 10% children in school and 28% excluded children had been physically attacked and 17% had been bullied in school and 9% out of school. There are no figures recorded for sexual abuse or assault.

Young people do not report crime to the police.

The YJB survey reports that only 15% of children in school reported the crime to the police, as 26% children in school and 40% excluded children said that they “sorted it out myself” while 11% victims told no one and did nothing about their experience.

Alexander (1998) drew attention to low levels of police reporting of homophobic violence by young people. 66% had not reported any homophobia to the police. Only 19% reported to the police with 33% finding the police supportive. However, 51% of those who did report felt that the police had been indifferent and 13% described the police as hostile. Just 22% said that they would report future homophobic violence to the police and 36.5% sought a more supportive and sensitive response from the police. Alexander recommended extending current liaison with the lgb communities to focus specifically on the compounded experience of young people within these communities and training for police in lgbt and issues relating specifically to young lgbt victims.

Young lesbians, gay and bisexual people do not feel that schools are supportive of lgb pupils.

Douglas (1997) found that although most secondary schools had a sex education policy only 51% covered lgb issues and only 6% schools had a bullying policy that specifically dealt with homophobic incidents. Mullen (1999) received 10 responses from secondary schools in Reading and found that five head teachers considered that their school was a safe environment for their pupils to be out and four did not. All of the schools had a bullying policy, but in only two schools did the policy cover sexuality. Four heads had dealt with homophobic incidents in the past year. Terence Higgins Trust/Stonewall (1998) surveyed 300 schools in England and Wales and found that 82% were aware of verbal homophobia and 26% knew of physical homophobic bullying. Although 99% had an anti bullying policy, only 6% recognised homophobic bullying within their policies.

Alexander (1998) reports that 41% respondents experienced physical homophobic abuse in school. 90% reported that they were victimised by fellow students, 3% by their “friends,” and 6% by teachers. 47% reported that they were verbally abused and 34% complained of harassment in school. The research recommended that homophobic bullying should be specifically addressed in school by developing anti bullying strategies and the inclusion of lgb issues in the curriculum, particularly in sex education. Support for lgb staff and pupils was advocated together with awareness training for teachers. Bridget (2000) found that 67% of her 15 participants had experienced homophobic verbal abuse at school

They are at risk of being made homeless if they come out.

Bridget (2000) cites American research that suggests that between 25% and 50% of homeless youth are lesbian, gay or bisexual. Trenchard and Warren (1984) found that 11% of their participants cited their sexual orientation as the reason for their being made homeless. Mullen (1999) found that 4% had been forced to leave home when they came out and Bridget (2000) found that 29% lesbian and 25% gay men were made homeless

when they came out to their parents.

They are prone to depression.

Rivers (2000) suggests that long-term exposure to harassment or violence increases the frequency of depression and relationship difficulties among bisexual men and women, gay men and lesbians.

Young people are at risk of suicide if bullying is not stopped.

The Children's Society (2003) report that 1 in 3 children are bullied in school and that 46% bullied children have contemplated suicide. Marr and Field (2001) state that every year in the UK, over 19,000 children attempt suicide and that suicide is now the major cause of death for young men between the ages of 18 and 24. At least 16 children each year in the UK commit suicide because they can no longer tolerate being bullied. The true figure could be as high as 80 as coroners will often record a verdict of accidental death in circumstances in which suicide is strongly indicated but cannot be proved beyond reasonable doubt. These deaths are so prevalent that they are known as bullycide.

Young lgb people attempt suicide or self harm more frequently than their heterosexual peers.

Trenchard and Warren (1984) found that 20% lgb teenagers had attempted suicide. LYSIS (1992) reports that 70% young lesbians had attempted suicide. Rivers (1996) found that 46% of 85 lesbian and gay respondents in a survey on school bullying had attempted suicide and many had made repeat attempts. Mullen (1999) found that out of 169 respondents, 22% had attempted suicide; a further 55% had considered it and 33% had self-harmed. Geraghty (1998) reported that 33% 117 lesbians aged 16 to 21 had attempted suicide. Bagley and Tremblay (1997) report that in Canada, young gay men are fifteen times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual contemporaries. MacManus and Rivers (2001) confirm that victims of homophobia in adolescence are

almost three times more likely to attempt to self-harm or commit suicide than heterosexual adolescents.

Young people are under pressure to conform to gender stereotypes

Boys who do not fit the model of hegemonic masculinity are labelled gay whether they prefer boys or not, and being called gay is a term of abuse. Kimmel (1994), Mac An Ghail (1995), Gilbert and Gilbert (1998), Duncan (1999), Pattman, Frosh and Phoenix (2002).

Methodology

Wengraf's (2001) conceptual framework of theory testing has been used to structure this research. This requires the research purpose to be defined as a Central Research Question (CRQ), which is then broken down into three to seven Theory Questions (TQs) which the questionnaires will help to answer. Appropriate Interview Questions (IQs) will be devised to provide data that will answer the TQs. The CRQ is "How can young people be empowered to achieve justice when they experience homophobic crime?" Three TQs based on the hypotheses in the introduction were used to answer this question and IQs were used to obtain information with which the TQs would be answered. One of the TQs is: Are young people deterred from reporting homophobic crime to the police because they fear discrimination by family, friends and teachers if involving the police means that they would be outed? This could be asked as a closed question, however, the question makes a number of assumptions, and the most informative answer will be obtained if the question is unpacked and a series of questions asked to obtain information. The answers to the IQs will be reconstructed to answer the TQs and ultimately the CRQ to provide an explanatory and considered answer that could not be achieved by using a tick box. A series of IQs have been asked which will answer that TQ e.g. whether young people experience homophobic crime, who they report it to, why they do not report to the police. The hypothesis that people are deterred from reporting for fear of being outed will not apply to young people who are out to their families and so questions were asked which would find out the extent to which people were out and the levels of support they believed that lgb people received from their friends, families and social groups.

It was decided to use questionnaires (victim surveys) because this method enabled the greatest number of lgb people to be surveyed within the time and financial restraints on the research. The questionnaire could be completed anonymously, which was important as the personal nature of the responses, particularly for those who were not out even to the people closest to them, was crucial to the research and this data was unlikely to be obtained if young people were required to be identified by their responses. The questionnaire can be completed in ten minutes to reduce the risk of fatigue and maximise

the response rate. However, a youth worker at one lgb group felt that although the youth leaders were experiencing research fatigue, young people enjoyed compiling questionnaires. The use of questionnaires made data analysis relatively simple and facilitated quantification without bias and promoted high reliability. The use of some open questions made analysis complicated, so the answers given by the respondents are reproduced in full to give effect to the views and opinions of young lgb people. The fact that the questionnaires were completed anonymously and in private meant that there were no interpersonal variables between the researcher and the participant to affect the quality and quantity of information obtained in an interview and the way that it is recorded. This meant that young people interpreted the questions themselves and gave the response that they considered most appropriate.

A combination of open and closed questions was chosen. The closed questions were used to obtain quantitative data, including variables, and to prompt respondents to comment on or consider issues that they may not otherwise have addressed e.g. the use of restorative justice in question 34 and whether they would access the criminal justice system if they could liaise with a police officer who was lgb in question 33. A disadvantage of closed questions is that respondents may give a response that they feel is expected or they may try to pigeon hole their response into one of the tick boxes. This risk was minimised by the inclusion of an “other, please state what” option and by using open questions. The use of open questions provided some qualitative data by enabling young people to answer in their own words and to offer opinions and suggestions that had not been anticipated or considered.

It would have been helpful to survey a control group to identify whether there are issues that are specific to young lgb victims or whether other young people share their concerns and experiences of crime. This was not possible within the financial and time restraints on the research, but the findings of the MORI/Youth Justice Board 2002 study have been deployed to consider the relationship between youth, sexuality and victimisation.

Recruiting Participants

An initial concern was that it would not be possible to gain the cooperation of sufficient young lgb people to produce meaningful results. Harris (1990: 19) estimates that 10% school students in England are lesbian or gay. This is a very small target group, and is made smaller as not all of these young people will be out and may be reluctant to be publicly open about their sexuality. It was also intended to include young transpeople in the research. Mermaids, which is the only support group specifically for adolescents with gender identity issues, were enthusiastic about the research and agreed to distribute the questionnaire. However, no responses were received.

The original plan was to research the nature and prevalence of homophobic crime in a small area of North London, but the limited access to local lgb youth groups and the negative or non-response from the contact points at London lgb groups made it difficult to contact potential respondents. Contact was made with two lgb youth groups, 30 questionnaires and stamped addressed envelopes were supplied and six were returned. In addition, the questionnaire was made available by e-mail from a number of site including University sites, www.gayyouthuk.org and www.gingerbeer. Sixteen questionnaires were returned by e-mail from these, sites. The questionnaire was also available to download and return by e-mail at www.queeryouth.org over a period of three months from November 2003 to January 2004. The research request was viewed 454 times and 87 questionnaires were downloaded, although only 19 completed questionnaires were returned from this site. Accepting responses by e-mail meant that there was no way to verify the information provided, including the location of the respondent. In addition, many of the target group would be at University so even if they lived in London, they may be studying elsewhere and vice versa. The geographical boundary that had originally been placed on the research was unnecessarily restrictive and was removed. It had originally been intended to use snowballing sampling, by asking those who returned questionnaires to publicise the research to others who may have been victimised. However, because of the ethical issues detailed below, it was decided not to use this technique. This research raised ethical issues of confidentiality and best practice,

particularly for participants under the age of 16. This age group would normally require parental consent to participate in this research. It was possible that respondents may disclose homophobic child abuse either within the family or by another adult in a position of trust or authority e.g. a teacher, youth club leader. Any such disclosure may need to be reported to the police to protect other children.

The inclusion of participants under the age of 16 was desirable in this study to obtain more information about their victimisation as this age group is discriminated against on a number of levels and there is minimal British research. However young lgb people may have refused to take part in the research if this was dependant on obtaining parental consent, as they may not be out to their parents.

Consideration was given to the advice concerning disclosure of information about a child offered to school staff by the Intercom Trust, which is a lesbian, gay and bisexual support forum in the Southwest of England. They recommend that no information should be disclosed about a child to anyone, including a parent, until the consequences of information sharing have been considered. They also stress the importance of child protection issues, which will arise if a child expresses concerns that there may be negative reactions in the family to the news that they are or may be growing up lesbian, gay or bisexual. They advise that under these circumstances, the child should be treated as though disclosure may put him/her in danger. This recommendation is based on first hand experiences of harm done by some families to gay and lesbian children.

It was decided to include those under 16 without obtaining parental consent because this group of victims is discriminated against and is under researched. However, it was essential to ensure that any such person completing the questionnaire had access to non-judgmental support from a legitimate source. This was achieved by ensuring that the questionnaire was only available through lgbt youth groups (Mermaids, Hackney Community Safety Forum LGB Group, and ELOP) and bona fide websites that gave on line support, information about local groups, national and local 24 hour help lines and chatrooms where young lgbt people were able to support each other. In addition, each

questionnaire included contact details of three organisations that could help: Stonewall for information particularly on housing, GALOP for advice and support for victims of homophobic crime and queeryouth, which not only has online support but also lists local lgb groups in every area.

The disadvantage of recruiting participants only through these sources was that two groups of victims were excluded. The first is young people who are heterosexual but are victimised because the perpetrator is motivated by homophobia and believes the victims to be lesbian, gay or bisexual or sympathetic to lgb people. The second is isolated young lesbians, gays and bisexuals who have not yet made contact with an lgbt support or social group. This second group may include young people who are undecided about their sexuality, in denial or who are not yet out. Wellings (1994) found that although 6.6% males between the ages of 16 and 24 were attracted to another male, only 4.3% had experienced sexual activity with another male. The figures for females showed that only 5.1% women of the same age were attracted to another woman but only 2.4% had experienced sexual activity with another female. It is this group of young people who are unlikely to seek help or report their victimisation, because they are still coming to terms with their sexuality or are new to the lgb scene and do not yet know how to contact support and social groups.

Evaluation and Analysis

Demographics

A total of 41 people between the ages of 14 to 21 inclusive completed the questionnaire. This is a small sample, and is not assumed to be proportionately representative of the whole young lgb population. However, the responses of these 41 young people are important, because they relate their own experiences of homophobia. The existence of any hate crime, in this case victimisation based on sexuality, is always serious and worthy of further attention, irrespective of the number of victims involved and the proportion of the young (lgb) population that appear to be affected. It is also useful to remember that none of the three major surveys into young lgb people's experiences of crime have attracted a high sample, the highest being 416 participants. There are no figures to determine the number of young lgb people in the UK, although the highest estimate is 10% of the school population, so the pool of potential participants is small.

Questions 1 to 5 sought personal information about the respondents, as variables such as gender, age and ethnicity may be of equal or greater significance than sexuality in assessing the victimisation and reactions of the respondents.

Question 1 - What is your age?

Age in years

	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Female	1	1	6	2	3	5	0	0
Male	0	0	6	2	5	3	1	6
Total	1	1	12	4	8	8	1	6

The age of the victim was relevant to check that the respondent was the correct age to participate in the survey. It was also expected that the likelihood of a victim reporting an incident to the police would increase with age. However, the sample was too small to draw any conclusions, as four out of the eight age bands had a membership of less than 5

so were not statistically significant.

Question 2 Which of the following do you attend?

26% of the sample (6 girls and 5 boys) attended school, 20% (4 females and 4 males) were at college and 36 % (6 females and 9 males) were University students. 12% (5 males and no females) were working full time, one female was unemployed and one female was on a home learning scheme. The home learner had experienced such severe homophobia at school that school was no longer a safe place for her to be.

Question 3: What is your gender?

44% (18) were female and 56% (23) were male. Gender was predicted to be the most significant variable, with an expectation that boys would be more likely than girls to be the victims of homophobia and violence, and less likely to report their victimisation to the police. There were some key differences between the results for males and females so some results are shown according to gender.

Question 4: How would you describe your ethnicity?

The majority (85%) of the respondents described themselves as white, so there was too small a sample to examine cultural issues. One male described himself as African, one female identified as Chinese, one male and one female described themselves as mixed race and one male and one female described their ethnicity as “other” but did not specify further. There were very few readily accessible websites for black and minority ethnic lgb people, but a research request was placed on the Women of Colour board at www.gingerbeer.com The request for research participants received 40 views, one woman requested a questionnaire but did not return it.

Question 5: How do you describe your faith or religion?

44% of respondents did not have a religious faith, but of the 66 % who did, 5 women and two men were Christians, one female was a Buddhist, one male was a humanist and three women and two men described their faith as “other.” Only one of these specified his faith as Wicca.

The faith or religion of the participants was important to identify whether there was a reluctance to report homophobic incidents that may have been influenced by the opposition or perceived opposition of the faith or denomination that the respondent most identified with. Although there is no consensus among people of faith, there are worshippers in Judaism, Islam and Christianity who are opposed to homosexuality. Requests for research assistance were placed on a number of lgb faith group websites and some lgb faith groups were contacted by e-mail namely young gay Christians, Jews, Muslim, Buddhists and humanists but there was no response from any of these sources.

Questions 6 to 9 are IQs to test the hypothesis that young people are deterred from reporting homophobic crime because doing so would require them to be out. This hypothesis makes a number of assumptions: that the young person identifies as lgb and therefore as a potential target of homophobia, that they conceal their sexuality and are not out, that they fear repercussions if they come out, and that they perceive that their friends, families and acquaintances will be unsupportive of and hostile to lgb people.

Question 6: Which of the following (sexualities) do you consider yourself to be?

33 (80%) respondents described themselves as lesbian or gay. 11 were female and 22 were male. 8 respondents described themselves as bisexual, of whom 7 were female and only one was male.

All of the young people identified as lgb, so the assumption in the TQ was correct. However, the absence of any straight youths or young people who do not yet identify as

lgb means that the prevalence of homophobic abuse such as insulting a straight boy by calling him “ gay” or “queer” has not been examined.

Question 7: If you are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, which one of these terms best describes whether others know this?

Two young women and one young man had decided not to tell anyone that they were lgb, and almost a fifth of the sample (3 females and 5 males) had told only close friends or family that they were lgb. 20% (3 females and 5 males) said that only some people knew that they were out. 39% (6 females and 4 males) were out to most of their friends and acquaintances and 22% (4 females and 5 males) were out to everybody.

Question 8: If you are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, but this is not widely known, please state the reasons for this.

Four young people felt that their sexuality was a private matter or that they were not yet ready to come out:

“ I don’t like to force it on people make it obvious or explicit. It’s important to me but it doesn’t mean I want to rub peoples nose in it. I don’t hide it if someone asks if I am gay I wont deny it.” (male aged 18)

“I don’t have a relationship yet so I don’t feel its necessary to tell anyone. I’m a little new and unready have to get used to the idea and try to work out the best way to talk to 'come out' without facing obstacles.” (female aged 17)

“ I keep my personal life to myself and my sexuality is personal e.g. for those who know me well enough to broach the subject with.” (male aged 21)

"Just haven't come out to people (male aged 18)

However, fear of a homophobic reaction or physical harm was the most frequently cited reason for concealing sexuality, with 14 out of 18 respondents expressing fear of the consequences of being out.

“Fear of being bullied by people who don't understand.” (female age 14)

“Fear of repercussions that might arise.” (male age 21)

“My family is very homophobic and so are most people at school, its easier for people not to know. I told my 2 closest friends though and their fine with it only a little freaked.”
(female age 17)

“I guess its because I'm a little afraid of how others might react. I chose to tell my close friends because I knew they would still accept me despite my sexuality but you never know how other people will react. If someone asks me flat out if I am a lesbian I will tell the truth. I refuse to lie about who I am.” (female age 16)

“I'm not ready to tell people yet, only my best mate knows. I'm happy with who I am, just not sure how people will react.” (male aged 16)

“Not a good social environment at school, generally speaking no need for everyone to know most people would assume I'm straight.” (male aged 17)

“I would rather my sexuality was not widely known, as I don't want people to judge me for it.” (female aged 17)

“Because people still don't understand and it just makes life harder with all the comments.” (male aged 19)

“Fear of coming out and fear of being rejected by parent and other family members.”
(male aged 18)

“Generally, people are too judgmental.” (female aged 18)

“The reason I have not told many people is because I know the kind of reaction I would get from the people where I live. I live in a backward homophobic place and my sexual preferences shouldn't matter to people, as it doesn't affect them in any kind of way. I just want to be happy.” (female aged 18)

“I'm not overly bothered about people knowing but I'm a bit worried about my family knowing as some of them are homophobic.” (female aged 16)

“Too nervous to come out to certain people in fear of their reaction” (male aged 18)

“Very traditional and evangelical family although direct family do know” (male age 20)

The responses to this question help to understand the reasons that sexual identity was being suppressed and confirm that the majority of those who conceal their sexuality are fearful of the consequences of being out. This tends to support the hypothesis that fear of being outed is a deterrent to reporting homophobic crime to the police.

Question 9: Do you feel that the following groups to which you belong support lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people?

The least supportive group was school, with 63% all respondents (30% girls and 40% boys) believing that their school did not support lgb people. This is a cause for concern, not only because young people will tend to conceal their sexuality and suffer psychological problems from doing so to avoid hostility and ridicule, but also because young people who experience homophobic bullying in school will have no confidence in the school to resolve the issue and treat them fairly. This also means that unless they report such crime to the police, they are unlikely to achieve justice when homophobic crime occurs in school.

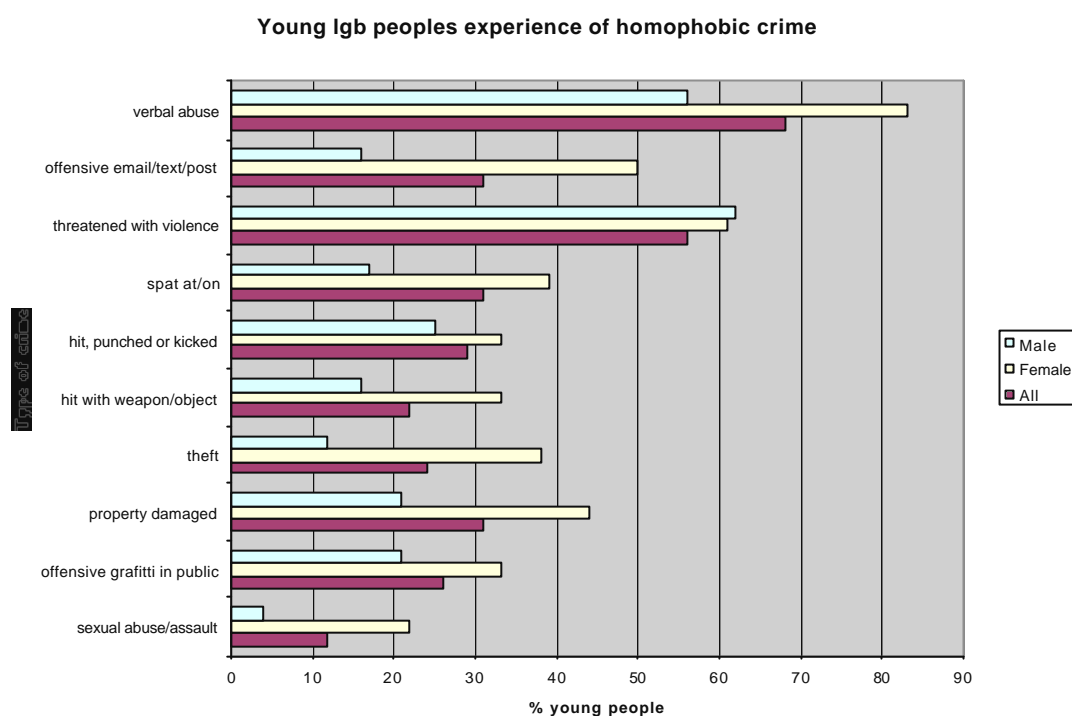
College and university were perceived as far more supportive of lgb students. This trend

applies to both male and female students, although women tend to find adult educational establishments more supportive of lgb people than men do, with college being considered lgb friendly by 83% women and only 60% men and University rated as supportive of lgb people by 100% women and only 80 % men. This suggests that people become less homophobic with maturity and education, perhaps because they meet more lgb people as individuals and so prejudices are reduced. The acceptance of women in further and higher education frees women from conforming to traditional gender stereotypes.

Youth groups and friends were regarded as supportive of lgb people by both genders, with lesbians and bisexual women finding them slightly more so than men. 80% women and 73% men felt that youth groups were lgb friendly, and 100% women and 98% men felt their friends were supportive of lgb people. Unfortunately sports clubs and teams were not so friendly, with slightly more respondents (57%) finding them unsupportive than supportive. There was no significant gender difference here, as 50% females and 43% males reported that the clubs and teams were unsupportive.

The most significant differences between the perceptions of males and females arose in the areas of support from the family, workplace and place of worship. Men derived support from these groups, as 70% males but only 56% females found their family supportive, 75% males but only 14% females were supported in their workplace and 67% males and just 17% females felt that their faith group was lgb friendly. This may suggest that faith groups, families and workplaces expect women to conform to a traditional heterosexual gender role. The fact that men do not face the same restriction may indicate that discrimination is based on gender rather than sexuality.

Question 10: How many times have these things happened to you because someone thought you were lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender?



This table shows the total percentage of all young people experiencing a type of homophobic crime. 29% participants reported that they had never experienced victimisation that was motivated by the perpetrators belief that they were lesbian, gay or bisexual. The 71% who had experienced homophobic crime consisted of 14 males and 15 females. They comprised 61% male participants and 83% female participants. Females reported victimisation far more frequently than males.

The average figures for male and female respondents combined show that 68% had suffered verbal abuse, 32% had received offensive texts or e-mails, 56% had been threatened with violence, 32% had been spat on or at, 29% had been assaulted, 22% had been assaulted with a weapon or object, 24% had been victims of theft, 32% had had their property damaged or broken, 27% had seen offensive graffiti about themselves in a

public place and 12% had been subjected to sexual assault or abuse.

The most frequently experienced crimes were at the lower end of the scale, with verbal abuse and threats of violence occurring most often. 68% all young people had suffered homophobic abuse, and the overwhelming majority of young women (83%) had been abused in this way. This figure was far higher than for males, 53% of whom reported verbal abuse. 50% young lb women received offensive text messages or other communications, whereas only 18% males experienced this form of homophobia.

Women were more likely than men to have experienced physical violence, as 34% females and 25% males reported that they had been punched, kicked or hit and 27% females and 17% males had been assaulted with a weapon. Women were over three times more likely than men to have been spat at or on as 50% females and 14% males reported this abuse. Males (66%) were slightly more likely than females (61%) to have been threatened with violence. Females were more likely than males to have their property stolen or damaged and were also more likely to be the victims of sexual abuse or assault.

Nearly three times as many females (39%) than males (14%) reported theft and twice as many women (45%) as men (21%) had had their property stolen or destroyed.

These results supported the findings in the literature review and confirm that young lgb people were at a greater risk of victimisation than their straight peers. They were three times more likely to be the victims of violence with 29% reporting assault compared with 10% 16s and under in school in the YJB 2002 survey and 7% adults in the British Crime Survey (BCS). They were between twice and six times more likely to be the victims of criminal damage with 32% reporting this crime compared with 15% YJB sample and 5% BCS respondents. The figures for theft showed a victimisation rate of 24% among lgb youth, 30% from YJB and 5% BCS.

The following table shows the number of times that young people have experienced homophobic crime:

	NEVER	ONCE	TWICE	THRICE OR MORE
Verbal abuse	31% (17% females) (43% males)	10% (6% females) (13% males)	2% (0% females) (4% males)	56% (78% females) (39% males)
Offensive/abusive texts, e-mails, letters, phone calls	68% (50% females) (82% males)	10% (17% females) (4% males)	2% (0% females) (4% males)	20% (33% females) (9% males)
Threatened with violence	44% (39% females) (34% males)	17% (11% females) (22% males)	15% (22% females) (17% males)	24% (28% females) (26% males)
Spat on /at	68% (50% females) (86% males)	7% (11% females) (4% males)	10% (22% females) (0% males)	15% (17% females) (10% males)
Punched, kicked or hit	71% (61% females) (73% males)	7% (6% females) (9% males)	7% (11% females) (4% males)	15% (17% females) (13% males)
Hurt with a weapon/object	78% (72% females) (83% males)	10% (11% females) (9% males)	5% (5% females) (4% males)	7% (11% females) (4% males)
Property stolen	76% (61% females) (86% males)	12% (17% females) (9% males)	5% (17% females) (4% males)	7% (5% females) (0% males)

	NEVER	ONCE	TWICE	THRICE OR MORE
Property has been broken or damaged	68% (55% females) (79% males)	17% (17% females) (17% males)	5% (6% females) (4% males)	10% (22% females) (0% males)
Graffiti about you appears on public property	73% (67% females) (78% males)	10% (22% females) (0% males)	10% (6% females) (13% males)	7% (5% females) (9% males)
Sexually assaulted or abused	88% (78% females) (95% males)	5% (6% females) (4% males)	5 % (11% females) (0% males)	2% (6% females) (0% males)

The majority of young people who had suffered homophobic abuse had been victimised not just once but on three or more occasions. Females were twice as likely (78%) as males (39%) to have been verbally abused three times or more; and three times as likely to have received offensive texts, e-mails etc. on three or more occasions (33% females cf. 9% males.) Among the group of young people who had been physically abused, twice as many (15%) had been punched, kicked, hit or spat on or at three times or more than had only endured it once (7%).

The levels of repeat victimisation suggest that there is no deterrent to committing homophobic crime and that young victims of homophobia are not given sufficient protection against this type of crime. It seems that for some young people, being the victim of homophobia is a frequent occurrence and is an unacceptable part of their experience of being lgb.

Questions 11 to 28 concerned the incident(s) in question 10 so were not applicable to the five males and four females who had not experienced homophobic crime. The percentages are therefore based on a smaller sample of the 29 young people who reported at least one incident of homophobic crime.

Questions 11 to 15 were aimed at gathering data to show whether a prosecution or disposal involving the perpetrators was possible. A secondary purpose of these questions was to obtain data to build up a profile of the perpetrators of homophobic crime. This would help to identify potential perpetrators and devise effective methods of deterring homophobic behaviour

Question 11: How many people were responsible for the offence?

Only 4 people were victimised by a single perpetrator. Three of the lone perpetrators were male and one was female. Three were aged between 14 and 17 and were known to their victims. One perpetrator was over 21 and although the victim did not know him, believed that he would recognise that perpetrator if he saw him again.

Twelve people were victimised by a group of between 2 and 5 perpetrators. There were three times as many male perpetrators (21) as female (7). Only one perpetrator was under 10, two were aged between 10 and 13, nineteen were aged 14 to 17, seven were aged 18 to 21 and four were over 21.

Five people were targeted by a group of between 5 and 10 perpetrators. There were almost twice as many male perpetrators (27) as female (13). None of these larger groups of perpetrators were under 14. The majority (25) were between 14 and 17, nine were aged 18 to 21 and six were over 21. Fourteen perpetrators were known to their victims and 24 would be recognised again. However, one victim did not know or recognise the perpetrators. A further two victims did not know their perpetrators but felt that they would recognise them if they saw them again.

Four victims reported that more than 10 perpetrators had targeted them. The number of perpetrators was reported as 15, 25, 30 and 50. Five were under 10, twenty eight were aged 10 to 13, fifty three were aged 14 to 17, fourteen were aged between 18 and 21, and fifteen were aged 21 or over. Fifty-seven were male and Sixty-three were female. The

high representation of females as perpetrators in large groups or because one female reported being victimised by a group of 50 girls. One victim knew none of the 15 perpetrators and did not think that he could recognise them again. One victim knew all 30 perpetrators and would obviously recognise them if she saw them again. One victim knew 20 of the 50 perpetrators and would recognise all of them if she saw them again. One victim knew 15 of the perpetrators.

Three victims were unable to say with certainty how many people had victimised them. One of these victims said that all of the perpetrators were aged between 11 and 13 and that he knew most of them. Another victim said there were too many perpetrators to count but some were aged under 10, some were between 10 and 13 and some were aged 14 to 17. Again, the victim knew most of the perpetrators and would recognise them again. The third victim said that he was victimised by a gang and did not know how many were male and how many female. He said that all were between 14 and 17 and that he knew and would recognise most of them because they were in his year at school.

Question 12: What was the gender of the people responsible?

Seventy-nine perpetrators were identified as female and ninety as male. The number of female perpetrators may need to be treated with caution as one victim reported being victimized by 50 females. The average figure is likely to be lower.

Question 13: What age were they?

Six* perpetrators were described as being under 10, which is the age of criminal responsibility. It would not be possible to bring criminal proceedings against this group of perpetrators. Thirty* perpetrators were aged between 10 and 13, One hundred* perpetrators were aged between 14 and 17, Thirty perpetrators were aged 18 to 21, and Twenty six perpetrators were aged 21 or over.

The true figure for the age ranges marked with * are higher than the figures shown, but

cannot be quantified as victims could not state with certainty the number of perpetrators in the age group, sometimes because there were too many to count.

Only 6 of the 192 perpetrators were believed to be below the age of criminal responsibility and therefore could not be prosecuted, warned or reprimanded for their behaviour. However, some intervention to address their behaviour and any underlying causes of the homophobia could occur e.g., asking the young person and his or her parent (s) to enter a Parental Control Agreement or an Agreement in School. The overwhelming majority of perpetrators were aged between 14 and 17, and of school age so would be likely to be part of the homophobic culture in schools.

Question 14: How many do you know?

54% victims knew all of the perpetrators and 75% knew at least one of the perpetrators.

This suggests that if the victim made a statement to the police and named the perpetrator, the police would be in a position to arrest and interview all of the suspects in 54% cases and at least one of the suspects in a further 21% cases.

Question 15: How many would you recognise again?

60% victims would recognize all of the perpetrators if they saw them again. 89% would recognize at least one of the perpetrators.

Unsurprisingly, more people would recognise their perpetrators than can name them. The belief that the victim would recognise the perpetrator again indicates that if the incident was reported to the police and investigated, there is a possibility that the perpetrators could be arrested, even though their identity is not known to the victim. There may be witnesses to the incident who could identify or at least describe the perpetrator or CCTV footage of the incident, which would provide sufficient evidence to hold an identification parade and invite the victim to identify the perpetrator.

The responses to these questions show that the majority of homophobic crime committed against young people is not carried out by strangers, but by people known to and of a similar age to the victim. The fact that the crime continues unchecked suggests that the perpetrators know that their victims will not report them to the police. Encouraging young people to report homophobic incidents to the police will increase the likelihood of the perpetrators being arrested and dealt with for their behaviour. This will have a deterrent effect on potential and existing perpetrators of homophobic crime and should reduce the rates of homophobic crime among this age group.

Question 16: Where did the incident happen?

This question sought to identify whether there were locations or venues in which young lgb people were especially vulnerable. This information could be used to warn young people to avoid or be vigilant in a particular area or to target locations in which measures to deter homophobic crime should be used e.g. CCTV, increased policing.

School was the most likely place for a homophobic incident to occur, with eleven females and three boys reporting that they had been victimised there. This was consistent with the earlier finding that only 30% girls and 40% boys said that their school was supportive of lgb people. It is also consistent with the finding that the most likely age of a perpetrator of homophobic crime against young people is also a young person, aged between 14 and 17, as people of this age spend a large proportion of their time in school. One male also reported an incident at college. Public transport, the street, and licensed premises were each cited as the venue for victimisation by four females and two males in each instance. Two young gay men cited Soho and the skateboarding area on the South bank as specific street locations. Three males and one female were victimised in their home area or the estate on which they lived. One male experienced homophobic abuse while at work.

Questions 17 to 20 focused on the feelings of the victim and to learn more about their

response to the incident. Court proceedings are inevitably offender centred. Justice is achieved in different ways, as it is dependant on the victim being satisfied. In some cases this may be achieved by formal court proceedings or a disciplinary procedure at school. However, a perpetrator who is arrested or excluded from school may be more resentful as a result of the process and may threaten the victim or increase the severity of their behaviour. Similarly, a victim may find the whole criminal process of making a statement and giving evidence as traumatic as the original offence. Using the criminal justice system may make things worse, not better for the victim. Victims may prefer a service that puts them at the centre of the process by putting their needs and wishes first and allowing them to regain control of their lives.

Question 17: Did you get medical help after incident?

Only 18% victims (two males and three females) obtained medical help after the incident. One young woman had been assaulted with an object and was treated for concussion. She did not have any counselling afterwards and did not report to the police because she had been treated badly by the police before. She would report a future incident if an lgb officer dealt with her case.

A bisexual woman was attacked with a weapon at a train station. She sought medical help and reported the matter to the police. She was scared to go out on her own for two months after the attack, as she knew the attackers were still in he neighbourhood.

One gay man was threatened by 15 boys that went to his school. He was assaulted by the ringleader of the group and went to hospital where his head was stitched. He also needed counselling and reported the incident to the police.

Another gay man was assaulted on his estate. He needed medical help and counselling and also reported the incident to the police.

One male gave no details of the incident or his injuries.

Question 18: If you answered no, what is the reason?

Five people answered no, rather than replying that medical assistance was not necessary. The reasons given were:

“Only verbal,” (female aged 17)

“No physical contact.” (male aged 21)

“I just didn’t” (female aged 19)

And causing more concern:

“ Didn’t bother me, I was much more angry with other gay people walking past as it was happening.” (male aged 18)

This shows that young lgb people could not rely on other lgb people to help them or at least support them when they are being abused.

“ The people in question were trying to light my hair with deodorant and a lighter, so I got off the bus to stop it and walked off.” (male aged 18)

This response again shows that the victim was not helped by any other passengers or the driver on the bus. The victim is likely to have been in shock after such a frightening incident, which he felt powerless to stop until he ran away.

Question 19: Did you have counselling or therapy afterwards?

Only 21 % respondents (14% females and 29% males) had counselling or therapy after the incident.

Question 20: If not, what is the reason?

Some felt that this was because the incident was minor or they took no notice of the incident.

"I'm used to it." (male aged 16)

"Friends helped instead." (male aged 20)

"It didn't seem necessary. When the incident happened I was with a group of supportive friends and although it was a bit shocking it wasn't something I felt unable to get over pretty quickly." (male aged 16)

"I didn't feel that it was necessary. It isn't so much a single event that would cause a need for therapy or counselling with bullying but the ongoing and constant reinforcement that being gay is a Bad Thing (the use of the word gay as an insult is a good example of this really annoys me more than anything else)." (male aged 17)

"No need, the instigator got a kicking from me. I don't lose fights with anyone." (female aged 18)

The other five respondents gave the following replies:

"Don't trust doctors" (male aged 17)

"My thoughts stay in my head and I don't like the idea of someone knowing what I think and studying me as part of their little project." (female aged 16)

"I was at a Roman Catholic school and felt I couldn't use the school counselling service"

as it was Roman Catholic based and my parents had warned me not to come out at school". (female aged 16)

"I don't think anyone could help me cope with it. I kind of realized that most people are scum and I would like to think I am strong enough mentally to deal with it." (male aged 18)

"I was too embarrassed and ashamed and didn't want the hassle because if they found out about it, it would have made the situation a lot worse." (female aged 17)

These responses show that some young people are well supported by their friends, with whom they can not only talk about the incident but also arrange companionship and social activities to reduce the impact of the incident and avoid the perpetrators. However, the majority would benefit from support or therapy after their victimisation but are deterred from seeking counselling because they feel that the services available are unsuitable e.g. the girl at the catholic school whose parents regarded her sexuality as incompatible with the faith. Two young women had no confidence in doctors or therapists and one felt that her problems were beyond help. She felt that the onus to cope was on her and the girl who took physical revenge on her assailant shared this view. Most distressing of all the responses were the girl who was ashamed of her victimisation and the girl who was so used to being victimised that she expected it.

Questions 21 to 24 seek to discover whether young lgb people have sufficient confidence in the criminal justice system to report the incident to the police.

Question 21: Did you report the incident to the police?

Only 11% (2 males and 1 female) reported to the police.

Question 22: If not what is/are the reason(s) for this?

The majority (11 people) felt that involving the police would be an overreaction, as the offence was minor or was dealt with at school or otherwise.

“Well it was in school and I didn't want to cause other people to feel negative towards me” (female aged 16)

“I thought about it and decided that it was a nasty piece of bullying but not something that required police action” (male aged 16)

“Happened in school, it was not serious although I reported it to my head of year.”
(female aged 19)

“Small minded tosser not worth it.” (female aged 19)

“Didn't think it was appropriate” (male aged 21)

“Dealt with it” (female aged 18)

“Minor incident” (male aged 19)

“Not needed” (male aged 16)

“No need” (female aged 17)

“Wasn't in violation of the law or really that out of line taken with society as a whole.”

Some felt that the police either could not or would not take any action if it were reported:

“They (perpetrators) were too subtle” (female aged 14)

“Not necessary, no permanent physical damage and in any case, the police wouldn’t do any good. I couldn’t name any of the individuals nor could I pinpoint any single one of them that did that the worst actions (throwing stones) (male aged 17)

I have been treated badly by the police before (female aged 18)

Thought that nothing would be done about it (male aged 18)

“I had no evidence it was my word against 10 thugs it didn’t really cross my mind to do anything about it.”(male aged 18)

“And the police would do what exactly?” (female aged 19)

Others thought that it would make matters worse:

“Seemed no point, it already had a large enough effect on my life”(male aged 20)

“I didn't want anyone to know” (female aged 15)

“ I thought it would only make the situation worse” (female aged 16)

“I felt a little scared and felt it might enflame the situation further. Also my sexuality might have been exposed to people I did not necessarily want it to be exposed to.”(male aged 18)

“Not serious enough and I'm not out.” (male aged 16)

“Too scared” (female aged 18)

“Too scared” (female aged 18)

“I did not wish for public attention to be drawn towards me,” (male aged 16)

These answers show that young people can rarely see any benefit in reporting the crime to the police, but are aware that reporting could make matters worse for them. The absence of sufficient support if their complaints are pursued and a lack of confidence in positive action mean that young people tolerate and come to expect their victimisation.

Question 24: If you did report to the police, how did they treat you?

The three people who reported to the police gave the following responses:

“Friendly manner, took me seriously, recorded incident as homophobic crime, got crime number, but had no follow up from the police.” (male aged 16)

“The police were very sympathetic about what happened (hurt with weapon) and did their best to sort everything out” (female aged 18)

“They sent police to their houses, arrested them and charged them for assault” (male aged 21)

This suggests that if young people can overcome their reluctance to approach the police, they are likely to receive a professional service. There is no indication of homophobia on the part of the police, nor that the complaints of the victims were trivialised.

Question 25: Who else did you tell about the incident?

	Actual Number Female	Actual Number Male	Total
Teacher	5	3	8

Parent	6	5	11
Other relative	1	3	4
Partner	3	2	5
Friends	12	11	25
Lgb group	1	3	4
Childline	0	1	1
Victim Support	1	2	3
Crime Stoppers	0	0	0
Other	1	4	5
No one	2	2	4

Young lgb victims were most likely to tell their friends about a homophobic incident (11 males and 12 females). This is consistent with the belief that friends were supportive of young lgb people. Parents were the second most likely people to be told with 5 males and 6 females confiding in their parents. This is encouraging as there were very few young people (3) who were not out to anyone and most did not experience homophobia at home.

No young people reported the incident to Crime Stoppers. The young man who reported to Childline also reported to Victim Support and his lgb group. The other male who reported to Victim Support also told his lgb group about the incident. Lgb groups are potentially a source of practical help and support and advice. They are also specialist providers of help to victims of homophobic crime and can help where traditional agencies such as Victim Support have little expertise with young victims or victims of homophobic crime. It is important that young lgb people do inform these agencies so that they are aware of the nature and extent of homophobic crime in order to provide appropriate and inclusive services for young lgb victims.

The most worrying aspect was that 4 young people told nobody about their victimisation and therefore received no support. One of these victims was a 19-year-old female who was only out to a few close friends as she was fearful of the reaction to her sexuality. She had been a repeat victim of both verbal and physical abuse and had also had her property

stolen or damaged, but was too scared to report it to the police or anybody else. It would appear that she was so afraid of the consequences of being outed to tell anybody what was happening to her. Two victims were both 16 and were out to most people. They were both repeat victims of verbal abuse, spitting and damage to and theft of their property. The other victim was a sixteen-year-old male who had experienced verbal abuse only once. He was out to everybody and considered the matter too trivial to report to anyone.

Question 26: Who were the most helpful and what were the reasons?

Friends were most helpful to victims of both genders, with 6 males and 5 females citing friends as most helpful. This is not surprising, given the earlier finding that 100% young lg women and 96% young gb men felt that their friends were supportive. Four young people gave no reasons, but some explained that:

"Friends stood by me at the time so I didn't feel alone and they deliberately made the bullies look isolated." (male aged 16)

"My close friends have always been fine about my sexuality and were there for me during the whole thing. I felt like I could talk to them about anything and that was very helpful." (female aged 19)

"Friends - they knew the people involved." (female aged 16)

"Close friends – experienced the same thing." (male aged 21)

"Friends were understanding." (male aged 16)

"Because they have always been very understanding of me." (male aged 16)

"Friends – obvious reasons." (male aged 17)

"Helped me put into perspective and see it as their problem not mine." (male aged 19)

4 females and 1 male said that a teacher was most helpful.

"I didn't tell all of my teachers, they merely called me and some other girls who were being treated the same as me into their office as they had been hearing some rumours about us. They offered us all kinds of support and were there to talk to, for which I will be forever grateful." (female aged 18)

"Teacher, the kid was suspended." (female aged 18)

"My English teacher because she helped stop the bullying when none of the other teachers did anything." (female aged 18)

"Offered to report it to the police." (male aged 18)

"Stopped it happening again." (female aged 18)

Despite the earlier finding that only 36% pupils felt that their school was supportive of lgb people, where schools are supportive, action by teachers can be very effective in tackling homophobic bullying. Two of the teachers actually stopped the bullying, which is a desirable outcome for any victim. The other teachers showed support in different ways. Suspending a pupil and offering to report to the police show that the victimisation was taken seriously and warranted official action. The female whose teachers were aware of the problem without her having to report it was grateful for the opportunity to talk and to be supported in her learning place. These teachers also demonstrated vigilance and an awareness of what was happening. This early intervention may have prevented the verbal abuse from escalating.

1 male and 2 females found that a parent was most helpful, which showed that these young people were confident to be out to their parents and could rely on parental support:

"My dad drove me to hospital and took me to the police station and tried to understand what I went through. My youth worker (lgbt) was equally good," (male aged 16)

"My mum is always there for me and efficient with it. Teachers weren't they didn't do anything." (female aged 16)

" My mum stuck up for me at school." (female aged 18)

2 males reported that their lgbt group was the best support,

"They really made sure that I was OK and I got all the support I needed." (male aged 21)

"They knew what I was going through and the best ways of approaching the situation, having dealt with similar cases in the past." (male aged 18)

1 male and 1 female commended their boss, and a partner and family were each the best support for one male.

"My boss was supportive and eager to involve the police." (male aged 18)

"My old boss at the drop in centre helped me sort my head out." (female aged 18)

"Family were helpful and concerned to make sure I knew they would stand by me if I decided to report it to the police or the school authorities." (male aged 16)

One female reported that no one she told was of any help.

" The first time it happened, my friends didn't believe me. The second time, they apologised and made sure that the boys that did it stayed away." (female aged 16)

These diverse responses show that it cannot be assumed that just because the victim is lgb that the incident has to be dealt with in a particular way. The important thing is that the victim is able to get support and make an informed choice as to the best way to achieve justice.

Question 27: Did anything happen to the person who committed the homophobic crime against you?

Only one perpetrator was arrested by the police. Three perpetrators were excluded from school and just two victims received an apology from the perpetrator. Three victims said that the perpetrator was dealt with, but did not specify how. The majority of victims (64%) said that nothing happened to the perpetrator and a further 10% did not know whether the perpetrator was dealt with.

Question 28: Are you satisfied with the way the incident was dealt with?

25% of all participants were satisfied with the way in which the perpetrator(s) were dealt. This figure represents 27% females and 21% males who reported at least one incident of victimisation. The majority (75%) respondents were dissatisfied with the outcome. The same percentage of respondents reported that nothing happened to the perpetrator(s) or that they did not know whether anything had happened to the perpetrator(s). The irresistible inference is that these are the same young people and it is unsurprising that they were unsatisfied as either the perpetrator had not been brought to justice, or if they had, which is unlikely, there had been no information about the outcome communicated to the victim. However, it has to be remembered that in the vast majority of cases, the victims told nobody in authority about the incident and so it was unlikely that there would be any response, still less one which satisfied the victim.

Question 29: If you answered no, what do you think should have happened?

Fifteen people responded to this question. 2 people decided that they should have

reported the incident. One said,

“I should have told someone, it should have been treated in the same way as it were racially motivated. Probably suspension.” (male aged 18)

“ I should have reported it.” (male aged 16)

3 people thought that the police or the court should have dealt with the perpetrators.

“I don’t think that expulsion from school is enough punishment for a physical attack on someone. It wouldn’t stop them from carrying out the same action again. I think that some type of community service should have been given.”

(18-year-old female who had experienced a least 18 homophobic incidents, including several threats of violence and an assault using a weapon)

“They should have been made to realise the severity of their crime by the police.”

(16 year old female, who had been threatened with violence, had her property stolen and seen offensive graffiti about herself, which was carried out by 10 girls that she knew at, school.)

“They should have gone to prison.”

(19-year-old female who was too scared to report numerous violent incidents to anybody)

Four people thought that there should have been a better outcome:

“The person in question was treated no differently. In fact the deputy head of the college took his side in the argument and he was allowed full privileges e.g. in spite of what happened, the person in question was allowed to use the English open access area. This

area is managed by a homosexual teacher and the fact that he took the abusers side really annoyed me.” (male aged 18)

“Although at a bar the incident was work related and there was a disciplinary hearing but I hoped for more.” (male aged 21)

“I shouldn’t have been suspended when I was the one who got hit in the back of the Head.” (male aged 18)

“They should have been beaten publicly with a very big stick and made to feel humiliated and wrong in front of everyone, just like I was, but that wouldn't be very nice thing for me to say now would it?” (female aged 16)

“Punished by school, forced to replace things and for people to know that they were thieves.” (female aged 21)

Two people thought that some education and discussion surrounding lgb issues would be helpful,

“ General discussion about sexuality in school now that section 28 is gone surely this is simple” (male aged 19)

“It would be nice to think that they had a lesson in manners and maybe even taught a few things about sexuality.” (male aged 18)

Although one person responded, *“You can't legislate morality.” (male aged 21)*

These responses show that young lgb people regard homophobic crime as serious and that perpetrators should be punished. The last three responses show an insight into the causes of homophobic crime and the need to deconstruct homophobic attitudes. Young lgb people can be victimised or supported by their peers, depending on the relationships

between them. Almost all young lgb people were supported by their friends, who treated them as individual likeable people rather than labelling them gay and regarding them as inferior and therefore acceptable targets for abuse. Sensible discussion about lesbian and gay issues, and the inclusion of lgb relationships within Personal Social Health Citizenship Education lessons might change attitudes and lead to the realisation that homophobic abuse is as unacceptable as racism.

Question 30: How did you feel after the incident?

This was an open question, so respondents answered in their own words and many described several reactions, therefore the percentages exceed 100%. 44% were angry or annoyed and 40% said that they were hurt, upset or disappointed. 24% were afraid and cautious afterwards and 10% said that they were ashamed. 8% felt vulnerable, 4% felt alone and 4% were concussed after the incident.

"I was very cautious as to what I talked to people about. I never mentioned homosexuality or related subjects in any way shape or form only clichés like the weather." (male aged 18)

"I was really hurt this could happen to me. I felt useless and unsupported." (male aged 21)

"Disappointed that young people my age could be so bigoted and shocked that they obviously thought that lots of the other people around them would support them." (male aged 16)

"Upset. The incidents made my life sad and knocked my self confidence a lot and put a strain on my friendships." (female aged 16)

"Annoyed that I was forced to fight for being myself, some people get an easy life." (female aged 18)

"Like I was worth nothing unloved betrayed dirty." (female aged 19)

These responses reiterate the earlier point made that the consequences of homophobic bullying can be devastating. Some of the young victims felt extreme distress after their victimisation and expressed feelings of low self-esteem. Unless these feelings are worked through, there is a danger that young lgb people will suffer from mental health problems including anxiety, depression, self-harm and suicidal thoughts.

Question 31: Please read through the list of incidents in Question 10. If one of these had happened to you yesterday because someone thought you were lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, would you report it to the police?

34% respondents said that they would report such an incident, 37% said that they would not and 29% did not know. Females were less likely than males to report to the police, the female responses showed that 28% (5) would report to the police, 39% (7) would not and 34% (6) did not know. 39% (9) males would report to the police, 35% (8) would not and 23% (6) did not know.

These reporting figures are still low, with less than 40% being certain that they would report. Unless the barrier to reporting can be overcome, the true extent of homophobic crime will not be known and so strategies to prevent and tackle it will not be developed.

Question 32: Would you give evidence in court about such an incident?

54% respondents (10 females and 12 males) said that they would give evidence in court about a homophobic incident, 20% (4 females and 4 males) said that they would not and 27% (4 females and 7 males) were undecided. Both males and females are less reluctant to testify than they are to report to the police, however the difference is more marked among females, with twice as many prepared to give evidence (56%) than are willing to report to the police (28%). This suggests that young people are suspicious of approaching the police directly. It is possible to report a crime online and many police encourage third party reporting of homophobic crime. These alternatives may need to be publicised among young people in order to increase the reporting rate.

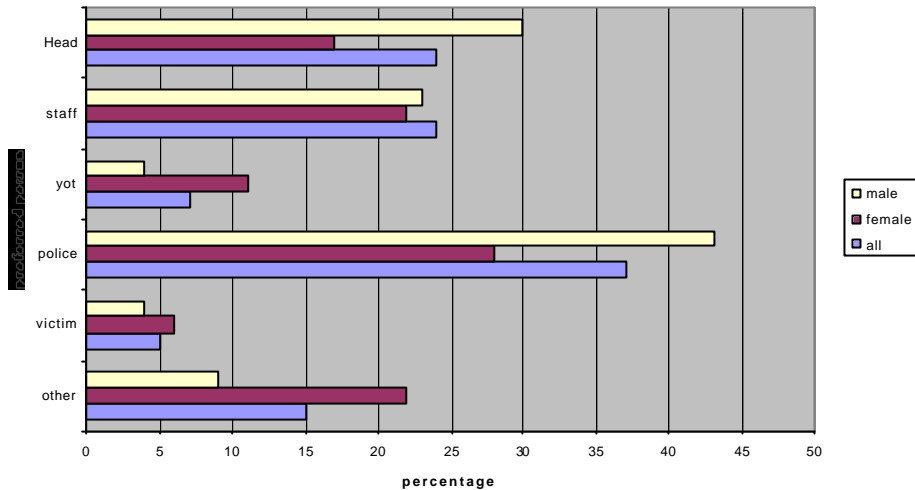
Question 33: If you answered no or don't know to either of these questions, would your answer be different if a police officer who was lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender was in charge of your complaint?

57 % respondents (9 females and 8 males) who answered that they would not report or give evidence about a homophobic incident (in questions 31 and 32) said that they would answer differently if an lgb police officer had conduct of their case. It would make no difference to 17% (2 females and 3 males) and 27% (2 females and 6 males) do not know whether it would make a difference.

Young lgb people would be far more willing to access the criminal justice system if they knew that an lgb officer would deal with the case. This suggests that young people are currently deterred from reporting to the police because they fear that the police will display homophobic attitudes. Lgb officers have an understanding and experience of the issues for lgb people and the barriers that they may need to overcome to access the criminal justice system. They are also obviously not prejudiced against lgb people and promote confidence in the ability and willingness of the police to act on behalf of all victims of crime. The knowledge that an lgb officer would deal with the case could raise reporting rates to 88% as only 5 people said that the presence of an lgb officer would make no difference to their willingness to report.

Question 34: What do you think is the best way to deal with such an incident if it happened in school/college?

The best way to deal with a homophobic incident that occurs in school



37% thought that the police should take action against an offender when the incident occurred at school. This option was considered appropriate by more males (43 %) than females (28%) A total of 48% all respondents felt that incidents that occur in school should be dealt with in school. 24% (17% females and 30% males) felt that the head teacher or principal should punish the perpetrator, and 24% (22% females and 23% males) believed that the staff at the school or college should bring the victim together to resolve the issue. A further 7% (11% females and 4% males) believed that the victim and offender should be brought together by the police or the youth offender team (yot.) Just 5% (6% females and 4% males) thought that the victim should sort it out with the offender without involving the police or school. 15% (22% female and 9% males) thought that another response was appropriate.

These responses show that opinion is divided as to the best way to tackle school-based incidents. Although a total of 48% felt that the school should take action, this combined punishment by the head (24%) and restorative justice by the staff and the parties involved (24%). A punitive response was most popular with 61% (45% females and 73% males

favouring punishment by the Head or official action by the police. Only 31% (17% females and 27% males) favoured restorative justice whether facilitated by the school staff, police or not. The majority of the respondents (95%) were clear that action must be taken by people in authority to tackle and prevent homophobic incidents at school.

Question 35: If you answered other to the above question, please explain how you think such an incident should be handled?

“Some incidents are best dealt with by school pupils and their friends but some things are too serious and need to be reported to the authorities. I think it's important that where possible school pupils should deal with things by challenging bigotry if they can rather than handing it over to the principal, but where a serious crime - theft or assault for example are involved or where these efforts don't work then adult authority will be necessary.” (16-year-old male)

“I am pretty sure that the key to stop homophobic bullying and violence against young people is changing attitudes and that reporting incidents to the authorities is not often any good at doing this. Although I know it's necessary for serious incidents, reporting homophobia usually does nothing but increase resentment. You might say that's irrelevant but in practical terms recruiting your friends and fellow students to support you is more effective and it isolates the bullies. Persuading people isn't hard either. I've seen the statistics that show that so many teen boys are homophobic but in my experience if you talk to people about it the homophobia is quite shallow. All of my friends were absolutely supportive when I came out and even people who didn't know me very well at school went out of their way to be supportive and friendly. There were people who were anti but I was lucky because they had to confront my friends and not just me so they were just marginalized.” (16 year old male)

“If verbal abuse dealt with internally. If sexual assault obviously the police should be involved.” (male aged 16)

"Well I'd just ignore them. It may not solve anything but I wouldn't want them to know they were getting to me." (female aged 16)

" I think it could be any of the above but I believe it would depend on the individuals involved and what had happened. Some people respond better to different tactics. I would hope all would be looked into depending on the situation." (female aged 16)

" It should be the students choice if they want to press charges or if they want it to be dealt with within school or college or if they don't want to make a complaint. However, the college should offer their full support if the student does decide to take it further support should still be given if the matter is not pursued i.e. counsellor support, support of tutors."

(female aged 17)

"It is a hate crime, school are not equipped and in some cases unwilling to deal with these issues." (male aged 16)

"Nothing could be done long term. Society in general has difficulty in accepting homosexuality or any kind of sexual deviation through it is contrary to what people would like to believe. Some of these issues arise from things like section 28. LGBT groups should continue to campaign for these rights if anything is to change." (female aged 18)

"Sensibly." (female aged 17)

Again, these responses show that young lgb people are not a homogeneous group who share a set of beliefs about the criminal justice system. They are individuals with their own thoughts and perceptions and a realisation that the appropriate course of action will depend on several factors, including the seriousness of the incident, the ability of the school or police to deal with it and the choice of the victim.

Conclusions

The theory underlying this research was that there is substantial underreporting of homophobic crime by young lgb people. This theory was supported by the finding that although 71% all respondents had experienced homophobic crime and many were repeat victims, only 3 had reported one crime to the police. Young lesbians and bisexual women were at the highest risk of homophobic crime, and all young lgb people experienced crime at a higher rate than their straight peers. Several victims had a mature insight into the homophobic culture in their schools and society and felt that the only long-term solution to homophobic violence was education and tackling the root causes of homophobia.

The three hypotheses for underreporting were tested. It was found that the fear of being outed, lack of confidence that the police would treat lgb people with respect and the belief that the incident was too trivial to concern the police were barriers to reporting homophobic crime to the police. Young people were deterred from reporting by a combination of factors that operated to different degrees with each young person. There was a strong desire to access the criminal justice system when the incident was sufficiently serious and most young people felt that they would do so if they could report to a police officer who was lgb. Young people realised that different interventions were appropriate in different circumstances but felt that the choice of how the incident was dealt with should be made by the victim. The victim should have the confidence that their complaint would be taken seriously and that they should be supported through whichever procedure that they chose. It is only in this way that young people can be empowered to achieve justice when they experience homophobic crime.

Recommendations

There were differences in victimisation rates for male and female participants and there were more bisexual women than men. Further research into the relevance of gender and

sexuality to victimisation, may provide a better explanation for this finding. There were also large numbers of female perpetrators of homophobic crime. While this may be due to one unrepresentative incident, women's liberation theories of criminality should be further researched as the loosening of the restrictions on women's behaviour may be resulting in an increase in violence and criminality on their part.

Schools were not perceived as safe places for lgb pupils. Further training to understand the effects of a heterosexist culture and the encouragement that this provides for homophobia should be undertaken so that lgb pupils and staff enjoy equality in school. The visible presence of lgb teachers may diffuse homophobia and encourage young people to report homophobic abuse.

There was too small a sample to examine the correlations of victimisation and other variables, particularly faith and ethnicity. Sexuality should be included a demographic question in "mainstream" research. This would help to get a better picture of homophobic violence committed against young people by providing a greater understanding of the interaction and effect of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, faith and disability on the victimisation rates and increasing access to justice. All of the participants in this survey described themselves as lgb and had made contact with a social or support group. The experiences of young people who are heterosexual but are mistaken for or friendly with lgb people and those who have not yet made contact with a group were excluded. These young people lack support and research into their experiences and needs should be undertaken to obtain a fuller picture of homophobic crime committed against adolescents and to identify ways of providing support to prevent depression and suicide and to reduce their risk of victimisation.

The Home Office should monitor homophobic crime and measure the conviction rates and sentences for homophobically motivated crime. If sexuality is included as a variable in the BCS and YJB surveys, it will be a relatively simple exercise to gauge whether homophobic crime is underreported and if so to identify ways to improve the reporting and attrition rates.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

If you complete this questionnaire, you will be taking part in a study of homophobic crime committed against young people, which I am undertaking as part of a MA degree. The purpose of the study is to find out how young people who experience homophobic crime can achieve justice. The study will be available in 2004 in the library at Middlesex University. You may complete the questionnaire anonymously.

1. What is your age?
2. Which of the following do you attend ? **(Please put x in the correct box)**

School	<input type="checkbox"/>	Work	<input type="checkbox"/>
College	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unemployed	<input type="checkbox"/>
University	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Are you ?

Male	<input type="checkbox"/>
Female	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. How would you describe your ethnicity?

5.

African	<input type="checkbox"/>	Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>
Afro Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mixed Race	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>	White	<input type="checkbox"/>
Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. How do you describe your faith or religion?

Agnostic		Jewish	
Atheist		Muslim	
Buddhist		Sikh	
Christian		None	
Hindu		Other	
Humanist			

6. Which of the following do you consider yourself to be? **(Please put x against all that apply)**

Gay or Lesbian	
Bisexual (Mostly lesbian or gay)	
Bisexual (Mostly heterosexual or straight)	
Heterosexual or straight	
Transgender	

7. If you are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, which one of these terms best describes whether others know this?

No one knows		Most people know	
Close family/friends only know		Everybody knows	
Some people at school, work or college know			

8. If you are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, but this is not widely known, please state the reason(s) for this.

.....

.....

.....

9. Do you feel that the following groups to which you belong support lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people?

	Yes	No	Not Applicable
School			
College			

University			
Friends			
Youth Group			
Sports club/football team etc. Family			
Place of Work			
Place of Worship			

10. How many times have these things happened to you because someone thought you were lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender? **(Please put x against correct reply to each type of behaviour)**

	0	1	2	3 or more
Verbal abuse e.g. swearing, name calling, rumours spread				
Offensive or abusive text messages, e-mails, letters, phone calls etc.				
Threatened with violence				
Spat on or at				
Punched, kicked or hit				
Hurt with an object or weapon				
Things have been stolen from you e.g. dinner money, mobile phone				
Your property has been broken or damaged				
Graffiti appears about you on public property				
Sexually assaulted or abused.				

If none of these things have happened to you, please go to question 29.

Questions 11 to 28 are about the incident in Question 10. If you have experienced more than one incident, please answer these questions about the behaviour that you found most serious and write here what sort of incident it was e.g. hurt with a weapon.....

11. How many people were responsible?.....

12. How many were... **(Please write the number in the box)**

Male	
Female	
Don't know	

13. How many of the people responsible were the following ages **(Please write the number of people in the box next to the age range)**

Under 10		18-21	
10-13		Over 21	
14-17			

14. How many of the people responsible do you know?

.....

15. How many of the people responsible would you recognise again?

.....

16. Where did the incident happen?

.....

17. Did you get medical help after the incident?

Yes	
No	
Didn't need any assistance	

18. If you answered no, what is/are the reason/s for this?

.....

19. Did you have counselling or therapy afterwards?

Yes	
No	

20. If not, what is/are the reason/s for this?

.....

.....

.....

21. Did you report the incident to the police?

Yes	
No	

22. If not, what is/are the reason/s for this?

.....

.....

.....

.....

23. If you did report to the police, how did they treat you?

.....

.....

.....

.....

24. Who else did you tell about the incident? (Please mark all that apply)

Teacher/Lecturer	Crimestoppers	
Parent(s)	LGBT group	
Partner	Childline	
Other relative	Victim Support	
Friend(s)	Other person/group	
No one		

25. Who was the most helpful and what are the reasons?

.....
.....
.....
.....

26. Did anything happen to the person/ people responsible for the incident in question 10? **(Please mark all that apply)**

Excluded from school/college	<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>
Person apologised to you	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nothing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Person caught by police	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

27. Are you satisfied with the way that the person was dealt with?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

28. If you answered no, what do you think should have happened?

.....
.....
.....
.....

29. How did you feel after the incident?

.....
.....
.....
.....

30. Please read through the list of incidents in Question 10. If one of these had happened to you yesterday, because someone thought that you were lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, would you report it to the police?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>

31. Would you be prepared to give evidence in court about such an incident?

Yes	
No	
Don't know	

32. If you answered no or don't know to either of these questions, would your answer be different if a police officer who was lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender was in charge of your complaint?

Yes	
No	
Don't know	

33. What do you think is the best way to deal with such an incident if it happened in school/college?

The head teacher or principal should punish the offender	
The staff at the school or college should bring the victim and offender together for apology and discuss outcome	
The police or youth offender team should bring victim and offender together to resolve the issue	
The police should take action against the offender	
The victim should sort it out with the offender without the police or the school getting involved	
Other	

34. If you answered other to the above question, please explain how you think such an incident should be handled.

.....

.....

.....

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete the questionnaire. If this has raised any issues for you that you would like to discuss, then please the group that gave you this questionnaire or you may find these groups helpful : www.stonewall.org.uk, www.galop.org.uk, www.queeryouth.org.uk

I am very interested in your experiences of homophobia and your opinion as to

the best way of dealing with these incidents. If you would like to add anything to the questionnaire or say more about how we should deal with homophobic incidents, please e-mail me at sallyresearch@hotmail or in writing to C/o Dr. Anthony Goodman, School of Health and Social Sciences, Middlesex University, Queensway, Enfield, Middlesex. EN3 4SA.

If you are willing to be interviewed, please write down your name and contact details, which will remain confidential and will be used only by me to arrange an interview.....
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