

Protecting students from homophobic bullying

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Students who are bullied because of sexual orientation have willing defenders in their classmates - motivated by leadership, courage, their beliefs in justice, altruism and having lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender friends, according to a Boston College professor and co-author of a new report on bullying at school.

With as many as eight out of every 10 LGBT students enduring bullying at school, the findings can help shape new programs to make schools safer, said Lynch School of Education Associate Professor Paul Poteat, who presents the study today at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association.

"Homophobic behavior often goes unchallenged, and there has been little attention to the large segment of students who witness homophobic behavior," said Poteat. "It is important to distinguish those who actually intercede or support students when homophobic behavior occurs."

An eight-year Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study found between 12 to 28 percent of LGBT students reported they had been threatened or injured at school the prior year. The 2011 Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network national survey found 82 percent of LGBT students reported problems with bullying.

Poteat and Olivier Vecho of the University of Paris, Nanterre, surveyed 722 students at a New England high school, assessing factors such as leadership, courage, altruism, and justice sensitivity, as well as observing

and intervening against homophobic behavior among their peers.

The researchers found students were more likely to intervene and defend a fellow student based on the values of [altruism](#), leadership, courage, having LGBT friends, and beliefs in justice.

Provided by Boston College

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