Taking over the school: student gangs as a strategy for dealing with homophobic bullying in an urban public school district

Description:
This article discusses the African American lesbian gang, DTO (Dykes Taking Over), as an example of a student-initiated strategy for dealing with homophobic bullying in an urban American school district. A series of alleged incidents of same-sex sexual harassment by gang members on heterosexual students illustrate how lesbian/bisexual threat was used by these women to re-establish a power differential after they experienced bullying based on their sexuality and gender expression. A series of alleged incidents of same-sex sexual harassment by gang members on female heterosexual students illustrate how gay/bisexual threat was used by these women to re-establish a power differential after they experienced bullying based on their sexuality and gender expression, particularly from their peers, forming gangs and using same sex sexual harassment of other students as a weapon against homophobia and a means by which they could assert themselves in their masculinities, not unlike their male peers who experience same sex bullying and/or harassment and use anti-female sexual harassment to assert their masculinity. Might their masculinities be uniquely related to their performances of bullying? (How) could homophobic bullying be framed with sexual harassment in both policy and practice? Would this framing benefit or harm students who are bullied? How would/does that change the way we can handle it in schools (i.e., school policies), if at all? Implications for school-based practitioners are discussed with regard to how these students' behavior might be the result of a lack of programs and services available for LGBTQ and same gender loving youth both in and after school.

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