

LGBT EDUCATION

In this issue:

- The Netherlands integrate sexual diversity in care and social studies [\[español\]](#) [\[français\]](#)
- Study shows social exclusion to be at the core of LGBT teenage risk factors [\[español\]](#) [\[français\]](#)
- Transgender teen suicide creates movement against trans conversion therapy [\[español\]](#) [\[français\]](#)
- GALE discusses how to deal with "enemies" in Lithuania [\[español\]](#) [\[français\]](#)
- Dutch teenagers slightly more tolerant but still not supportive [\[español\]](#) [\[français\]](#)

LOCAL NEWS: NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands integrate sexual diversity in care and social studies

GALE, its Dutch partner EduDiversity, COC Netherlands and Theatre AanZ ("Your Turn") are developing a project to fully integrate attention for sexual diversity in Care & Social Studies for young adults in the

Netherlands. "Care & Social studies" qualify young people to become a nurse or a social worker. This is important because nurses and social workers have to be sensitive to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, especially to vulnerable young and elderly LGBT.



Scene from "Loosing Face", a play for vocational students

A multi-level approach

The project consists of a one-day training for teachers, follow-up coaching of teachers and course managers, a series of the theatre performances “Loos=song Face” for students, lessons and integrated attention in the supervision of internships. An additional part of the project is an attempt to make attention for sexual diversity a mandatory part of the national qualification criteria for nurses and social workers. The project uses interactive theatre as a very engaging way to motivate staff and students to engage with sexual diversity, which they otherwise would find not relevant for schools or even dangerous to discuss.

Have a nice weekend

The teacher training starts with a performance by AanZ of "Have a nice weekend", which is a scene in the school staff room on a Friday afternoon. A new lesbian teacher asks her colleagues how to deal with male students who fall in love with. These students also attempt to get her erotic attention. She gets mixed responses. One teacher encourages her to come out. Another advises her not to spoil her popularity. A third thinks she should keep her "personal affairs" out of the classroom.



Scene from “Have a nice weekend”

The play treats not only the coming-out of the lesbian teacher, but also how to teach about sexual diversity, how to work as a team on a safe environment and how to integrate adequate attention in a structural way in the school organization.

In the discussion after the play, the teachers can vote for different strategies and each of these are played out in life. This results in a list of tailored strategies for the particular school where the training takes place.

In the afternoon, teachers explore further how to practically implement their strategic choices in their classrooms and as a team effort.

Engaging students

Experience shows that the practical implementation of resolutions by teachers is not so easy. The young adults in these



course come from a variety of background and may have orthodox and very emotional negative views on homosexuality and trans sexuality. To make the first steps easier for them, Theatre AanZ plays a series of performances of "No Face", a play especially made for these students. AanZ also manages the discussion right after the performance. Mentors are encouraged to then have an additional discussion with students. The format of such mentor group discussions is provided by EduDiversity, which also facilitates some of these discussions to role-model this to the teachers. The teachers are provided with extra formats and suggestions on how to give an additional lesson on providing sensitive care to LGBT elderly people and social work for LGBT teenagers. Since a large percentage of care and social studies is taken up by internships, EduDiversity offers suggestions on how to monitor and coach such sensitivity in internships. LGBT students are engaged in the project by supporting them to create gay/straight alliances in their schools and they are invited to take part in a national feedback committee for the project.

Engaging course managers

To make sure the elicited attention does not just stay on the personal level of the teachers and students involved, the course managers are advised on how to integrate the attention in the courses in a structural way. This involves planning decisions and logistic coordination, reserving a budget and continued engagement of the staff by the management.

Ten pilots in schools will be run in 2015. A guide on how to implement this method will then become available. It is planned to roll-out the implementation of the method to all other Care & Social Studies in the Netherlands.

LOCAL NEWS: US RESEARCH

Study shows social exclusion and loneliness to be at the core of LGBT teenage risk factors

A recent article in "LGBT Health" shows LGBT youth with a high social economic background are more likely to receive support from family, peers, and significant others, while youth with lower social economic backgrounds receive less support. For most mental health outcomes, family support appears to be an especially relevant and important source of support to target for LGBT youth. The school context was not separately explored in this research.



Three types of support explore: family, peer and significant-other

Previous research has shown that experiencing victimization exposes LGBT youth to negative mental health outcomes (e.g. depression, self-harm, loneliness etc.). Furthermore, it indicated that social support lowers these outcomes.

Between 2007 and 2008, McConnell, Birkett and Mustanski from DePaul University and Northwestern University in Chicago (USA) conducted interviews with 232 self-identified LGBT teenagers. The participants were between 16 and 18 years old and they all lived in Chicago. The teenagers were asked to fill in a questionnaire and the results were interpreted with a cluster analysis. The case study elaborated three sources of social support: family, peer and significant-other. Significant others are described as "special persons with whom I can share my joys and sorrows".

More than half of the Chicago youth had low support from family

It was possible to sort the results in three different groups: low support, non-family support and high support. The study showed that 21.5% of the total sample experienced low levels of family, peer and significant-other support; 34.5% experienced low levels of family support and moderate levels of peer and significant-other support; 44% experienced high levels of family, peer and significant-other support.



In the final analysis, the study established that 60% of the participants reported low levels of family support and had consequently negative mental health outcomes. For most mental outcomes, family support seems to be an especially relevant and important source of support to target for LGBT youth.

Low social support results in loneliness and other negative mental health outcomes

The socio-economic status (SES) played an important part in the results: teenagers from high or middle-class were most likely to fall within the high social support cluster, while those who reported low social class were most likely to fall within the non-family support cluster (McConnell et al, 2015: 3).

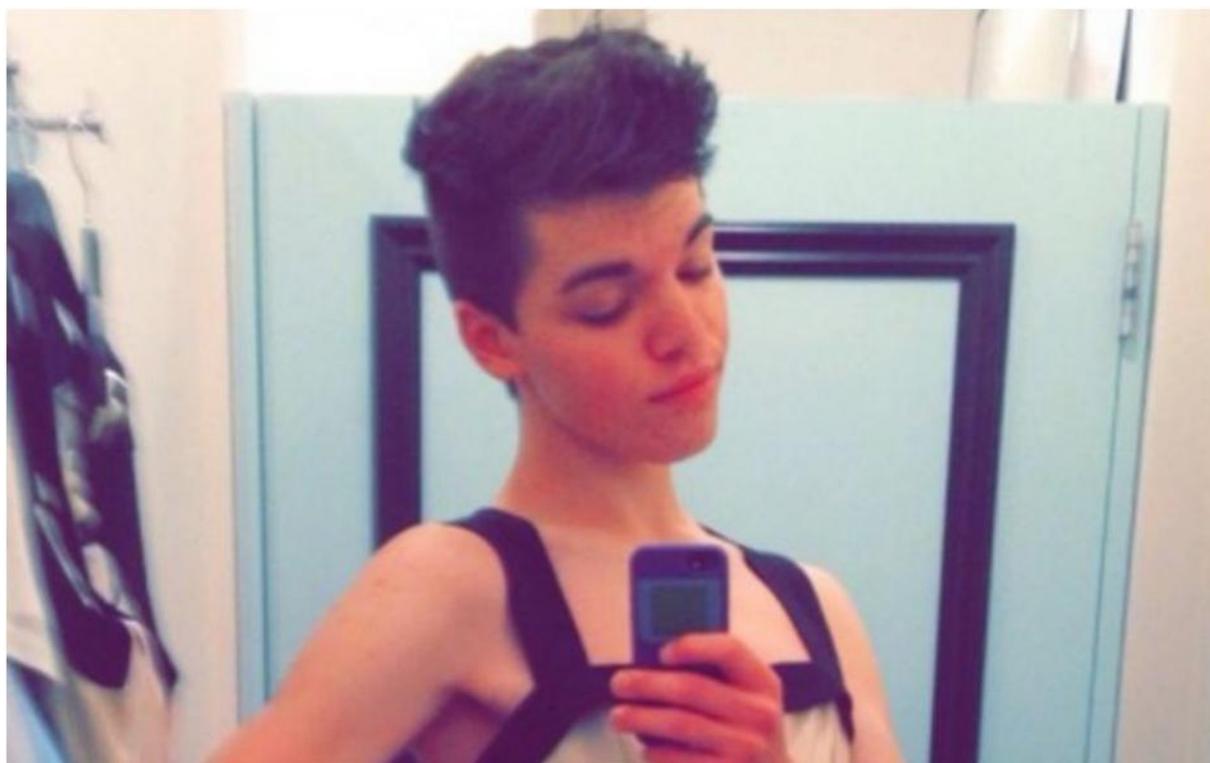
Elizabeth McConnell and her colleagues demonstrated that the low support cluster reported significantly more hopelessness, loneliness, depression, anxiety, somatization, suicidality, and global severity than those in the high support cluster. However, the study also showed that even when teenagers lack family support but do get support from peers and significant others, they feel significantly less lonely.

Source: http://online.liebertpub.com/doi/full/10.1089/lgbt.2014.0051#utm_source=FastTrack&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=lgbt

Transgender teen suicide creates movement against trans conversion therapy

On Sunday, December 27, 2014, Leelah Alcorn, a 17 year old transgender youth wrote a suicide note, posted it on Tumblr and then walked out to a highway and out in front of a semi-truck tragically ending

her life. In her last post, Leelah explained how her parents had forced her to attend conversion therapy, pulled her out of school and isolated her in an attempt to change her gender identity.



A suicide note

Leelah's suicide note has been shared across the world. She wrote: "If you are reading this, it means that I have committed suicide and obviously failed to delete this post from my queue. Please don't be sad, it's for the better. The life I would've lived isn't worth living in because I'm transgender. I could go into detail explaining why I feel that way, but this note is probably going to be lengthy enough as it is. To put it simply, I feel like a girl trapped in a boy's body, and I've felt that way ever since I was 4. I never knew there was a word for that feeling, nor was it possible for a boy to become a girl, so I never told anyone and I just continued to do traditionally boyish things to try to fit in."

"When I was 14, I learned what transgender meant and cried of happiness. After 10 years of confusion I finally understood who I was. I immediately told my mom, and she reacted extremely negatively, telling me that it was a phase, that I would never truly be a girl, that God doesn't make mistakes, that I am wrong. If you are reading this, parents, please don't tell this to your kids. Even if you are Christian or are

against transgender people don't ever say that to someone, especially your kid. That won't do anything but make them hate them self. That's exactly what it did to me.

My mom started taking me to a therapist, but would only take me to Christian therapists, (who were all very biased) so I never actually got the therapy I needed to cure me of my depression. I only got more Christians telling me that I was selfish and wrong and that I should look to God for help."

"I formed a sort of a fuck you attitude towards my parents and came out as gay at school, thinking that maybe if I eased into coming out as trans it would be less of a shock. Although the reaction from my friends was positive, my parents were pissed. They felt like I was attacking their image, and that I was an



embarrassment to them. They wanted me to be their perfect little straight Christian boy, and that's obviously not what I wanted."

"So they took me out of public school, took away my laptop and phone, and forbid me of getting on any

sort of social media, completely isolating me from my friends. This was probably the part of my life when I was the most depressed, and I'm surprised I didn't kill myself. I was completely alone for 5 months. No friends, no support, no love. Just my parents disappointment and the cruelty of loneliness."

"The only way I will rest in peace is if one day transgender people aren't treated the way I was, they're treated like humans, with valid feelings and human rights. Gender needs to be taught about in schools, the earlier the better. My death needs to mean something. My death needs to be counted in the number of transgender people who commit suicide this year. I want someone to look at that number and say that's fucked up and fix it. Fix society. Please. Goodbye, (Leelah) Josh Alcorn"

Mother cannot reconcile herself with the facts

He was a good kid, a good boy, Leelah's Carla Alcorn said, adding that the family religiously did not support Leelah's transgender identity but told him that we loved him unconditionally. In interviews on US TV stations she kept on referring to Leelah as "Josh" and "him". She denied they send Leelah to conversion therapy. We didn't have the money for anything like that. But she confirmed that Leelah had spoken to her at least once about transitioning. That's when the parents pulled her from school, cut off from her friends and forced to stay in her room alone.



Parents of Leelah

Call to stop transgender conversion therapy

According to a recent US study in Pediatrics (20 February 2012) gender-dysphoric children who do not receive medical treatment or counseling can be at high-risk for certain behavioral and emotional problems, including psychiatric diagnoses. Of 97 patients younger than 21 years who met the criteria for GID, 44 percent had a prior history of psychiatric symptoms, 37 percent were taking psychotropic medications, and 21.6 percent had a history of self-mutilation and suicide attempts.



In the pursuit of honoring Leelah's last request, a movement started to formally forbid Transgender conversion therapy' in the United States. Petitions were set up on change.org, to plead for a "Leelah Alcorn" law and to plead for Leelah's female name to be put on her tomb stone. The petition for the law was signed by 322.000 people.

Above: Leelah turns into an icon

Sources:

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/progressivesecularhumanist/2014/12/transgender-teen-commits-suicide-cites-christian-parents-in-blog/>

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/progressivesecularhumanist/2014/12/transgender-teen-commits-suicide-cites-christian-parents-in-blog/#ixzz3NMunvb4L>

<http://www.newnownext.com/leelah-alcorns-mother-feels-no-guilt-over-daughters-death-i-loved-my-son-he-was-a-good-boy/01/2015/>

GALE discusses how to deal with "enemies" in Lithuania

On 2nd October 2014 GALE was one of the speakers at the conference on Tackling Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying: Challenges and Effective Responses, organized by the national LGBT rights organization of Lithuania, LGL. International and national experts shared their views on psychological aspects of bullying, empowerment of young LGBTQ people and good practices at school and national policies.



Photo: Marinus Schouten (GALE), Vladimir Simonko (chairman LGL) and Bert van der Lingen (ambassador Embassy of the Netherlands in Lithuania).

Dealing with emotions

On behalf of GALE, Marinus Schouten explored the connection between human rights education and sexual diversity. He described tentative stage state seems to go through when implementing the right to education. He also went into the core factor for change: reaching out to the hearts of people who are usually considered opponents of LGBT rights. The core of dealing with resistance is how you deal with their and your own emotions.

Schouten also explored the role of storytelling in education and advocacy. Such storytelling is most effective when it is not just shaped by your own negative emotions like, fear and anger. Schouten gave several suggestions on how to use the language and interests of the "enemy" to frame your LGBT story. A key is to stop seeing homophobes and transphobic people as enemies. Instead, we can try to see them as people who are afraid to lose contexts and morals they consider valuable. Their need is to learn to deal with diversity.



Is Lithuania a denying or ambiguous State?

Because GALE was stressing these fundamental principles, it was asked if Lithuania was a "denying" or "ambiguous" State with respect to the right to education. Both during the panel discussion, Schouten explained that the used stage model should be seen as an instrument to develop strategy rather than to simply use it as a determination. On one hand, the legal situation with respect to LGBT rights in Lithuania is threatening. On the other hand the plan to develop a national plan against school bullying - including homophobic and transphobic bullying - is very promising. During the panel discussion, parliament members from both social and liberal parties found each other in supporting this policy case.

This discussion was also broadcasted by the national Lithuanian television.

The conference was mainly attended by politicians and health professionals. Only one teacher was present. But as Rugilė Butkeviūtė showed in her presentation on Violence and bullying on the grounds of gender at school and online more than 300 teachers were involved in e-learning on this subject. This shows there is interest in combating bullying.

More local information: <http://www.lgl.lt/en/news/lgbt-guide-lt/effective-response-bullying-international-conference-vilnius/>

LOCAL NEWS: NETHERLANDS

Dutch teenagers slightly more tolerant but still not supportive

According to a survey by the Dutch Social and Cultural Planning Bureau, the superficial opinions of heterosexual youth about sexual diversity have improved over the last few years, but LGBT youth still often remain in the closet and have to deal with negative experiences. Especially effeminate boys and butch girls suffer discrimination.

Heterosexual youth are ambivalent about LGBT

The Social and Cultural Planning Bureau (SCP) says young people in the Netherlands are now regularly confronted with positive images and stories about lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders. But this does not lead to a positive attitude towards LGBT youth. The view of heterosexual youth is ambivalent.

Two-thirds of primary school pupils (67%) and three-quarters of pupils in secondary education (76%) indicates that LGBT youth could be their friends.

But LGB youth should not kiss each other. 36% of primary school pupils and 34% of pupils in secondary education says two guys kissing are dirty. 33% and 19% thinks girls kissing is dirty.

Also, many students state you better not tell anyone if you

are gay in their school. 23% think that you cannot tell this, 39% think that only you can tell your best friends.



Superficial opinions improved

The attitudes of students seem improved between 2009 and 2013. But the SCP cannot analyze if this is a statistical coincidence. Most of the teenagers (aged 16-21) find equality fine and indicate "that LGBT should be free to live their lives as they wish". They also agree LGBT people can be a teacher. But kissing, cuddling or walking hand-in-hand meets disapproval by a significant group of young adults. Also, 17% would find it difficult when their own son or daughter would be gay or lesbian.

Differences between LGB and heterosexual youth

A common argument in Dutch schools to not pay attention to sexual diversity is that LGBT youth are "normal". They should be treated the same as other young people and specific attention would be damaging.

But the SCP says that the differences between LGB- and young heterosexuals outnumber the similarities. LGB students have more problems at home and at school. They experience less support from the family, talk less with parents about concerns, find school less fun, experienced a negative atmosphere in the classroom and a worse relationship with the teacher, skip school more often and are more often bullied. They exercise less, have more overweight and their alcohol, cigarette and marijuana use is two to six times as high. On a scale 1-10, they rate their lives at 6, as opposed to heterosexual students who rate their lives as 8. They report poorer health and have more psychosomatic, emotional and behavioral problems. They have less self-esteem and a lot more psychological problems. In addition, LGB-young adults report significantly more suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts.

Truancy because of poor relationship with teachers

According to SCP, the higher level of truancy of LGB-school students is due worse relationships with their parents and teachers. There is an interaction between low support in their environment and their psychosomatic, emotional and behavioral problems. Unfortunately, the SCP cannot assess to what extent the situation at home, school, study and work relatively affect LGB young adults.

However, it is clear that some of the differences in loneliness and suicidal thoughts are related to the greater degree of gender nonconformity (effeminate boys and butch girls). LGB youth are often lonely and often think of suicide because they behave less in line with the prevailing gender standards. Four in ten LGB young adults were faced with negative reactions in the past year. A quarter regularly adapted their behavior to not be visible. For example they do not touch their partner in public and avoid certain places.

Recommendation goes against government policy

The SCP cannot give concrete recommendations. The institute states there is no evidence based approach for improving the school climate for LGB students. The SCP therefore believes that new interventions need to be developed and tested. This



recommendation goes square against the policy of the Dutch government, which has banned any form of funding by the government for new interventions. The Dutch government believes the current Gay/Straight Alliances of students, volunteer panel sessions and the limited attention for sexual diversity in regular sex education programs are enough. It sees better implementation mainly in terms of better marketing for these interventions.

Interestingly, the SCP also recommends that effective interventions should not only focus on gay / trans discrimination or coming-out. High impact interventions should also focus on the general problems LGB youth often have to deal with such as gender, truancy, family problems, school experience, bullying, substance use and mental problems.

Source: <http://www.edudivers.nl/doc/onderzoek/SCP-2015-Jongeren-en-seksuele-oriëntatie.pdf>

[Join as GALE member](#). Membership is free!

[Únete eje miembro GALE](#). La membresía es gratis!

[Rejoignez axe membre de GALE](#). L'adhésion est gratuite!

Colophon

LGBT EDUCATION 14

14 FEBRUARY 2015

Published by the GALE Foundation,

Supporter of the Global Alliance for LGBT Education, info@lgbt-education.info.

The GALE Foundation is financially supported by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science