

FACTORS INFLUENCING ALLIES' ROLES WITHIN SCHOOLS:

KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, AND BARRIERS

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## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all educators who are making LGBTQ students feel seen, valued, and protected within their school communities each day. Whether your allyship involves addressing bias/harassment with students and colleagues, fostering an overall atmosphere of acceptance and safety, letting students know you are a safe person to talk to, getting involved in LGBTQ-supportive groups, including LGBTQ-inclusive content in your curriculum, committing yourself to staying educated and helping to educate others, being mindful of the language you use, displaying a visual symbol of your support or advocating for school-level changes, the impact of your support and advocacy for this population could never be emphasized enough; you are quite literally saving lives through these actions. I hope you continue this important work while empowering those around you to do the same. The world is a better place for our LGBTQ youth when they are surrounded by allies like you. On behalf of all the students you are supporting within our schools, thank you.

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## Abstract

The current study sought to examine factors influencing LGBTQ allies' roles within middle and high schools. This was an expansion upon Swanson and Gettinger's (2016) study by using their *Providing Services & Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey* to further examine LGBTQ-supportive school staff, or allies. First, the association between demographic characteristics and allyship was investigated. Then, since this measure has not been used much in research and is one of the only tools available to survey this population of allies to LGBTQ youth, the validity and reliability of the measure were assessed. Lastly, a path analysis was used to determine the relationship between the subscales of the *Providing Services & Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey*, specifically knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and barriers. Briefly, it was hypothesized that certain demographics would be associated with a higher degree of allyship, the *Providing Services & Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey* would be supported as a valid and reliable measure to be used in future research, and there would be relationships between knowledge and behaviors, and attitudes and behaviors, with both relationships being mediated by barriers. Results indicated limited support for the predictability of demographic characteristics on allyship. Additionally, results from the current sample indicated poor reliability and validity support for this measure, particularly with the knowledge and attitudes scales, likely suggesting these constructs are not measured appropriately by the items that make up each scale. Lastly, knowledge was not found to be a significant predictor of behaviors, whereas attitudes was found to be a significant predictor of behaviors. These relationships were both mediated by barriers.

*Keywords:* LGBTQ youth, allies, knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, barriers

## **Chapter I: Introduction and Literature Review**

In recent years, there has been increased attention in the literature to the experiences of sexual and gender minority individuals (Kosciw, Palmer, Kull, & Greytak, 2013), particularly within the school environment (Heck, Poteat, & Goodenow, 2016; Kosciw, Byard, Fischer, & Joslin, 2007). This literature review will begin with a discussion of the cultural norms of heteronormativity (Mayo, 2014) and homophobia in the United States (Gratson, 2012), which contribute to some of the negative experiences of sexual and gender minority students at school. These experiences include harassment and discrimination (Kosciw, Greytak, Zongrone, Clark, & Truong, 2018) and social exclusion/isolation (Pearson, Miller, & Wilkinson, 2007; Ueno, 2005). After reviewing these negative experiences, there will be a discussion regarding the impacts of these experiences on the students. Specifically, these negative experiences often contribute to poor attendance, lower levels of self-esteem, lower sense of school belonging, and increased levels of anxiety and depression (Kosciw et al., 2018).

Next, the importance of school-based supports for improving outcomes for this population of students will be explored. These supports include Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer/Questioning (LGBTQ)-inclusive laws and policies (Kull, Greytak, Kosciw, & Villenas, 2016), LGBTQ-inclusive curricula (Kosciw et al., 2018), Gay-Straight Alliances (Marx & Kettrey, 2016), and supportive school staff (Kosciw et al., 2013). In particular, a thorough review of supportive school staff will be provided, ending with a discussion of Swanson and Gettinger's (2016) study, which serves as a foundation for the current study. This 2016 study explored how teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors in support of sexual and gender minority students are affected by the presence of school-level supports. Finally, the current study will be introduced as an expansion of the Swanson and Gettinger

(2016) study to further examine supportive school staff of LGBTQ students. Specifically, research questions for the current study will incorporate the following:

1. Understanding how various demographic characteristics predict the likelihood of being supportive toward LGBTQ individuals.
2. Examining the reliability and validity of the scale developed by Swanson and Gettinger (2016) as a measure of LGBTQ-supportive educators to determine if it is a measure that can be used in further research with this population.
3. Using the scale developed by Swanson and Gettinger to understand the relationship between “knowledge” of risk factors and legal rights of LGBTQ youth, general “attitudes” toward LGBTQ youth and “behaviors/roles” to support LGBTQ youth within the school environment. There will also be an exploration of “barriers” to these behaviors/roles and how they impact these relationships.

### **Heteronormativity and Homophobia in the U.S.**

Within the culture of the United States, heterosexuality is considered the norm. This is referred to as heteronormativity, or “the pervasive assumption that sexual and gender difference is just not there” (Mayo, 2014, p. 20). As a result of heteronormativity, heterosexuals experience power and privileges within our society that are oftentimes denied to those that do not align with this norm (Washington & Evans, 1991). Due to their position within a disadvantaged group in our country, it is difficult for people to display any sexual or gender difference.

Furthermore, feelings of discomfort, fear, or extreme repulsion toward people that do not conform to the heteronormative ideals of our country is known as homophobia (Gratson, 2012). For people growing up in the United States, a society that values and teaches heterosexist norms, homophobia is the consequence of internalized hateful attitudes and beliefs about sexual and

gender diverse individuals (Macgillivray, 2000). Unfortunately, homophobic beliefs can lead to harassment and discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Additionally, not speaking out against this harassment and discrimination, or simply remaining silent in these instances, further contributes to homophobia. As a result of forming schooling, children are socialized to the cultural norms of our country (Bishop, 2010); therefore, heteronormative and homophobic beliefs are especially prevalent within school settings (Carrott et al., 2016; Ouellett, 1996; Quinlivan & Town, 1999; Steck & Perry, 2018).

### **Describing Sexual and Gender Diverse Youth**

When discussing those within the sexual and gender minority community, there are many different ways to refer to these individuals. Additionally, terminology is constantly changing and evolving to be inclusive of this group. Therefore, it is important to begin this review with a section to familiarize the reader with the terminology that will be used.

The acronym “LGBTQ” is commonly used when referring to sexual and gender minority individuals, which includes individuals that are “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer/questioning.” Notably, queer is an umbrella term used to describe individuals that are not heterosexual and/or cisgender, whereas questioning is used to represent individuals that are questioning their sexual orientation and/or gender identity (Mayo, 2014).

Glossaries can be helpful for reducing confusion surrounding commonly used language; however, the terminology used with sexual and gender minority individuals is constantly evolving and certain terms can mean different things to different people. Therefore, terminology and their definitions should simply be used as a starting point toward greater understanding of those within the sexual and gender minority community (LGBTQIA Recourse Center Glossary, n.d.). Although LGBTQ is commonly used when referring to this population, many different

acronyms are used in an attempt to be inclusive of all the diverse sexual and gender identities that one might have. Due to this, there are several glossaries available from various organizations to provide definitions of common terms that are used when referring to this population (Human Rights Campaign, (n.d.); The Trevor Project, (2017); LGBTQIA Resource Center (n.d.)).

Despite the plethora of ever evolving terminology that is available to refer to this population, LGBTQ will be used throughout this paper when referring to sexual and gender minority individuals, as this is a well-known and commonly used acronym. In instances in which a certain study did not include a specific group of individuals that is included within the LGBTQ acronym, a note will be made or the acronym will be adjusted to reflect the population that was included in the study (e.g., LGBT for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender individuals or LGB for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual individuals).

### **Increased Attention in the Literature**

In recent years, there has been increased attention in the literature to the experiences of sexual and gender minority youth (e.g., LGBTQ) (Kosciw et al., 2013), especially within the school environment (Heck et al., 2016; Kosciw et al., 2007). The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) has greatly contributed to this increased attention. Founded in 1990, GLSEN is the leading national education organization with the goal of ensuring safe and affirming schools for LGBTQ students. This goal is achieved by conducting extensive and original research, authoring developmentally appropriate resources for educators, partnering with decision makers and other national education organizations, and empowering students to affect change (GLSEN, n.d. -a).

In 1999, GLSEN recognized that limited information was available about the experiences of LGBTQ youth, especially in national studies of adolescents. After recognizing this need,

GLSEN launched the National School Climate Survey (NSCS), which is given every two years to collect current data about this population. This involves examining indicators of negative school climate, the effects of school climate on student outcomes, in addition to the availability and benefits of crucial school-based supports (Kosciw et al., 2018).

According to the participation criteria from the most recent NSCS, youth were eligible to participate in the 2019 survey if they satisfied the following criteria: at least 13 years old; attended a K-12 school in the U.S. the year before the survey was given; identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer or a sexual orientation other than heterosexual, or described themselves as transgender or having a gender identity that is not cisgender (Kosciw, Clark, Truong, & Zongrone, 2020). The survey, provided in English or Spanish, is available online through GLSEN's website. Additionally, notices and announcements are sent through GLSEN's email and chapter networks as well as through national, regional, and local organizations that provide services to or advocate on behalf of LGBTQ youth. To ensure adequate representation of transgender and gender non-conforming youth, youth of color, and youth in rural communities, there are additional outreach efforts made to notify groups and organizations that work predominately with these populations about the survey. Finally, in order to broaden the reach of LGBTQ students who may not have connections with these groups and organizations, targeted outreach and advertising through social media sites is used. This involves advertising on Facebook and Instagram, promoting the survey to youth connected to Facebook pages relevant to LGBTQ students, and advertising on YouTube accounts identified as having a LGBTQ youth following.

In the most recent NSCS, there were 16,713 total survey respondents from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and Guam. The final sample was 69.2%

White, 51.4% identified as cisgender, 40.4% identified as gay or lesbian, and the largest number of students were in 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grades (Kosciw et al., 2020).

Importantly, because this survey is conducted every two years, GLSEN is able to identify trends in the experiences of LGBTQ students within schools and the school-based supports that are available. Unfortunately, results from NSCS conducted in 2017 revealed that progress toward more LGBTQ-inclusive schools had actually stalled for the first time in several years and the school environment has gotten worse for transgender and gender non-conforming youth (GLSEN, 2018). Specifically, there were fewer positive changes. Positive changes would be evidenced by decreased levels of victimization or discrimination and increased school support. In the most recent NSCS, there were more positive changes than were seen in the 2017 survey; however, there were not as many positive changes in comparison to those that have been documented in years prior to the 2017 survey (Kosciw et al., 2020).

Although there had been progress toward more LGBTQ-inclusive schools until the 2017 survey, for transgender students specifically, this trend was different. There was a steady increase of negative remarks about transgender people from 2013 to 2017. Additionally, there was an upward trend in the frequency of staff making negative remarks about gender expression from 2013 to 2017 (Kosciw et al., 2018). Although there was a steady increase from 2013 to 2017, results from the most recent NSCS reveal the frequency of hearing negative remarks about transgender people has decreased between 2017 and 2019. Furthermore, results from the most recent NSCS show the frequency of school staff making negative remarks about gender expression have decreased to levels that are similar to the findings from the 2015 survey (Kosciw et al., 2020). A more specific examination of the experiences of LGBTQ youth within schools is provided throughout the discussion below.

## Negative Experiences of LGBTQ Youth at School

### *Harassment and Discrimination of LGBTQ Youth*

Previous research examining the school-based experiences of LGBTQ youth has established consistent negative encounters for these students, including instances of harassment and discrimination. Muñoz-Plaza, Quinn, and Rounds highlighted this finding by referring to the classroom as “the most homophobic of all social institutions” (2002, p. 53), as homophobia is more concentrated and more violent in high school environments (Elia, 1993) and there is a lack of social support systems for homosexual youth (Unks, 1994). Specifically, LGBTQ youth are faced with high levels of verbal and physical harassment (Kosciw et al., 2018), which is often specifically related to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression (Kosciw et al., 2013). Notably, sexual minority students experience disproportionate levels of harassment (Bontempo & D’Augelli, 2002).

As defined within the 2017 NSCS Full Report, verbal harassment may include hearing the word *gay* used in a negative way, or witnessing negative remarks about gender expression, such as not acting “masculine enough” or “feminine enough.” Physical harassment may involve pushing and shoving, whereas physical assault involves being punched, kicked, or injured with a weapon (Kosciw et al., 2018). In the most recent NSCS, 68.7% of LGBTQ youth experienced verbal harassment at school based on sexual orientation and 56.9% based on gender expression. Additionally, 25.7% of LGBTQ students were physically harassed and 11.0% were physically assaulted in the past year based on sexual orientation. Shockingly, in the past year at school, 58.3% of LGBTQ students were sexually harassed, including instances of unwanted touching or sexual remarks (Kosciw et al., 2020).

It is important to mention that most LGBTQ students do not report instances of harassment and discrimination to school officials. As outlined in the 2019 NSCS, 56.6% of LGBTQ youth who were harassed or assaulted at school did not report the incident to a member of the school staff, usually because they did not think effective intervention would occur or they feared that reporting the incident would make the harassment worse. Additionally, 60.5% of LGBTQ students who did report instances of harassment or assault indicated that the school staff person did nothing in response to their report or told the student to ignore the harassment (Kosciw et al., 2020).

### ***Social Exclusion and Isolation***

In addition to harassment, LGBTQ students experience social exclusion and isolation. On average, sexual minority students have a more difficult time getting along with peers, teachers, and parents, and overall are less emotionally attached to others (Ueno, 2005). Previous research suggests that the social stigma that lesbian, gay, and bisexual students face can lead to emotional distress, ultimately contributing to these students withdrawing and disengaging from their school community (Pearson et al., 2007). Additionally, research has established that sexual minority youth are at an increased risk for absenteeism, partly due to feelings of fear or avoidance, in addition to higher rates of depression and anxiety (Burton, Marshal, & Chisolm, 2014).

### **Impacts of these Experiences on LGBTQ Youth**

Previous research has explored the outcomes of these negative experiences for LGBTQ youth within the school environment (Aragon, Poteat, Espelage, & Koenig, 2014; Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009; Bontempo & D'Augelli, 2002; Burton, et al., 2014; Kosciw, Greytak, & Diaz, 2009; Kosciw et al., 2013). Importantly, a relationship has been established

between the amount of harassment these students are experiencing and their resulting negative outcomes (Aragon et al., 2014; Bontempo & D'Augelli, 2002). Results from the 2019 NSCS regarding effects of a hostile school climate revealed that LGBTQ students who experienced higher levels of victimization surrounding their sexual orientation were nearly three times as likely to have missed school in the past month in comparison to students who experienced lower levels of harassment. Additionally, these students had lower grade point averages (GPAs), had lower self-esteem, and a decreased sense of school belonging in comparison to students who experienced lower levels of harassment (Kosciw et al., 2020). Lastly, these students who experienced higher levels of harassment were nearly twice as likely to report that they did not plan to pursue post-secondary education and were also nearly twice as likely to have been disciplined at school. Similar results were found within the 2019 NSCS for LGBTQ students who experienced higher levels of victimization because of their gender expression.

The relationship between negative school experiences and harmful psychological effects, including low self-esteem, depression, and anxiety, has been well documented in the literature (Bontempo & D'Augelli, 2002; Burton et al., 2014; Toomey, Ryan, Diaz, & Russell, 2010). Using longitudinal data to compare sexual minority youth and heterosexual youth, it was determined that depression and anxiety symptoms were stronger predictors of unexcused absences for sexual minority youth (Burton et al., 2014). Previous research has also found that LGBTQ students are more likely to display suicidal ideation and behavior (Birkett et al., 2009; De Pedro, Lynch, & Esqueda, 2018). Furthermore, higher levels of peer victimization and lower levels of social support in school are associated with a history of attempted suicide, suicidal ideation, and self-harm for LGBTQ youth (Mustanski & Lui, 2013). Finally, these negative

outcomes for LGBTQ youth also involve health risks, such as substance abuse, risky sexual behavior, and suicide attempts (Bontempo & D'Augelli, 2002).

### **Importance of School-Based Supports**

Due to the negative outcomes that have been documented for LGBTQ students, and the findings that at-school victimization relates to these outcomes, there is an obvious need for social support and positive school climates to improve outcomes for this population. Therefore, research in recent years has shifted away from solely examining the negative experiences of LGBTQ youth toward attempting to understand factors within the school environment that contribute to positive outcomes for these students (Russell, Kosciw, Horn, & Saewyc, 2010). Importantly, previous research suggests that LGBTQ-affirming school climates can act as a protective factor for LGBTQ students, ultimately contributing to lower rates of victimization and increased feelings of safety within the school (Wimberly, 2015). There are several school-based supports that can be used to establish a more supportive, welcoming environment for all students, while specifically helping to diminish the negative impact of victimization on mental health and educational outcomes for LGBTQ youth (Kosciw et al., 2013). The school-based resources that contribute to improved school climate and better academic and social outcomes for these students include the following: LGBTQ –inclusive laws and policies, LGBTQ-inclusive curricula, having a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) or similar student club, and being able to identify supportive school staff (Kosciw et al., 2018).

### ***LGBTQ-Inclusive Laws and Policies***

According to GLSEN, one of the most effective steps that school districts and states can take to improve overall school climate and make schools safer for all students is to enact safe school laws and policies, which protect LGBTQ students in K-12 schools (GLSEN, n.d. -b).

Despite the benefits of these school resources, the majority of LGBTQ students do not have access to these protections (Kosciw et al., 2018). This section will provide a review of LGBTQ-inclusive laws and policies at the school, state, and federal level. At the school level, this involves anti-bullying policies that are inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. At the state level, this includes enumerated anti-bullying laws, nondiscrimination laws, and policies ensuring transgender athletes can participate in sports, in addition to laws that could harm or stigmatize LGBTQ students. Finally, several federal court cases against schools who failed to protect LGBTQ students will be included. As evidenced by these cases, school districts are liable under federal law to protect LGBTQ students from harassment.

**School-Level Policies.** Research suggests anti-bullying policies that are inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression can contribute to better outcomes for sexual minority youth (Kull, et al., 2013; Kosciw et al., 2013). Specifically, LGBTQ students in schools with a comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policy were less likely to hear “gay” used in a negative way often or frequently, were less likely to hear other homophobic remarks such as “fag” or “dyke” often or frequently, and experienced less anti-LGBTQ harassment. Additionally, these students more likely to report victimization incidents to school staff and more likely to rate their response as effective (Kosciw et al., 2020). Comprehensive school policies have also been correlated with more positive feelings of self-esteem for LGBT students (Kosciw et al., 2013), and a greater sense of school safety (Kull et al., 2016). Despite these established benefits, only 13.5% of students in the 2019 NSCS reported that their school had a comprehensive policy that provided specific protections involving sexual orientation and gender identity/expression (Kosciw et al., 2020).

In May 2015, GLSEN published a report examining the policies of every school district in the United States (Kull, Kosciw, & Greytak, 2015), specifically regarding protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students. At this time, only 1 in 10 districts had a policy with specific protections for students based on actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. This finding is consistent with results from the most recent NSCS as discussed above (Kosciw et al., 2020) suggesting that the overwhelming majority of schools do not outline policies with specific protections for students based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. Additionally, only 2 in 10 districts required professional development for educators on general bullying and harassment within their schools. Importantly, GLSEN concluded that laws and guidance from the state level greatly influenced district policies. Specifically, having a state anti-bullying law doubled the likelihood that a district had an anti-bullying policy in place.

Within this May 2015 review, some regional conclusions were drawn (Kull et al., 2015). Whereas districts in the Northeast were most likely to have anti-bullying policies, to have LGBT-inclusive policies, and to have policies that included professional development requirements for teachers, districts in the South were least likely to enumerate protections for LGBT students within their anti-bullying policies. Additionally, rural districts were least likely to have anti-bullying policies in general, to enumerate protections to any group of students, to have policies that were LGBT-inclusive, and to include professional development requirements. Overall, districts that had anti-bullying policies that were LGBT-inclusive and required professional development were more likely to have a larger student population, have higher student to teacher ratios, dedicate more spending per pupil, and have a higher SES.

The Kull et al. (2015) finding regarding less LGBT-supportive environments in rural schools supports results from a previous study. O'Connell, Atlas, Saunders, and Philbrick (2010) conducted an exploratory investigation to examine the attitudes and perceptions of rural school staff toward sexual minority students. The final sample consisted of 653 educational professionals working at public schools in three rural counties in New York State. Results revealed that participants viewed sexual minority students less favorable than other minority groups, reported hearing homophobic speech within schools, and suggested that school-based supports for sexual minority students were unavailable. Although these findings signified a negative school climate, almost all respondents indicated they were comfortable working with sexual minority students; however, fewer were actually willing to do something to support these students (e.g., further their personal knowledge about issues for sexual minority youth or create a safe place in schools for these students). In drawing their conclusions, O'Connell et al. (2010) suggested that school personnel are not aware/tend to minimize the negative impact of harmful comments and limited resources on LGBTQ students. Additionally, participants may have responded in a socially appropriate or biased manner concerning their comfort level working with this population of students. Finally, it was noted that mental health personnel were more likely than other school personnel to attend workshops, discuss LGBTQ issues with their colleagues, and designate their offices at a safe place, likely due to their focus on students' emotional well-being and their willingness to engage in professional development opportunities.

**State-Level Laws and Policies.** As mentioned above, state-level laws and guidance regarding protections for LGBTQ students greatly influences policies at the school-level; therefore, it is important to also include a review of laws and policies at the state level. GLSEN tracks two types of safe school laws across states: enumerated anti-bullying and

nondiscrimination laws (GLSEN, n.d. -b). Enumerated anti-bullying laws specifically prohibit bullying and harassment of students based on their sexual orientation and gender identity, whereas nondiscrimination laws provide protection against discrimination to LGBTQ students within the school setting. As of May 2021, 21 states plus the District of Columbia had enumerated anti-bullying laws. As of May 2021, 17 states plus the District of Columbia had nondiscrimination laws applicable to schools, which protect students on the basis of sexual orientation as well as gender identity. One additional state, Wisconsin, has nondiscrimination laws applicable to schools which protect against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, but *not* gender identity. A summary of these policies is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1

*State Anti-Bullying and Nondiscrimination Laws (as of May 2021)*

States with Enumerated Anti-Bullying Laws	States with Nondiscrimination Laws Designed to Protect Students Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity	States with Nondiscrimination Laws Designed to Protect Students Based on Sexual Orientation, But NOT Gender Identity
Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington	California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington  Plus, the District of Columbia	Wisconsin
Plus, the District of Columbia		

In addition to enumerated anti-bullying laws and nondiscrimination laws, GLSEN also examines state's policies ensuring that transgender students can participate in sports on a team based on their gender identity (GLSEN, n.d. -b). As of July 2021, 15 states and the District of Columbia have athletic association policies that support full inclusion and participation of trans and nonbinary student athletes; however, at this time there were 16 states with policies that placed discriminatory restrictions on participation by these students. Furthermore, 6 states discriminated against transgender and nonbinary students by requiring students to participate in athletics based on their birth certificate or sex assigned at birth while three states prohibited these athletes from participation unless they had undergone surgery. A summary of these policies is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2

*State Athletic Association Policies for Transgender and Nonbinary Students (As of July 2021)*

State Athletic Association with Guidance that Supports Participation by Transgender and Nonbinary Athletes	State Athletic Associations with Guidance that Discriminates Against Transgender and Nonbinary Athletes	State Athletic Associations with Guidance that Bans Transgender and Nonbinary Students Based on Birth Certificate or Sex Assigned at Birth	State Athletic Associations with Guidance that Requires Surgery for Participation by Transgender and Nonbinary Students
California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington	Arizona, Delaware, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Utah, Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming	Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, New Mexico, Texas	Indiana, Louisiana, Kentucky
Plus, the District of Columbia			

Finally, in comparison to laws that protect LGBTQ students within schools, GLSEN also tracks negative laws that could harm or stigmatize LGBTQ students. This includes laws prohibiting the “promotion of homosexuality,” often referred to as “No Promo Homo Laws,” which prohibit teachers from discussing gay and transgender issues in a positive way, if at all. Shockingly, some of these laws require teachers to portray sexual and gender minority people in negative or inaccurate ways (GLSEN, n.d. -c). As of May 2021, there were six states with these types of laws: Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Texas. Additionally, two states, Missouri and South Dakota, prohibit school districts from having enumerated anti-bullying policies. In their review, GLSEN clearly “opposes state laws that purport to prevent bullying and harassment, but which prohibit school districts from having enumerated anti-bullying policies... enumeration is essential to implement anti-bullying measures that effectively protect all students” (GLSEN, n.d. -b).

**Federal-Level Laws.** Regardless of the laws that exist at the state level, all public schools are obligated under federal law to protect LGBTQ students. The US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights reminded school districts of their obligation to protect students from bullying and harassment through the publication of a “Dear Colleague” letter (Ali, 2010). GLSEN provided a review of several federal court cases filed against schools who failed to protect LGBTQ students from harassment (n.d. -d). Specifically, *Nabozny v. Podlesny* illustrates that all students are entitled to the same level of protection from harassment. *Henkle v. Gregory* demonstrates that students have a constitutional right to express their sexual orientation in school, without receiving harassment or discrimination. *Flores v. Morgan Hill Unified School District* says that in addition to having nondiscrimination and anti-harassment policies, safe schools must actually enforce these policies. *Vanve v. Spencer County Public School District*

shows that when school officials are informed of a student being sexually harassed, they must properly investigate and take effective action in an attempt to end the harassment. Finally, *Doe v. Anoka-Hennepin School District No. 11* demonstrates that schools have an obligation to protect students from harassment on the basis of gender stereotyping and gender non-conformity, or it may become a widespread issue throughout the district with severe consequences for students.

Rulings from these cases illustrate that school districts and their employees can be held liable under the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution if they fail to protect students from anti-LGBT harassment (GLSEN, n.d. -d). Specifically, if school districts fail to provide the same level of protection against harassment to boys and girls, and to LGBT and to non-LGBT students, they have violated the Equal Protection Clause. Additionally, schools fail to provide equal protection when school officials learn of LGBT harassment and do not take action because they think an LGBT student should expect to be harassed, or the student provoked the harassment by being openly LGBT (GLSEN, n.d. -d).

Schools receiving federal money must also abide by Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 (2018), which requires schools to ensure that students are not sexually harassed. Recently, the U.S. Department of Education issued a notice explaining that Title IX will be expanded to include prohibition of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). One way to eliminate harassment/discrimination against LGBTQ students and encourage equal treatment of this population is through the presence of LGBTQ-inclusive curricula.

### ***LGBTQ-Inclusive Curricula***

Curricula that include positive representations of LGBTQ people, history, and events are beneficial for this population of students. As explained by Kosciw et al. (2018), “a curriculum

that is inclusive of diverse groups... instils a belief in the intrinsic worth of all individuals and in the value of a diverse society. Including LGBTQ-related issues in the curriculum in a positive manner may make LGBTQ students feel like more valued members of the school community, and it may also ... [result] in a more positive school climate” (p. 70). In comparison to students in schools without an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, LGBTQ students in schools with an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum were less likely to hear homophobic remarks or negative remarks about gender expression often or frequently. Additionally, they were less likely to feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation and gender expression. These students experienced lower levels of victimization, performed better academically in school, had higher academic aspirations, and were more likely to report that their classmates were somewhat or very accepting of LGBTQ people. Students in schools with an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum felt greater belonging to their school community. These students were also more likely to feel somewhat or very comfortable talking with their teachers about LGBTQ-related issues. LGBTQ students in schools with an inclusive curriculum also reported higher levels of self-esteem and lower levels of depression (Kosciw et al., 2018).

Results from the most recent NSCS reveal that 66.8% of LGBTQ students have not been exposed to representations of LGBTQ people, history, or events in lessons at school. While 19.4% of LGBTQ students were taught positive representation about LGBTQ people, history, or events in school, 17.0% of this population had been taught negative representations of LGBTQ topics. Additionally, 55.9% of survey respondents with internet access at school reported being able to access LGBTQ-related information online using school computers. Less than half of respondents (48.9%) reported being able to access information about LGBTQ-related issues in their school library.

In their examination of LGBTQ-inclusive curricula, the NSCS also included questions specifically looking at LGBTQ-inclusive sex education. These questions asked whether sex education included any information about sexual orientation topics or gender identity-related topics, and how positive or negative this inclusion of information was (Kosciw et al., 2018). More than one-fifth of LGBTQ students reported they had never received sex education in school. Of the 75.9% of students who had received some form of sex education in school, most were not exposed to sex education that included LGBTQ topics; however, it was more common for lesbian, gay, and bisexual topics to be included in sex education (53.0%) in comparison to transgender/gender nonconforming topics (22.9%). Of the LGBTQ students that were exposed to sex education in school, 8.1% were taught sex education that included negative representations of lesbian, gay, or bisexual topics, whereas 6.2% were taught sex education that included negative representation of trans/nonbinary topics (Kosciw et al., 2020). LGBTQ students in rural, Southern, and religious schools were less likely to receive LGBTQ-inclusive sex education. These findings suggest that the majority of LGBTQ youth are not provided with critical health information in health or sex education classes. Additionally, negative inclusion of LGBTQ topics in sex education curricula can further stigmatize LGBTQ students and add to sexual health risks for this population, including higher rates of STIs and intimate partner violence (Kosciw et al., 2018).

Similar to what was mentioned about LGBTQ-inclusive laws and policies, LGBTQ-inclusive curricula have been identified as positive school resources for these students; however, the majority of this population of students are not provided with these protections. Another school resource that can be beneficial for LGBTQ students is the presence of a Gay Straight Alliance, or similar student club.

### ***Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs)***

GSAs are school-based organizations for LGBTQ students and their allies, often with the overarching goal of improving school climate for sexual and gender minority youth (Marx & Kettrey, 2016). This section will begin with a review of the roles of GSAs in school.

Additionally, the impact of these organizations on the academic and social experiences of students will be examined, using data from the 2019 NSCS. Finally, there will be a discussion about the availability of GSAs for LGBTQ students.

As explained within the NSCS, GSAs “can provide LGBTQ students in particular with a safe and affirming space within a school environment that they may otherwise experience as hostile. GSAs may also provide leadership opportunities for students and potential avenues for creating positive school change” (Kosciw et al., 2018). A qualitative study looking at the various roles GSAs play in schools suggested that these groups provide counseling and support, a safe space, and were sometimes the primary means for raising awareness, providing education, and increasing visibility of LGBT issues in the school (Griffin, Lee, Waugh, & Beyer, 2004).

Another qualitative study involved interviewing LGBTQ high school students to understand the impact of GSAs on their academic and social experiences. The themes that emerged from the students' experiences with GSAs include: having a group to be accountable to; having a greater sense of school connection; reclaiming a sense of hope; the normalization of thoughts/feelings/experiences; establishing a greater sense of appreciation for one's own differences and the differences of others; helping to negotiate friendships and romantic relationships; and playing a role in the coming out process with family (McCormick, Schmidt, & Clifton, 2014).

Results from the 2019 NSCS reveal that in comparison to LGBTQ students who did not have a GSA in their school, students who had a GSA in their school were less likely to hear

homophobic remarks and negative remarks about gender expression often or frequently, were less likely to feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation or gender expression, experienced lower levels of LGBTQ-related victimization, reported a greater number of supportive school staff and more accepting peers, and overall felt greater belonging to their school community (Kosciw et al., 2020). Additional research found that students in schools with a GSA reported less truancy, smoking, drinking, suicide attempts, and sex with casual partners compared to students in schools without a GSA. Notably, this difference was more sizable for LGBTQ youth than their heterosexual peers (Poteat, Sinclair, DiGiovanni, Koenig, & Russell, 2012). Importantly, almost two thirds (61.6%) of LGBTQ students reported that their school had a GSA or similar student club, and most LGBTQ students reported participating in their GSA at some level (Kosciw et al., 2020). Additionally, the 2019 NSCS revealed higher numbers of GSAs in schools nationwide in comparison to the 2015 and 2017 surveys. Despite this improvement, 14.7% of LGBTQ students within the 2019 NSCS were restricted from forming or promoting a GSA.

Results of the 2019 NSCS revealed that middle school students were less likely to report that their school had a GSA, in comparison to high school students (Kosciw et al., 2020). Additionally, students in religious schools were least likely to have a GSA, whereas students in public schools were most likely to have a GSA. In comparison to students in urban and rural schools, LGBTQ students in suburban schools were most likely to report they had a GSA at their school. Regionally, students in the Northeast were more likely to report they had a GSA at their schools, whereas students in the South were least likely to have access to this school resource.

Within the 2017 NSCS, there were also questions about LGBTQ student activism. Respondents were asked if they had participated in social activism in the past year by

participating in things such as: expressing political or social views on social media, participating in an event where people express political views, participating in a GLSEN Day of Action, or participating in a rally/protest/demonstration for a cause (Kosciw et al., 2018). Results indicated that students were more likely to engage in activism if they participated in a GSA or other extracurricular activity related to social or political issues. While Kosciw et al. suggested these clubs might provide students with opportunities to engage in social action or may help to develop students' critical consciousness around political and social issues, they also recognized that students who are already politically/socially engaged may be more likely to participate in social activism and belong to these student organizations (2018). In addition to the benefits of GSAs already discussed, these clubs usually include at least one faculty advisor, making it easier for LGBTQ students to identify supportive school staff members.

### ***Supportive School Staff***

Although the LGBTQ-inclusive laws and policies, LGBTQ-inclusive curricula, and GSAs all contribute to positive outcomes for LGBTQ youth, previous research has suggested that supportive educators have the strongest positive influence across several student outcomes (Kosciw et al., 2013). A study examining multiple dimensions of LGBTQ-affirming school climates found that peer and teacher intervention was a specific predictor of LGBTQ safety, suggesting that affirming and knowledgeable school staff may be more likely to implement procedures within their classroom that help these students feel safe at school (De Pedro et al., 2018). Conversely, sexual minority youth who were unable to identify a supportive adult within the school they could talk to about a problem were more likely to have been threatened at school and to have made multiple suicide attempts in the previous year (Goodenow, Szalacha, & Westheimer, 2006).

Results from the 2019 NSCS supported these findings. Specifically, compared to LGBTQ students with no supportive school staff, students with many (at least 11) supportive staff at their school were less likely to feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation or gender expression, were less likely to miss school because they felt unsafe, had higher GPAs, were more likely to say they planned on pursuing post-secondary education, and felt a greater sense of belonging to their school community. Although only 42.3% of LGBTQ students could identify 11 or more supportive staff, over half (62.8%) had seen at least one Safe Space sticker or poster at their school, which serve to identify supportive educators within the school environment (Kosciw et al., 2020).

Overall, through the 2019 NSCS results, LGBTQ youth have better mental health and academic outcomes in schools with supportive and inclusive policies, educators, curricula, and student-led clubs, such as GSAs (Kosciw et al., 2020). Although improvements have been made across these areas, there are still many LGBTQ students who report that several of these supports are currently not available to them. Due to this unfortunate reality, it is important that we continue to advocate for these beneficial resources and supports to be implemented in schools. The remainder of this review will focus on one of the most influential resources for LGBTQ students: supportive school staff.

### **Supportive School Staff as “Allies”**

Given the research suggesting supportive educators have the strongest positive influence across several outcomes for LGBTQ youth (Kosciw et al., 2013), it is worthwhile to provide a more thorough discussion of the ways in which school staff members act as a resource to this population of students. An educator who assumes this role of providing support for LGBTQ students can be considered an “ally.” Specifically, “an ally is an individual who speaks out and

stands up for a person or group that is targeted and discriminated against. An ally works to end oppression by supporting and advocating for people who are stigmatized, discriminated against, or treated unfairly... Any educator, LGBT or non-LGBT, can be an ally to LGBT students”

(GLSEN, 2016, p. 5). As previously outlined, there is research supporting the benefits of having adult allies within the school environment for LGBTQ students. These benefits include improved school climate and sense of safety at school, lower rates of discrimination and harassment, and improvements with mental health and educational outcomes.

### **Ally Definition**

Through previous research examining the roles and experiences of LGBTQ allies, there has been some agreement in the literature regarding the definition of an ally in this context. Specifically, an ally is a person who recognizes LGBTQ oppression (DiStefano, Anderson, Kampa-Kokesch, & Bullard, 2000; Duhigg, Rostosky, Gray, & Wimsatt, 2010; Munin & Speight 2010). Oftentimes, this “knowledge” results from having a close personal relationship with an individual who identifies as LGBTQ (Brown & Henriquez, 2008; Duhigg et al., 2010; Fingerhut, 2011). These close personal relationships are associated with less negative “attitudes” toward LGBTQ individuals (Brown & Henriquez, 2008).

Finally, allies engage in “behaviors” to support and advocate for this stigmatized group in our society (GLSEN, 2016; DiStefano et al., 2000). Ways in which allies act to end oppression against LGBTQ individuals include confronting homophobia and heterosexism, having supportive relationships with LGBTQ individuals, visibly displaying LGBTQ symbols, participating in and/or providing LGBTQ-affirmative programming or training, and advocating for LGBTQ-affirmative institutional policies (DiStefano et al., 2000). Notably, simply having an awareness of oppression against LGBTQ individuals does not always lead to behaviors taken on

in support of this population. Allies oftentimes encounter barriers that can potentially hinder their support and advocacy for the LGBTQ population (DiStefano et al., 2000; Goldstein, 2017).

Although most allies do encounter barriers to their work, experience with barriers is not a requirement for identification as an ally. Overall, this information suggests “knowledge,” “attitudes,” and “behaviors” are dimensions that contribute to the construct of an ally.

### **A Review of Allies in the Literature**

A review of the previous literature reveals there has been data collected about allies of the LGBTQ community in general; however, the literature surrounding being an ally to LGBTQ youth within the school environment is particularly limited. Instead, previous research mainly focuses on allies of LGBTQ students in college (Munin & Speight, 2010; Ryan, Broad, Walsh, & Nutter, 2013) by examining demographic characteristics of allies in addition to their experiences within this role.

Studies involving LGBTQ youth that are done within middle and high school settings usually focus solely on the role of GSA advisors. Although this research examines educators who choose to be supportive of this population of students through this role, it is limited in that it examines only one way to act as an ally to these students. Overall, previous research has examined the ally-student relationship from the perspective of LGBTQ students; however, there is limited research looking at this relationship from the ally’s perspective.

The following sections will review predictors of being an ally, specifically demographic characteristics and life experiences that increase the likelihood that one will act as an ally to the LGBTQ community. Additionally, a discussion about the general experiences that are common for those acting as an LGBTQ ally will be provided.

### ***Predictors of Being an Ally***

Several studies have examined demographic characteristics and general experiences that are common among allies to the LGBTQ community. For example, in their 2008 study, Brown and Henriquez had 320 undergraduate students enrolled in a psychology course complete the Attitudes Towards Lesbians and Gays Scale (ATLGS) and the Gender Role Beliefs Scale (GRBS). Additionally, participants completed a sociodemographic measure that assessed gender, ethnicity, religion, religiosity, political affiliation, and experience with gays and lesbians. Although Brown and Henriquez did not specifically use the word “ally” to describe their study participants, their study examined individuals with positive attitudes toward those within the sexual and/or gender minority community. As previously discussed, positive attitudes toward these individuals is a component of being an ally.

A linear regression was used to examine the direct and indirect effects of participants' sociodemographic characteristics on their attitudes towards gays and lesbians. Several direct effects were found. Specifically, White participants had fewer negative attitudes towards this population than non-Whites. Having a gay friend or family member was associated with less negative attitudes, whereas being more religious and more politically conservative were both associated with higher levels of anti-gay attitudes. Gender role beliefs were the strongest predictor of attitudes towards gays and lesbians; those with more traditional gender role beliefs were more likely to have anti-gay attitudes.

Brown and Henriquez (2008) also found several indirect effects on participants' attitudes towards gays and lesbians. Female participants were more religious, which was connected with more negative attitudes. However, females also had less traditional gender role beliefs which was associated with more positive attitudes. Having experience with gays and lesbians was associated with being less religious, more politically liberal, and having less traditional gender role beliefs,

which were all related to less negative attitudes. Christians were more religious, more politically conservative, and held more traditional gender role beliefs, all connected with more negative attitudes about gays and lesbians. Although the researchers confirmed previous findings that participants' race, experience with homosexuals, religiosity, political affiliation, and gender role beliefs were all significant direct predictors of attitudes towards gays and lesbians, they identified limitations with their study. Specifically, their sample had a limited age-range, the correlational methods used do not allow for assessing the causality of sociodemographic variables on anti-gay attitudes, data were obtained through self-report (potential for social-desirability effects), and participants were students from a large metropolitan college, which may limit the generalizability of their findings to the greater U.S. population.

In a similar study, Fingerhut (2011) recruited 201 participants from StudyResponse.com, a project run by Syracuse University containing an online panel of approximately 80,000 participants, to examine what predicts heterosexual alliance with the LGBT community. Specifically, the researcher was interested in whether and to what degree personal connections, out-group attitudes, and demographic characteristics predict action one takes on behalf of LGBT causes. Participants answered survey questions about the following: ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, level of education, contact with LGBT individuals, dispositional empathy, perspective taking, attitudes toward gay men and lesbians, and action taken on behalf of the LGBT community. For this study, action on behalf of the LGBT community involved attending a gay rights event, donating time to organizations promoting LGBT rights, donating money to these organizations, signing a petition to legalize same-sex marriage, participating in discussions promoting LGBT rights, and/or initiating discussions promoting LGBT rights. As acknowledged by Pittinsky, Rosenthal, and Montoya (2011), low levels of prejudice for out-group members

may indicate tolerance, but this is different from actual acceptance and positivity toward this group of people. Tolerance is more of a neutral stance, or a middle ground between negative feelings and positive attitudes toward others (Pittinsky, 2005). Recognizing this distinction, Pittinsky developed the psychological concept of “allophilia,” which includes “a sense of kinship, comfort, and engagement with and affection and enthusiasm for the out-group” (Fingerhut, 2011, p. 2235). As the result of Pittinsky’s work, Fingerhut chose to use the Allophilia Scale as a measure of participants’ attitudes toward gay men and lesbians; He recognized that positive attitudes might be a better predictor of prosocial behaviors than simply tolerance, or the absence of negative behaviors toward LGBT individuals.

Correlations were calculated to determine how the following variables each related to allied behaviors: empathic concern, perspective taking, out-group contact, allophilia, prejudice, gender, and education. All of these predictors were significantly correlated with allied behaviors, but empathic concern was only marginally related. Similar to Brown and Henriquez’s (2008) findings, participants with gay or lesbian friends were significantly more likely to engage in allied behaviors. Overall, heterosexual women who are more educated and who are friends with out-group members were more likely to take action on behalf of out-group members. Additionally, an interaction was present between allophilia and prejudice; whereas allophilia was significantly and positively related to allied behaviors, prejudice was not. For participants who were low in allophilia, prejudice was unrelated to allied actions. Conversely, those higher in allophilia were more likely to engage in allied behaviors when they also had lower levels of prejudice.

This study allowed for an initial understanding of the factors associated with out-group alliance, specifically being friends with out-group members, being a woman, being more

educated, and having lower levels of prejudice in combination with higher levels of allophilia. Limitations of this study include assessing a narrow range of prosocial behaviors on behalf of the LGBT community, only including straight allies within the sample, not accounting for the different resources and levels of commitment required for the six allied behaviors chosen, not examining participants' understanding of their heterosexual privilege, and only suggesting associations among predictor variables and out-group alliance without examining the process by which out-group alliance emerges and one becomes an ally.

Duhigg et al. (2010) conducted a study that explored the motivational and developmental processes that encouraged heterosexuals to seek out justice for the sexual minority population. Criteria for participation in this study involved: self-identification as a heterosexual, being 25 years of age or older, willingness to talk about experiences and developmental processes, and active involvement in some form of sexual minority advocacy within the past year. Open-ended interviews were conducted with the 12 participants and data were analyzed using the Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) method. A research team coded all text into relevant domains or themes and members tallied the number of occurrences of each domain within the data. Duhigg et al. (2010) identified several domains during their examination of participants' responses regarding important factors that led participants to ally work. These themes included "early family modeling," "recognition of oppression and privilege," "response to this recognition," "impacts of values and attitudes," "others' reactions to ally work," and "rewards from ally work." Early family modeling and rewards from ally work only occurred in at least half of the interviews, whereas all of the remaining themes occurred in all interviews.

In relation to "early family modeling," the majority of participants described the early influence of their families, some of which positively modeled and some negatively modeled, in

shaping their attitudes about diversity and differences among people. For “recognition of oppression and privilege,” all participants were able to identify moments when they recognized privilege and oppression. All but one participant specifically talked about personal connections with LGBT individuals who had experienced oppression because of their sexual minority status. In “response to this recognition,” many participants experienced various emotional reactions, including sorrow, anger, and guilt. Due to these emotional reactions, many participants felt the urge to actively use their privilege to protest injustice. In other words, recognition of privilege and oppression led to an increased sense of personal responsibility to get involved directly. Next, all of the participants acknowledged that recognizing and responding to privilege and oppression was shaped by their core “values and attitudes,” including a strong commitment to the value of equality, valuing diversity, and religious/spiritual beliefs. For “reactions to ally work from others,” a majority of participants received positive support from family and friends. Although participants talked about both negative reactions and positive reactions from the local community, negative reactions were more commonly discussed within the interviews. Participants also received both positive and negative reactions from the LGBT community regarding their ally work. Finally, participants experienced a wide range of “rewards due to their involvement in LGBT ally work.” Rewards included making a difference/positively impacting society, friendships and connections with others, personal and professional recognition, positive feelings of oneself, and enjoyment.

These results both support and add to the findings of the studies previously discussed regarding predictors of acting as an ally. Specifically, similar to the findings from Brown and Henriquez (2008) and Fingerhut (2011), participants in the Duhigg et al. (2010) study stressed the need for empathic connection to the LGBT people they encountered. This was usually

developed as a result of personally witnessing experiences of discrimination against LGBT individuals. Additionally, reflecting on times when the allies themselves had experienced unfair treatment also generated these feelings of empathy and compassion. The findings of Duhigg et al. (2010) further contribute to knowledge of common ally characteristics by providing a better understanding of the factors and processes that facilitate the development of heterosexual allies.

Information collected revealed that participants felt a sense of dissonance between their understanding of sexual prejudice and heterosexual privilege, and their core values of justice, equality, and an appreciation of diversity. By using their privilege to promote social justice for the LGBT community, some of this internal conflict was resolved. Results of the study identified key processes and experiences common among the participants as they engaged in social justice work for this population, particularly highlighting the importance of having meaningful encounters with LGBT individuals whom they liked and cared about. This is a common finding in studies examining predictors of being supportive to LGBT individuals (Brown & Henriquez, 2008; Fingerhut, 2011). Although the qualitative methodology used within this study allowed for the proper grounding of theory building and future hypothesis testing, these findings cannot be generalized to the broader population. Specifically, Duhigg et al. (2010) acknowledged that their sample of only 12 participants is not representative of all heterosexual allies in terms of age, race or ethnicity, etc. Finally, Duhigg et al. (2010) suggested that future research in this area should focus on a wider range of social contexts among heterosexual allies, rather than only focusing on intra-individual factors.

In their 2010 study, Munin and Speight examined the ally development of 13 undergraduate students invited for participation in the study based on satisfying the following criteria: (1) member of a dominant population active in social justice work opposing their own

privilege, (2) involved in large-scale, organized social justice efforts, (3) involved in these activities for at least one year, and (4) self-identifying as an ally. The interview protocol for Munin and Speight's study was influenced by Seidman's (2006) work involving using interviewing as a means of qualitative research in education and the social sciences.

Specifically, semi-structured interviews were conducted with probes into three subject areas: participants' life history related to phenomenon of being an ally, present-day reality relating to phenomenon, and making meaning of the entire experience. Data analysis involved open-coding to uncover factors influencing ally development. Several common factors among the allies were identified, including common personality qualities (extroversion, leadership, empathy, and impatience); faith, religion, and God; family influence; and realization of "otherness" (the out-group or oppressed members of society), either by being the "other" or by seeing the "other."

As previously discussed, the findings of Duhigg et al. (2010) revealed that some participants' religious and spiritual beliefs guided their action and involvement with LGBT ally work. Similarly, participants in Munin and Speight's (2010) study detailed faith, religion, and God as essential facets of their ally development. Additionally, participants in the Duhigg et al. (2010) study discussed the influence of "family modeling," which was also acknowledged by the participants in Munin and Speight's (2010) study. Specifically, participants shared that their families taught them about diversity, injustice, and the acceptance of all people. Finally, the Realization of "Otherness" was evident in all interviews, which involves being aware of oppressed members of society. This was accomplished by seeing out-group members, or by being a member of another oppressed group in society and personally experiencing discrimination as a result of his/her identity within this group. This theme was similar to the theme of "recognition of oppression and privilege" from the Duhigg et al. (2010) study.

Munin and Speight's (2010) study identified common themes surrounding what factors influence college students to become allies, including personality qualities, family values of social justice, faith, and the realization of "otherness." With recognition of privilege and oppression being such an important characteristic of allies, Munin and Speight (2010) urged professors and higher education staff to design curricular models that expose college students to privilege, oppression, and the role allies can play in disrupting the imbalance of power within this system. Although important implications such as this resulted from the study, there were some limitations present. Specifically, a largely homogeneous sample was used from a religiously affiliated institution in a Midwestern urban area, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, as recognized by Munin and Speight (2010), professionals from Student Affairs recommended allies for participation in the study. This may have led to an over-representation of extroverted student leaders within the sample, as the staff members have greater access to this population of students. Finally, Munin acknowledged that entering this study with an inherent bias as an ally may have been the biggest limitation of their study, as it likely guided the methods and analysis of their research.

Across these studies examining predictors of being supportive of LGBTQ individuals, sometimes referred to as being an ally, similar demographic characteristics were examined to determine their influence on ally development, including gender, race and ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, level of education, and personal connections/experiences with gays and lesbians. Additional variables, such as awareness of privilege and oppression, levels of prejudice and allophilia, personality qualities, and influence of family modeling were also looked at within the previously discussed studies. Although they provided important information regarding variables that are associated with a person identifying as an ally to the LGBTQ community, these

studies were limited in that their samples included people from the general community, or undergraduate students on college campuses in specific regions of the country. It is important to note that these may have been necessary concessions in order to study the characteristics of allies more closely. Limitations of these studies involve samples that are not generalizable to allies in different contexts, including within the high school environment. Additionally, a narrow range of behaviors were selected to determine if a person was considered an ally in these studies, including having to be involved in large-scale organized social justice efforts. By using a limited range of highly specific behaviors, these studies may have excluded potential participants who are still acting in ways that are consistent with being an ally to the LGBTQ community.

Overall, these studies suggest that having knowledge of the experiences of LGBTQ individuals contributes to more positive attitudes toward this population, ultimately increasing the likelihood of engaging in allied behaviors. Although this theme has emerged, the literature in this area is limited in that it primarily focuses on community or college-age ally characteristics, focuses on a limited range of ally behaviors, and relies on largely qualitative studies with small sample sizes.

### *Experiences as an Ally*

In addition to exploring the relationship between personal characteristics and the likelihood of being an ally to those identifying as LGBTQ, previous research has examined the experiences people have within their role as an ally. DiStefano et al. (2000) surveyed 87 heterosexual student affairs professionals about their experiences being allies to lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) people. Open-ended questions were asked within a written survey to assess times when the participants were supportive of LGB people/issues and/or identified themselves as an ally in addition to times when they were not supportive of this population. Similar to previously

discussed studies, there was also a section in this survey about life events that have been influential in affirming LGB people/issues and/or becoming an ally to this population. DiStefano et al. (2000) noted that this qualitative data-collection method was used in which researchers summarized written data collected from a large number of participants, as this is well-suited for use in relatively unexplored research areas.

Analysis of the data involved four researchers reading the raw data and independently identifying a list of common ideas identified across participants. This analysis of participant responses revealed several themes, including participants' descriptions of how they acted as allies, reactions to ally activities, description of times participants did not behave as allies, reactions to not acting as an ally, and influential events in becoming an ally.

The most frequently cited ally activity involved participating in or providing LGB-affirmative programming or training (DiStefano et al., 2000). Participants also acted as allies by visibly displaying LGB symbols, having supportive relationships with LGB people, confronting homophobia and heterosexism, advocating for LGB-affirmative institutional policy changes, and assisting with LGB student organizations. Allies usually experienced positive emotions as a result of their work, especially pride, and felt encouraged about the importance of their work as a result of the positive support they received from others. When participants did not behave in ways consistent of allies, such as not confronting homophobia and heterosexism or having a lack of action in support of LGB people, they did so for several reasons. Specifically, they felt a need to pick and choose their battles, wanted to avoid conflict and hard feelings, and feared that their ally behaviors could have negative repercussions on their employment. During these times, the allies experienced self-critical feelings, including feeling discouraged, not proud, or disgusted. Finally, the participants in this study also acknowledged that having personal relationships with

LGB people and experiencing oppression as a result of one of their own identities (e.g., being a woman or person of color) were influential events in becoming allies to LGB people.

DiStefano et al. (2000) used a qualitative data-collection method to broadly explore the experiences of counselors and student affairs professionals as allies. Due to influential events increasing participants' awareness and motivation to work as allies, the researchers emphasized the importance of having personal relationships (friends, family members) with those identifying as LGB. Participants also discussed the challenges in their experiences as allies, which resulted in DiStefano et al. (2000) urging college counselors to persevere in the face of those challenges, for the benefit of LGB people but also for the rewarding experiences that come from being an ally. Despite these findings, the study was limited in its focus on student affairs professionals, selected for participation through their membership in a specific organization.

Ryan et al. (2013) conducted an in-depth qualitative study of a heterosexual ally organization, the ALLIES group, on a southeastern university campus. To understand this organization, narrative ethnography was used in which researchers analyzed official group materials (training manuals, descriptions of the group online and in brochures, and anonymous workshop evaluations) in addition to analyzing interview transcripts with 17 participants involved with this organization.

Unlike results from previously discussed studies, the participants in this study offered a narrative about being an ally that revolved around professional responsibility to the student body. When sharing their stories, participants suggested that there was a professional expectation and duty to act as an ally, as they were simply following the educational mission of their university which involved serving all students and promoting diversity. When faculty and staff members interviewed for this study condemned homophobia, this was done in connection to their work

responsibility to treat all students equally. After exploring the narratives of these allies, Ryan et al. (2013) acknowledged the need for safe spaces around campuses and recognized that this professional responsibility model of caring for all students equally can be used as a means to address this need. Finally, results demonstrated that being an “educational-professional ally,” such as the participants in this study, is a distinctive way to serve as an ally for LGBTQ students. Therefore, this study is limited in that it focused on faculty and staff acting as allies through their role in an LGBTQ ally organization at their university. As highlighted by Ryan et al. (2013), “how one understands oneself as an ally, and tells one story and does one’s work, is likely to be different if one is not talking as an employee of an institution, is doing so outside of the institution of higher education, or in less hostile circumstances” (p. 101). Although some participants may have chosen these jobs specifically for the opportunity to advocate for students, it is likely that the ways in which these participants talked about their experiences as an ally would have been different if they were not talking as an employee of the institution.

Barriers to assuming the role of an ally were investigated in a study exploring stigma and stigma by association in others’ perceptions of straight allies (Goldstein, 2017). 505 non-LGBTQ college students filled out a questionnaire involving demographic items and a target description followed by an open-ended item and adjective ratings. For the target description, participants were randomly assigned to read one of eight paragraphs about a college student in which the target gender, sexual orientation, and involvement in a college activity (including a GSA) were varied. After reading the paragraph, participants were asked to rate the individual using an adjective rating scale, which included trustworthiness, sociability, self-confidence, altruism, dominance, effort, likeability, bravery, attractiveness, intelligence, and gender descriptors (feminine, masculine).

Analysis of trait descriptors involved 2 (participant gender) x 2 (target gender) x 2 (target orientation) x 2 (target activity) ANOVAs for both “feminine” and “masculine” measures. For “feminine,” there were significant main effects for target gender and target orientation. Additionally, stigma by association was supported by a significant three-way interaction among target gender, target orientation, and target activity. For “masculine,” there were significant main effects for target gender and participant gender. Although there was a significant two-way interaction between target gender and target orientation, the test for stigma by association (target gender x target orientation x target activity) was not significant.

Goldstein (2017) explained that “stigma by association is demonstrated when negative traits attributed to the lesbian and gay target stimuli spread to the straight ally” (p. 353). Results indicated that stigma by association was present toward the allies. The stigma by association for male allies was stronger in comparison to female allies, likely due to the inflexibility of masculine gender roles in our society. In her discussion of these findings, Goldstein (2017) acknowledged that it is likely that this finding about stigma by association for straight male allies partly accounts for the underrepresentation of men in LGBTQ-supportive organizations, such as GSAs. This finding regarding greater stigma by association for male allies can also help to explain previous findings suggesting it is more common for allies to be female (Brown and Henriquez, 2008) or women (Fingerhut, 2011). Overall, Goldstein’s results contribute to the discussion surrounding experiences of allies by shedding light on some of the barriers that may be encountered when acting as an ally, specifically receiving stigma by association.

These studies involving the experiences of LGBTQ allies examined how participants acted as allies, instances when they were supportive to LGBTQ people in addition to times when they were not supportive, and also assessed influential events in their lives that lead them to be

allies. Additionally, acting as an ally as a professional responsibility was assessed through faculty and staff involved in LGBTQ ally organization at their university. Finally, the stigma that allies experience through association with LGBTQ individuals was examined. Results of these studies revealed that allies felt a sense of pride and were oftentimes encouraged due to the positive support they received. However, allies did not always act in supportive ways, as they had to pick and choose their battles to avoid conflicts and negative repercussions on their employment. In these instances, allies felt discouraged and not proud. These findings highlight that allies oftentimes encounter barriers that prevent them from acting in a way that is consistent with their knowledge of and attitudes toward the LGBTQ population. Similar to the studies discussed in the previous section, having close personal relationships with LGBTQ people was an influential life event in ally development. Although these studies uncovered important information regarding the experiences of LGBTQ allies, they were limited in that they focused on those acting as allies within specific settings, typically on college campuses. Future research should examine the experiences of LGBTQ allies in other settings, specifically within secondary schools.

### ***GSA Advisors***

As previously mentioned, research available about allies of LGBTQ youth within the school environment largely focuses on the role of GSA advisors. In their 2015 study, Graybill et al. had 262 GSA advisors complete a 67-item survey examining demographic trends and advocacy experiences. This study was the second phase of a mixed method ethnographic project, in which Phase 1 involved using semi-structured interviews with 22 GSA advisors to learn about their experiences advocating for LGBT youth in schools. Advisors discussed their experiences advocating in relation to barriers and facilitators across different systems in addition to the use of

specific strategies when advocating for LGBT youth in schools. The advisors' description of their experiences within Phase 1 informed the development of the survey questions in this study, Phase 2.

An examination of the demographic trends of GSA advisors revealed that most advisors were female, White, and educated at a Master's level or above. Additionally, a disproportionate percentage of the advisors who participated in the study were teachers, rather than administrators or support staff. Almost three quarters of the advisors identified themselves as Democrat. In comparison to trends in the general population, a high percentage of advisors identified as LGBT. Unlike previously reported studies examining demographic trends of allies, most of the advisors reported lower levels of religiosity and/or religious involvement. At the school level, most advisors worked in schools with a larger student enrollment than the national average in addition to schools in which fewer than 25% of the students were eligible for free or reduced lunch. Finally, the largest number of advisors reported to work in the Western region of the United States, in suburban communities.

Next, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to determine the factor structure of the survey. A two-factor system was retained, which included barriers to advocating and facilitators to advocating for LGBT youth in schools. The highest rated barrier was the community (outside of school), whereas the highest rated facilitator was the support the advisors received from family, friends, and/or their partners. Other variables, such as principals, other administrators, staff, parents of students within the school, and public or school policy were all rated to be both barriers and facilitators for different advisors advocating for LGBT youth. Additionally, sexual identity was rated as a facilitator for some advisors. Participants responded to survey items on a 7-point Likert scale with 1 representing "Not at all" (a weak barrier or

facilitator) and 7 representing “A lot” (a strong barrier or facilitator). Whereas the mean barriers ranged from 1.96 to 2.68, the mean facilitators ranged from 3.06 to 5.06. Due to these results, Graybill et al. (2015) concluded that the GSA advisors within this study were more likely to experience things that facilitated their work rather than barriers to their work.

When discussing the limitations of their study, Graybill et al. (2015) acknowledged the ethnographic sampling techniques as a significant limitation. Additionally, they recognized that more research is needed to assess demographic characteristics of GSA advisors to allow for greater generalizability of the findings. Finally, more information is needed regarding the strategies used by advisors to advocate for LGBT youth within schools, how these strategies change from one school to another, and the effectiveness of these strategies in supporting LGBT students.

Valenti and Campbell (2009) interviewed 14 GSA advisors from public high schools in one Midwestern state to answer the following research question: why do GSA advisors advise this club? Demographic information collected indicated that eight participants were men, five self-identified as LGBT (or currently in a same-sex relationship), and eight reported working in either a middle-class or upper- to upper-middle class neighborhood. Twelve of the advisors were teachers, and the remaining two advisors were social workers. In addition to demographic information, data were collected involving advisors' motivations for getting involved with their schools' GSAs and the decision-making process that was involved with becoming advisors.

Researchers chose a qualitative method using individual interviews with the 14 participants in which broad, open-ended questions and follow-up probes were used. Data analysis were both inductive and deductive, with an analysis of specific statements and themes, and a search for all possible meanings. Techniques were used to verify the results, which

involved the interviewer clarifying biases and assumptions before the study started and holding regular meetings with the second qualitative researcher to ensure that bias was not the focus of the analysis (Valenti & Campbell, 2009, p. 233).

The majority of participants' responses regarding why they became GSA advisors involved two themes. First, the advisors suggested a protective attitude toward LGBT youth. They were knowledgeable about the challenges for this population and they felt motivated to become an advisor in order to protect these students and help them at school. Secondly, most advisors talked about a personal connection with an LGBT person. In addition to having a friend, family member, or a family member's friend who identifies as LGBT, some of the advisors themselves were gay and had a very personal reason for getting involved. One gay advisor said, "I see myself as a role model for them... I hope they look at me as someone [who is] comfortable with himself and has, you know, gone through that issue and come out of it in a positive way" (Valenti & Campbell, 2009, p. 237).

The participants' decision-making process to become GSA advisors involved worries or concerns, in addition to protections that reduced some of this worry. Specifically, advisors who did not identify as LGBT felt as though they lacked credibility to serve in this role and felt they did not have the appropriate training or skills. Conversely, the advisors who did identify as LGBT feared they may be accused of recruiting students to the "gay lifestyle" by being involved with the GSA (Valenti & Campbell, 2009, p. 238). Additionally, many advisors spoke about their concern with losing their job due to their role as the GSA advisor. Despite these hesitations, participants spoke of the protections that reduced these concerns. Specifically, having tenure was particularly important, especially for sexual-minority advisors. Finally, being married was seen as a protection. Valenti and Campbell wrote "Being married affords an advisor protection against

harassment that a gay or lesbian may not enjoy. Marriage is a status symbol that may have more credence in the school community than being single or LGB. In a way, a married person is a trusted person” (2009, p. 242). Importantly, this study was conducted prior to same-sex marriage being legalized in all 50 states (*Obergefell v. Hodges*, 2015).

This study investigated the motivational factors that encouraged GSA advisors to become involved in this club, in addition to examining the local school context and supportive people who were also influential in the advisor’s decision to advise a club that can be considered controversial within the K-12 school environment. One significant limitation of this study is that it did not include those who decided *not* to be GSA advisors. Surveying those who were not GSA advisors would have likely provided important information concerning the costs and benefits of participation in this role.

Graybill et al. (2015) and Valenti and Campbell (2009) found that GSA advisors are likely to identify as LGBT themselves and work in a school with lower levels of poverty. Advisors are likely to have a protective attitude toward LGBT youth. Specifically, they are knowledgeable of LGBT youth’s high risk for negative experiences and outcomes, oftentimes through personal experiences of growing up gay in a heteronormative society (Graybill et al., 2015; Valenti & Campbell, 2009). The advisors could empathize with the struggles with LGBT students and were motivated to protect them and help them during their time at school. Additionally, by working in schools with lower levels of poverty, the advisors likely worked in schools with greater resources, allowing for a greater number of LGBT supports and programs (Graybill et al., 2015). GSA advisors were likely to take on this role due to a personal connection with LGBT people (friend, family member, etc.). Although there are several barriers to serving as a GSA advisor, including concerns about employment repercussions and pushback from the

community, facilitators and protections are also present. These include support from family, friends, and partners, in addition to having the protection of being tenured. Despite providing valuable information about the motivations and experiences of GSA advisors, these studies are limited because they exclude school staff who are acting as allies to LGBTQ youth within the school setting in ways other than being a GSA advisor.

### **Need for Further Research**

Within the literature, there has been increased attention to the experiences of LGBTQ individuals (Kosciw, Palmer, Kull, & Greytak, 2013), particularly within school settings (Heck, et al., 2016; Kosciw, Byard et al., 2007). As evidenced by this literature, cultural norms in the United States, such as heteronormativity (Mayo, 2014) and homophobia (Gratson, 2012), have contributed to hostile environments and negative experiences for LGBTQ youth at school. Specifically, harassment, discrimination (Kosciw et al., 2018), and social exclusion/isolation (Pearson et al., 2007; Ueno, 2005) are common experiences for these students. Due to these experiences, LGBTQ youth oftentimes have poor academic and social outcomes, including increased days of missed school, lower levels of self-esteem, lower sense of school belonging, and increased levels of anxiety and depression (Kosciw et al., 2018). These negative outcomes for LGBTQ youth are well established within the literature; therefore, research in recent years has focused on the importance of school-based supports for improving academic and social outcomes for these students. Specifically, these supports include LGBTQ-inclusive laws and policies (at the school, state, and federal level), LGBTQ-inclusive curricula, Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs), and supportive school staff members (Kosciw et al., 2018).

This review focused on one of the most influential resources for LGBTQ youth: supportive school staff (Kosciw et al., 2013), otherwise referred to as allies. Predictors of being

an ally and general experiences as an ally were investigated, in addition to exploring GSA advisors as a specific way to serve as an ally to LGBTQ youth. As demonstrated by this review of the available ally literature, allies are oftentimes very knowledgeable about the experiences of LGBTQ individuals, which contributes to positive attitudes toward this population. Ultimately, this knowledge and these attitudes may increase the likelihood of engaging in allied behaviors (Brown & Henriquez, 2008; Duhigg et al., 2010; Fingerhut, 2011). Research also suggests that there are typically barriers associated with assuming the role of an ally (DiStefano et al., 2000; Goldstein, 2017). At times, these barriers can prevent allies from behaving in ways that are consistent with their beliefs and attitudes toward LGBTQ individuals. Notably, these findings are mainly from qualitative studies with small sample sizes. Although these studies have provided important information, there is a need for increased research into ally characteristics and allied behaviors using quantitative studies with larger sample sizes. This could be achieved using a valid, reliable measure to study a large number of allies or potential allies. The literature in this area has also primarily focused on community or college-age allies. Therefore, there is an obvious need for additional research about allies within secondary school settings.

Although the term “ally” was not specifically used, Swanson and Gettinger (2016) completed one of the only quantitative studies examining supportive adults within secondary school settings. Through reviewing the literature, they found LGBT students have the best chance of achieving academic and social success at school when provided with a safe and supportive environment. Due to this, they hoped to examine contributions to safe and supportive school environments. Specifically, Swanson and Gettinger (2016) explored how teachers’ knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors in support of LGBT students are directly affected by the presence of three school-level supports: GSAs, enumerated anti-bullying policies, and LGBT-

related training. They developed a scale specifically for this study titled *Providing Services and Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey (TAS)* (Swanson, 2015a). The TAS consists of four scales: (1) knowledge of risk factors and legal rights of LGBT youth, (2) general attitudes toward LGBT youth, (3) frequency of engaging in diverse roles and activities to support LGBT youth, and the importance of each role, and (4) perceptions of barriers to providing support to LGBT students.

Surveys were given to 98 teachers in grades 6-12 to assess teacher knowledge, teacher roles to support LGBT youth, barriers to providing support, teacher attitudes, and school-wide support variables. Teachers from four states (California, Iowa, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee) participated in this study. These states were chosen for teacher recruitment due to their differences with state-level legislation regarding protections on the basis of sexual orientation and/or gender identity and expression.

To address their research questions, Swanson and Gettinger conducted a series of t-tests to examine differences for each variable of interest (knowledge, attitudes, frequency and importance of roles, and barriers) between the following: (a) schools with a GSA versus schools without a GSA, (b) schools with an enforced enumerated anti-bullying policy with specific protections based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity and expression versus schools without and (c) the level of professional development indicated by the participant. Results illustrated a relationship between teacher's behaviors or activities to support LGBT students, the presence of a GSA or policies with specific protection for LGBT students and receiving specific training surrounding LGBT youth. Level of knowledge and barriers to providing support for LGBT students did not differ between teachers based on the three school resources. In comparison to teachers with limited professional development and those who worked in schools

without a GSA, teachers who reported receiving a high level of training and who worked in schools with an active GSA had more positive attitudes toward LGBT students, engaged more frequently in behaviors to support LGBT students, and rated the importance of those supportive roles more highly. Finally, teachers who worked in schools with an enumerated antibullying policy engaged more frequently in behaviors to support LGBT youth compared to teachers working in schools without a similar policy.

Swanson and Gettinger's results are presented in Table 3 below. The range of scores for each scale is presented in the left column. Low scores on the frequency and importance scales indicate more frequent participation in and higher ratings of importance of supportive roles. Mean scores are presented within the chart for each scale, in addition to *t*-values calculated for differences across each school resource (GSAs, enumerated policy, and professional development).

Table 3

*Results from Swanson and Gettinger Study*

	Gay-Straight Alliance			Enumerated Anti-bullying Policy			Professional Development		
	Yes (n=32)	No (n=66)	<i>t</i>	Yes (n=71)	No (n=27)	<i>t</i>	High (n=12)	Low (n=86)	<i>t</i>
Knowledge (0-11)	7.97	7.29	1.39	7.52	7.48	0.08	8.18	7.43	1.04
Attitudes (9-36)	31.28	28.42	2.93**	28.97	30.29	-1.23	32.36	28.91	2.44*
Frequency of Supportive Roles (10-40)	18.81	26.22	-5.34**	22.70	26.56	-2.39*	15.55	24.83	-4.32**

Importance of Supportive Roles (10-40)	15.84	18.22	-1.83	17.20	18.04	-0.61	13.55	17.93	-2.29*
Barriers to Providing Support (0-13)	7.00	7.05	-0.07	6.93	7.31	-0.51	8.18	6.88	1.32

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\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

Additionally, although teachers recognized the importance of taking on supportive roles for these students, the frequency with which they actually took on these roles was significantly lower,  $t(97) = 8.97, p < .01$ . Swanson and Gettinger explained that teachers commonly acknowledge that there is a need to support LGBT youth; however, they do not consistently intervene on behalf of these students when given the opportunity. This may be partly accounted for by the most commonly rated barrier to being able to support these students: lack of training about how to support LGBT youth (87.4% of participants indicated this was a barrier).

Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for each scale to examine internal consistency reliability of the TAS, with the scales demonstrating minimally acceptable to good reliability ( $\alpha = .61$  to  $.81$ ). Additionally, Pearson interscale correlations were calculated to determine relationships among variables measured by each scale. Teachers' knowledge of and attitudes toward LGBT students were moderately correlated with the frequency with which they participated in roles/activities to support LGBT students ( $r = -.39$  and  $-.48$ , respectively) and their ratings of importance for those roles/activities ( $r = -.34$  and  $-.49$ , respectively). Using this data, Swanson and Gettinger (2016) concluded that the relationship among the variables was consistent with the theoretical and empirical framework for the study, which supported the overall validity of the scale. Content validity of the scale was also accounted for as the measure

was developed using prior research and adaptations of research tools measuring similar variables in previous studies (Swanson & Gettinger, 2016). As explained within her published dissertation, Swanson (2015b) wrote that the knowledge scale involved items regarding knowledge of legal responsibilities created based on safeguards of the Equal Protection Clause of the US Constitution, in addition to items surrounding knowledge of risk factors, school experiences, and school performance of LGBT youth created based on previous research findings. The attitudes scale was an adaptation of the "Attitudes" subscale from the *Sexual Orientation Counselor Competency Scale*. For the behaviors/roles scale, 10 potential roles for supporting LGBT youth that have been previously identified through research were used. Finally, the barriers scale used a list of potential barriers to providing support to LGBT students that had been used in an earlier study. Additionally, a barrier was added to this list based on previous research findings relating to not having enumerated anti-bullying/harassment policies.

Importantly, this study began filling a gap in the literature regarding looking at the relationship between supportive school staff members, or allies, and LGBT students from the perspective of the allies and potential allies. Despite preliminary information supporting the reliability and validity of this measure, additional support is needed. With this survey being used in one of the only studies measuring ally characteristics and behavior in schools, it should be further examined as a potentially important measure to be used in future investigations of the role of allies in secondary school settings.

### **Current Study**

The current study aimed to expand on Swanson and Gettinger's study by further examining LGBTQ-supportive school staff, who are referred to as "allies" within this study. Specifically, factors that are correlated with being supportive to LGBTQ middle and high school

students were examined. For their study, Swanson and Gettinger surveyed supportive adults to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students. However, this study looked at allies to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) students. In recent years, research involving sexual and gender minority youth has included those under the umbrella terms of “queer or questioning” (Kosciw et al., 2018) to account for those who may not identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Due to the trend in the literature widely recognizing queer and/or questioning youth as part of this group, the acronym “LGBTQ” was used to identify the student population of interest for this study.

As discussed above, previous research in this area has focused on LGBTQ middle and high school students, which is why they were chosen as the population of interest for this study. Similar to the subscales used in Swanson and Gettinger’s study, the current study examined how knowledge of risk factors and legal rights of LGBTQ youth, in addition to general attitudes toward LGBTQ youth, contribute to behaviors/roles taken on in support of LGBTQ youth within the school environment. The influence of barriers on this relationship was also examined. Finally, information about the demographic characteristics of participants was also collected.

*Providing Services & Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey*, the scale used in Swanson and Gettinger’s study, was only recently developed and has not been used in many studies. Due to this, the present study also involved running an exploratory factor analysis of the scale. There are limited options available to survey this population (allies of LGBTQ youth), so it was hoped that the data would support this scale as being a valid and reliable measure to use when surveying educators in future studies.

### ***Research Questions***

1. Do demographic characteristics, such as gender, race, religion, political affiliation, and sexuality predict ally scores, or degree of allyship?
2. Is the *Providing Services and Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey* a valid measure of ally characteristics and are the three factors clearly identifiable constructs as measured by the questions that they are comprised of? Does this survey demonstrate construct validity?
3. Is the *Providing Services and Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey* a reliable measure?
4. How do “**knowledge**” of risk factors and legal rights of LGBTQ youth and general “**attitudes**” toward LGBTQ youth contribute to “**behaviors/roles**” to support LGBTQ youth within the school environment?
  - a. Do “**barriers**” change the strength/nature of the relationship between knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors?

### ***Hypotheses***

First, it was hypothesized that there would be a relationship between the demographic characteristics. Specifically, that men and women respondents would differ in knowledge and attitudes, with women reporting greater knowledge and more positive attitudes. It was also hypothesized that White people would have more positive attitudes and that lower levels of religiosity would be associated with more positive attitudes. In terms of political affiliation, it was hypothesized that those with more politically conservative beliefs would have more negative attitudes. For participants who identified as LGBTQ themselves, it was hypothesized that they would have greater knowledge and more positive attitudes. Finally, it was hypothesized that

participants who had a friend or family member who identifies as LGBTQ would be more likely to have greater knowledge and more positive attitudes.

In relation to knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors/roles, it was hypothesized that those with more knowledge and more positive attitudes would engage in more supportive behaviors. Additionally, it was hypothesized that these relationships would be mediated by barriers. Specifically, experience with more barriers would negatively affect the relationship between knowledge and behaviors, in addition to the relationship between attitudes and behaviors. Within the following section, these hypotheses will be discussed in more detail with a summary of previous research to support each hypothesis.

## **Chapter II: Research Design and Methodology**

The present study utilized a demographic questionnaire and the *Providing Services and supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey (TAS)* developed by Swanson (2015a).

Regression analyses were used to determine how demographic variables predict overall degree of allyship, as calculated from scores on individual knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors scales.

Principal components analysis and calculation of Cronbach's alpha were used to assess the validity and reliability of the *Providing Services and supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey (TAS)*. Lastly, path analysis was used to determine the relationship between the subscales of this measure.

### **Participants**

All New York State educators employed in public middle and high schools were recruited for participation in this study. The researcher first identified and then contacted all administrators of NYS public middle and high schools, sharing information about the study and asking them to share the survey with all their instructional staff members to invite them to participate in the study. There were limited responses from NYC schools, as they have their own IRB that requested many changes be made to the current study. This is discussed in further detail within the Procedure section below.

### **Variables**

This study focused on the relationship between two types of variables: demographic characteristics and allies.

#### ***Demographic Characteristics***

For this study, individual-level demographic characteristics include the following: gender, race, religiosity, political leaning, sexuality, job title, number of years in current job, and

knowing someone (a friend or family member) who identifies as LGBTQ. Additionally, school-level characteristics include school environment (rural, urban, or suburban) and percentage of student population receiving free or reduced lunch. These demographic variables were included in this study, as previous research looking at those that are supportive of sexual and/or gender minority individuals commonly include these variables (Brown & Henriquez, 2008; Duhigg et al., 2010; Fingerhut, 2011; Munin & Speight, 2010). Additionally, previous research has found relationships between school-level characteristics and supports for sexual and/or gender minority students (Kull et al., 2015; O'Connell et al., 2010). As mentioned above, within the current study, information about school-level characteristics was collected only for sample description purposes.

### ***Ally***

As previously outlined, to be identified as an “ally,” one must be knowledgeable about the academic outcomes and mental health issues experienced by LGBTQ youth, in addition to legal protections that exist for these students. An ally must demonstrate a supportive attitude toward LGBTQ youth. Finally, an ally must engage in various behaviors within the school environment to support and advocate for the rights of LGBTQ students. Using a cutoff score to identify allies versus non-allies would be problematic because it would place participants into different categories based on very small score differences. Instead of making ally a dichotomous variable, it was incorporated as a continuous variable within this study. Ally scores were calculated for all participants based on their responses to the survey. From here on, the overall ally score will be referred to as *degree of allyship*.

Degree of allyship for each participant was calculated using the *Providing Services and supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey (TAS)* from Swanson and Gettinger's

(2016) survey. A review of the ways in which scores for each scale within this survey were calculated in Swanson and Gettinger's study is provided in Table 4 below:

Table 4

*Scoring In Swanson and Gettinger Study*

Scale	Knowledge	Attitudes	Behaviors/Roles
Content of Scale and Response Options	11 statements; Indicate whether each statement is true using "yes," "no," or "don't know" response options	9 items; Respond using 4-point Likert scale with response options ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 4 ("strongly agree")	10 potential roles identified; Respond by indicating how often you typically engage in activities/roles using 4-point Likert scale from 1 ("always") to 4 ("never")
Calculation of Score	Total possible score ranging from 0-11 points with higher scores indicating a higher degree of knowledge	Total possible score from 9 to 36 points, with high scores reflecting more supportive or facilitative attitudes	Total possible score for frequency of roles from 10 to 40, with lower scores indicating a higher frequency of taking on supportive roles

Within Swanson and Gettinger's original study, a total score combining scores from the individual scales was not calculated; however, the current study calculated an overall degree of allyship using scores from the individual scales. The overall degree of allyship was calculated by combining scores on the knowledge, attitude, and behaviors/roles scales. To allow for consistency across scales, some changes were made in the calculation of scores for the scales.

These changes are outlined below in Table 5:

Table 5

*Changes in Score Calculations for Each Scale*

Scale	Knowledge	Attitudes	Behaviors/Roles
Calculation of Score for Current Study	<p>Total possible score ranging from 0-33; higher scores indicating a higher degree of knowledge</p> <p>*To make total possible score more similar to other scales, each correct answer will be worth 3 points instead of 1 point</p>	<p>Total possible score from 9 to 36 points, with high scores reflecting more supportive or facilitative attitudes</p> <p>*No changes for this scale</p>	<p>Total possible score for frequency of roles from 10 to 40, with higher scores indicating a higher frequency of taking on supportive roles</p> <p>*For consistency with other scales, order of Likert scale response options changed; new responses will be 1("never") to 4("always")</p>

Within their study, Swanson and Gettinger also included an "importance score." To calculate this score, participants rated each potential role according to how important it is they take on each role, using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("very important") to 4 ("not important"). The importance score ranged from 10 to 40, with lower scores indicating a higher degree of importance placed on activities or behaviors to support LGBT youth in schools. Within the current study, the importance score was not used in the calculation of the total degree of allyship, as this dimension was not included in the ally definition; however, an importance score was still calculated for participants. Similar to the changes that were made with the behaviors/roles scale, response options for the importance scale within the current study were on a Likert scale from 1 ("not important") to 4 ("very important"). The importance score ranged from 10 to 40, with higher scores indicating a higher degree of importance placed on activities or behaviors to support LGBT youth in schools.

## Measures

Participants completed a survey involving two parts. First, a demographic questionnaire was included to assess the demographic characteristics of the respondents (Appendix A). Secondly, the *Providing Services and Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey (TAS)* (Swanson, 2015a) from Swanson and Gettinger's original survey was used (Appendix B). This survey involves four scales: knowledge of risk factors and legal rights of LGBTQ youth, general attitudes toward LGBTQ youth, frequency of engaging in diverse roles and activities to support LGBTQ youth and the importance of each role, and perceptions of barriers to providing support to LGBTQ students. Importantly, this measure closely aligns with the previously discussed definition of an ally including knowledge of general experiences for the LGBTQ population, a positive attitude toward LGBTQ individuals, and engaging in behaviors to support and/or advocate for the LGBTQ community.

When this measure was initially developed for Swanson's dissertation research and the follow-up journal article published by Swanson and Gettinger (2016), Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for each scale to examine internal consistency reliability of the TAS, with the scales demonstrating minimally acceptable to good reliability ( $\alpha = .61$  to  $.81$ ). Additionally, Pearson interscale correlations were calculated to determine relationships among variables measured by each scale. Using this data, Swanson and Gettinger (2016) concluded that the relationship among the variables was consistent with the theoretical and empirical framework for the study, which supported the overall validity of the scale. Content validity of the scale was also accounted for as the measure was developed using prior research and adaptations of research tools measuring similar variables in previous studies.

## **Procedure**

Approval by the Human Subjects Research Committee (HSRC) at the author's University was acquired in October of 2020 prior to the start of the study. The researcher began collecting survey responses in January 2021 and the survey was closed in July of 2021. Participating educators were employed at public middle and high schools across New York State. Using The Directory of Public and Non-Public Schools and Administrators for the State of New York available on the NYSED.gov website, the researcher obtained contact information for all principals of New York State middle schools and high schools. Using this information, all administrators were emailed. Within the email, the researcher introduced the study to the administrators and asked them to share a link to the online survey with all instructional staff members currently working with middle and high school students at their school in some way. The recruitment letter sent to administrators can be found in Appendix C.

The administrators who responded to this request shared an email with their staff members briefly introducing the study and providing a link to respond to the survey questions online. For NYS middle and high schools without any survey responses after a few weeks, the researcher sent a second and then final reminder email to the school administrators asking them to share the survey with their staff members. After the initial outreach attempt, some administrators from New York City schools indicated that additional approval through the New York City Department of Education Institutional Review Board (NYC DOE IRB) was needed. The researcher completed the application and submitted an external research proposal to the NYC DOE IRB; however, the committee responded with several changes/additions that had to be made to the initial proposal that had been approved by Alfred University's HSRC. Some of the changes that were requested by the NYC DOE IRB included the following: updating the recruitment strategy because administrators were not able to assist with research recruitment,

updating the compensation strategy because lottery/games of chance and direct compensation to teachers was not permitted, updating the introduction letter to include a signature and date line to be obtained from all administrators, and needing further justification of the direct benefit to NYC DOE schools/why it was necessary to include NYC educators beyond convenience sampling. Due to the changes that would have to be made, particularly involving sampling methods and recruitment strategies, the researcher decided to cease efforts to collect additional responses from educators working in NYC schools.

Participants received an email from their administrators and then followed the link to complete the survey via the online platform esurveyspro.com. The first page of the survey was an introduction including the following: brief description of the survey, discomfort/risks, incentives/benefits, approximate time to complete the survey, statement of confidentiality, information about termination of participation, and where to direct questions or concerns with the survey (Appendix D). By continuing to the next page, participants indicated they had read the introduction and gave consent to participate in the study. Then, participants completed the demographic questionnaire and the *Providing Services & Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey* developed by Swanson (2015a). A few weeks after the third and final reminder email was sent to non-participating schools, the survey was closed. At this time, data from survey responses were transferred to two statistical software programs, SPSS and STATA, for analysis.

### **Overview of Analysis**

Data were transferred from the digital survey responses on esurveyspro.com into statistical software programs, SPSS and STATA, in order to conduct appropriate statistical analysis. Prior to transfer into SPSS, the data were screened for errors. Specifically, some

participants opened the survey, answered a few demographic questions, and then ended the survey. Participants' surveys which included a majority of missing data were not used, as the analyses could not be performed in these instances.

Several statistical analyses were performed to answer the research questions. First, descriptive statistics (i.e., mean, standard deviation, variance) were calculated using SPSS to gain an overall picture of survey respondents and their data. Then, regression analysis was used to determine how demographic variables predicted degree of allyship. Categorical variables were turned into dummy variables so the regression analysis could accommodate them. To assess the validity and reliability of the *Providing Services & Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey*, a principal components analysis was used. Since this scale has not been used much in the research and has not been validated on a broad, diverse sample, an exploratory factor analysis was determined to be the most appropriate analysis. The analysis was used to measure the construct validity of this survey to determine if knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors/roles were underlying factors of this measure. Internal consistency of item responses was determined through Cronbach's alpha analyses. Factor loading statistics were also examined regarding the calculation of degree of allyship. Then, reliability results were used to determine if each item from each scale was consistent with the overall scale score. Lastly, path analysis was used to determine the relationship between the subscales of the *Providing Services & Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey*, specifically knowledge, attitudes, behaviors/roles, and barriers. A significance level of 0.05 was used throughout the analyses. All analyses were conducted using SPSS and STATA software.

A hypothesized model (*Figure 1*) was created based on previous research and SEM practices (Keith, 2006) to test the direct effects of knowledge and attitudes on behaviors/roles, in

addition to the indirect effects of knowledge and attitudes on behavior/roles through direct effects on barriers. The STATA Path Analysis model with path values included can be seen in *Figure 3* within the results section. In the model, rectangles represent measured variables, which are based on participants' direct responses from the survey. Within the model, straight arrows represent a direct effect in which one variable directly affects another variable. Conversely, curved arrows represent variables that are correlated without implied causality. Indirect effects are also identified within the model, in which one or more variables mediates the causal effects between two different variables. Total effects were calculated by combining the direct effects and the indirect effects.

Demographic characteristics, specifically gender, race, religiosity, political affiliation, sexuality, and having a LGBTQ friend/family member are presented first in the model, as exogenous variables. This is based on research suggesting these variables influence knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors/roles. As exogenous variables, they were presumed to have causal effects on the other variables within the model; however, they have no variables in the model exerting influence upon them. The exogenous variables are presented first in the model and have curved arrows between them, suggesting correlation between these variables without assumed causality. Next, the model includes the endogenous variables of knowledge, attitudes, and barriers. Endogenous variables both influence and are influenced by other variables within the model. Therefore, the variables have arrows going towards them in addition to arrows going away from them to other variables. Due to being influenced by the exogenous and endogenous variables, behaviors/roles are presented last in the model, as the dependent variable.

After the exogenous variables, knowledge and attitudes appear as the next variables in the model. It was hypothesized that there would be a relationship between the demographic

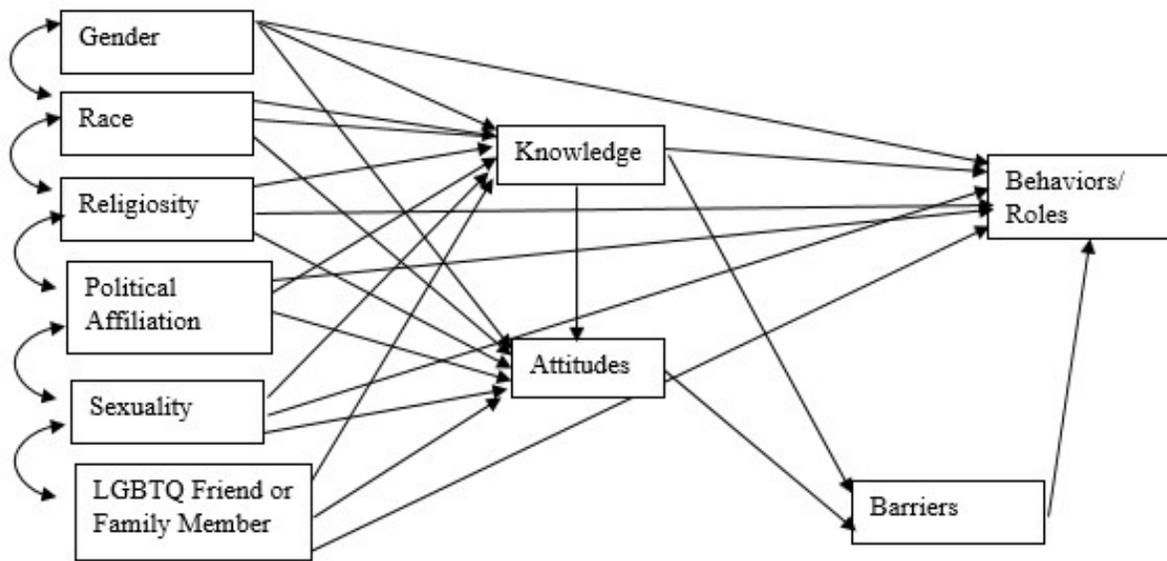
characteristics and these variables. More specifically, it was hypothesized that men and women respondents would differ in knowledge and attitudes, with women reporting greater knowledge and more positive attitudes. This hypothesis was supported by research suggesting that women are more likely to be allies to the LGBTQ community (Fingerhut, 2011). It was also hypothesized that White people would have more positive attitudes, based on research supporting this finding (Brown & Henriquez, 2008). Next, it was hypothesized that lower levels of religiosity would be associated with more positive attitudes. This hypothesis was based on research suggesting that people who are more religious are more likely to have more negative attitudes (Brown & Henriquez, 2008), and allies are more likely to have lower levels of religiosity (Graybill et al., 2015). In terms of political affiliation, it was hypothesized that those with more politically conservative beliefs would have more negative attitudes based on research supporting this finding (Brown & Henriquez, 2008; Graybill et al., 2015). For participants who identified as LGBTQ themselves, it was hypothesized that they would have greater knowledge and more positive attitudes. This hypothesis is supported by Valenti and Campbell's (2009) research. Finally, it was hypothesized that personal connections would influence knowledge and attitudes. Specifically, participants who had a friend or family member who identified as LGBTQ would be more likely to have greater knowledge and more positive attitudes. This hypothesis is repeatedly supported by previous research (Brown & Henriquez, 2008; Fingerhut, 2011; Valenti & Campbell, 2009). These hypotheses were tested by analyzing the direct effects of these various demographic characteristics on the knowledge and attitudes variables. Additionally, the direct effects of the demographic characteristics on the dependent variable, behaviors/roles, were calculated due to previous research suggesting a connection between

certain demographic characteristics and the likelihood of acting as an ally (Munin & Speight, 2010).

The variables of knowledge and attitudes are presented before the behaviors/roles variable as it was hypothesized that individuals with more knowledge and more positive attitudes would engage in more supportive behaviors. This hypothesis is supported by research establishing a connection between these variables. Specifically, those with greater knowledge and understanding regarding the oppression of LGBTQ members of our society oftentimes develop positive attitudes toward this population based on their values of diversity, equity, and social justice. Due to this increased knowledge and more positive attitudes, these people are more likely to take action and engage in allied behaviors/roles (Duhigg et al., 2010; Munin & Speight, 2010). This hypothesis was tested by analyzing the direct effects of knowledge on behaviors/roles, and the direct effects of attitudes on behaviors/roles.

The relationships between knowledge and behaviors, and attitudes and behaviors, were also analyzed in an indirect manner. It was hypothesized that these relationships would be mediated by barriers. Specifically, experience with more barriers would negatively affect the relationship between knowledge and behaviors, in addition to the relationship between attitudes and behaviors. This hypothesis is supported by research demonstrating that even when people have high levels of knowledge and positive attitudes, they do not always engage in allied behaviors due to experience with barriers opposing their support and advocacy for the LGBTQ population (DiStefano et al., 2000; Goldstein, 2017). This hypothesis was tested by analyzing the indirect effects of knowledge and attitudes on behaviors/roles by way of direct effects of barriers.

*Figure 1. The Proposed Model*



At the end of the survey, two questions were included to collect qualitative information from participants regarding if they identified themselves as an ally based on the definition used for this study, and if their work with LGBTQ youth had been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Since there were no research questions connected to this information, specific procedures for data analysis with these items were not outlined; however, in reviewing and summarizing responses from participants, the researcher generally followed procedures for qualitative content analysis.

As explained in their description of the content analysis process, Elo and Kyngäs wrote that the aim of this method is “to attain a condensed and broad description of the phenomenon, and the outcome of the analysis is concepts or categories describing the phenomenon” (2007, p. 107). Furthermore, there are two approaches to content analysis: through an inductive or a deductive way. If there is limited previous knowledge about the topic of interest for the analysis, the inductive approach is recommended. This approach involves using the data to derive categories or in other words, taking data from the specific to more general themes/categories. As

further explained by Hsieh and Shannon, with the inductive approach, “researchers avoid using preconceived categories..., instead allowing the categories and names for the categories to flow from the data. Researchers immerse themselves in the data to allow new insights to emerge” (2005, p. 1277). In their discussion, Elo and Kyngäs outlined three main phases that are used with the content analysis: preparation, organizing, and reporting.

Within the current study, the “preparation” phase was initiated when the researcher chose to include two qualitative questions at the end of the survey to gather more information about participants’ self-identification as an ally and how their work with LGBTQ students had been impacted by the pandemic. These questions were included as they aligned with the overall aim of the study: to gain a greater understanding of allies’ roles within school settings. The preparation phase also involved reading through participants’ responses to these questions for the first time to generally learn what was going on with the data collected. The “organizing” phase involved reading through the responses for a second time while writing down notes to describe all aspects of the content provided within the responses. Within this phase, the researcher was starting to freely generate categories to organize the data. Then, the researcher interpreted the notes written and made decisions about what belonged together, or how similar categories or responses could be grouped together. Eventually, the researcher had a general description of responses for each of the qualitative questions through broad categories that encompassed the individual responses from participants. These categories were then labeled, or given names, to be included within the Results and Discussion sections of this paper for the final phase of “reporting.”

### **Ethical Considerations**

To ensure minimal risk associated with participation in the current study, several precautions were taken. First, approval from Alfred University’s Human Subjects Research

Committee (HSRC) was attained prior to the start of data collection. Additionally, participants indicated their consent for participating in the study after reading the informed consent information, which included the following: purpose of the research, procedure to be followed, discomfort/risks, incentives/benefits for participation, time duration of participation, statement of confidentiality, statement about voluntary participation, statement about termination of participation, and where to direct questions or concerns about participation in the study. Additionally, there was a statement informing participants that the research had been reviewed and approved by Alfred University's HSRC. By proceeding to the next page and starting the survey, participants acknowledged that they had read this information and consented to participate in the study. Although the surveys were extremely low risk, there was the possibility that, due to the nature of the questions, completion of the survey could be mildly distressing to some participants. To proactively account for this possibility, the informed consent information outlined these risks and encouraged participants to seek care from a local mental health professional at their discretion. It was also noted that participants could contact the researcher if they needed assistance locating such a professional.

Data were treated with careful attention to safeguards and security. The researcher utilized password encryption on the data set, and it was only available to the researchers directly involved in the study. Participants who chose to enter the raffle for a gift card at the end of the survey gave their name and email address. This contact information was stored separately from survey responses. For participants who did not wish to enter the raffle, personal identifying information was not collected. The data collected throughout the current study were used solely for the purposes of the researcher's dissertation and in the context of sharing and discussing results.

### Chapter III: Results

Within this chapter, the author reviews the results of the statistical analyses that were conducted to answer the four research questions in the current study. First, the steps that were taken to screen the initial data and create variables are reviewed. Then, an overall description of the sample is provided. Next, results of the regression analysis, principal components analysis, and the path analysis are described. Lastly, results of some follow-up analyses that were conducted for further examination of the data are discussed.

Data were collected via the online survey platform esurveyspro.com. Initial outreach emails were sent to administrators of NYS public middle and high schools starting in January of 2021. The final reminder emails were sent to administrators in July of 2021. At any point during this time (January to July of 2021), participants were able to complete the online survey involving the demographics questionnaire and the *Providing Services and Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey (TAS)*. This chapter provides the results of the analyses that were conducted to answer the following research questions:

1. Do demographic characteristics, such as gender, race, religion, political affiliation, and sexuality predict ally scores, or degree of allyship?
2. Is the *Providing Services and Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey* a valid measure of ally characteristics and are the three factors clearly identifiable constructs as measured by the questions that they are comprised of? Does this survey demonstrate construct validity?
3. Is the *Providing Services and Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey* a reliable measure?

4. How do “knowledge” of risk factors and legal rights of LGBTQ youth and general “attitudes” toward LGBTQ youth contribute to “behaviors/roles” to support LGBTQ youth within the school environment?
  - a. Do “barriers” change the strength/nature of the relationship between knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors?

### **Data Screening**

**Data entry.** Participants provided their responses online via esurveyspro.com. Raw score data were exported via this online platform to a Microsoft Excel file. Data were reviewed for participants who had too much missing data to conduct the necessary analyses (i.e., only opened the survey but did not respond to any questions or only answered a few demographic questions and then stopped the survey). After these cases were removed, the data were entered into SPSS for analysis by the researcher. From SPSS, a STATA file was created to conduct the remaining analysis.

**Missing data.** In total, 307 respondents opened and at least began the survey. 60 of these cases involved people just opening the survey and not answering any questions, or only answering a few demographic questions and then discontinuing, and were therefore removed. The 247 participants that remained were able to be included in at least parts of the data analysis, as they completed the demographic questionnaire and at least one of the subscales within the *Providing Services and Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey*. In total there were 171 respondents who fully completed the survey. Throughout the remainder of this section, notes will be made to indicate the number of missing cases (out of the total 247 cases) for each analysis.

### **Variable Creation**

To allow for the proposed analyses, composite scores were calculated for each participant. This included the following: knowledge score, attitudes scores, behaviors score, importance of behaviors score, barriers score, and overall degree of allyship. The knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, importance of behaviors scores, and barriers scores were calculated by summing scores from each item on these respective scales within the *Providing Services and Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey*. The total possible knowledge score ranged from 0-30, with higher scores indicating a higher degree of knowledge. The total possible attitudes score ranged from 8 to 32, with higher scores reflecting more supportive or facilitative attitudes. The total possible behaviors score ranged from 10 to 40, with higher scores indicating a higher frequency of taking on supportive roles. The total possible importance of behaviors score ranged from 10 to 40, with higher scores indicating greater importance placed on the behaviors. The total possible barriers score ranged from 0-30, with higher scores demonstrating a greater number of barriers faced. Lastly, the ally composite score was calculated by adding the scores from the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors scales. The total possible degree of allyship ranged from 18 to 102, with higher values representing a higher degree of allyship. Notably, the importance of behaviors score within the current study was only calculated for sample description and discussion purposes, as it was not included within any of the proposed analyses.

### **Sample Description**

Overall, data from 247 participants were analyzed in this study (see Table 6). The sample was 76% women and 88% White. No respondents indicated they identified as transgender. About half of the participants (49%) described their level of religiosity as “slightly religious” and 40% of the sample described their political affiliation as “mixed.” The sexual orientation of the sample was 87% heterosexual. When asked if they had a friend or family member who identifies

as a member of the LGBTQ community, 89% of participants said yes. The most common length of time participants had been employed as an educator was 10-14 years (21%). About half of the participants worked at a school in a suburban setting (51%). When asked about the percentage of their students receiving free or reduced lunch, 26% of participants said 81-100% of their students. Around half of the participants worked in the following NYS counties: Broome (30.1%), Onondaga (11.5%), Albany (8.0%), and Westchester (5.8%). The other half of the respondents worked in various counties peppered throughout the state. The breakdown of respondents by regions of NYS is provided within Table 6 below. The most common area of specialization/primary role of the respondents within their schools were general education teachers (38.1%), special areas teachers (18.2%), and administrators (13.0%). For additional information regarding the demographic characteristics of the sample, refer to Table 6.

Table 6

*Demographic Characteristics as a Percentage of the Sample (n=247)*

Variable	% Of total (n=247)
Gender	
Man	24.3
Woman	75.7
Non-binary	0
Other	0
Missing	0
Transgender	
Yes	0
No	98.8
Missing	1.2

Table 6 Continued

Variable	% Of total (n=247)
<b>Race</b>	
White	88.3
African American	3.6
Asian	0.8
Hispanic or Latinx	2.4
Native American or American Indian	0.4
Middle Eastern	0
Other	1.2
Missing	0.4
<b>Level of religiosity</b>	
Not religious	38.9
Slightly religious	49.0
Extremely religious	11.3
Missing	0.8
<b>Political leaning</b>	
Consistently conservative	33.6
Usually conservative	0
Mixed	39.7
Usually liberal	25.9
Consistently liberal	0
Missing	0.8
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	
Heterosexual/straight	87.0
Gay	4.5
Lesbian	2.8
Bisexual	3.2
Other	2.0
Missing	0.4
<b>Friend/family members who identifies at LGBTQ</b>	
Yes	89.1
No	10.9
Missing	0
<b>Length of time (in years) employed as educator</b>	
0-4	11.7
5-9	15.0
10-14	21.1
15-19	12.1
20-24	19.4
25 or more	20.6
Missing	0

Table 6 Continued

Variable	% Of total (n=247)
Area of specialization/primary role	
General education teacher	38.1
Special education teacher	8.9
Specials teacher (e.g., art, P.E., library, etc.)	18.2
Teacher's assistant/teacher's aide	4.5
School counselor	5.7
Social worker	1.2
School psychologist	3.6
Administrator	13.0
Other	6.9
Missing	0
Setting of school	
Urban	18.6
Rural	27.3
Suburban	51.4
Other	2.0
Missing	0.8
Region of NYS employed as educator	
Western NY	3.98
Finger Lakes	6.12
Southern Tier	38.05
Central NY	11.5
Mohawk Valley	2.21
Capital Region	11.06
Mid-Hudson	11.95
New York City	11.06
Long Island	1.33
North Country	2.65
Missing	8.50

To compare the current sample with the overall population of educators in New York State, there was an exploration of available literature on demographic characteristics of NYS educators. Previous research examining the demographic characteristics of the NYS teacher workforce found them to be 76% women and 80% White (New York State Education Department). This suggests the gender of the current sample closely matches the overall population of NYS educators, whereas there was a higher percentage of White participants within the current sample in comparison to the population demographics. Although this

information was not found for NYS educators specifically, a study regarding the political perceptions of educators from across the country was conducted in 2017 (Education Week Research Center). When asked about their political leaning, 43% of educators described themselves as moderate, 23% said conservative, 24% said liberal, 4% said very conservative, and 5% said very liberal. Comparing this with the current sample, the percentage of educators within the current study who described their political leaning as “mixed” and “usually liberal” was consistent with educators nationwide; however, there was a greater percentage of people who described themselves as “consistently conservative” and a lower percentage of people who described themselves as “usually conservative” within the current sample in comparison to educators nationwide. Reference Table 7 for a comparison of demographic characteristics for the current sample with NYS educators and educators nationwide. Information regarding population data for the other demographic characteristics included within this study was not found.

Table 7

*Comparison of Demographic Characteristics from Current Sample with NYS Educators and Educators Nationwide*

Demographic Characteristic- Gender, Race, and Political Leaning	% of Current Sample	% of NYS Educators	% of Educators Nationwide
Women	76	76	-
White	88	80	-
“Consistently Conservative” * or “Very Conservative” **	34	-	4
“Usually Conservative” * or “Conservative” **	0	-	23
“Mixed” * or “Moderate” **	40	-	43

Table 7 Continued

Demographic Characteristic- Gender, Race, and Political Leaning	% of Current Sample	% of NYS Educators	% of Educators Nationwide
“Usually Liberal” * or “Liberal**	26	-	24
“Consistently Liberal” * or “Very Liberal” **	0	-	5

\*Language used within current study; \*\*Language used within study of educators nationwide

A few questions that were included within Swanson and Gettinger’s (2016) study were included within the current study to gain a greater understanding of participants’ level of training/professional development and personal knowledge/skills working with LGBTQ youth, in addition to the school-level supports that exist where participants are employed. This information was not included in any of the analysis but rather was only collected to further understand the participating schools and educators within the study. When asked about their level of training and professional development related to LGBTQ students, the most common response was “low” (31% of participants). Additionally, participants were asked their personal level of knowledge or skills related to working with and teaching LGBTQ students and 43% of the sample described their personal knowledge as “average.” A little more than half (56%) of respondents were aware of a Gay-Straight Alliance or Gender/Sexuality Alliance (GSA) student group at their school and more than three quarters of respondents (79%) were aware of an enforced anti-bullying and/or harassment policy at their school with language specific to sexual minorities and gender identity. Refer to Table 8 for additional results from these questions.

Table 8

*Information about Individual and School-Level Factors*

Question	% Of total (n=247)
Level of Training and Professional Development	
Very High	1.6
High	13.0
Average	28.7
Low	30.8
Very Low	22.7
Personal Level of Knowledge or Skill	
Very High	7.3
High	27.1
Average	42.9
Low	15.8
Very Low	3.2
GSA Student Group at School	
Yes	55.9
No	23.5
Not Sure	17.0
Enforced Enumerated Anti-bullying or Harassment Policy	
Yes	78.5
No	3.2
Not Sure	14.6

### Initial Analyses

First, preliminary descriptive analyses were performed. Then, the initial analyses were conducted to address the four research questions. These analyses consisted of running a regression analysis to determine how demographic variables predicted degree of allyship (research question 1), running a principal components analysis and calculating Cronbach alphas to assess the validity and reliability of the *Providing Services & Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey* (research questions 2 and 3), and lastly conducting a path analysis to determine the relationship between the subscales of the *Providing Services & Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey*. Prior to completing these analyses, descriptive analyses were completed.

**Descriptive analyses.** To gain an overall understanding of the variables of interest, descriptive statistics were calculated. Then, to assess normality issues, skewness and kurtosis of

the major variables were calculated. These analyses were completed on SPSS. Refer to Table 9 for these results for knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, barriers, and degree of allyship. With the exception of the attitudes scale, all other variables had approximate normal distributions (skew and kurtosis between -2.00 and +2.00). The attitudes scale had a skewness = -1.815 and kurtosis = 3.310. This means that the data are negatively skewed and asymmetrical. Specifically, attitudes score was not normally distributed in that there were more people with high scores on this scale.

Table 9

*Descriptive Statistics for Major Variables*

(Knowledge  $n=223$ , Attitudes  $n=208$ , Behaviors  $n=202$ , Barriers  $n=178$ , Degree of Allyship  $n=202$ )

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median	(SD)	Skew	Kurtosis
Knowledge	3	30	21.39	21	4.32	-1.122	1.860
Attitudes	19	32	30.17	31	2.59	-1.815	3.310
Behaviors	14	40	31.51	33	5.98	-.518	-.414
Barriers	0	30	16.15	15	8.22	.091	-1.045
Degree of Allyship	55	99	83.26	84	9.031	-.783	.467

Although the importance of behaviors score was not included in any analyses for the current study and was therefore not included a major variable, scores for this scale were still calculated as contribution for discussion purposes. For the importance score, the mean score was 36.43, the median score was 38, the standard deviation was 4.286, and the variance was 18.37. The minimum score was 19 and the maximum score was 40. This scale had an approximately normal distribution (skewness = -1.233, kurtosis = 1.098).

**Regression analysis.** To determine if demographic variables predicted degree of allyship, a regression analysis was conducted. The following demographic variables were included in the regression analysis: gender, whether a participant identified as transgender, race, level of religiosity, political leaning, sexual orientation, and whether a participant had a friend or family member who identified as a member of the LGBTQ community. First, the following demographic variables were turned into dummy variables so the regression analysis could accommodate them: sexual orientation, race, religiosity, and political leaning. Given that most responses for these demographic questions were “heterosexual/straight” and “White”, sexual orientation was turned into a dummy variable comparing those identifying as heterosexual/straight versus people with any other sexual orientation and race was turned into a dummy variable comparing those identifying as White versus all people of color. Religiosity and political leaning had more variability in the responses, so these were turned into dummy variables with reference categories. More specifically, for level of religiosity, “not religious” was the reference category. Dummy variables were made for both “slightly religious” and “extremely religious.” For political leaning, “mixed” was the reference category. Dummy variables were made for both “consistently conservative” and “usually liberal.” Since no participants indicated their political leaning was “usually conservative” or “consistently liberal,” these did not need to be turned into dummy variables.

Then, assumptions of normality, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity were assessed. Linearity was accounted for as the predictor variables in the regression have a linear relationship with the outcome variable. This was verified by viewing the Loess line on the plot of unstandardized predicted values and unstandardized residual values. Given the sampling method that was used in this study, it was acknowledged that each observation was not able to be drawn

independently from the sample. Homoscedasticity was indicated, as the residuals were equally distributed across all levels of the independent variables. It was determined that the residuals, or the differences between the observed value of the dependent variable and the predicted value, follow a normal distribution. Lastly, there were no issues with multicollinearity, suggesting that the predictor variables were not too highly correlated with each other.

Degree of allyship was regressed on demographic variables (gender, whether a participant identified as transgender, whether a participant had a friend or family member who identified as LGBTQ, race, sexual orientation, religiosity, and political leaning). The resulting model explained 14.4% of the variance and was significant at the .001 level ( $R^2 = .144$ ;  $F [8, 189] = 3.959, p < .001$ ). Within the model, however, there were only two significant predictors (see Table 10). First, having a friend or family member who identifies as LGBT was a significant predictor of degree of allyship, ( $b = 6.434, t (189) = 3.178, p = .002$ ). On average, participants who had a friend or family member who identified as LGBTQ scored 6.434 points higher on the degree of allyship. Then, being “consistently conservative” was also a significant predictor of degree of allyship, ( $b = 3.007, t (189) = 1.996, p < .047$ ). On average, those who described their political leaning as “consistently conservative” scored 3.077 points higher on the degree of allyship. Except for these two variables, these results suggest that most demographic variables are not significant predictors of degree of allyship.

Table 10

*Summary of Regression Analysis: Demographic Characteristics Predicting Degree of Allyship*

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Standard Error (SE <sub>B</sub> )	Standardized Coefficients (β)	Significance Level	Zero-Order Correlations
Constant	76.104	2.365	-	<.001	-
Gender	1.506	1.507	.048	.484	.050

Table 10 Continued

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Standard Error (SE <sub>B</sub> )	Standardized Coefficients ( $\beta$ )	Significance Level	Zero-Order Correlations
Friend/Family LGBTQ	6.434	2.025	.220	.002	.253
New Race	-1.347	2.013	-.046	.504	-.034
New Sexual Orientation	3.038	1.915	.112	.114	.174
Slightly Religious	.004	1.397	.000	.998	-.051
Extremely Religious	-2.284	2.199	-	.300	-.107
Consistently Conservative	3.077	1.541	.163	.047	.265
Usually Liberal	-1.694	1.544	-.082	.277	-.159

**Validity and reliability analysis.** To measure the construct validity of the *Providing Services & Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey*, a principal axis factoring analysis (with promax rotation) was conducted on the 28 items of the scales that were included in the calculation of the degree of allyship. Specifically, these were the items from the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors subscales. This analysis was conducted to determine if knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors were underlying factors of this measure. The Kaiser-Meyer-Okin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis,  $KMO = .762$ , which was above the acceptable level of .5. An initial analysis was run to obtain the eigenvalues for each factor in the data. Nine factors had eigenvalues over Kaiser's criterion of 1 and in combination explained 63.94% of the variance (see Table 11). The breakdown of how the 28 items factored into these 9

factors is displayed within Table 12. Values less than .3 are not displayed within this table. The scree plot was ambiguous and justified retaining fewer than nine factors (*Figure 2*).

Although the items did not factor into three distinguishable factors (knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors/roles) as originally anticipated, the nine factors that were found represented smaller, more specific subscales of these constructs. As displayed within Table 12, Factor 1 included items surrounding behaviors to support LGBTQ representation in schools. Factor 2 included items surrounding behaviors to support LGBTQ representation in schools. Factor 2 consisted primarily of items related to anti-LGBTQ attitudes, along with one item from the knowledge scale that had a negative relationship with this factor. Factor 3 involved items representing knowledge of school-based experiences for LGBTQ youth. Factor 4 included items related to behaviors involving use of affirming language/terminology for LGBTQ youth. Similar to Factor 2, Factor 5 also included items related to anti-LGBTQ attitudes. Factor 6 consisted of items related to the knowledge of legal protections for LGBTQ youth. Lastly, Factors 7-9 each consisted of one or two items that did not fit well with any of the other factors. These were all items from the knowledge scale regarding outcomes for LGBTQ youth- some positive outcomes and some negative ones.

To determine the internal consistency of the *Providing Services & Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey*, Cronbach's alphas were calculated. Internal consistency of this overall measure was .674. This did not reach Kline's cutoff of .7 for reliability. Cronbach's alphas were also calculated for the individual scales. While the internal consistency for the Attitudes ( $\alpha = .794$ ), Behaviors ( $\alpha = .842$ ), and Barriers ( $\alpha = .912$ ) scales all reached Kline's cutoff to be considered reliable, the Knowledge scale did not ( $\alpha = .445$ ). Overall, the correlation matrix for individual scales (Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviors/Roles) revealed relatively low correlations between items within the same scale (see Table 13).

Table 11

*Summary of Principal Axis Factoring: Total Variance Explained*

Factor	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative % of Variance
1	5.512	19.685	19.685
2	2.951	10.540	30.224
3	1.832	6.542	36.766
4	1.743	6.226	42.993
5	1.435	5.124	48.117
6	1.275	4.554	52.671
7	1.078	3.849	56.520
8	1.058	3.777	60.297
9	1.020	3.643	63.940

Table 12

*Pattern Matrix Table: How 28 Items Factored**(Full Text of Items Included Below)*

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7	Factor 8	Factor 9
R2	.871								
R3	.733								
R10	.710								
R9	.618								
R4	.384								
A3		.797							
A6		.768							
A2		.701							
A4		.696							
A5		.381							
K2		-.365							
K8			.812						
K7			.735						

Table 12 Continued

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7	Factor 8	Factor 9
R7				.710					
R6				.618					
R1				.456					
R8				.438					
R5									
A7					.704				
A8					.389				
A1					.345				
K4						.580			
K3						.436			
K1						.424			
K10							.809		
K9								.515	
K6								.311	
K5									.604

*Full text of items loading into each factor:*

Factor 1

R2: Display visual support for LGBTQ students, e.g., “safe space” symbol on classroom door.

R3: Ensure that LGBTQ students have access to magazines, brochures, and other materials relevant to them.

R10: Pursue training and professional development to enhance understanding and effectiveness of working with LGBTQ students.

R9: Be available as an ally for LGBTQ students by supporting or participating in a Gay-Straight Alliance or Gender/Sexuality Alliance.

R4: Ensure that LGBTQ persons are represented in course content and classroom discussions.

Factor 2

A3: Students should conform to traditional sex values

A6: If students have same-sex feelings, bisexual feelings, or feel they belong to a different gender than the one they were born into, they should do everything they can to overcome these feelings.

A2: A heterosexual lifestyle is best for students.

A4: LGBTQ youth should be discreet about their sexual orientation when in school.

A5: LGBTQ students benefit from receiving counseling from a heterosexual counselor who endorses conventional sex values and norms.

K2: Teachers and administrators must protect and respect students’ right to speak out about their sexual orientation or gender identity.

*Full text of items loading into each factor continued*

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## Factor 3

K8: LGBT students feel less safe and less supported in school than do non-LGBTQ students.

K7: LGBTQ students experience more bullying and harassment from peers than do non-LGBTQ students.

## Factor 4

R7: Advocate for using appropriate terminology for LGBTQ groups/individuals in the classrooms.

R6: Learn and use appropriate key words/terms that reflect LGBTQ youth culture.

R1: Take a strong stand to support LGBTQ students.

R8: Immediately address anti-LGBTQ language (e.g., "That's so gay.") used by students or staff.

## Factor 5

A7: Being LGBTQ is a different kind of lifestyle that should be condemned.

A8: Homosexuality is a threat to many basic social institutions.

A1: The lifestyle of LGBTQ youth is unnatural or immoral.

## Factor 6

K4: The state in which I teach has anti-bullying laws that specifically address discrimination, harassment, and/or bullying based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

K3: It is not illegal to intimidate students because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

K1: Teachers and school administrators may be legally liable if they do not act to stop harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

## Factor 7

K10: In general, LGBTQ students are popular and well-liked by peers.

## Factor 8

K9: Compared to non-LGBTQ peers, LGBTQ students are more likely to participate in performing arts activities (e.g., music, drama).

K6: In general, LGBTQ students have higher academic achievement and are less likely to drop out of school compared to non-LGBTQ students.

## Factor 9

K5: Compared to non-LGBTQ students, LGBTQ students are at high risk for depression, suicide, and engaging in substance abuse behaviors.

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Figure 2. Scree Plot from Principal Axis Factoring

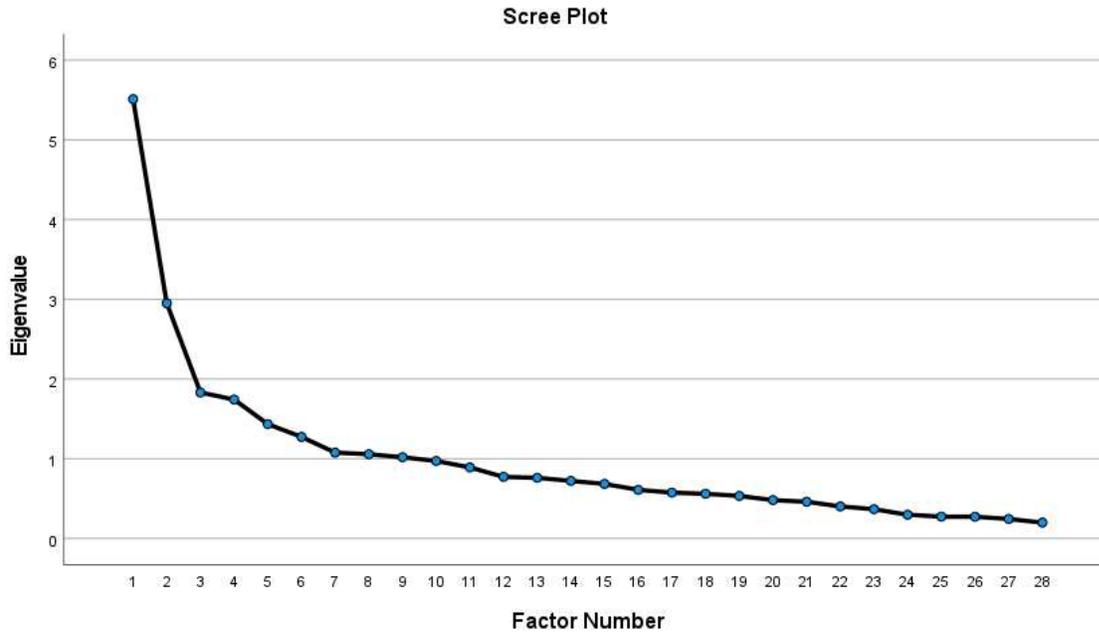


Table 13

*Inter-Items Correlations for Individual Scales:**Knowledge Scale*

	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	K6	K7	K8	K9	K10
K1	1.000	.045	.212	.237	-.067	-.012	-.046	-.047	.135	.148
K2	.045	1.000	.078	-.005	-.044	.057	-.025	-.111	-.014	.164
K3	.212	.078	1.000	.249	-.135	.016	-.001	.007	.053	.022
K4	.237	-.005	.249	1.000	-.059	.028	.071	.155	-.063	.021
K5	-.067	-.044	-.135	.166	1.000	.166	.212	.289	-.143	-.162
K6	-.012	.057	.016	.212	.166	1.000	.247	.128	.128	.144
K7	-.046	-.025	-.001	.289	.212	.247	1.000	.589	.049	.040
K8	-.047	-.111	.007	-.143	.289	.128	.589	1.000	-.180	.030
K9	.135	-.014	.053	-.162	-.143	.128	.049	-.180	1.000	.331
K10	.148	.164	.022	-.068	-.162	.144	.040	.030	.331	1.000

Table 13 Continued

*Attitudes Scale*

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8
A1	1.000	.378	.416	.263	.316	.488	.299	.154
A2	.376	1.000	.579	.442	.283	.504	.153	.097
A3	.416	.579	1.000	.554	.433	.626	.256	.159
A4	.263	.442	.554	1.000	.313	.467	.112	.134
A5	.316	.283	.433	.313	1.000	.424	.217	.064
A6	.488	.504	.626	.467	.424	1.000	.413	.209
A7	.299	.153	.256	.112	.217	.413	1.000	.332
A8	.154	.097	.159	.134	.064	.209	.332	1.000

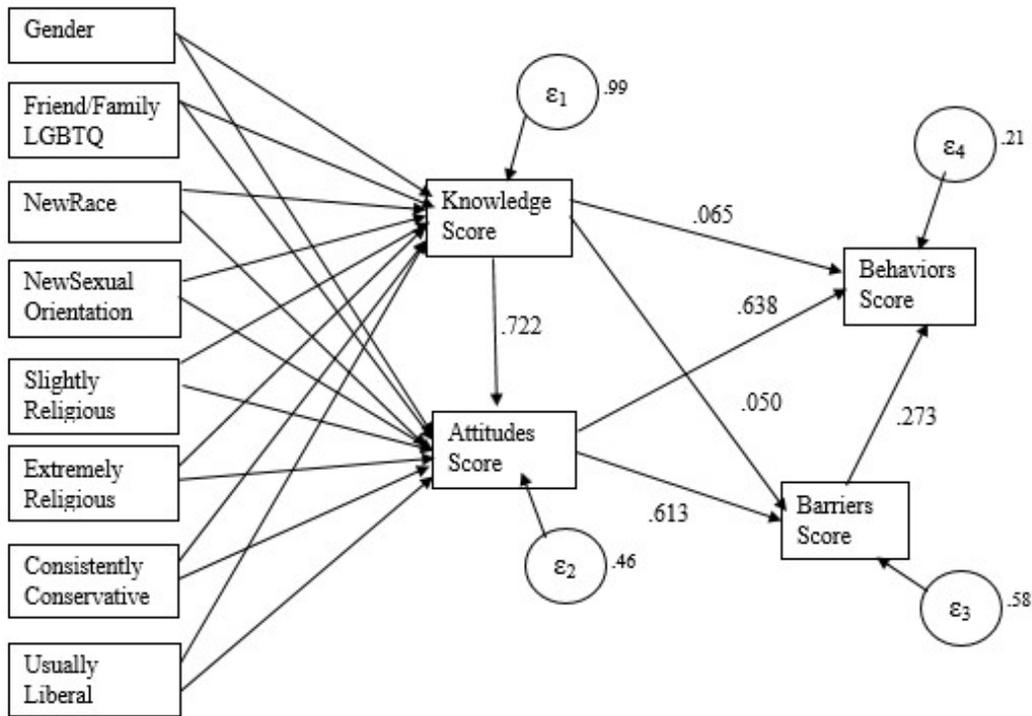
*Behaviors (Roles) Scale*

	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10
R1	1.000	.352	.381	.461	.282	.338	.582	.248	.378	.362
R2	.352	1.000	.607	.399	.268	.306	.338	.131	.436	.486
R3	.381	.607	1.000	.590	.301	.453	.440	.169	.373	.562
R4	.461	.399	.590	1.000	.364	.372	.436	.085	.327	.423
R5	.282	.268	.301	.364	1.000	.286	.324	.216	.251	.222
R6	.338	.306	.453	.372	.286	1.000	.597	.288	.223	.409
R7	.582	.338	.440	.436	.324	.597	1.000	.257	.368	.423
R8	.248	.131	.169	.085	.216	.288	.257	1.000	.162	.097
R9	.378	.436	.373	.327	.251	.223	.368	.162	1.000	.478
R10	.362	.486	.562	.423	.222	.409	.453	.097	.478	1.000

**Path analysis.** To determine the relationship between the subscales (knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and barriers) of *Providing Services & Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey* a path analysis was conducted. The path analysis estimated the magnitude and significance of each of the variables in their contributions to the dependent variable, behaviors score. The results (i.e., paths) that follow can be seen in *Figure 3* as well as the tables included in the remainder of this section. For ease of viewing and reading the information within

this figure, values representing the correlations between the demographic variables and the direct effects of the demographic variables on the knowledge and attitudes scores are not shown within this graphic. Additionally, paths from the demographic variables to the behaviors score, along with the values for these paths are not shown within the figure. Path values are reported in standardized beta coefficients, as these standardized values allow for the comparison of the effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable. Therefore, the higher the absolute value of the beta coefficient, the stronger the effect. Direct effects indicate the relationship from one variable directly to another variable, whereas indirect effects represent the relationship from independent variables to dependent variables through a mediating variable. To calculate indirect effects, the product of direct effects (or standardized beta coefficients) is determined. To calculate total effects, the sum of direct and indirect effects is found. The total number of participants with scores for all four scales included in the path analysis (knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and barriers) was 178.

*Figure 3. STATA Path Analysis Model*



First, hypotheses regarding the effects of demographic variables on knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors scores were examined. Results from the path analysis indicated that none of the demographic variables were significant predictors of knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors scores. Therefore, none of the hypotheses in this area were supported. See Table 14 for direct effects of demographic variables on these scores.

Table 14

*Path Analysis Findings: Demographic Characteristics on Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviors*

Variable	Direct Effects		Direct Effects		Direct Effects	
	(β) on Knowledge Score	Sig. Level	(β) on Attitudes Score	Sig. Level	(β) on Behaviors Score	Sig. Level
Gender	-.070	0.29	-.058	.20	.008	0.80
Friend/Family Member LGBTQ	.005	0.93	.008	.86	.034	0.26
New Race**	.017	0.80	.051	.25	.013	0.67

Table 14 Continued

Variable	Direct Effects ( $\beta$ ) on Knowledge Score	Sig. Level	Direct Effects ( $\beta$ ) on Attitudes Score	Sig. Level	Direct Effects ( $\beta$ ) on Behaviors Score	Sig. Level
New Sexual Orientation**	.074	0.27	-.022	.64	.025	0.42
Slightly Religious**	-.044	0.55	.025	.63	.043	0.21
Extremely Religious**	-.011	0.88	.081	.09	.007	0.84
Consistently Conservative**	-.042	0.58	.030	.56	.011	0.75
Usually Liberal**	-.034	0.63	-.009	.86	.007	0.83

\*\*dummy variable

Next, the relationships between knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and barriers were examined to address the fourth research question. First, it was hypothesized that those with more knowledge and more positive attitudes would engage in more supportive behaviors. While knowledge score was not a significant predictor of behaviors score, results from the path analysis supported this hypothesis for attitudes. Specifically, attitudes score was associated with significantly higher behaviors score (direct path  $\beta = .638, p < .001$ ). Then, it was hypothesized that this relationship would be mediated by barriers: experience with more barriers would negatively affect the relationship between knowledge and behaviors, and attitudes and behaviors. Results from the path analysis supported these hypotheses, as a significant portion of the relationship of knowledge and attitudes with behaviors was explained by barriers (knowledge indirect path  $\beta = .595, p = < .001$ ; attitudes indirect path  $\beta = .167, p = < .001$ ). See Table 15 for direct, indirect, and total effects of these variables.

Table 15

*Path Analysis Findings: Direct and Indirect Effects on Behaviors*

Variable	Direct Effects ( $\beta$ )	Indirect Effects (Through Barriers)	Total Effects
Knowledge	.065	.595*	.660
Attitudes	.638*	.167*	.805
Barriers	.273*	-	.273

\* $P < .05$

**Goodness of fit statistics.** Goodness of fit statistics are used to measure how well a statistical model fits a data set, specifically quantifying the discrepancy between the observed values and the expected values. For the model, the Chi-Square index, the Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA), CFI and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and the coefficient of determination (CD) were analyzed.

The following norm guidelines were used for analyzing fit statistics for this model: a Chi-Square probability value in which the p-value  $> .05$  indicates an acceptable model fit, a CFI and/or TLI value close to 1.0 indicates a good fit (ideally, these values would be  $> .90$ ), a RMSEA  $< .05$  indicating a close fit, and finally, a perfect fit for the CD ( $R^2$ ) is 1 (stata.com, n.d.).

Results of the goodness of fit statistics were mixed. Specifically, the Chi-Squared index was 9.62 ( $> .05$ ), suggesting a good fit. Additionally, both the CFI and TLI values were close to 1.0 (.998 and .989 respectively), also suggesting a good fit. Similarly, the RMSEA was  $< .05$  (.029), providing further support for a close fit. However, the CD was .058 which indicated a less than perfect fit.

### Follow-Up Analyses

The initial regression analysis suggested that most demographic characteristics were not significant predictors of degree of allyship, therefore the researcher considered conducting additional regression analyses to determine how demographic variables instead predicted knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors scores. However, since it was determined that the *Providing*

*Services & Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey* was not a statistically sound measure of the underlying constructs of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors, this additional analysis was not completed.

Since the initial analyses provided minimal support for the validity and reliability of the *Providing Services & Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey*, follow-up analyses were conducted to determine if minor changes would improve the validity and reliability of this measure. Review of the pattern matrix from the initial principal axis factoring analysis revealed there were four items that did not correlate well with the rest of the items on this measure. Specifically, these were four items from the knowledge scale (questions K5, K6, K9, and K10). These items were removed, and another principal axis factoring analysis was conducted. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure from this follow-up analysis increased slightly,  $KMO = .803$ . This time, seven factors had eigenvalues above Kaiser's criterion of 1 and in combination explained 61.99% of the variance, which was a decrease from the initial analysis. Removing these four items from the principal axis factoring analysis did not significantly improve the factor loading statistics, so no further investigation was completed.

Given the limited support for the overall reliability of the *Providing Services & Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey*, Cronbach alphas were calculated for the individual seven factors that were identified within the pattern matrix following the removal of four knowledge items as discussed above. Reliability analysis of these seven factors indicated that only one factor had a Cronbach's alpha that reached the Kline's cutoff of .7 to be considered reliable. This factor included eight items from the behaviors scale (Cronbach's alpha = .835). Within the behaviors scale included on the *Providing Services & Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey*, there were ten items. Items R6 and R8 did not correlate well with

the other items on this scale and were therefore not included on this factor within the pattern matrix table. Overall, these follow-up analyses did not significantly improve the validity and reliability of the *Providing Services & Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey*.

### **Qualitative Information from Respondents**

Although there were not specific research questions connected with this information, there were two questions provided at the end of the survey to collect qualitative information from participants regarding if they viewed themselves as an ally and how their work with LGBTQ youth had been impacted through the COVID-19 pandemic. First, there was a question at the end of the survey which provided the ally definition used within the current study, including knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. Then, participants were asked to reflect on this definition, determine if they identified themselves as an ally, and provide an explanation for their answer (Appendix E). In total, 177 respondents provided an answer for this question, of which, 160 said they identify themselves as an ally and 17 said they do not. The answers from this question provided important information regarding allies' roles within our schools and areas for further development.

For participants who identified themselves as an ally, several common themes were identified within their explanations. Refer to Table 16 for information about how often these responses occurred. These people commonly had personal relationships with LGBTQ individuals or identified themselves as a member of the LGBTQ community. They addressed bias and harassment, both with students and their colleagues. Additionally, they fostered an overall atmosphere of acceptance and safety for these students, while making sure students knew they were a safe person to talk to. Many of these people noted that students had felt comfortable coming out to them. Those who identified themselves as an ally were oftentimes involved in

LGBTQ supportive groups within their schools and made efforts to include LGBTQ-inclusive content in the curriculum. One respondent even indicated they invited LGBTQ community members to come speak to their classes about their role in the community and their experiences as someone who identified within the LGBTQ community. These people were committed to staying educated and helping to educate others, in addition to correcting misunderstandings that people have about this population. This involved attending professional development opportunities while also conducting professional development workshops for colleagues about LGBTQ concerns. Next, these respondents indicated they are mindful of their language and use student's pronouns correctly. When they make a mistake with this, they immediately apologize and correct themselves. Those identifying as an ally display support in many ways, whether that be a silent visual display such as a sticker, or by a much more vocal display of advocating for changes at the school-level, such as the addition of gender-neutral bathrooms. Overall, these respondents wanted their students to feel heard and supported as valued members of the school community. Although those identifying as an ally were able to talk about specific things they were doing within their schools to support LGBTQ youth, many of these people also wrote that they wanted to or felt they should be doing even more to support and advocate for this student population.

For participants who said they did not identify themselves as an ally, they oftentimes had positive attitudes toward LGBTQ youth but felt they were lacking in their knowledge and level of engagement with supportive behaviors. While they felt they had a basic understanding, they needed to learn more about this population and their experiences. Some respondents indicated barriers at the school or district level, such as a lack of initiative with LGBTQ-related programs within the district or a school culture that works against LGBTQ allies. One person indicated

they did not consider themselves an ally because they did not go out of their way to involve themselves with LGBTQ students, whereas another person indicated they did not have time to engage in additional activities due to their professional duties and family responsibilities.

Table 16

*Information from Question about Self-Identification as an Ally*

*(Number of participants who responded to this question=177; 160 said yes, 17 said no)*

Reasons Provided for Identification as an Ally		
	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents*
Have personal relationships with LGBTQ people or identified as member of LGBTQ community	25	14.12
Address bias/harassment, with students and colleagues	17	9.60
Foster an overall atmosphere of acceptance and safety	29	16.38
Safe person to talk to/students have come out to them	19	10.73
Involved in LGBTQ-supportive groups	14	7.91
Include LGBTQ-inclusive content in curriculum	15	8.47
Committed to staying educated and/or helping to educate others/correct misunderstandings	2	1.13
Attend LGBTQ-related professional development opportunities and/or conduct these trainings for colleagues	8	4.52
Mindful of language, use pronouns correctly; Immediately apologize and correct mistakes with language/pronouns when made	10	5.65
Demonstrate support; ranging from visual support to more vocal support, advocating for school-level changes	12	6.78

Table 16 Continued

Reasons Provided for Non-Identification as an Ally		
	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents*
Have positive attitudes, but lacking knowledge and/or engaging in supportive behaviors	12	6.78
Barriers at school or district level	2	1.13

\*Out of the total 177 participants who responded to this question

At the beginning of the survey, participants were asked to respond to questions while thinking about a typical school year, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, to acknowledge any potential impacts, the second question at the end of the survey was included to ask if the pandemic had changed the way people supported and advocated for LGBTQ youth, and if so, in what ways. There were several responses indicating there was no change. Out of the 147 participants that answered this question, 12 indicated the pandemic changed the way they supported and advocated for *all* students, not just LGBTQ students. On the other hand, there were several people who reported differences within their work with LGBTQ youth. Refer to Table 17 for information about the frequency of these responses.

Participants worried about the level of isolation all students faced, particularly LGBTQ youth living in unsupportive homes, and felt an even greater desire to be supportive to these students. Since youth were not attending school in-person, they were not able to take advantage of the supports within the schools, such as attending GSA meetings with their peers. However, some respondents indicated their GSA was thriving in the virtual format. Other people felt disconnected from their students and felt it was more challenging to develop meaningful relationships with them, especially since there was little time available to interact with students on a personal, non-academic level. One participant noted that the pandemic made LGBTQ students less visible to educators. Others recognized that their students who were openly part of

the LGBTQ community appeared to be the ones struggling the most mentally during this time. With much of education being provided over Zoom during the pandemic, one participant noted this gave students the opportunity to put their pronouns after their names on the screen. Conversely, others talked about students leaving their video off and not participating in discussions over Zoom, making it very difficult for these educators to develop the level of rapport with their students that is a prerequisite to being an ally for them. Since curriculum was cut down to only cover the most essential standards, one participant noted content with LGBTQ representation that would typically be included in normal years was taken out of lessons due to decreased instructional time. Participants acknowledged that the pandemic contributed to missed opportunities for professional development/ training. Lastly, a person noted that major political issues were brought to light, which helped the participant to examine their own prejudices and be more mindful of the difficulties others were experiencing.

Table 17

*Information from Question about Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic*

*(Number of participants who responded to this question=147; 59 said there was an impact, 88 said no impact/not an impact specific to LGBTQ youth)*

Reasons Provided for How COVID-19 Pandemic Impacted Support for LGBTQ Youth		
	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents*
Concerned about level of isolation for students, especially LGBTQ students in unsupportive homes	5	3.40
Students unable to take advantage of in-school, supports, such as GSA	11	7.48
Positively, GSA able to thrive in virtual format	2	1.36

Table 17 Continued

Reasons Provided for How COVID-19 Pandemic Impacted Support for LGBTQ Youth		
	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents*
Feeling disconnected from students; Limited time to interact with students on non-academic level which makes it challenging to develop close, personal relationships	35	23.81
Felt that LGBTQ students were the ones struggling the most during the pandemic	1	0.68
LGBTQ students commonly had their videos off, did not unmute to respond to questions/participate	6	4.08
LGBTQ-inclusive content was cut out of curriculum as it was not "essential" material	2	1.36
Missed opportunities for professional development	2	1.36

\*Out of the total 147 participants who responded to this question

## Chapter IV: Discussion

The present study sought to examine LGBTQ-supportive school staff, or “allies,” and expand upon the research done by Swanson and Gettinger (2016) with the *Providing Services & Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey*. Specifically, demographic characteristics that are related to being supportive to LGBTQ middle and high school students were explored. Next, there was an examination of the *Providing Services & Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey* to determine if it was a valid, reliable measure to be used with future research investigating LGBTQ-supportive school staff. Lastly, the relationships between the subscales of this measure were explored to determine their influence on one another. This study was done with a sample of 247 educators employed at various public middle and high schools across New York State. This was an expansion of Swanson and Gettinger’s original sample of 98 educators (2016). Within this chapter, there is a summary of the results of the current study, along with a discussion of the findings in the context of the existing literature.

First, a discussion about the contributions of demographic characteristics predicting those who are an ally is provided. Then, there is a discussion regarding the contributions of the validity and reliability of the *Providing Services and Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey*. Finally, there is a discussion of the contributions of individual constructs involved in being an ally. The chapter closes with discussion of implications to the field of school psychology, contributions to the overall literature base, limitations to the current study, and directions for future research.

### Contributions of Demographic Characteristics Predicting Allyship

The current study hypothesized there would be a relationship between demographic variables and degree of allyship. The resulting model from the regression analysis indicated that

demographic characteristics accounted for 14.4% of the variance in degree of allyship. Having a friend or family member who identified as LGBTQ and being “consistently conservative” were significant predictors of degree of allyship. Conversely, gender, race, sexual orientation, level of religiosity, and being “usually liberal” were not significant predictors of degree of allyship.

While the hypotheses regarding the relationships between demographic characteristics and degree of allyship were partially supported, it was expected that all these variables would be significant predictors of degree of allyship.

This result was partially unexpected given the literature on demographic characteristics and their connection with being an ally to the LGBTQ community. The current study confirmed previous research that having a friend or family member who identifies as a member of the LGBTQ community is a significant predictor of having positive attitudes toward this population (Brown and Henriquez, 2008) and engaging in allied behaviors (Fingerhut, 2011). This result was expected as explained through the findings of Duhigg et al. (2010): those that have close personal relationships with LGBTQ individuals are more likely to have a greater recognition of instances of privilege and oppression within our society and are therefore more likely to feel an increased sense of personal responsibility to get involved directly in ally work.

Conversely, the current finding that those who described themselves as being “consistently conservative” was associated with a higher degree of allyship was contradictory to previous findings. Specifically, within their study, Brown and Henriquez (2008) found that those with more politically conservative beliefs were more likely to have higher levels of anti-gay attitudes. A crosstabs analysis on SPSS revealed that out of the 83 educators who said they were “consistently conservative” within the current study, 76 of them (or 92%) also had a friend or family member who identifies within the LGBTQ community. Given the well-supported research

on the likelihood that someone will have supportive attitudes and engage in supportive behaviors if they have personal connections with LGBTQ individuals, it is possible that for people who are both conservative and have these personal connections, their desire to support their friends and family overrides the traditionally conservative beliefs/practices that have been documented in previous literature. Perhaps these people within the current sample are more “moderately” conservative, such as by being fiscally conservative but socially liberal. Participants being less conservative than they are reporting within the current study would also help to explain why this sample had a much larger percentage of educators who described themselves as “consistently conservative” in comparison to the political leanings of educators nationwide. Overall, the subset of people who describe themselves as “consistently conservative,” while working within the NYS education system, and who furthermore chose to participate in this study involving LGBTQ youth represent a very targeted subgroup of educators. Therefore, this finding may be more indicative of sample limitations within the current study rather than something that can be broadly generalized to all educators.

As previously explained, within the current study, the attitudes score was not normally distributed in that there were more people with high scores on this scale. It is possible that participants responded in socially desirable ways indicating more positive attitudes than their actual beliefs, which would have increased their overall degree of allyship. Furthermore, perhaps those who described themselves as “consistently conservative” were conscious of the fact that individuals with these political beliefs have previously been found to have more anti-gay attitudes, so they were even more likely to respond in socially desirable ways. Another explanation for this finding is that with the increased attention to LGBTQ issues within the literature and within the media in recent years, people are gaining a greater knowledge and

understanding of the experiences of this population, leading to more positive attitudes in comparison to when these studies were done over ten years ago.

### **Contributions of Validity and Reliability for the Measure**

Hypotheses associated with the second and third research questions suggested the *Providing Services and Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey* would be a valid and reliable measure, therefore providing further support for its use with future research examining allies to LGBTQ youth in schools. A principal axis factoring analysis was conducted to determine if this measure supported the underlying constructs of allyship, specifically knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors as discussed within previous literature (Duhigg et al., 2010; Munin & Speight, 2010). Results did not clearly support only these three factors within the measure. Instead, the nine factors that did emerge were smaller, more specific clusters of items from these scales. There were four items from the knowledge scale that did not fit well with the other items and were shown within their own, separate factors. After these outlying items were removed, follow-up analyses were conducted to determine if knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors were identified as distinguishable factors of this measure. Overall, the factor loading statistics did not significantly improve from this follow-up analysis.

Throughout these analyses, the one factor that was repeatedly supported as an underlying construct of being an ally included several items from the behaviors scale. While it appears that the items within the knowledge and attitudes scales are not accurately capturing these constructs of ally development and were therefore not supported as underlying factors of allyship on this measure, the current study confirmed that observable actions taken on behalf of LGBTQ individuals is a consistent indicator of being an ally. Within Swanson and Gettinger's (2016) study, an overall degree of allyship was not calculated. Although the current study sought to

include this ally composite score as part of the *Providing Services and Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey*, results did not support the validity of summing scores from subscales within the measure to create an overall score.

Results from the Cronbach's alpha analyses did not provide definite support for the reliability of the *Providing Services and Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey*. The initial reliability analysis of the overall measure did not reach Kline's cutoff of .7 to be considered reliable. Then, reliability analyses were conducted on the seven factors that were identified within the principal axis factoring analysis following the removal of four items that did not fit well into the other factors. Further support was found for the factor with items from the behaviors scale, as this was the only factor with a Cronbach's alpha above Klein's cutoff. Within their original study, Swanson and Gettinger (2016) concluded the scales exhibited minimally acceptable to good reliability, with Cronbach's alphas from .61 (behaviors and barriers scales) to .81 (importance of behaviors scale). Overall, it was expected that there would be greater support for the validity and reliability of the *Providing Services and Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey* than what was found within the current study.

### **Contributions of Individual Constructs of Being an Ally**

The last research question involved the relationship between subscales of the *Providing Services and Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey*, specifically knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and barriers. A path analysis was conducted including these variables, in addition to demographic characteristics. Various hypotheses were provided regarding the relationship between demographic variables and scores on the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors scores. None of these hypotheses were supported, as the demographic characteristics were not significant predictors of any of these scores. This finding was unexpected given

previous research suggesting connections between demographic characteristics and knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.

In relation to the scales, it was hypothesized that those with more knowledge and more positive attitudes would engage in more supportive behaviors. This was partially supported. Although knowledge score was not a significant predictor of behaviors score, results of the path analysis found attitudes score to be a significant predictor of behaviors score. Those with more positive attitudes were more likely to engage in supportive behaviors. This finding was expected given previous research finding a connection between positive attitudes toward LGBTQ individuals and engaging in supportive behaviors (Duhigg et al, 2010; Munin & Speight, 2010).

It was also hypothesized that barriers would mediate the relationship between knowledge and behaviors, in addition to attitudes and behaviors. Specifically, it was hypothesized that greater experience of barriers would negatively affect these relationships. This hypothesis was supported, as there were significant indirect effects of both knowledge and attitudes on behaviors through barriers. When comparing the mean score from the importance of behaviors scale (36.43) and the behaviors scale (31.51), similar to the results found by Swanson and Gettinger (2016), educators are not engaging in supportive behaviors to the same degree they are indicating that these behaviors are important. Although people may have adequate knowledge and positive attitudes toward LGBTQ youth, this finding suggests there are barriers getting in the way of educators actually engaging in these behaviors that they view as important.

Previous research can further help to explain this role of barriers and its impact on the relationship between knowledge and attitudes predicting behavior. The theory of planned behavior illustrates that behaviors are a function of attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms around the behavior of interest, and one's perceived behavior control, or in other words,

the perceived ease or difficulty in carrying out the behavior. Therefore, the resources and opportunities that are available to a person will impact the likelihood of performing the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). More specifically, as highlighted within their meta-analysis of the effects of social pressure and perceived difficulty within the relationship between attitudes and behaviors, Wallace et al. (2005) indicated that “low perceived behavioral control creates a strong situation in which participants are swayed more by the perceived lack of resources and opportunities to perform the behavior than by their own attitudes toward doing so. When a behavior is difficult to enact, few people can overcome the situational obstacles” (p. 216). Relating these findings back to the current study, although many people have knowledge of LGBTQ youth and supportive attitudes toward this population, this does not always predict the likelihood that they will engage in supportive behaviors. Many educators mention a lack of resources and opportunities to freely engage in these behaviors within the school setting, suggesting that educators may view this as an area with low perceived behavioral control, ultimately leading to instances in which knowledge and attitudes do not always indicate the likelihood of engaging in supportive behaviors.

### **Contributions to the Literature**

Within the last several years, there has been increased attention in the literature regarding the experiences of sexual and gender minority individuals, particularly youth within the school environment. Since the experiences of LGBTQ youth have been well documented, more recent research has shifted to understanding supports that are available for this population. One of the most influential supports for LGBTQ youth in schools is supportive school staff, or allies. To date, most of the research has examined allies of the LGBTQ community in general but there has been limited research surrounding being an ally specifically to LGBTQ youth within the school

environment. The current study contributed to the overall literature base regarding examination of allies by targeting those who are acting as LGBTQ allies within the middle and high school environment.

Previous studies also utilized a narrow range of behaviors to classify a person as an ally, including having been involved in large-scale organized social justice efforts. To recognize and honor the various ways one may act as an ally, the current study used a broader definition of an ally, which included a variety of simple, everyday behaviors that one may engage in to show support to LGBTQ youth. Additionally, there was a question provided at the end of the survey to encourage participants to reflect on whether they identified themselves as an ally. Within these responses, both from those identifying as an ally and those that did not, there were areas identified for further ally development. Specifically, educators feel as though they have limited exposure to and therefore limited knowledge about LGBTQ youth. Participants do not always know how to be supportive to this population and would like to learn more tangible ways to support these students, beyond some of the obvious things such as addressing harassment and bullying against LGBTQ individuals. Some participants indicated they would even like specific guidance on appropriate ways to respond when they witness instances of harassment. Finally, respondents would like to incorporate more LGBTQ-affirmative content within their classrooms and would like training on ways this could be accomplished. Administrators should be aware of these areas of need when planning professional development opportunities for their staff.

Lastly, the current study helped to expand upon the work of Swanson and Gettinger (2016) by examining one of the only measures available to study allies to LGBTQ youth in schools. The sample from Swanson and Gettinger's study involved 98 general and special education teachers in grades 6-12 from four states (California, Iowa, Pennsylvania, and

Tennessee). The sample from the current study was an expansion of this, as it involved 247 educators from public middle and high schools across New York State. Rather than only including teachers within the sample, all instructional staff members in participating schools were invited to complete the survey. While general and special education teachers made up most of the sample, there was also representation from administrators, school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, and teaching assistants/aides within this study. Although results from the current study did not achieve the desired goal of supporting the overall validity and reliability of the *Providing Services & Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey*, this study emphasized the need for future research to continue exploring current measures and furthermore, to develop new measures to add to our knowledge about allies to LGBTQ youth in our schools.

### **Study Limitations**

Although the current study was designed to minimize threats to its reliability and validity, there are a few limitations that should be acknowledged. First, there are concerns with population validity and the generalizability of the results. Specifically, participants within this study were all from New York State schools. As discussed within the literature review, state-level laws and guidance regarding protections for LGBTQ students greatly influences school-level policies and practices. With NYS having enumerated anti-bullying laws and guidance that supports athletic participation by transgender and nonbinary athletes, the experiences for educators acting as allies within NYS schools is likely different than the experiences of educators working in states that do not have these supportive laws and policies, especially for educators working in states with laws prohibiting the “promotion of homosexuality” or “No Promo Homo Laws.” Therefore, the participants within the current study represent a small segment of the overall population, and

therefore, are likely not fully representative of educators working as allies to LGBTQ youth across the country.

Although it was acknowledged that educators from New York State are not generalizable to educators across the country, the research had still hoped to have a sample that adequately represented New York State educators in middle and high school settings and could be generalized to all educators within the state; however, limitations with the sampling procedure and with the final sample hindered this goal. Although the final sample of 247 was an increase in Swanson and Gettinger's original sample size, the researcher hoped to have a much larger sample representing a wider range of educators across the state.

The sampling procedure involved two tiers of respondents- the administrators that received the initial outreach email from the researcher and then the staff members who received a follow-up email from their administrator with information about participating in the study. This procedure was likely damaging to the overall sample because many administrators across the state chose not to send the survey to their staff members, therefore removing hundreds of potential survey respondents before they were even informed of the survey and their opportunity to participate. The final sample was geographically constrained, with a disproportionate number of respondents from Broome County, where the researcher resides and is employed as a school psychologist. Administrators and staff members who participated in the survey from Broome County likely felt a sense of loyalty and a desire to support the researcher with her dissertation research by completing the survey. Additionally, there were few responses from educators in larger cities across NYS, which was to be expected since the survey was not able to be widely shared with educators in New York City. The researcher hoped to have an equal response rate from participating schools, but this did not happen. For example, some smaller schools had more

than ten participating educators whereas some larger schools only had one or two educators who completed the survey.

When thinking about the current sample, it is also important to highlight that the educators who chose to participate in this study were self-selected. The group of educators that chose to participate in this study are undoubtedly different than the educators who received the link to the survey but chose not to participate. This self-selection bias further contributed to limitations with the overall sampling method and the final sample for this study.

Next, this study relied on participants to self-report data for all questions. Surveys relying on self-report are naturally limiting because participants may respond in socially desirable ways. This is especially likely given the current study was examining how educators act as allies to LGBTQ youth within our schools and participants were probably aware that non-supportive, anti-LGBTQ attitudes and behaviors are not considered socially acceptable. Previous research has demonstrated that people will rate their support for LGBTQ individuals to be greater than their actual behaviors indicate. Specifically, a study found that opposition to same-sex marriage was about 5 to 7% greater on election day compared to responses in pre-election polls (Powell, 2013). Another study compared base rates for an unmatched-count technique (UCT) to conventional self-report surveys regarding anti-gay hate crimes (Rayburn, Earleywine, & Davison, 2003). The UCT did not require participants to directly answer sensitive questions and revealed higher estimates for participants having gotten into a physical fight with a person because they were gay or having damaged someone's property because they were gay.

Due to the likelihood for people to respond in socially desirable ways on self-report measures of sensitive topics, some studies include a measure of social desirability to account for this. For example, a study that involved development of a scale to measure attitudes toward gay

men and women also included *The Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR)* to measure participants' self-deception enhancement and impression management (Raja & Stokes, 1998). Similarly, a study involving the creation and validation of an LGBT ally identity measure incorporated the impression management scale of the BIDR to assess socially desirable responding (Jones, Brewster, & Jones, 2014). Future research examining potential allies of LGBTQ youth in schools should consider adding a similar measure to account for socially desirable responding with this topic.

Additionally, participants responded to many of the self-report survey questions on Likert scales. Since these scales are ordinal and the intervals between each option on the scale are not well defined, this could lead to misrepresented responses, as participants may interpret the options differently when responding. Given the sensitive nature of this topic and to account for feasibility of data collection, the researcher chose to survey staff members rather than surveying LGBTQ students themselves to gain their perspectives regarding allies within their schools; however, this is something that should be explored in future research.

It is important to note that data collection for this study took place during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Educators had additional responsibilities and added stressors during this time, which likely made it more difficult for them to dedicate up to 20 minutes of their day to take the survey. Although the researcher included incentives to encourage participation (i.e., raffle for Amazon gift cards and resources outlining ways to be supportive of LGBTQ youth within schools), it is possible that this was just not the best time for educators to be completing extra tasks outside their assigned job duties. However, as demonstrated by those participants that completed the survey and provided an answer about how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted their work with LGBTQ youth, this population of students need supportive educators now more

than they even did prior to the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has been an extremely isolating time for LGBTQ students, as they have been unable to take advantage of school-based supports previously available to them and there is limited time for them to develop close, personal relationships with their teachers. Additionally, LGBTQ-inclusive content has been removed as it is not considered “essential” curricula and there have been missed opportunities for professional development surrounding LGBTQ youth.

A review of the current literature revealed further support for some of the impacts of the pandemics mentioned by educators within current study. In a review of the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ youth during the pandemic, an article from the *Harvard Medical School Primary Care Review* highlighted the loss of social connections and support systems at school, the loss of extracurricular activities (including GSAs), and being confined in non-affirming, potentially abusive home environments (Green & Price-Feeney, 2020). The Trevor Project conducted the National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health 2021, which included information regarding the impact of COVID-19 on this population. Results suggested more than 80% of LGBTQ youth indicated the pandemic made their living situation more stressful, 70% said their mental health was “poor” most of the time or always during the pandemic, and about half said the pandemic impacted their ability to express their sexual orientation. As suggested by educators within the current study and further supported by the literature, the COVID-19 pandemic has been an isolating, unhappy, and for some, even an unsafe time for LGBTQ youth. Furthermore, many school-based supports are temporarily unavailable for these students. Therefore, the impact of supportive educators in the midst of this global pandemic may be even more pronounced than in years prior.

### **Implications for the Field of School Psychology**

Within their job, school psychologists have the opportunity to work directly with students and work through collaborative relationships with teachers, administrators, and various other stakeholders throughout the school community. Within these roles, school psychologists can serve as an ally to their students while also helping to educate and empower those around them to do the same. Although some of the specific hypotheses examined in this study were unfounded and therefore additional research is needed to understand allies within our schools, the literature is clear regarding the negative experiences of LGBTQ youth and the tremendous impact supportive educators can have in counteracting these experiences and contributing to better outcomes for these students (Kosciw et al., 2020). Especially in schools where educators have limited exposure to the LGBTQ population, school psychologists may be responsible for educating others about the experiences of these students and the need for supportive adults, or allies, within the school community. Furthermore, school psychologists can model what allyship may look like in a school, such as by immediately addressing anti-LGBTQ language, displaying visual displays of support, and advocating for school-level policy changes. Given that each school is unique, school psychologists may even wish to conduct a needs assessment with educators from their school to determine the current school climate surrounding LGBTQ issues and areas for future professional development opportunities with this topic.

### **Future Research**

Results from this study provided additional support for the predictive power of some demographic characteristics (i.e., having a friend or family member who identifies at LGBTQ) on allyship; however, there were conflicting findings regarding how other demographic characteristics predict the likelihood that one would act as an ally to LGBTQ youth. Future research should continue exploring these predictor variables and their connection with being an

ally. Since discussion of LGBTQ issues has become much more widespread over the last several years, especially within middle and high school settings, perhaps these variables are no longer significant predictors of whether one will serve as an ally to LGBTQ youth, as there are more people within the general population, but especially educators within secondary school settings, who are gaining knowledge of this population and therefore developing more supportive attitudes. However, a search of recent literature did not produce any support for the idea that demographic characteristics no longer predict allyship to the same degree as found in previous literature from several years ago. Instead, since it is a demographic characteristic that has been repeatedly supported within the literature and was further supported within the current study, perhaps having a friend or family member who identifies as LGBTQ is a primary indicator for if one will serve as an ally, whereas other demographic characteristics are just much less significant and impactful on ally development.

Although behaviors were found to be a consistent underlying factor of being an ally to LGBTQ youth within the current study, the same was not found for knowledge and attitudes. A search of the available literature was conducted to determine if this finding was not unexpected when compared to research involving allies in different areas, such as with racial allyship. This search did not produce any studies that did not include some form of knowledge/awareness and positive attitudes toward outgroup members as factors influencing ally development. Future research may continue exploring allies to determine if there are other factors that contribute to this overall construct. Perhaps knowledge and attitudes are not as significant as originally thought and behaviors is the primary factor that should be considered when exploring contributions to the overall construct of being an ally. However, given the poor reliability and validity support for this measure within the current study, it seems more likely that while

knowledge and attitudes are underlying constructs of being an ally, these areas were simply not measured appropriately with the *Providing Services and Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey*.

Since it is one of the only measures available to study the population of interest, the current study hoped to find support for the overall validity and reliability of the *Providing Services and Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey*; however, results did not support this with the given sample. It has been established by previous literature that knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors are all constructs contributing to allyship (Duhigg et al., 2010; Munin & Speight, 2010). Within the current study, results from the factor analysis suggest the items on this measure are not adequately measuring these constructs of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. A more recent measure of ally identity encompassed questions examining four dimensions of ally identification: knowledge about LGBT issues (e.g., history, policies, laws, culture, norms), awareness of systematic oppression and experiences of injustice, skills to assist LGBT groups, and action through social justice activism or advocacy (Jones et al., 2014). Results from the exploratory factor analysis of the Ally Identity Measure (AIM) for this study yielded three factors: knowledge and skills, openness and support, and oppression awareness, suggesting the underlying constructs of being an ally may be best represented by a combination of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors rather than clearly defined, separate factors.

There were some items included within the AIM that were not accounted for within the *Providing Services and Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey*. Similar to results from the qualitative information provided by participants within the current study, Jones et al. noted that some heterosexual people feel a sense of inadequacy in viewing themselves as an ally because they think they do not possess the necessary knowledge and skills to support LGBT

individuals (2014). In recognition of this, items that contributed to the knowledge and skills factor of the AIM assessed participants specific knowledge of concrete ways to support LGBT individuals. For example, these items included “I know about resources (for example: books, web sites, support groups, etc.) for sexual minority people in my area,” “I know about resources for families of sexual minority people (for example: PFLAG),” “If I was approached by a sexual minority person who was experiencing discrimination, I have the skills to be able to support them,” and “I know of organizations that advocate for sexual minority issues.” While the items within the behaviors scale of the *Providing Services and Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey* included more general ways educators can be supportive of LGBTQ youth (e.g., taking a strong stand to support these students, displaying visual support, using appropriate terminology, immediately addressing anti-LGBTQ language, pursuing training and professional development on this topic), future research may wish to expand upon the *Providing Services and Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey* by incorporating additional items similar to those from the AIM, adjusted to reflect how educators may be supportive in these ways within the school setting. The addition of these items would allow for a greater understating of participants’ confidence in their knowledge of specific resources to support LGBTQ youth and their skills with supporting LGBTQ youth who approach them and ask for assistance when faced with discrimination. Adding these additional items to the scale based on more recent findings of the AIM would ideally improve the validity and reliability of the *Providing Services and Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey* for use in other studies with a broader, more diverse population of educators from across the country.

It was expected that those with greater knowledge and those with more supportive attitudes would engage in more supportive behaviors. Furthermore, it was hypothesized that

these relationships would be mediated by barriers. The current study supported these hypotheses, except for the relationship between greater knowledge and more supportive behaviors. Further exploration is needed to understand the relationship between knowledge and behaviors. Although knowledge was not found to be a significant predictor of behaviors, several participants within the current study did not self-identify as an ally because they felt as though they lacked knowledge of LGBTQ youth and/or ways to be supportive of this population. There were eleven respondents who indicated this within their explanation of why they do not self-identify as an ally. A simple analysis comparing average scores on the knowledge and behavior scales for this group of respondents with the average scores for the whole sample confirmed what was reported within these explanations. While the average knowledge score for the entire sample was 21.39 and the average behaviors score was 31.51, the average knowledge score for the eleven people who did not self-identify as an ally due to limited knowledge and engagement in supportive behaviors was 19.36 and the average behaviors score for this group was 25.73. Therefore, these eleven people accurately indicated that they have room for improvement in relation to their knowledge about this population and their engagement with supportive behaviors. Future research may include a survey of the current professional development opportunities available for educators as a starting point for addressing this need.

Lastly, future research should aim to address one of the limitations within the current study, specifically the use of self-report data from educators. Although participants were able to self-reflect on their identification as an ally and provide a justification for their response, it would be helpful to include LGBTQ students in future studies to compare how educators view their allyship to the ways in which these students view the support available within their schools. Although this may reveal that educators think they are being more supportive than students

report, it is also possible that including this information from LGBTQ students would serve to validate and affirm allies in that they are doing much more of this important work than they even realize and most importantly, that their support is recognized and appreciated by their students.

### **Summary**

Within recent years, there has been increased attention in the literature to the experiences of sexual and gender minority individuals (i.e., those identifying as LGBTQ) (Kosciw et al., 2013), particularly within the school environment (Heck et al., 2016; Kosciw et al., 2007). This population experiences harassment and discrimination (Kosciw et al., 2018) and social exclusion/isolation (Pearson et al., 2007; Ueno, 2005). These experiences contribute to poor attendance, lower levels of self-esteem, lower sense of school belonging, and increased levels of anxiety and depression (Kosciw et al., 2018). Since the negative experiences and outcomes of LGBTQ youth have been well documented, research has most recently shifted to examining the importance of school-based supports for improving outcomes for these students. Although there are many supports available, including LGBTQ-inclusive laws and policies (Kull et al., 2016), LGBTQ-inclusive curricula (Kosciw et al., 2018), and GSAs (Marx and Kettrey, 2016), one of the most influential resources for LGBTQ youth is supportive school staff, or allies.

A review of the previous literature reveals that an ally is a person who recognizes LGBTQ oppression (DiStefano et al., 2000; Duhigg et al., 2020; Munin & Speight, 2010) and this “knowledge” oftentimes results from having a close personal relationship with an individual who identifies as LGBTQ themselves (Brown & Henriquez, 2008; Duhigg et al., 2010; Fingerhut, 2011). Furthermore, these close personal relationships are associated with more positive “attitudes” toward LGBTQ individuals (Brown & Henriquez, 2008). Finally, allies engage in behaviors to support and advocate for those identifying as LGBTQ (GLSEN, 2016;

DiStefano et al., 2000). Although they did not specifically use the term “ally” within their study, Swanson and Gettinger (2016) explored how teachers’ knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors in support of sexual and gender minority students are affected by the presence of school-level supports.

The current study was an expansion of Swanson and Gettinger’s (2016) study by using their *Providing Services & Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey* to further examine LGBTQ-supportive school staff, or allies. Specifically, demographic characteristics that are correlated with being supportive to LGBTQ individuals were examined. Since this measure has not been used much in the research and is one of the only tools available to survey this population, the validity and reliability of the measure were assessed. These analyses were used to determine if knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors were underlying factors of the measure, in addition to exploring the consistency of the scale. Lastly, a path analysis was used to determine the relationship between the subscales of the *Providing Services & Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey*, specifically knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and barriers. It was hypothesized that demographic characteristics would predict knowledge and attitudes scores. Then, it was hypothesized that individuals with more knowledge and more positive attitudes would engage in more supportive behaviors. Lastly, it was hypothesized that experience with barriers would mediate these relationships. Specifically, experience with more barriers would negatively affect the relationship between knowledge and behaviors, in addition to the relationship between attitudes and behaviors.

Results from the regression analysis only provided support for the predictability of one demographic characteristic on allyship: having a friend or family member who identifies as LGBTQ. Although being “consistently conservative” was also found to be a significant predictor

of being an ally, this finding is contradictory to previous literature and therefore further exploration in this area is needed. Results from the principal axis factoring and reliability analysis did not support the overall validity and reliability of the *Providing Services & Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey*. Specifically, knowledge and attitudes were not found to be distinguishable underlying factors of the measure. Behaviors, however, appeared to be a clear, consistent factor contributing to the overall degree of allyship from this scale. Results from the path analysis revealed that all the hypotheses related to demographic characteristics were unfounded. Although knowledge score was not a significant predictor of behaviors score, attitudes score was found to be a significant predictor of behaviors score. Specifically, those with more positive attitudes were more likely to engage in supportive behaviors. There were significant indirect effects of knowledge and attitudes on behaviors through barriers.

Future research should continue exploring allies to LGBTQ youth within schools, specifically the ways in which demographic characteristics predict allyship, underlying constructs that contribute to being an ally, and ways to survey this population in future studies. Although there has been research conducted on various aspects of this topic, the literature base specifically examining allies to LGBTQ youth within the middle and high school setting is very limited. The significant, positive impacts that supportive school staff can have on the overall wellbeing of LGBTQ students is well documented; however, further exploration is needed to understand how one becomes an ally within the school setting, what their experiences are within this role, and ways administration can foster a culture where educators feel empowered to serve as an ally to LGBTQ youth. Ideally, future research will find ways to incorporate this population of students to gain their perspectives of supports available through continued exploration of allies within our schools.

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**Appendix A: Demographics Questionnaire****Demographic Questions****1. How do you identify your gender?**

- Man
- Woman
- Non-binary
- Other

**1a. Do you identify as transgender?**

- Yes
- No

**2. How do you identify your race? Please select all that apply.**

- White
- African-American
- Asian
- Hispanic or Latinx
- Native American or American Indian
- Middle Eastern
- Other

**3. What best describes your level of religiosity?**

- Not Religious
- Slightly Religious
- Extremely Religious

**4. What best describes your political leaning?**

- Consistently Conservative
- Usually Conservative
- Mixed
- Usually Liberal
- Consistently Liberal

**5. How do you identify your sexual orientation?**

- Heterosexual/straight
- Gay

- Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Other

**6. Do you have a friend or family member whom identifies as a member of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer/Questioning (LGBTQ) community?**

- Yes
- No

**7. How long have you been employed as an educator?**

- 0-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-15 years
- 15-20 years
- 20-25 years
- Over 25 years

**8. What grade level students do you work with in your current role? Select all that apply.**

- 6<sup>th</sup>
- 7<sup>th</sup>
- 8<sup>th</sup>
- 9<sup>th</sup>
- 10<sup>th</sup>
- 11<sup>th</sup>
- 12<sup>th</sup>

**9. What is your area of specialization/primary role as an educator?**

- General Education Teacher
- Special Education Teacher
- Specials Teacher (e.g., Art, P.E., Library, etc.)
- Teacher's Assistant/Teacher's Aide
- School Counselor
- Social Worker
- School Psychologist
- Administrator
- Other (Please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**10. In what setting is your school located?**

- Urban
- Rural
- Suburban

Other (Please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**11. What percentage of students at your school qualify to receive free or reduced lunch?**

- 0-20%
- 21-40%
- 41-60%
- 61-80%
- 81-100%

**12. What school district are you employed at?** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Providing Services and Supports for LGBT Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey (TAS)

Developed by Katie M. Swanson (2015)

*Think about the specialized training or professional development you have received related to LGBTQ youth, including preservice training, workshops, conferences, graduate courses, etc. Rate the level of training you have received and your level of knowledge/skill related to working with or training LGBTQ students.*

Level of training and professional development related to LGBTQ students:

- Very High
- High
- Average
- Low
- Very Low

Personal level of knowledge or skill related to working with and teaching LGBTQ students:

- Very High
- High
- Average
- Low
- Very Low

### SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

To the best of your knowledge is there a Gay-Straight Alliance or Gender/Sexuality Alliance (GSA) student group at your school?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

To the best of your knowledge is there an enforced anti-bullying and/or harassment policy with language specific to sexual minorities and gender identity at your school?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

### KNOWLEDGE

*Indicate whether each statement is mostly true (“yes”) or mostly not true (“no”) or whether you are “not sure.”*

Yes                  No                  Not sure

- |   |                          |                          |                          |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| K1. Teachers and school administrators may be legally liable if they do not act to stop harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity.                          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| K2. Teachers and administrators must protect and respect students' right to speak out about their sexual orientation or gender identity.                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| K3. It is not illegal to intimidate students because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| K4. The state in which I teach has anti-bullying laws that specifically address discrimination, harassment, and/or bullying based on sexual orientation or gender identity. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| K5. Compared to non-LGBTQ students, LGBTQ students are at high risk for depression, suicide, and engaging in substance abuse behaviors.                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| K6. In general, LGBTQ students have higher academic achievement and are less likely to drop out of school compared to non-LGBTQ students.                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| K7. LGBTQ students experience more bullying and harassment from peers than do non-LGBTQ students.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| K8. LGBTQ students feel less safe and less supported in school than do non-LGBTQ students.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| K9. Compared to non-LGBTQ peers, LGBTQ students are more likely to participate in performing arts activities (e.g., music, drama).  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| K10. In general, LGBTQ students are popular and well-liked by peers.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### ATTITUDES

*Indicate your level of agreement with each statement below:*

- |   | Strongly Agree           | Agree Somewhat           | Disagree Somewhat        | Strongly Disagree        |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A1. The lifestyle of LGBTQ youth is unnatural or immoral. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- |   |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A2. A heterosexual lifestyle is best for students.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A3. Students should conform to traditional sex values.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A4. LGBTQ youth should be discreet about their sexual orientation when in school.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A5. LGBTQ students benefit from receiving counseling from a heterosexual counselor who endorses conventional sex values and norms.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A6. If students have same-sex feelings, bisexual feelings, or feel they belong to a different gender than the one they were born into, they should do everything they can to overcome these feelings. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A7. Being LGBTQ is a different kind of lifestyle that should be condemned.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A8. Homosexuality is a threat to many basic social institutions.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### TEACHER ROLES

***There are many things teachers can do to support LGBTQ students. Listed below are some potential roles for teachers. Rate each possible role for teachers on two dimensions.***

*First, indicate **how often** you typically adopt each role, using the following rating system:*

*Always – this is something I **always** do.*

*Sometimes – this is something I **sometimes** do.*

*Rarely – this is something I **rarely** do.*

*Never – this is something I **never** do.*

- |  | Always                   | Sometimes                | Rarely                   | Never                    |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| R1. Take a strong stand to support LGBTQ students. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

R2. Display visual support for LGBTQ students, e.g., “safe space” symbol on classroom door.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
R3. Ensure that LGBTQ students have access to magazines, brochures, and other materials relevant to them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
R4. Ensure that LGBTQ persons are represented in course content and classroom discussions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
R5. Ensure that printed/multimedia resources (e.g., photos, posters, magazines, films, books, etc.) are free of biased or negative content, language, or images about LGBTQ persons.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
R6. Learn and use appropriate key words/terms that reflect LGBTQ youth culture.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
R7. Advocate for using appropriate terminology for LGBTQ groups/individuals in the classrooms.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
R8. Immediately address anti-LGBTQ language (e.g., “That’s so gay.”) used by student or staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
R9. Be available as an ally for LGBTQ students by supporting or participating in a Gay-Straight Alliance or Gender/Sexuality Alliance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
R10. Pursue training and professional development to enhance understanding and effectiveness of working with LGBTQ students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Second, rate **how important** it is for teachers (including yourself) to take on each role, using the following rating system:*

*Very important*

*Mostly important*

*Slightly important*

*Not important*

	Very important	Mostly important	Slightly important	Not important
R1a. Take a strong stand to support LGBTQ students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- |   |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| R2a. Display visual support for LGBTQ students, e.g., “safe space” symbol on classroom door.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| R3a. Ensure that LGBTQ students have access to magazines, brochures, and other materials relevant to them.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| R4a. Ensure that LGBTQ persons are represented in course content and classroom discussions.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| R5a. Ensure that printed/multimedia resources (e.g., photos, posters, magazines, films, books, etc.) are free of biased or negative content, language, or images about LGBTQ persons. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| R6a. Learn and use appropriate key words/terms that reflect LGBTQ youth culture.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| R7a. Advocate for using appropriate terminology for LGBTQ groups/individuals in the classrooms.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| R8a. Immediately address anti-LGBTQ language (e.g., “That’s so gay.”) used by student or staff.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| R9a. Be available as an ally for LGBTQ students by supporting or participating in a Gay-Straight Alliance or Gender/Sexuality Alliance.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| R10a. Pursue training and professional development to enhance understanding and effectiveness of working with LGBTQ students.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### BARRIERS

*Listed below are some barriers (identified by educators in previous research) to providing support for LGBTQ student in schools. Indicate the extent to which you believe each item poses a barrier to supporting LGBTQ students in your school, using the following rating system:*

*Very much a barrier**Moderate barrier**Slight barrier**Not a barrier*

	Very much a barrier	Moderate barrier	Slight barrier	Not a barrier
B1. A school climate among students and staff that tolerates LGBTQ harassment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B2. Lack of support from school administration regarding LGBTQ issues.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B3. School anti-bullying/harassment policies that do not specifically address LGBTQ students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B4. Lack of knowledge regarding the needs and issues of LGBTQ students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B5. Lack of training/skills on how to support LGBTQ youth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B6. Not knowing how or when to intervene when bullying/harassment or anti-LGBTQ statements (made by students or staff) occur.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B7. Lack of availability of LGBTQ-inclusive educational materials for the classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B8. Not enough time or resources; other work duties take precedence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B9. Fear of being labeled as LGBTQ by students, staff, or community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B10. Fear of staff, parent, or community opposition.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Appendix C: Recruitment Letter to Administrators**

Date

School Name

Dear Mr. John Smith:

I would like to start out by introducing myself. My name is Allyson Church., I am from Binghamton, NY and I am currently pursuing my doctorate degree in school psychology at Alfred University. One of the final components of my degree is the completion of my dissertation research. I am writing to request permission to conduct research within SCHOOL NAME district with all members of your instructional staff.

The current research seeks to examine how knowledge of and attitudes toward LGBTQ youth contribute to behaviors/roles taken on in support of LGBTQ youth within the school environment. Barriers that influence this relationship will also be examined. Importantly, this study will use a scale that was previously developed by other researchers in hopes to support this as a valid and reliable measure to be used with this population and continue collecting important information impacting LGBTQ youth in our schools. Data will be collected via an online survey (attached). Approval has been granted through Alfred University's Human Subjects Research Committee (HSRC). The purpose of the HSRC is to review research protocols involving human subjects and evaluate risks to subjects, protection against risks, and potential benefits likely to result from proposed research. This approval indicates that the current research is in accordance with professional standards of ethical conduct and legal guidelines.

The proposal for the project including details along with informed consent documents is attached. ***Please consider sharing this survey with all members of your instructional staff*** (classroom teachers, administrators, aides, special area teachers, school counselors, social workers, school psychologists, etc.). If you choose to share this survey with your instructional staff members, your name will be entered into a raffle for a gift card.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me for any questions or concerns.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Allyson Church  
[AC37@alfred.edu](mailto:AC37@alfred.edu)  
(phone number)

## Appendix D: Consent Letter

**Title of Project:** Factors Influencing Allies' Roles within Schools: Knowledge, Attitudes, and Barriers

**Researcher(s):** Allyson Church and Dr. Andrea Burch, Psy. D.

Your consent is being sought for your participation in this study. Please read the following information carefully before you decide whether or not you consent to participate.

**Purpose of the research:** The purpose of this study is to examine the relationships between knowledge, attitudes, barriers, and roles within schools for allies to LGBTQ students.

**Procedure to be followed:** You will be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire and a survey titled *Providing Services & Supports for LGBTQ Youth: Teacher Assessment Survey*.

**Discomforts/risks:** Although the surveys are extremely low risk, there is a possibility that, due to the nature of the questions, completion of the survey may be mildly distressing. If you are feeling uncomfortable or distraught, please seek care from a local mental health professional at your discretion. If you need assistance locating such a professional, please contact the researcher with the contact information provided below.

**Incentives/benefits for participation:** Participants will be entered into a drawing for a gift card upon submission of their surveys. Furthermore, all participants have the opportunity to contribute to the greater field of psychology by providing important information about an understudied population - allies of LGBTQ youth within the school environment.

**Time duration of participation:** Participation in the study will not exceed 20 minutes.

**Statement of confidentiality:** Records will be kept confidential and will be available only to the researchers directly involved in the study. Survey responses will be stored on a password-protected file. If the results of this study are published, the data will be presented in group form and individual participants will not be identified. If you choose to enter the drawing for a gift card, you will be asked to provide your name and email address. This information will be kept separate from your survey responses. If you choose not to enter the drawing, this information will not be collected.

**Voluntary participation:** Your participation is voluntary. If you believe you have been in any way coerced into participating, please inform the researcher.

**Termination of participation:** You may choose to withdraw from the study at any time and not submit your survey responses.

**Questions or concerns regarding participation in this research should be directed to:** Allyson Church ([ac37@alfred.edu](mailto:ac37@alfred.edu)) or Dr. Andrea Burch ([burcha@alfred.edu](mailto:burcha@alfred.edu)). If you have questions about your rights as a person who is taking part in a research study, you may contact

Danielle Gagne, Ph.D., Chair of the Human Subjects Committee at AU at (607) 871-2213 or email her [gagne@alfred.edu](mailto:gagne@alfred.edu). She may be reached via mail at 1 Saxon Drive, Alfred, NY 14802.

This research has been reviewed and approved by Alfred University's Human Subjects Research Committee (HSRC).

**By proceeding to the next page, you acknowledge the following statement:**

*"I have read the above information. I consent to participate in the study."*

**Appendix E: Questions at End of Survey**

1. An ally can be defined as a person who:

- (1) has knowledge of academic outcomes and mental health issues experienced by LGBTQ youth, in addition to legal protections for this population of students,
- (2) has a supportive attitude toward LGBTQ youth, and
- (3) engages in various behaviors within the school environment to support and advocate for the rights of LGBTQ students.

***Based on this definition, do you identify yourself as an LGBTQ ally?***

- Yes
- No

***Please briefly explain your answer:***

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***2. Has the COVID-19 pandemic changed the way you support and advocate for LGBTQ youth? If so, please briefly explain how.***

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