What do I say when…?

Proactive ways to prevent negative interactions in schools
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Workshop Objectives

1. To provide educators with the language and skills to effectively and consistently intervene in incidents of sexual, homophobic and transphobic harassment.

2. To offer educators short & long-term strategies for improving the climate in their schools in regards to gender and sexual diversity issues.

3. To connect educators with information and resources to help them confidently intervene and work to improve their school climate.

Workshop structure

1. Understanding unconscious bias

2. Strategies for intervention – interactive

3. Conclusion & Q&A

Understanding unconscious bias

Lessons on gender & sexuality surround us

Foundational concepts

- Binary systems: either/or thinking

- The 'Heterosexual Matrix'
  - Hegemonic Masculinity vs. Emphasized Femininity
  - Heteronormativity& heterosexism

- Patriarchy

- Homophobia

- Transphobia

- Queer pedagogy

That's so gay
www.thinkb4youspeak.com

Scenarios: What do I say when?

Scenario 1

- You are giving an assignment to your class and one of the students loudly claims, "This homework is so gay!"
  - How often do you hear this statement in your classroom?
  - Is this statement of concern for you and your students? Why or why not?
  - How do you respond?

Scenario 2

- After school you are working with a student club and a few girls start talking about a male colleague. "He's so hot. But I heard he's gay. That would be so sad! Do you know if he's dating anyone?"
  - Is this statement of concern? Why or why not?
  - How would you respond?

Scenario 3

- In between classes you overhear a scuffle in the hallway. You go outside to see what's going on and you see 3 boys teasing another boy and overhear the word "faggot".
  - Is this a word you hear often in your school?
  - Do many teachers address is?
  - What would you do?
    - Immediately
    - The next day
    - The rest of the school year

Scenario 4

□ During your lunch break you notice a girl from your class sitting alone and crying. When you ask her what's wrong she tells you another girl has started a rumour about her being a lesbian and now the girls on her basketball team don't want her in the locker room when they're getting dressed.

   □ Is this something you would get involved in? Why?

   □ What do you do?

Scenario 5

◻ A male student in your class is very artistic and is expressive with his emotions and gestures. He tends to linger with teachers after class and you've overheard students calling him "queer" and "art fag". His grades are dropping.

   ◻ Could this happen in your school?

   ◻ What would you do?

Scenario 6

- You are having a class discussion and the subject of same-sex marriage comes up. One student asserts, "homosexuality is a sin and anyone who does that is going to hell."
  - What would you do?

Other sticky situations?

Interventions – Transforming School Culture

Individuals – Classrooms – Schools – Communities

Individual changes

- Watch educational films and documentaries
  - Tough Guise
  - Straitlaced
  - It's Elementary: Talking about Lesbian and Gay Issues in Schools
  - Call me Kade

- Attend an event sponsored by a local GLBT advocacy organization

- Invite a colleague to view/attend with you

Classroom changes

- Challenge your own assumptions

- Use inclusive language
  - parent or guardian
  - partner or spouse

- Avoid gender-specific language and assumptions in class activities
  - asking girls to help clean and boys to help move heavy things
  - Avoid phrases like: "act like a man," "boys don't cry," or "don't act like a girl"
  - Dividing students up by gender

Classroom changes

Respond to name-calling

"Stop & Educate"

How to confront name-calling

- Do
  - Stop the behavior
  - Educate those involved: publicly or privately
  - Practice responses to commonly heard insults and comments
  - Share ideas with colleagues on how to respond

- Don't:
  - Ignore the incident
  - Excuse it
  - Allow yourself to be immobilized by fear or uncertainty
 - Avoid the situation in fear of saying the wrong thing

Publicly v. Privately

Publicly/on the spot

- Provides immediate information & support
- Models taking a stand
- Reassures others that this is a safe space
- Sets a compassionate tone

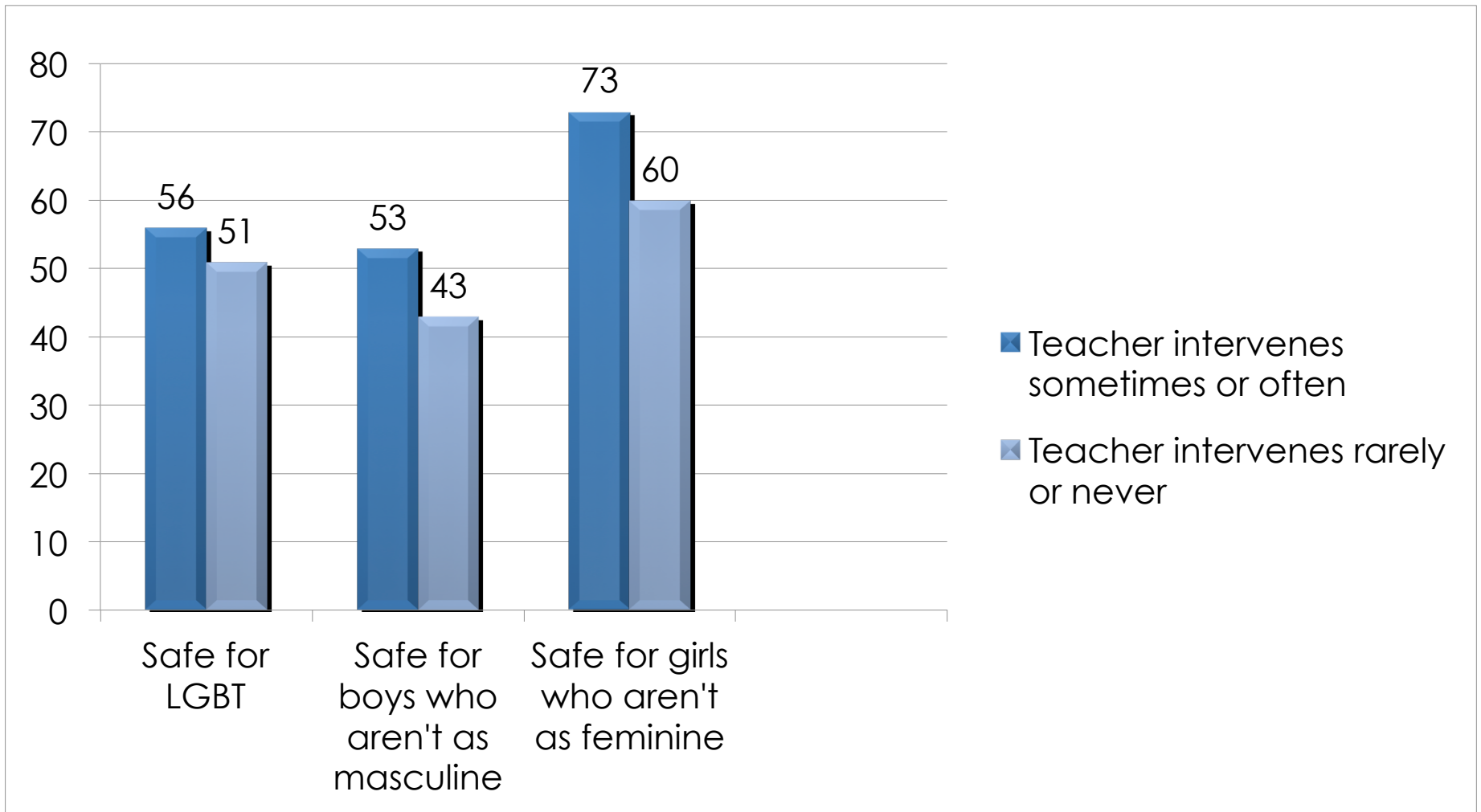Privately

- Allows harasser to "save face"
- Prevents possible embarrassment of target
- Allows you to cool down
- Allows more time to explore & discuss

Harassment is less common when teachers stop name-calling
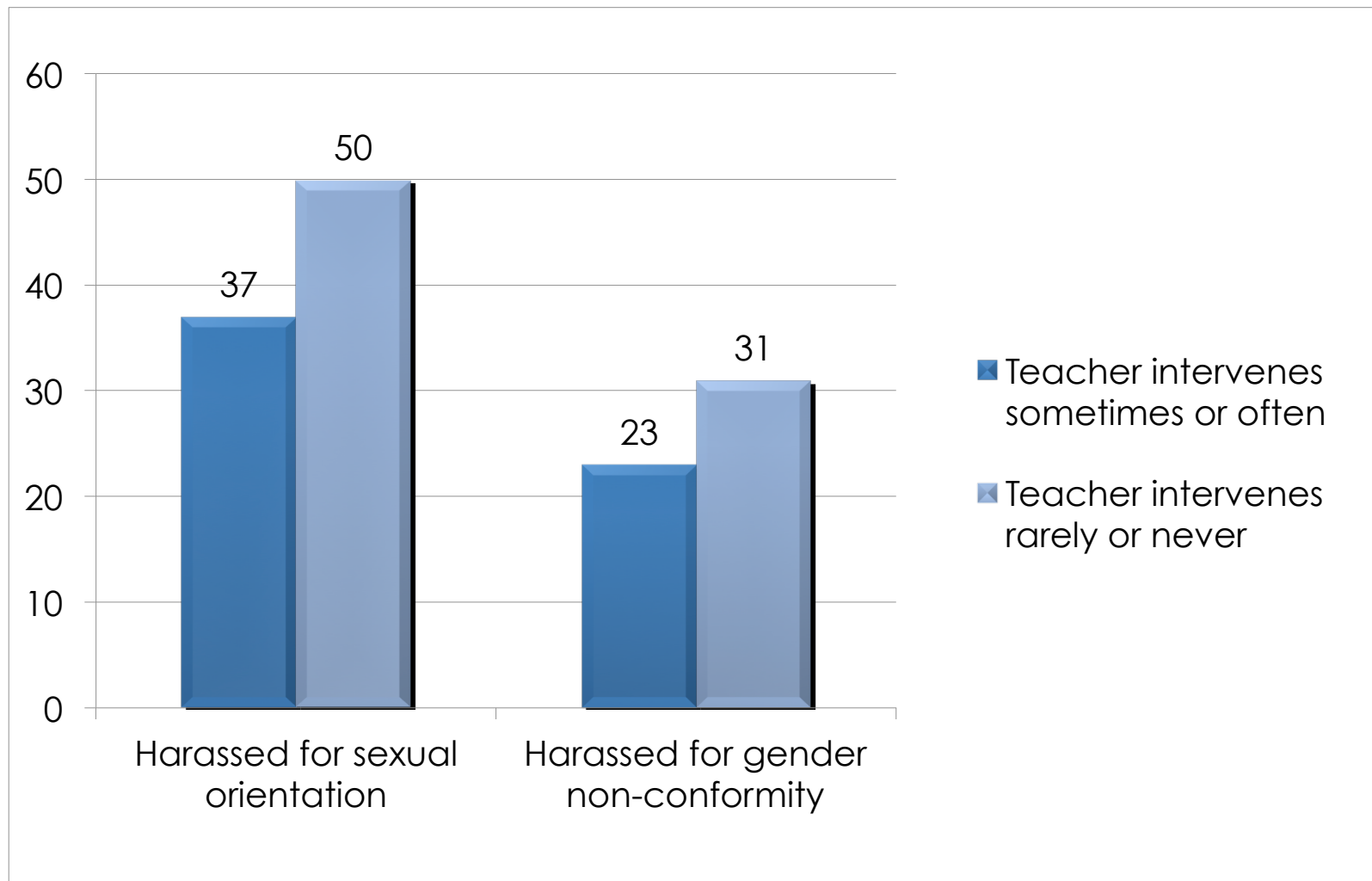
Students feel safer when teachers intervene
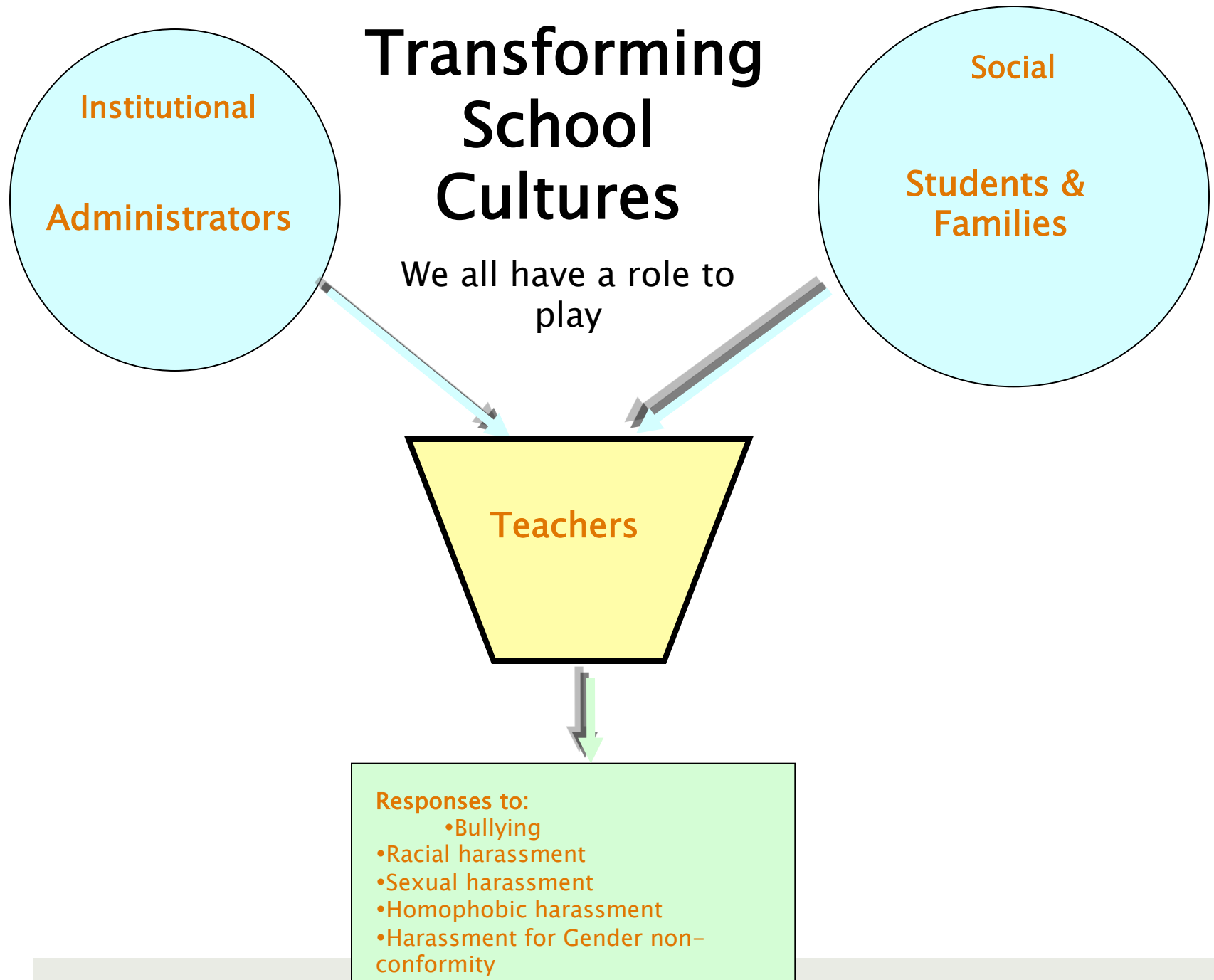
Classroom changes

- If you are heterosexual, don't state it. Allow yourself to be an ally while allowing others to be uncertain about your sexual orientation.

- Actively include issues relating to sexual orientation and gender identity in your classes.

- Invite GLBT speakers to address your class.

- If you are GLBT, consider coming out to your employer, and if you get their support, your students/school.

School changes

- "Stop and educate" in <u>public</u> areas (hall, cafeteria, bathrooms, locker rooms, etc.)

- Help students establish a Gay-Straight Alliance or other diversity group in your school.

- Request and/or help organize staff training on issues related to gendered harassment and cyberbullying.

- Build a network of colleagues interested in starting a safety & equity task force at your school.

- Revise and update school policies to address gendered harassment and cyber-bullying.

School changes

- Work with students to organize a "Day of Silence" (www.dayofsilence.org)

- Work with colleagues to organize a "No Name Calling Week" (www.nonamecallingweek.org)

- Invite parents, religious leaders, and community members to work on a safety and equity task force in your school and community.

- Ask your school librarian to create a display of books and resources on sex, gender, and sexual orientation.

- Encourage colleagues to integrate issues related to sex, gender, and sexual orientation diversity in their curriculum.

- Invite speakers and performance groups that address multiple issues of diversity, including: sex, gender, and sexual orientation.

Transforming School Cultures

We all have a role to play

Institutional

Administrators

Social

Students & Families

Teachers

Responses to:
- Bullying
- Racial harassment
- Sexual harassment
- Homophobic harassment
- Harassment for Gender non-conformity

Other Resources

▶ Welcoming Schools – www.welcomingschools.org

▶ Safe Schools Coalition www.safeschoolscoalition.org

▶ Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network www.glsen.org

▶ www.delicious.com/lizjmeyer

▶ http://sites.google.com/site/lizjmeyer/

▶ Contact me: ejmeyer@calpoly.edu