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**WHAT'S YOUR INTENTION? EXAMINING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
LEADERS' ATTITUDES AND INTENTIONS TOWARDS LGBTQ  
INCLUSIVITY**

Nekesha Bynum

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WHAT'S YOUR INTENTION? EXAMINING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEADERS'  
ATTITUDES AND INTENTIONS TOWARDS LGBTQ INCLUSIVITY

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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of

THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

at

ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY

New York

by

Nekesha Bynum

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **WHAT'S YOUR INTENTION? EXAMINING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEADERS' ATTITUDES AND INTENTIONS TOWARDS LGBTQ INCLUSIVITY**

Nekesha Bynum

The purpose of this study was to examine New York based elementary school principals' attitudes towards transgenderism, gender nonconformity and the use of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with K-5 students. Grounded in the theory of Reasoned Action Approach, RAA, the study aimed to investigate the extent to which these attitudes influenced school leaders' intentions to implement an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum.

Utilizing a mixed methods design, principals were surveyed and invited to participate in semi structured interviews. Findings revealed perceived behavioral control, attitude towards transgenderism and attitude towards the use of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum predicted intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. Principals reported community pushback, lack of resources and the presence of LGBTQ youth as factors that influenced their intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. District and school board support, the accessibility of LGBTQ inclusive resources and the availability of training for staff and parents may prove useful in increasing elementary school principals' intention to support LGBTQ students using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my family. First, my mother, Elaine Bynum, who raised me as a single mother and instilled in me the importance of hard work, perseverance, and self-love and reminded me to keep God at the center of my life.

Gratitude goes to my siblings, Kelanda Bynum and Nadale Ravenell, whose senses of humor and fun demeanors kept joy and laughter in my life. To my sweet angel in Heaven, Angelique Ayala, who brought me friendship and love and reminded me how to live life spontaneously and love unselfishly.

Lastly, this work is dedicated to all the LGBTQ youth out there. I hear you. I see you. You are amazing and beautiful just the way you are.

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Thank you to the group of teachers that participated in my very first focus group and interviews. Your participation helped to shape who I am as a researcher and brought clarity to the subject of my study.

A huge shoutout goes to the principals who participated in the study! Thank you for completing the survey. A special acknowledgement goes to the fourteen principals who participated in the interview phase of the study and shared their honest and candid thoughts. You are true rock stars and I admire the work you do as school leaders.

Last, but certainly not least, my deepest gratitude goes to my cohort members. Without your support and encouragement, this journey would have been so much more difficult. You are certainly the best cohort ever!

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## CHAPTER 1

As noted by The New York State Education Department (NYSED), a welcoming and affirming school environment is an essential aspect of establishing a culturally responsive-sustaining educational setting (NYSED, 2018). Specifically, NYSED lists a “welcoming and affirming environment” as one of its four principles for culturally responsive-sustaining education, CR-SE (NYSED, 2018, p.14). According to NYSED (2018):

A welcoming and affirming environment feels safe. It is a space where people can find themselves represented and reflected, and where they understand that all people are treated with respect and dignity. The environment ensures all cultural identities (i.e. race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, language, religion, socioeconomic background) are affirmed, valued, and used as vehicles for teaching and learning (p. 14).

School environments should be a place where students' identities are affirmed and where they can be provided with an education that respects and accepts varying identities.

Positive school environments are linked to higher graduation rates, student engagement and motivation (Thapa et al., 2013). However, as noted by Kosciw et al. (2020), schools can be unwelcoming and unsafe for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth, as they continue to experience discrimination and bullying in schools.

According to the Human Rights Campaign in their 2018 youth report, only 27% of LGBTQ youth say that they can be themselves in school as an LGBTQ identified person, only 26% of LGBTQ youth report feeling safe in school, and 73% of LGBTQ youth have experienced verbal threats because of their actual or perceived LGBTQ

identity (Human Rights Campaign, 2018). The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, or GLSEN, as it is most commonly known, is an organization that conducts research and works to provide resources and education to K-12 schools on providing LGBTQ students with safe and affirming school environments that are free from bullying and harassment. GLSEN's School Climate Survey reports that LGBTQ middle school students were more likely to have a hostile school environment than high school students (Kosciw et al., 2018). Similarly, Poteat et al. (2014), found that high school students have more supportive staff and resources than middle school students and are less likely to encounter hostile school environments. Middle school students were also less likely than high school students to have access to LGBTQ inclusive curriculum, access to supportive staff and LGBTQ related resources (GLSEN, 2019).

Biological sex, male or female, is based on genitalia and determined at birth, as opposed to gender which is defined by societal and cultural norms (Haeefe-Thomas & Combs, 2019). As cultures vary, the acceptable attitudes and behaviors for males and females will vary (Haeefe-Thomas & Combs, 2019). Individuals who are gender nonconforming express their gender contradictory to social norms, expectations, and stereotypes for a typical female or male. A gentleman wearing makeup and a dress to work instead of a traditional suit or shirt and tie can be considered an example of gender nonconformity.

“Individuals with gender behaviors, expression and identities that depart from the cultural norms and expectations implied by their assigned sex at birth have been labeled *gender nonconforming*, *gender expansive*, or most commonly, *transgender*” (Olson-Kennedy et al., 2016, p.2). Additionally, the “T” under the LGBTQ umbrella represents

transgender individuals. A person is considered transgender when their gender identity is not in alignment with the biological sex assigned at birth (Bunton & Smirl, 2016).

Transgenderism falls along the spectrum of gender expression.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study will examine the attitudes of elementary school leaders towards transgenderism and gender nonconformity and how these attitudes influence their decision to implement an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. While both terms, transgender and gender nonconforming, will be used throughout this study, it is important to recognize that they are not interchangeable. People whose gender identity differs from their biological sex assigned at birth are considered transgender. Gender nonconformity refers to individuals who express their gender in ways that differ from, or does not conform to, traditional societal norms. Some gender nonconforming individuals may also consider themselves transgender.

As we take a closer look at the subcommunities that make up the LGBTQ community, transgendered individuals experience larger levels and more frequent experiences of harassment. Transgender and nonbinary students reported more hostile school experiences than LGBQ cisgender students (GLSEN, 2019). Four in ten students (42.5%) felt unsafe because of how they expressed their gender particularly in the school bathrooms, locker rooms, and gym classes that are commonly avoided (GLSEN, 2019). A shocking 41.8% of nonbinary youth have attempted suicide at least once during their lifetime (GLSEN, 2019).

Confronting stereotypes and prejudices in schools is crucial now more than ever. To support the needs of students who identify as LGBTQ and/or live within LGBTQ

families, educators must ensure that the school environment is a welcoming and safe space, especially for transgender and gender nonconforming students. In a study using literature discussions to challenge gender and sexuality stereotypes with second graders, Hartman (2018) found that young children are ready to and can engage in conversations about gender and sexualities. Literature can be used to explore the behaviors at the root cause of gender and sexual identity-based bullying (Hartman, 2018). Working with students at the elementary school level may play a critical role in supporting and assisting youth in accepting varying expressions of gender (Vilkin et al., 2020). Before we can create supportive school environments for transgender and gender nonconforming youth at the elementary level, we must first begin with educators. The purpose of this study is to examine the personal beliefs and attitudes about transgenderism of school leaders (K-5) and how these attitudes impact their intention to incorporate an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum.

Through utilizing a mixed-methods approach, I used qualitative data collected from interviews to expound upon the quantitative data collected from the surveys. I can begin to fill the gap in the literature by surveying and interviewing elementary school leaders to explore their perspectives, willingness and preparedness on creating a supporting school environment for transgender and gender nonconforming youth through the use of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. While research exists on this topic at the middle and secondary levels, this study expands the literature by examining elementary school principals' (K-5) attitudes about the transgender community and how variables influence these attitudes. It is important to consider how our attitudes are linked or



connected to our intentions, actions and behavior. General attitudes provide some useful data on predicting and explaining discriminatory patterns of behavior (Ajzen et al., 2005).

### **Theoretical Framework: Reasoned Action Approach**

This research study is grounded in the reasoned action approach (RAA). The RAA examines intentions that are influenced by attitudes (Hagger, 2019). Attitude is defined as "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor" (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p.1). In a study conducted with school principals on their attitudes and intentions towards inclusive education, the results showed that attitudes were the strongest predictor of intention (Yan & Sin, 2017).

In life, it is a natural occurrence to express one's likes and dislikes for things. This favor or disfavor constructs our attitude towards the attitude object. An attitude object can include people, physical objects and abstract concepts. It is the thing toward which an attitude is directed. In other words, if we find visiting the dentist a painful and miserable experience, we will have a negative attitude towards going to the dentist. In this example, the dentist visit plays the role of the attitude object.

According to Haddock and Maio (2004), an attitude is composed of three parts: affective component, behavioral component, and cognitive component. The cognitive component involves what a person believes about an attitude object (i.e. *Homosexuality is immoral and sinful*). How a person feels or the emotions felt about the attitude object is the affective component (i.e. *I feel nervous when I think about my child having a gay friend*). Finally, the behavioral component encompasses the way our attitude shapes or impacts our behaviors (i.e. *"I teach my children that it is okay to be gay because I believe*

*that all people deserve love*”) (Haddock & Maio, 2004). Hall and Rodgers (2018) examined the attitudes of 305 PK-12 teachers (there was at least one respondent represented from each US state) about the LGBTQ community, how these attitudes changed over time and the role that social and demographic variables, such as age and race, are related to these attitudes. Attitudes were measured by asking participants questions such as the rightness or wrongness of sex between the same gender and whether they agreed or disagreed to the right of same-sex marriage (Hall & Rodgers, 2018). The results indicated that teacher attitudes towards the LGBTQ community did change over time from negative to positive, but many still held negative attitudes. Older teachers, teachers of color and teachers who frequently attend religious services were more likely to have negative attitudes.

The behavioral component encompasses the way our attitude shapes or impacts our behaviors (Haddock & Maio, 2004). There is a correlation between general attitudes and behavioral patterns (Ajzen et al., 2005). A study investigating the attitudes of 40 preschool teachers from North Carolina towards working with children reared by gay and lesbian parents found that teachers with positive attitudes towards homosexuality were more willing to take steps to encourage and celebrate diversity on their classrooms (Hegde et al., 2014). However, it is important to note that behavior is indirectly impacted by attitude. After forming an attitude about an attitude object, we create intentions for a behavior towards the attitude object.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study aims to fill a gap in the literature on LGBTQ representation and elementary school curriculum. Studies and statistics that describe the school experience

and environment of middle and high school LGBTQ students are widely available. While research has emphasized the importance of middle and high school support of LGBTQ students through the use of clubs and groups like Gay-Straight Alliances and supportive adults, it fails to address the work that has been done at the elementary school level. The studies that are conducted from the school administrator perspective are often from middle and high school leaders. Less is known about the thoughts and perceptions of elementary level pedagogues. In addition, studies often examine the LGBTQ community as a whole. When the community is addressed as a whole, it can be difficult to differentiate between attitudes towards sexuality and attitudes towards gender nonconformity. This study aims to obtain a clearer picture of how instructional leaders feel about transgenderism and how they choose to address, or not address, gender nonconformity in the elementary school environment.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this mixed methods study is to investigate the attitudes and beliefs of elementary school leaders towards transgenderism and their influence on intention. In the quantitative phase of the study, the researcher aims to examine the attitudes towards transgenderism and LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. The qualitative interview phase will build upon and further explain quantitative findings. The following research questions have been formulated for the study:

#### ***Quantitative Research Questions***

1. What are the beliefs and attitudes of elementary school leaders towards transgenderism and gender non-conformity? What are the beliefs and attitudes of elementary school leaders towards using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with K-5 students?

2. To what extent do elementary school leader's subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and attitude influence their intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum?

### ***Qualitative Research Question***

3. What factors contribute to elementary school leaders' intentions to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum in their schools?

### **Definition of Terms**

**Attitude.** A psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p.1).

**Biological Sex.** Male or female, based on genitalia and determined at birth (Haefele-Thomas & Combs, 2019).

**Belief.** Something that is accepted as true (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

**Gender.** Behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with how assigned sexes should behave (Feeney et al., 2019).

**Gender Binary.** A system in which gender is constructed into two strict categories of male or female (Haefele-Thomas & Thatcher Combs, 2019).

**Gender Non-Conforming.** Exhibiting behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits that do not correspond with the traits typically associated with one's sex (Goodrich & Barnard, 2019).

**LGBTQ Inclusive Curriculum.** Inclusive curriculum supports a student's ability to empathize, connect, and collaborate with a diverse group of peers, encourages respect for all and incorporates the history and contributions of LGBTQ individuals including individuals who express their gender in ways that differ from, or does not conform, to traditional societal norms (GLSEN, n.d.).

**Perceived Behavioral Control.** A behavior that individuals perceive is within their control (Hagger, 2019)

**Perceived Norm.** Normative beliefs are the perceived expected behaviors by important individuals in our lives (e.g. friends, family, colleagues) which govern subjective norms (Ajzen, 1985.)

**Transgender.** Of, relating to, or being a person whose gender identity differs from the sex the person had or was identified as having at birth (Bunton & Smirl, 2016).

## CHAPTER 2

This chapter reviews the literature regarding gender nonconforming and transgender youth. It investigates: (a) the theoretical framework that examines the relationship between attitudes and intention, (b) explore the value of a safe school climate, (c) describe the development and importance of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum and (d) expound upon gender identity and gender expression as it pertains to transgender and gender nonconforming youth.

### **Theoretical Framework: Reasoned Action Approach**

The reasoned action approach has evolved from the Theory of Reasoned Action that was developed to help understand and possibly change behaviors (St. Quinton & Monacis, 2020). The reasoned action approach is a theoretical framework that states our attitudes, perceived behavioral control and subjective norms determine our intentions (Ajzen & Madden, 1986). Thus, our intentions then predict our actual behaviors. This study will examine the beliefs and attitudes of school leaders towards transgenderism and gender nonconformity and the use of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum.

### ***What is an Attitude?***

Eagly and Chaiken (1993) define attitude as an evaluative judgement towards an object with some degree of approval or disapproval. When asked questions such as, “What do you think about liver pate?” or “How do you feel about abortion?” the responses to these questions indicate an attitude towards liver pate and abortion. The attitudes we have can differ and vary, depending on the object, in strength and direction (Haddock & Maio, 2007). For example, because of an aversion to its taste, we can have a strong negative attitude towards anchovies and a very neutral or positive attitude towards

other types of fish like salmon and tuna. Objects of our attitude can be abstract (e.g. communism) or concrete (e.g. sports).

### ***What are the Components of Attitude?***

An attitude is comprised of three parts: affective, cognitive and behavioral. The emotions and feelings we have about an object make up the affective component of an attitude (Haddock & Maio, 2007). Many people have a fear of snakes. The feeling or emotion of fear is likely to produce a negative attitude towards snakes. The cognitive component of attitude is the beliefs and attributes that are associated with an object. A person can have a positive attitude towards the Nike brand of sneakers when considering its attributes such as price, comfort, styles and colors. Affective and cognitive components of attitude were independently significant in predicting intentions towards using hormone replacement therapy during menopause, one study found (Schaller & Malhotra, 2015). Behavioral is the third component that comprises attitude. This refers to behaviors performed in the past associated with an attitude object (Haddock & Maio, 2007). If we return to the Nike sneaker example, past purchases of the sneakers is an example of behaviors performed in the past that may be associated with your attitude towards them.

### ***Measuring Attitudes***

According to Frymier and Nadler (2017), earlier studies on attitudes failed to consider measurement factors. Measurement factors are how behaviors and attitudes are measured. The relationship between attitudes and behaviors can be influenced by the way they are measured (Frymier and Nadler, 2017). In these earlier studies, the LaPiere study for example, measured the attitude generally (attitudes towards Chinese people) but

measured specific behavior (serving the Chinese couple in the restaurant). Let us say, for example, a person has a positive attitude towards having a healthier lifestyle. The behaviors this person may engage in could include exercising regularly, increasing their intake of fruits and vegetables, sleeping at least 8 hours or bringing lunch to work. However, without specificity in measuring the attitude, it would be a challenge to predict which of these behaviors this individual performs.

Specificity is important in both the attitude being measured and the behavior when attempting to use a specific attitude to predict a specific behavior. (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). Measurement factors increase the level of specificity. When we are detailed about the expected behaviors, then we can better examine the specific attitudes (Frymier & Nadler, 2017). The four measurement factors include: action (the specific behavior), target (object the behavior targets), time (when the action is performed) and context (location of action) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). Let us refer to the person with a positive attitude towards a healthier lifestyle. We can increase specificity by examining eating healthy foods (action) such as leafy greens (target), at work (context) during lunch (time).

### ***Attitude and Behavior Prediction***

Before the 1970's, while many social psychologists and theorists subscribed to the notion that attitudes influenced behaviors, very few research studies were able to show a strong correlation between attitudes and behaviors (Kim & Nan, 2012). LaPiere's 1934 study was one of the initial studies that began to show a discrepancy between attitudes and behavior (Frymier and Nadler, 2017; Kim & Nan, 2012). Professor and researcher Richard LaPiere visited several US restaurants with a Chinese couple who were served



and treated well during their visits. Six months later, a survey was sent to the restaurant managers regarding their attitudes towards accepting and welcoming Chinese people to their restaurants. Ninety percent of the survey responses indicated that they would not serve Chinese people. LaPiere deduced that attitudes did not influence behavior (Frymier & Nadler, 2017). Studies in later years, continued to find similar findings. Allan Wicker (1969) reviewed the findings of 42 studies and found that attitude was a poor predictor of behavior.

In the early to mid-1970's, Icek Ajzen and Martin Fishbein began to reexamine the attitude-behavior relationship. In their analysis of previous studies, they found that attitudes proved to be poor predictors of specific actions or behaviors. However, behavior is strongly determined by a person's intention (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977).

### ***The Evolution of Reasoned Action Approach***

The theory of reasoned action was Ajzen and Fishbein's (1975) initial version of the theory to explain the relationship between behavior and intention. The theory of reasoned action suggests that an individual's intention to carry out a behavior is the main determinant on whether the individual performs the action (Ajzen, 1985). Attitude and subjective norms determine intention. A subjective norm is the pressure an individual perceives is present to engage in a behavior. A person's evaluation of a behavior is an attitude (St. Quinton & Monacis, 2020). Behavioral beliefs govern our attitudes towards a behavior. A behavioral belief is the expected outcome we perceive as the result in engaging in a behavior (Ajzen, n.d.). For example, if we believe that indulging in grandma's chocolate cake will lead to a five-pound gain, we could have a negative attitude towards indulging in the cake. The belief that a weight gain will occur is the

behavioral belief which in turn is connected to our negative attitude towards grandma's cake.

Normative beliefs are the perceived expected behaviors by important individuals in our lives (i.e. friends, family, and colleagues) which govern subjective norms (Ajzen, 1985). In the cake scenario, we could also believe that refusal to eat the cake will hurt grandma's feelings. Our normative beliefs could include the thought that family members and grandma will expect everyone to indulge in a piece of cake. In this example, these normative beliefs are connected to subjective norms (the pressure we will feel from the family to eat the cake). Both attitudes towards behavior and subjective norms are linked to intentions. Within the theory of reasoned action, intention is determined by a person's attitude towards a behavior and/or the social pressures or expectations to perform a behavior (Ajzen, 1985). Individuals are likely to have intentions of performing a behavior when they have a positive attitude towards it and believe that others think they should (Ajzen, 1985).

Over the years, the theory of reasoned action began to evolve and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was introduced. In the theory of reasoned action, it explains behaviors that are in a person's control. In the TPB, Ajzen added the concept of perceived behavioral control and determined that when individuals perceived a behavior was within their control, they were more likely to act on their intentions (Hagger, 2019). Perceived behavioral control is the key difference between the theory of reasoned action and TPB. An individual's perceived behavioral control is increased when they believe that there are few obstacles to prevent the behavior from occurring and that they have the skills, resources and opportunities to complete the task (Ajzen & Madde, 1986). This is

based upon Bandura's theory of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to accomplish a task and plays a significant role in resilience and motivation (Benight & Bandura, 2004).

In the latest version of the theory, the Reasoned Action Approach, (RAA), extends the TPB by breaking down the components of behavioral, normative and control beliefs. There are several background factors that play a role in shaping our beliefs. According to Fishbein and Azjen (2010), variables, or background factors, that could potentially influence our beliefs include: gender, socioeconomic status, age, intelligence, education, religion and past experiences. It is important to note that while these factors may influence our beliefs, RAA is not attempting to show a connection between beliefs and background factors as it would require additional empirical research (Azjen & Fishbein, 2010).

### **Educators' Beliefs and Instructional Practices**

A belief is something that is accepted as true (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Teachers' beliefs play a large role in the instructional decisions they make within their classrooms regarding teacher centered and learner centered practice (Kaymakamoglu, 2018). Beliefs can also play a role in the policies and decisions made for a school by the school leader. According to Payne and Smith (2018), when school leaders held beliefs that LGBTQ issues were not relevant to students' academic success, they were not motivated to include LGBTQ professional development into their schools' policies and professional learning plans.

Self-efficacy is a type of belief. The term self-efficacy was coined by psychologist Albert Bandura and is defined as the beliefs an individual holds in their

ability to accomplish a specific task (Bandura, 1977). According to Tournaki and Podell (2005), “secondary school teachers’ self-efficacy has strong effect on students’ achievement scores” (p. 674). Vocabulary gains in preschool children were associated with higher levels of self-efficacy in their teachers (Guo et al., 2010).

Few studies have been conducted to explore teachers’ self-efficacy in teaching LGBTQ students and teaching LGBTQ inclusive content. A study of higher education instructors found that self-efficacy was moderately high when working with LGBTQ students but declined when teaching LGBTQ content (Brant & Willox, 2021). When examining heterosexism beliefs of preservice teachers, Jones et. al. (2021) found that heterosexist beliefs were related to stronger perceptions of pedagogical abilities to teach LGBTQ youth.

## **Gender**

Biological sex differs from gender though the term is often used interchangeably. Known as biological sex or assigned sex, when a child is born, they are assigned a sex at birth based upon the genitalia (Haeefele-Thomas & Combs, 2019). Gender is a social construction of the societal and cultural expectations of how assigned sexes should behave (Feeney et al., 2019). This can vary between cultures. For example, in the United States the wearing of skirts is attributed to women and girls. In traditional Scottish culture, men wear skirts called kilts during formal ceremonies such as weddings.

Gender identity refers to how a person self-identifies their gender (Feeney et al., 2019). Gender identity can include identities such as male, female, transgender, nonbinary, genderqueer and many others. In a study conducted with 71 two and three year olds, researchers found that by 26 months old, children were able to identify their

gender and the gender of others verbally and nonverbally (Weinraub et al., 1984).

Cisgender children, children whose biological sex is in alignment with their gender identity, begin to understand cues about gender and perceive gender categories as young as six months old (Fast & Olson, 2018).

Gender nonconformity is an inclusive term used to identify individuals whose gender expression deviates from the traditional gender expectations (Goodrich & Barnard, 2019). Gender expression should be seen as a continuum with gender nonconformity at one end and gender reassignment at the other end (Vaughn, 2016).

Transgender is the term used when referring to an individual whose assigned sex does not match their gender identity (American Psychiatric Association, n.d.). In the United States, approximately 0.7% of youth between the ages of 13 and 17 identify as transgender with New York, Texas, California and Florida having the largest transgender youth population (Herman et al., 2017). In New York, there are approximately 9,750 youth aged from 13 to 17 that identify as transgender (Herman et al., 2017). This is 0.79% of New York's youth population.

Some individuals who identify as transgender experience gender dysphoria. Gender dysphoria refers to psychological distress that occurs as a result of this difference between assigned sex and gender identity (Haeefele-Thomas & Thatcher Combs, 2019). To affirm their gender, people who are transgender may change their names and pronouns (social affirmation), obtain surgeries like mastectomies (surgical affirmation) and/or obtain legal affirmation through changing gender on government documents like birth certificates, driver's license and other records (Haeefele-Thomas & Thatcher Combs, 2019).

Names play a role in how we express our gender and they are often gender specific. It is common for transgender youth to change their names to reflect their gender identity (Haefele-Thomas & Combs, 2019). Transgender youth whose chosen name are used collectively by their school, job, family and friends are at the lowest risk for depression, suicidal behaviors and suicide ideation than transgender youth who do not (Russell et al., 2018). To create an environment that is safe and supportive of transgender and gender nonconforming youth, the New York State Education Department, NYSED (2015), recommends that schools within its districts use the students' chosen names and pronouns. Additionally, New York requires its schools to allow students to use the restrooms and participate in activities in a manner consistent with their gender identity (NYSED, 2015).

“Our role as educators is to create a safe and reflective space for children to develop their identities and to counterbalance gender stereotypes” (Feeney et al., 2019, p. 84). To increase children’s understanding and awareness that gender exists on a spectrum and increase the awareness of gender diversity, curriculum needs to be modified in the early elementary years (Vaughn, 2016). However, the inclusion of transgender and gender nonconforming experiences and themes in the elementary school curriculum is not very common (Ryan et al., 2013). The way that gender is presented and socially constructed in elementary school is important as one study found “students relied heavily on social constructions of what gender is, or should be, based upon familiar markers of color, physical features, and the actions the characters engage in” (Hill & Bartow Jacobs, 2020).

Before children attend school, their home and community provide gendered messages that help them construct their gender identity (Gosselin, 2007). Children develop an understanding of how the world works from the perspectives and behaviors observed around them such as gender roles and the notion of the gender binary (Witt & Burriss, 2000). Television's role in perpetuating gender stereotypes becomes increasingly important as preschoolers spend an average of 30 hours weekly watching TV (Witt, 1997; Witt & Burriss, 2000). In addition to television's influence, parents play a role in the social construction of a child's understanding of gender and their gender identity. Parents, though often unaware, treat their infant and young children differently based on the child's sex (Hoffman, 1977). Parents may treat female children gentler and see them as less sturdy than their male young (Hoffman, 1977).

Peers, educators and school culture continue to shape children's understanding of gender once they enter school (Gosselin, 2007). Teachers giving their girls students the jobs that require care and cleanup can send a powerful message to all students of the role that females should play (Gosselin, 2007). "Classrooms that endorse gender-separated practices not only proactively support boys' and girls' use of gendered voices and actions, they may also unintentionally create social conditions that limit them to it" (Gosselin, 2007, p. 42).

### **School Climate**

School leaders set the tone for the learning environment of their schools. The Southern Poverty Law Center (2013) posits, "Leaders who promote a safe and inclusive environment are essential in creating a positive school climate" (p. 2). While school

administrators understand the importance of school climate, few schools have systematic approaches in place that promote and maintain school climate (Jones & Shindler, 2016).

The National School Climate Center (NSCC) is an organization that guides K-12 schools and their districts within the U.S. with information and support on how to promote learning environments that are safe and supportive for all students. A positive school climate is the “quality and character of school life” in which individuals feel respected and supports the norms and values of all to provide social, emotional, and physical safety (NSCC, 2007, What is School Climate section, para.1), All members of the school community engage in a collaborative practice that develops and contributes to the vision of the school (NSCC, 2007).

A school climate is characterized by several factors. These factors include the physical environment (including condition of hallways, cafeterias, and classrooms) and the social system, which encompasses the relationships and interactions between staff and students, staff and families and amongst students (Creemers & Reezigt, 1999). School climate has an impact on the physical, intellectual, social, and emotional safety of students as it is linked to higher graduation rates, academic achievement, school engagement and motivation (Thapa et al., 2012). A study that examined school climate and student achievement at 30 urban public schools found that there is strong relationship between school climate quality and academic achievement levels (Jones & Shindler, 2016).

### ***School Climate and LGBTQ Students***

For many LGBTQ students, schools continue to feel like an unsafe and unwelcoming space. Over 80% of transgender and 52.4% of non-binary students report



feeling unsafe at school because of their gender as compared to only 8.8% of cisgender students (Kosciw et al., 2020).

While teachers report feeling comfortable with intervening when hearing derogatory remarks or verbal harassment made by students, but they were least comfortable when the negative remarks were about transgender individuals or gender expression (Greytak et al., 2016).

Teachers received more professional development on bullying and diversity than professional development on LGBT issues (Greytak et al., 2016). In fact, only 32.9% of teachers received professional development on LGB student issues and 23.6% on transgender student issues (Greytak et al., 2016).

### **LGBTQ Inclusive Curriculum**

Curriculum is defined as “a plan for action, or a written document, which includes strategies for achieving desired goals or ends” (Ornstein, 1987, p. 212). Curriculum also deals with the experiences students have under the guidance of their teachers (Ornstein, 1987). When a curriculum is inclusive, it reflects the cultural diversity of the learners and fosters appreciation of individuals’ contributions to society (Bryant, 1996). When children see their cultural identities reflected negatively or fail to see themselves at all within curriculum texts, it teaches them that they are a devalued part of society (Bishop, 1990). The exclusion of LGBTQ communities is one example of bias found in school curricular (McGarry, 2013).

Currently, there are six states, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, Oklahoma and South Carolina, whose laws explicitly discourage the implementation of LGBTQ inclusive curriculum (McGarry, 2013; Lambda Legal, n.d.). Shockingly, in Texas, state

laws specifically refer to homosexual conduct as an unacceptable lifestyle and a criminal offense (Equality Texas, n.d.). As of September 22, 2021, there are seven states that have curricular standards that affirm visibility of LGBTQ communities (GLSEN, n.d.). As this study will focus on school leaders in New York, it is important to note that currently, New York State does not have LGBTQ affirming curricular standards.

A curriculum inclusive of the LGBTQ community can have a profound impact on the school experience of queer and gender minority students (Page, 2017). The use of an LGBT-inclusive curriculum is related to less victimization of LGBTQ students and increased feelings of connectedness to the school community (Greytak et al., 2016). Snapp et al. (2015) found that high school students taught with an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum reported an increased learning about LGBTQ people, opportunities to see positive portrayals of LGBTQ leaders and discuss relevant current events impacting the LGBTQ community such as same sex marriages and learned LGBTQ related terminology. Students also reported LGBTQ topics and lessons were taught in health, social sciences, and history but often missing in math, art and English (Snapp et al., 2015).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter explored the reasoned action approach and its role in determining the components of intentions. In addition, it reviewed school climate and the school climate currently experienced by LGBTQ youth, defined and expounded upon LGBTQ inclusive curricular and gender identity. In chapter 3, we will review the research design and procedures used to conduct this research study.

## CHAPTER 3

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitude and beliefs of elementary school leaders regarding transgenderism and their intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with students in grades K-5. The study used a mixed methods design to investigate the extent to which the RAA constructs influence on school leaders' intention. Chapter three focuses on discussing the research questions and hypotheses, data analysis approach, the quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and procedures that are used, the researcher's role, description of participants, and finally the participant selection methods.

### **Mixed Methods Design**

This study implemented a mixed methods approach, which is a methodology that integrates quantitative and qualitative data within one research inquiry or study (Wisdom & Cresswell, 2013). This study employs a sequential explanatory design. When using this design, the quantitative data is collected and then analyzed. Once this analysis is complete, the qualitative data is used to expand upon the results found during the quantitative stage (Ivankova et al., 2006). For example, in this study, interviews are used to further explore findings from the quantitative instruments. One advantage to using a mixed methods approach is that it reflects the viewpoints of the participants. The findings are grounded in the participants' experiences (Wisdom & Cresswell, 2013).

Shorten and Smith (2017) suggest that a mixed methods approach allows data integration that is purposeful and enables the researcher to obtain varied viewpoints through different research lenses. In my study, quantitative data was collected from two survey instruments to determine school leaders' beliefs and attitudes towards

transgenderism and the extent to which these beliefs and attitudes influence their intention towards LGBTQ inclusivity in the curriculum. The qualitative data collected from the interviews provided insight into the reasons and factors that influence these intentions. The varying perspectives of the school leaders illuminated the nuances of the intention. Furthermore, it is important that the research question justifies the use of a mixed methods approach (Shorten & Smith, 2017). The second research question for the study, “*What factors do elementary school leaders identify as reasons why they intend/do not intend to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum?*” was answered more fully by using the qualitative interview data in addition to the data collected from the survey instruments.

Mixed methods research is used in educational research to explore the complexities of the education field (Ponce & Maldonado, 2015). In one study conducted with 500 secondary teachers in Malaysia which was based on whether their epistemological teacher beliefs contributed to educational research practice, quantitative data collected showed a significant but weak positive relationship between the two (Ismail et al., 2019). The qualitative data collected via semi-structured interviews identified the understanding of epistemological teacher beliefs and the support of school administration as contributing factors towards educational research used within classrooms (Ismail et al., 2019). In that study, the qualitative data allowed the researcher to explore the factors that specifically contribute to the practice of educational research.

## **Research Questions**

### ***Quantitative Research Questions***

1. What are the beliefs and attitudes of elementary school leaders towards transgenderism and gender non-conformity? What are the beliefs and attitudes of elementary school leaders towards using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with K-5 students?
2. To what extent do elementary school leader's subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and attitude influence their intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum?

### ***Qualitative Research Question***

3. What factors contribute to elementary school leaders' intentions to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum in their schools?

## **Sample**

### ***Participants in Quantitative Phase***

The goal of this study is to better understand elementary school leaders' intentions towards adopting an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. While school leaders can include deans, principals, assistant principals, and/or directors, this study focuses on principals as they often influence curriculum decisions (Ingersoll & Rossi, 1995). Therefore, the participants of this survey consist of elementary school principals and directors who currently lead schools with K-5 students in the state of New York. The New York State Education Department reports having 731 school districts and over 4, 411 public schools (NYSED, n.d.).

There are currently over 2000 elementary public and nonpublic schools led by principals or directors in New York State. The New York State Education Department’s website houses a public database which includes the contact information for all principals and directors of public and nonpublic schools. This list was downloaded and filtered to identify elementary schools. From this list, the email addresses of principals were used to send the survey link and informed consent. Forty-two elementary school principals completed the survey. Participating school leaders had varying levels of school leader experience and age ranges. 50% of participants were 46-55 years of age and 59.6% had over 11 years of school leader experience. Most of the participants were female at 71.4%.

**Table 1**

*Demographics of Study Participants*

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	30	71.4%
Male	12	28.6%
<b>Years as School Leader</b>		
1-5 years	7	16.7%
6-10 years	10	23.8%
11-15 years	13	31%
16 or more years	12	28.6%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
White	27	64.3%
Black/African-American	8	19%
Hispanic/Latino	7	16.7%
<b>Age range</b>		
26-45 years	12	28.6%
46-55 years	21	50%
56 or more years	9	21.4%

### *Participants in Qualitative Phase*

After completing the survey, participants were invited to participate in an interview to explore their thoughts about transgenderism, their intention in using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum and the reasons that impact their intention. Fourteen principals in total were interviewed. Females made up the majority of the interviewees at 79%. 64% had student population totals between 251-500 and 43% were between the ages of 46 and 55. The complete demographics collected can be found on Table 2.

**Table 2**

#### *Demographics of Interviewed School Principals*

Participant	Gender	Age (Years)	Years as Principal	School Size # of Students	Religion
Principal Adalyn	Female	56-65	11-15	251-500	Atheist
Principal Brooke	Female	56-65	1-5	251-500	None
Principal Carrie	Female	36-45	1-5	251-500	Christian
Principal Chloe	Female	26-35	1-5	251-500	Christian
Principal Jocelyn	Female	36-45	6-10	0-250	Christian
Principal Juan	Male	56-65	15+	0-250	Christian
Principal Kacey	Female	36-45	11-15	501-1000	Agnostic
Principal Lucas	Male	56-65	15+	0-250	Christian
Principal Lucia	Female	46-55	6-10	251-500	Christian
Principal Marian	Female	46-55	6-10	251-500	Agnostic
Principal Parker	Male	46-55	15+	251-500	Agnostic
Principal Scarlett	Female	46-55	15+	251-500	Christian
Principal Shayla	Female	46-55	1-5	0-250	Christian
Principal Yolanda	Female	46-55	11-15	251-500	None

### **Setting**

This study focuses on school leaders located in New York State. This study examines school leaders' willingness to implement an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. Because of this, it is important to note the existing policies put into place by New York State.

New York State is an important setting as it is one of few states with a state law in place to protect all LGBTQ students from harassment, bullying, and discrimination based on sexual orientations, gender identity and sexes (Freedom For All Americans, n.d.). The New York State’s Dignity for All Act, also known as DASA, was signed into law on September 13, 2010 and took effect on July 1, 2012. DASA protects students from bullying or harassment on school property and functions, including school buses, by students or employees based on an individual’s perceived or actual sex, gender identity, gender expression, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religious practice, religion, ethnic group, weight, race or color (NYSED, 2015).

In 2017, the Trump administration withdrew protections that were put into place during the Obama administration that protected transgender students in public schools and allowed them to use the bathroom and other gender-based facilities, of the gender in which they identify (Vogue et al., 2017). Upon this announcement, New York’s Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman and New York State Education Department Commissioner MaryEllen Elia sent out a statement to all school districts in New York as a reminder that all school districts are to adhere to the State Education Department's guidance distributed in July 2015 entitled, *Guidance to School Districts for Creating a Safe and Supportive School Environment For Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students* regardless of the Trump administration federal decision (NYSED, 2017).

To be used as a complementary resource to DASA, NYSED’s (2015) guidance provides school districts with resources and information that support:

school districts in fostering an educational environment for all students that is safe and free from discrimination—regardless of sex, gender identity, or expression—



and to facilitate compliance with local, state and federal laws concerning bullying, harassment, discrimination, and student privacy. All students need a safe and supportive school environment to progress academically and developmentally. Administrators, faculty, staff, and students each play an important part in creating and sustaining that environment. This guidance document is intended as a resource guide to help school and district administrators continue to take proactive steps to create a culture in which transgender and GNC students feel safe, supported, and fully included, and to meet each school's obligation to provide all students with an environment free from harassment, bullying and discrimination (p. 2).

### **Quantitative Research Instruments**

To investigate the research questions, a demographic questionnaire, two survey instruments, Attitudes Towards Transgender Individuals and the LGBTQ Curriculum Intention Scale, were used to collect the quantitative data and an interview protocol was utilized for the qualitative portion of the research. Participants completed the demographic questionnaire first (see Appendix B). Galvin & Galvin (2017) suggest that research is more useful when demographics are reported in detail. The demographic survey includes seven questions about the participants' age, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual identity, size of school (student population) and years of experience as a principal. For this study, the demographic information is useful in examining how attitudes towards transgender individuals and use of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum vary based on participants' age and years of experience as a leader.

After the demographic questionnaire, participants answered the questions from the Attitudes Towards Transgender Individuals or ATTI. The ATTI is a published scale used with permission from the author (see Appendix C). The ATTI is a 20-item scale designed to assess stigma and identify survey respondents attitudinal and evaluative beliefs about transgenderism and transgendered individuals (Walch et al., 2012). Walch et al. (2012) states, “this instrument is psychometrically sound, with a highly internally-consistent, single-factor structure. Factor loadings were quite high for all items and coefficient alpha was similarly high” (p. 1288). The ATTI consists of 9 positive attitude statements such as, *I would feel comfortable working closely with a transgendered individual* and *I would enjoy attending social functions at which transgendered individuals were present* and 11 negative attitude statements like *Transgenderism is a sin* and *Transgenderism endangers the institution of the family*.

The ATTI instrument has been used in a few studies to gauge participants' attitudes towards transgendered people. Conducting a study with medical students in South Korea, Lee et al. (2021) found that individuals with previous LGBT-related education had more positive attitudes than those who did not have the same experience. Another study investigating transphobia by comparing the attitudes of gender dysphoric individuals, the general population, and health care professionals, found that men showed higher levels of transphobia than women (Fisher et al., 2017). In both studies, the ATTI was used to measure the participants' attitudes.

The second instrument is the LGBTQ Curriculum Intention Scale (LGBTQ-CIS). The LGBTQ-CIS is a researcher developed scale based on Fishbein and Ajzen's work (2010). The LGBTQ-CIS measures intention, attitude, subjective norm and perceived

behavioral control for using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum (Appendix D). When developing a reasoned action approach questionnaire, Fishbein & Ajzen (2010) suggest that each of the constructs (intention, attitude, perceived norm and perceived behavioral control) are assessed by using three to six items on a seven-point adjective scale. The LGBTQ-CIS measures each construct on a seven-point scale and uses three items to measure intention, three items to measure attitude, four items to measure perceived norms, and three items to measure perceived behavioral control.

The final portion of the survey asks participants to respond to one open response question, *what are the reasons you are willing or not willing to implement an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with your K-5 students? Why do you feel this way?* to gather data about the factors that school principals report as reasons they are willing or unwilling to implement an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum.

### **Qualitative Research Instruments**

For the qualitative research portion of this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Interviews are used to discover things that may not be able to be observed like people's thoughts, feelings and intentions (Bogden & Biklen, 2016). Semi-structured interviews feature aspects of both structured and open-ended interviews (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer asks a few predetermined questions and any additional questions asked are unplanned (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

This study used a semi-structured interview style with the use of four preplanned questions (see Appendix E). The preplanned questions are aimed to expand upon the quantitative data and the participants' feelings, beliefs and intentions about leadership

practices that support transgender and gender nonconforming students. Additional unplanned questions were asked during each interview to clarify and probe for specific examples when participants' responses were vague or unclear.

### **Quantitative Data Collection**

Elementary school principals residing in New York were invited to complete the survey. The survey respondents will be contacted through a public database on the New York State Education Department website that lists their school location and email address. A link to the survey was emailed to approximately 2,000 elementary public and charter school principals within New York State.

The quantitative data was collected via survey developed using Google Forms. Google Forms is a survey tool offered by Google for all users with a Google account. The creation and access to the survey form is only accessible by the user of a password protected account. The Google Forms survey was divided into three parts. The first section of the survey includes questions that collect demographic data. The second section includes the 20 questions of the ATTI. The final and third portion of the survey includes the 13 questions of the LGBTQ-CIS and open response question. The survey collected responses for three weeks and any clicks on the survey after the deadline received a "this survey is no longer collecting responses" message. Forty-two survey responses were collected.

### **Qualitative Data Collection**

After completing the surveys, participants were invited to participate in a follow-up interview. An interview availability survey was sent to individuals who agreed to be interviewed. Interviewees were invited to a Webex meeting, encouraged to keep their

video camera off and reminded that the interview was being recorded. Each Webex meeting was recorded, and the audio transcription feature was used to transcribe the recordings.

### **Quantitative: Validity and Reliability**

The ATTI scale has been used in nine studies (Billard, 2018). Walch et al. (2012) found the ATTI scale to have a high internal consistency reliability, along with evidence of discriminant and convergent validity. Furthermore, the ATTI has demonstrated predicted validity in a study conducted with school counselors and psychologists and their role in supporting transgender students (Riggs & Bartholomaeus, 2015).

The LGBTQ-CIS is a researcher developed survey instrument based upon the research of Fishbein and Ajzen. Using the public school leader contact databases, found on the education department websites of California, Virginia, Ohio, and Maryland, over 500 elementary school principals were invited to take the LGBTQ-CIS. Seventeen responses were collected. To assess the internal consistency of the LGBTQ-CIS, Cronbach's alpha was used. Cronbach's alpha measures relatedness between survey items and has a numerical range from 0 to 1 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Cronbach alpha has a general acceptable range of 0.70 to 0.95 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The LGBTQ-CIS intention subscale consisted of 3 items ( $\alpha = .93$ ), the attitude subscale consisted of 3 items ( $\alpha = .95$ ), the perceived norm subscale consisted of 4 items ( $\alpha = .83$ ) and the perceived control subscale consisted of 3 items ( $\alpha = .795$ ).

Content validity was established by asking survey respondents, the school principals, to provide suggestions for question clarity and relevance in order to refine the instrument. In addition, two experts from PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of

Lesbians and Gays) were invited to share their thoughts on the scale. Based upon the expert feedback, the definition for LGBTQ inclusive curriculum used in the survey was modified and subsequently defined as *a curriculum that supports positive representations of LGBTQ people, history and events, students' ability to empathize, connect, and collaborate with a diverse group of peers, encourages respect for all and incorporates the history and contributions of LGBTQ individuals including transgender people and individuals who express their gender in ways that differ from or does not conform to traditional societal norms.*

### **Qualitative: Trustworthiness**

To ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research, researchers must check credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Interviewed school leaders engaged in member checking. Cresswell (2018) states that researchers must validate the accuracy of their data by engaging in validation procedures such as member checking and triangulation. The interview participants were sent excerpts of the results and interpretations to be confirmed and validated. To address reliability, studies should be dependable in that it can be repeated within the same context and methods (Shenton, 2004). The methods and instruments used in this study have been reported in detail and can be replicated. Reflective journaling was used throughout the qualitative data collection process and analysis to contribute to the trustworthiness of the study. Each day of data analysis, I wrote down impressions, thoughts and feelings about the interview transcripts and responses to the open-response question. According to Ortlipp (2008), using a reflective journal can help make the research process more visible to both the researcher and the readers. Using a reflective journal assisted me in

confirming that emerging themes came directly from the words and language of the participants and assisted in arranging the order of the interview questions to create a more natural flow.

## **Data Analysis Approach**

### ***Quantitative Data Analysis***

The descriptive statistics feature in SPSS (version 27) was used to gather summary statistics such as the mean and standard deviation of demographic data collected from the survey such as participants' age, gender, ethnicity, religion, and years of experience as a K-5 principal. Data analysis began with creating totals for the ATTI scale. The ATTI has 20 Likert scale questions that range from one to five. These 20 responses were tallied to create a composite score. The ATTI scores can range from a minimum score of 20 (20 questions with the lowest response score of 1) and a maximum score of 100 (20 questions with the highest response score of 5). Higher scores indicate positive attitudes towards transgender individuals, while lower scores indicate negative attitudes. The ATTI scale has 9 positively phrased attitude statements (questions 1, 5, 8, 10, 12-14, 16-17) and 11 negatively phrased attitude statements (questions 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 15, 18-20). To ensure consistency between what agreement means for each item, negatively phrased statements were reversed scored.

A linear regression was used to quantify the relationship between intention (measured by LGBT-CPIS) and attitude towards transgender individuals as measured by the ATTI. A crosstab analysis was conducted to examine differences in attitude towards transgender individuals by demographic variables such as age and years of experience. The ATTI total scores were placed into categorical groups for cross tab analysis. The

categorical groups were labeled as high negative attitudes (totals 20-34), negative attitudes (totals 35-49), neutral attitudes (totals 50-70), positive attitudes (totals 71-85) or high positive attitudes (totals 86-100).

In addition, a crosstabulation analysis was conducted to disclose patterns and trends between demographic variables (age and years of school leader experience) and attitude towards using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. The RAA construct (attitude) averages were placed into categorical groups for cross tab analysis. The categorical groups were labeled as high negative attitudes (averages 1.0-2.5), negative attitudes (averages 2.6-4.1), positive attitudes (averages 4.2-5.7) or high positive attitudes (averages 5.8-7.0).

Intention, perceived norm, attitude, perceived behavioral control, and RAA constructs are measured by multiple items within the LGBTQ-CIS instrument. In order to obtain a composite score for each of the RAA constructs, they were totaled and averaged separately. For example, to measure intention, study participants were asked three Likert scale questions. The responses to the three intention questions were then totaled and averaged to create a composite score. The average, or composite score, for each RAA construct was used to predict the relationship between intention and each construct. For this study, the dependent variable is the intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. The independent variables are attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control (Table 3). A multiple regression was the statistical technique used to predict the relationship between and explain how much of the variance in intention can be explained by the RAA constructs.



**Table 3***Variables*

Variable	Type of Variable
Dependent Variable	
Intention to use LGBTQ inclusive curriculum	continuous
Independent Variables	
Subjective Norms	continuous
Perceived Behavioral Control	continuous
Attitude Towards LGBTQ inclusive curriculum	continuous

Before beginning to investigate the extent that subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and attitude influenced the intention of the school leaders, a multiple linear regression was used. Before running the test, the following assumptions were assessed: independent errors, homoscedasticity, linearity and multicollinearity. First, to ensure that there was no multicollinearity, the variance inflation factor values were assessed. The values did not indicate a violation of this assumption as they were less than 10. A Durbin-Watson statistic was calculated to assess the assumption that the values of the residuals are independent. The assumption was not violated as the Durbin-Watson value = 2.581. A scatterplot was created to assess that the variance of the residuals was constant (homoscedasticity). A visual inspection of the plot did not indicate a violation of this assumption and showed a linear relationship. A P-P plot was created to assess the assumption that the values of the residuals were normally distributed. The plot did not

indicate a violation of this assumption. After all assumptions were assessed, the appropriate statistical analysis procedures were conducted.

### ***Qualitative Data Analysis***

Word clouds are graphic images of words that are used within a selection of text with the words most frequently used displayed larger and darker than the other words (McNaught & Lam, 2010). Word clouds can be a useful tool in educational research as general patterns can emerge from interview and focus group transcripts and written responses from surveys (McNaught & Lam, 2010). Using word clouds in qualitative research can be one way in identifying emerging themes when analyzing and coding qualitative data coming from open-ended survey responses, interviews, and focus groups (DePaolo & Wilkinson, 2014).

For this study, a word cloud was used to begin the preliminary analysis of the data. During the quantitative phase of the study, survey participants were asked to add a written response to the question, “*What are the reasons you are willing or not willing to implement an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with your K-5 students? Why do you feel this way?*” This question was designed to gain an understanding of the specific factors that contributed to school leaders’ intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with elementary- aged students. Words prominently displayed in the open response word cloud included *parents, staff, training, resources, community* and *district*. These terms provided a way to begin to see the emerging themes as to factors that contributed to school leaders’ unwillingness to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum and/or factors that create possible barriers to an intended implementation.

I then began the process of analyzing the interview transcripts. After transcribing the interviews via Webex audio transcription, I relistened to each interview and ensured that they were transcribed accurately. After reading through each finalized transcription, I began the coding process by engaging in a practice that Saldana (2013) calls a “pre-coding” in which researchers circle, underline and highlight quotes or passages that resonate with them. In vivo coding is a first cycle coding method in which the in vivo codes come from the direct quotes of the participants (Saldana, 2013). This coding method is useful in obtaining concepts and themes that are drawn directly from the participants' words (Saldana, 2013). Dedoose is a cloud-based software that was used to explore patterns within the data. As I read the interview transcripts and the responses to the open-response question, I highlighted words and phrases that stood out. These initial highlights were recorded in Dedoose and organized into categories. Dedoose captured the codes and created a digital codebook. As I engaged in the coding process, I took analytic memos.

The transcriptions and open-response question data were read for a second time. “The primary goal during second cycle coding is to develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization from your array of first cycle codes.” (Saldana, 2013, p. 234). During my second cycle of coding, I utilized pattern coding. In pattern coding, the codes are explanatory or inferential and begin to identify emerging themes or explanations (Saldana, 2013). Dedoose was used to search for similarly coded passages and assign them pattern codes. The goal of using the system of pattern codes was to describe any emerging themes or a patterned action from the school leaders' words about their intentions.

## **Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Data**

This study utilized the sequential explanatory design research method. Sequential timing occurs when the researcher collects and analyzes data in two distinct phases: quantitative and qualitative (Cresswell & Plano, 2010). Mixing occurs when the quantitative and qualitative strands are integrated. The mixing strategies include: “merging the two data sets, connecting from the analysis of one set of data to the collection of a second set of data, embedding of one form of data within a larger design or procedure, and using a framework (theoretical or program) to bind together the data sets” (Cresswell & Plano, 2010, p. 66).

For this study, I connected the two data sets at the analysis phase. I analyzed the quantitative data collected from the survey instrument. I then analyzed the qualitative data collected from the interviews. Through the process of merging, I further analyzed the quantitative and qualitative results by using a matrix to relate the data sets to one another and determine comparisons between them. The goal was to determine to what extent the interview data helped in explaining the survey results. On the matrix, summary statistics were identified regarding intention and any emerging themes from the qualitative data will be used to explain the quantitative statistics.

## **Research Ethics & Researcher Role**

I am aware of my potential researcher's bias. I identify as a queer person of color and have worked with a few students who identified as bisexual and gender nonconforming. I have seen an impact on their social and emotional development when they did not receive school and/or familial emotional support regarding their gender and sexuality. In addition, my role as a volunteer crisis counselor with the Trevor Project, an

organization that focuses on suicide prevention for LGBTQ youth, bolsters my mission of LGBTQ advocacy. It is important that my personal belief, which is that all elementary schools should be required to teach an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum, does not impact the research study. In an attempt to avoid potential researcher bias, I kept my interpretations grounded in the actual words and thoughts of the participants. Exact quotations were threaded throughout the findings and discussion portion of the paper. It was critical to share the perspectives of the school leaders and not my own personal thoughts. In addition, the use of a reflective journal helped to keep my opinion and experiences visible throughout the research process.

Sutton & Austin (2015) note that when conducting qualitative research, the researcher's role includes an "...attempt to access the thoughts and feelings of study participants" (p.226). It is the primary responsibility of a researcher to ensure that the participants' identity and data being collected is safeguarded (Sutton & Austin, 2015). As the researcher, it is important that the confidentiality, anonymity of my study participants and security of the data is a priority. Before completing the instrument questions in Google Forms, all participants were asked to view and acknowledge the research purpose and participation guidelines in order to obtain informed consent. In Google Forms, the respondents' information is securely stored and responses were collected anonymously unless they completed the information to be interviewed.

At the completion of the survey, participants were asked about their interest in participating in a follow-up interview. After obtaining the contact information of interested participants, an additional document was sent regarding consent, acknowledgement that the interview was voluntary, understanding that consent could be

rescinded at any time and that all data and identifying information collected would be kept confidential. The interviews took place using the St. John's University approved Webex application. Participants were reminded that the interview was being recorded and that their participation could end at any time. The audio transcripts are kept in the secure Webex account and a copy held within a Google Drive account in which only the researcher has access via the account password.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the research methodology that was used to explore the attitudes and beliefs of elementary school leaders regarding transgender and gender nonconforming individuals, along with their intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. Research questions were provided and the methods used to integrate qualitative and quantitative data were discussed. The data collection and analysis methods were explained in addition to research ethics and the researcher's role.

## CHAPTER 4

Schools can be unwelcoming and unsafe for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth, as they often experience discrimination and bullying in schools (Kosciw et al., 2020). The use of an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum is related to less victimization of LGBTQ students and increased feelings of connectedness to the school community (Greytak et al., 2016). The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes and beliefs of elementary school leaders regarding transgenderism and their intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with students in grades K-5.

### **Quantitative Findings**

#### ***Research Question One***

The first research question aimed to determine the beliefs and attitudes of elementary school leaders towards transgenderism, gender non-conformity and the use of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with K-5 students. First, the LGBTQ-CIS was used to investigate the attitudes of elementary school leaders towards the use of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. Participants held positive attitudes towards using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum ( $M=5.11$ ,  $SD=1.81$ ). Seventy-eight percent of participants had positive attitudes towards using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with K-5 students as measured by the LGBTQ-CIS (using a 1-7 scale). Positive attitudes were analyzed by age: 75% of participants aged 26-45, 81% aged 46-55 years, and 78% aged 56 and older had positive attitudes towards using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum as seen in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Positive Attitude Percentages by Age Group*

Attitude	Ages 26-45 %	Ages 46-55 %	Ages 56 and older %
Positive attitudes towards using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum.	75	81	78

Positive attitudes were also analyzed by years of experience: 71% of participants with 1-5 years of experience, 80% of participants with 6-10 years of experience, 69% of participants with 11-15 years of experience and 92% of participants with 16 years of experience and more held positive attitudes towards using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with K-5 students (see Table 5). While school leaders had positive attitudes towards using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum, the percentage levels of intention were lower to do so (M=3.94, SD=2.16).

**Table 5**

*Positive Attitude Percentages by Years Of Experience*

Attitude	1-5 Years %	6-10 Years %	11-15 Years %	16 or more Years %
Positive attitudes towards using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum.	71	80	69	92

The open response survey question asked the respondents to record the reasons they were willing or not willing to implement an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with K-5 students and to explain their thinking. Common themes emerged from the analysis of the open response question. In general, the responses fell into five main categories or common themes (Table 6). For example, 14% of the responses indicated willingness to



implement an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum in order to create a more inclusive school community and 12% of the responses indicated the importance of this curriculum to support mental and emotional health and prevent bullying and/or suicide.

**Table 6**

*Open Response Category Percentages*

Common Themes	Responses %
Creating inclusiveness in the school community	14
To support mental and emotional health and prevent bullying and suicide	12
Concerns about students' age	10
Concerns about lack of resources and/or professional development	21
Concerns about community and parent response	19

While participants had positive attitudes towards using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum on average, a closer analysis of the survey questions revealed the following: question 4A (*using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with all students in grades K-5 by the end of the 2022-2023 school year would be: unnecessary/necessary*) had the lowest average mean of 4.79 on a scale, question 4B (*using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with all students in grades K-5 by the end of the 2022-2023 school year would be: harmful/beneficial*) and question 5 (*using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with all students in grades K-5 by the end of the 2022-2023 school year, will contribute to a positive, safe, and affirming learning environment: disagree/agree*) had average means of 5.21 and 5.38 respectively.

The ATTI was used to investigate the beliefs and attitudes of elementary school leaders towards transgenderism. The average mean of the even numbered questions on the ATTI are displayed on Table 7. Upon analysis of the data, all questions on the ATTI had an average mean between 1.0-2.0 or 4.0-5.0. Question 10 was the only exception whose average mean was 3.67.

**Table 7**

*ATTI Mean Breakdown by Question*

Descriptive Statistics			
Question	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
ATTI Q2	42	1.40	1.061
ATTI Q4	42	1.26	.885
ATTI Q6	42	1.38	1.058
ATTI Q8	42	4.40	1.211
ATTI Q10	42	3.67	1.493
ATTI Q12	42	4.29	1.255
ATTI Q14	42	4.36	1.226
ATTI Q16	42	4.10	1.165
ATTI Q18	42	2.17	1.497
ATTI Q20	42	1.24	.759

The results of the ATTI scale show that 93% (M=88.45, SD: 16.54) of participants had positive attitudes towards transgender individuals. Positive attitudes were analyzed by age: 92% of participants aged 26-45, 100% aged 46-55 years, and 78% aged 56 and older held positive attitudes towards transgenderism. Positive attitudes were also analyzed by years of experience; 100% of participants with 1-5 years of experience, 90% of participants with 6-10 years of experience, 92% of participants with 11-15 years of experience and 92% of participants with 16 years of experience and more held positive attitudes towards transgenderism.

As seen in Table 8, participants disagreed with statements such as, *transgendered individuals should be barred from the teaching profession* (95.3% disagreement) and *I*

*avoid transgendered individuals whenever possible* (95.3% disagreement). Participants agreed with statements like *transgendered individuals should be accepted completely into our society* (88.1% agreement) and *I would feel comfortable if I learned that my best friend was a transgendered individual* (83.3% agreement).

Question 10 (*There should be no restrictions on transgenderism*) had an average mean of 3.62. On closer analysis of question 10, 26.2% of participants strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, 9.5% were neutral and 64.3% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. All other questions had an average of over 80% agreement on positively worded statements and disagreement on negatively worded statements.

**Table 8**

*ATTI Percentages By Agreement Group*

Descriptive Statistics					
Question	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Neutral %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %
ATTI Q8 Transgendered individuals should be accepted completely into our society.	9.5	0	2.4	16.7	71.4
ATTI Q9 Transgendered individuals should be barred from the teaching profession.	90.5	4.8	0	0	4.8
ATTI Q10 There should be no restrictions on transgenderism.	14.3	11.9	9.5	21.4	42.9
ATTI Q11 I avoid transgendered individuals whenever possible.	92.9	2.4	2.4	0	2.4

In summary, school principals held positive attitude towards transgender individuals such as fully accepting them into society but believe there should be restrictions on transgenderism.

**Research Question Two**

A simple linear regression was calculated to predict intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum based on attitudes towards transgender individuals (ATTI raw score). A significant regression equation was found ( $F(1, 40) = 9.606, p < .004$ ), with an  $R^2$  of .194. Participants’ predicted intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum is equal to  $-1.149 + .058$  (ATTI raw score). Participants’ intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum increased .058 for each one point increase of the ATTI raw score (Table 9).

**Table 9**

*Attitude Towards Transgender Individuals Coefficients*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-.869	.632		-1.375	.177		
	Attitude Score	.940	.117	.787	8.059	<.001	1.000	1.000

A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum based on school leader’s attitude towards use of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum, perceived behavioral control and subjective norms. A significant regression equation was found ( $F(3, 38)=57.037, p<.001$ ), with an  $R^2$  of .818. Participants’ predicted intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum is equal to –

1.078 +.517 (attitude towards use of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum) +.174 (subjective norms) +.565 (perceived behavioral control).

As seen on Table 10, while subjective norms did not significantly predict intention ( $\beta = .174, p=.426$ ), it was found that attitude towards using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum did significantly predict intention ( $\beta=.517, p<.001$ ). In addition, perceived behavioral control did significantly predict intention ( $\beta=-.565, p<.001$ ).

**Table 10**

*RAA Constructs Coefficients*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-1.078	.450		-2.397	.022		
	Attitude Score	.517	.145	.432	3.573	<.001	.327	3.060
	SN Score	.174	.216	.128	.805	.426	.189	5.289
	PC Score	.565	.134	.466	4.212	<.001	.391	2.559

SN=subjective norms, PC=perceived behavioral control

**Qualitative Findings**

After the collection and analysis of the quantitative data, fourteen elementary principals were interviewed to determine the factors that contributed to their intentions to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum in their school. As the data from the interview transcripts were examined and went through a third cycle of coding, several major themes began to emerge. Principals reported that the presence of LGBTQ youth in their school buildings, concerns about potential backlash from the community and fear of consequences such as job loss or loss of tenure, all played a role in their intention to be more LGBTQ inclusive in the curriculum.

### ***Theme One: Allow People to be Who They Are***

As seen from the results of the ATTI, school principals have a positive attitude towards transgenderism. These quantitative results were in alignment with what the principals said during the interview phase. When asked about their personal beliefs about transgenderism and gender nonconformity, several principals expressed their beliefs that people should just be who they are. The following includes the personal beliefs statements of five of the principals: “whatever happens to fulfill somebody's life, let them have that freedom,” “I just think people should be who they are and be left alone”, “my personal beliefs are that people should be able to self-identify their gender and how they manage their lives” and “I very much support members of the movement and people who feel that this designation fits who they are.”

Principal Marian extended this thinking of allowing people to be who they are by stating that people’s gender and sexual identities are none of her business. She shared, “the long, and the short of it is, do what you want, you know, everyone has an opinion. Everyone has a preference. It's really none of my business what's under your pants and who you’re sleeping with. It’s not my business.”

Principal Yolanda believes that transgenderism is a natural occurrence that should be accepted and understood:

We really need to face this reality and gain an understanding to help everybody to have an understanding of this. It’s something that you are born with or you come to the world with. It is not something you did, something bad or something out of the ordinary.

A few principals considered the role gender norms and labels, such as gender nonconformity, play in their beliefs about transgenderism. Principal Jocelyn shared:

Our current gender norms that we've had in society are not accurate. It's crazy to try to put somebody into a bubble and say this is the only way that you can think, and this is the only way you can dress and the only way that you can speak and act. And I guess that it would extend to transgender as well too.

Principal Lucia questioned our current system of the societal need to conform to a gender when she stated, “Why conform? What’s the point of conforming, you know? You do what's in your heart. You do, you be you. That's what we always say here, you know, be kind but be you.” Principal Shayla agreed with these sentiments and considered the use of terms such as *gender nonconformity* a way to “separate” and “defeat” groups of people.

It is a beautiful thing when you come across an individual who defines themselves in a different way. And I really do not like that word nonconforming or conforming because that's a definition that is colonizing. It's separating. It's defeating. It's not a good word that I would use. I would just say what beautiful person is bringing this beautiful gift forward. And, yeah, because when you do that, you put people in boxes, and you make them something that they're not.

In general, principals held positive attitudes towards transgenderism. They believe that people should be allowed to be who they are and support people’s gender identities. Some principals believe transgenderism is a natural thing and we should consider the norms we ask people to conform to as it pertains to gender.

## ***Theme Two: Considering Religion***

While several of the principals agree that people should be allowed to be who they are, for other principals, religion played a role in their perspectives about transgenderism and gender non-conformity. Some principals felt their personal beliefs conflicted with their religious beliefs or teachings. While Principal Jocelyn believes the current gender roles are “not accurate,” she shared how that differed from what her religion believes.

I know sometimes that is in contradiction to what the Catholic church prescribes to. You know, especially the Catholic church, they have very clear and definitive roles on how men and women and act in the church and roles that they can assume in the church. And sometimes that's a difficult thing for me, because I don't always agree with that part.

In contrast, Principal Lucas and Principal Juan’s religious beliefs shape how they feel about transgenderism and gender nonconformity. Both principals consider their beliefs that God creates individuals the way they are supposed to be and transgenderism may imply that God made a mistake. Principal Lucas shared:

I have no idea what they're dealing with, so I want to be sympathetic and kind. But I do think, yeah, I think there's a problem. That they're never going to be happy, choosing a different gender, whether it's actually changing their gender, or dressing, or whatever it is. I think that's a dead-end road anything other than what God intended. I believe they were born a gender as God's intention. I want to be a channel of grace and love for anyone. But that doesn't mean that I'm going to say,



that's okay the choices you're making are okay. I'm not going to say that if I don't believe they are.

Principal Juan spoke about his two gay sons and the time he spent reading the Bible to confirm if there was opposition to homosexuality within it. He believes that the scriptures do not explicitly oppose it and that people who are attracted to the same sex were created by God. Principal Juan acknowledged homosexuality is “looked upon as this huge sin” by many within the Catholic faith. However, his beliefs are different when it comes to transgenderism. When he discussed his viewpoints on sexuality and transgenderism, he shared:

You are celebrating how God made you, you know? He doesn't make junk. This is just me, in my own development on transgenderism, I feel like I'm saying, well, God made a mistake with me and I need to fix it. So, that's my current struggle as I kind of think about that issue. Again, my sons are attracted to people of the same sex, I don't think, I think that was created.

Other principals do not believe that their religion plays a role in their beliefs about gender nonconformity and transgenderism. When asked about her religious beliefs, Principal Scarletta shared that people should be who they are and it “has nothing to do with religion. That’s it. I don’t know why it has to do with religion.” Similarly, Principal Adalyn expressed:

I have no religious beliefs that would ever transgress against anybody. That's my feeling. I've been in this job long enough to see when children can't identify or how they might be feeling on the inside and the detriment that might have. It's

been a really hard road getting the rest of the world to accept that. But that's me, because my beliefs are very liberal.

Principal Chloe feels she has to put her “religion aside” when supporting students within her school that may be gender nonconforming or transgender. She shared:

So, as a Catholic educator, this is a very difficult question to answer because traditionally, as I was raised, you know, there was always questions around gender and gender nonconformity, or any really queer cultural aspect at all. So personally, my belief is that gender is something that people often discover at different times in their lives. Gender is not always fluid. And so oftentimes we meet individuals who have a nonconforming gender or may find themselves at any point in their lives wanting to go through with procedures or lifestyle changes to change their gender. So, personally, I have a more liberal take on what all of this means for individuals and their identity because it is an identity conversation. And so personally I choose to kind of put my religion aside when it comes to this type of understanding.

In summary, religion plays a role in principals’ beliefs about transgenderism. However, the role it plays varies. Some principals’ religion shapes their thoughts on the natural occurrence of transgenderism and some believe their religion differs from their personal beliefs. Others believe their religion helps them to accept all individuals and does not play a role in accepting people as they are.

### ***Theme Three: Age Appropriateness***

Principals were asked about their beliefs regarding the use a LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with K-5 students. Several principals felt this type of curriculum was suitable

for students within this age range as long as it was age appropriate. One interviewee, Principal Carrie explained that children's literature with LGBTQ characters were not providing specific details about sexual preference or personal lives. She believes that these books can be read and approached similar to reading about a character who just so happens to be a female and/or black. Principal Marian agreed and stated, "I am a fan of books that just naturally have these characters in them." In addition, Principal Marian believes that young children should have exposure at a very young age:

I think the younger they are when they experience this, the less strange it is to them. Like I said, the little boy in my school with the tutu, he was in kindergarten. And he was perfectly accepted in kindergarten and as he moved up, he was accepted. That's just how (child's name) was. So, I kind of think that the younger they are, the more, quote, unquote, normal, this seems. And it doesn't bother anyone cause, you know, it is normal and it is a way of life.

Principal Chloe believes that discussions about gender identity can occur at very young ages, but believes that challenge can come via opposition from older adults who may not be comfortable with the topic. When asked about the use of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum and if her beliefs differed for students in kindergarten through grade two versus grades three through five, Principal Chloe shared:

I don't feel differently, but I think there would be a different conversation that speaking about older, the older population versus the younger. For myself personally, I would think just introduce it across the board so it's something that they're hearing throughout their studies and not just all of a sudden hearing about when they get to a certain age. I personally don't see why you couldn't start even

at the youngest ages, even with play. I mean, books are curriculum, you know, that's a little more concrete, but there's even a lot of toys now where, gender, I think that would be the one of the first steps into introducing, you know?

In agreement, Principal Scarlette's beliefs did not change based upon the grade of the students. At her school, all students learn about LGBTQ history during LGBTQ month and read books all year long with a diverse set of characters. She believes topics like gender and sexual identity can be approached through reading comprehension discussions about characters in texts. She shared:

There is no difference. We don't handle it like, it's a subject area. We handle it within the composition of the reading. But we also started something this year. That with all the books about social justice, that's the mind work and the heart work. So, the mind work is the character study plot you know, all of that we're used to. But then the heart work is how is the character feeling? Why do you think the character feels like that? And that's when we touch upon racism and LGBTQ situations that the character might have in a book. So that's how we do it, like heart and mind work.

Principal Lucia also believes that an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum is appropriate for students in all grades. Her school teaches about the LGBTQ community and completes various learning activities during LGBTQ Pride Month. Some of these activities include kindergarten and first grade students learning about different families, including those with two moms and two dads. Principal Lucia did, however, question whether specific topics such as drag queens, were appropriate for her very young

students. In the school's 3-K library, a book called *The Hips on the Drag Queen Go Swish, Swish, Swish* was present. She commented:

You sing it to the wheels on the bus, you know, go round and round. But it was in my 3-K library. I was like, I can see it for my upper grades, but I'm not sure if I'm comfortable explaining what a drag queen is to my 3 K's and my Pre-K. So, like in that sense, I'm a little like, leery.

While some principals believed this curriculum would be appropriate for all students from kindergarten through grade five, some did not agree. Principal Parker believed conversations and the introduction of books with LGBTQ characters were more appropriate with students in fourth grade and higher. He shared, "I'm more reluctant at the Pre-K through probably grade three. I think starting in grades four and five, I think some conversations and some maybe direct instruction or texts that kind of brings those elements to the surface is more appropriate."

To summarize, generally, principals believe that an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum can be used with K-5 students. Some principals expressed certain conditions in which this could be done. Some believe that books used should have LGBTQ characters that exist, like being black and female, but it is not central to the story plot. Others feel more comfortable with the incorporation of books that showcase the diversity in our world like families parented by same gender partners.

#### ***Theme Four: Presence of LGBTQ Students in Elementary School***

Of the school leaders interviewed, more than half of them reported their intention to be more inclusive of LGBTQ themes within the school curriculum. Some principals indicated that their intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum was motivated by the

LGBTQ students they knew were within their student body. Principals shared examples of students that changed their names and pronouns or wore clothing that are traditionally worn by another gender (see Table 11). The examples include a range of students from kindergarten through grade 5.

**Table 11**

*School Principal Examples of LGBTQ Elementary Students*

Principal	Quote: Student Example
Principal Shayla	“I’ve had one student who wished to be non-binary and wished, and this is 5th grade, and wished to change their name.”
Principal Kacey	“Last year, I had a student share in the morning meeting, that [he] wanted to be referred to as <i>they</i> instead of <i>he</i> and what that meant.”
Principal Scarlett	“We had about 10 LGBT students graduate this year.”
Principal Marian	“I’ve definitely had a little boy in kindergarten who wore tutus to school and nobody really cared.”
Principal Lucia	“Many children have come out to me personally in my upper grades and to my teachers. They say, by the way, you know, I’m bi or I’m gay. I say, okay.” “And I’ve had some children, I had boy, two years ago, his name is (child’s name). He loved to play in the play center in Pre-K in dresses. Every day he’d come in and put on a princess dress and he put on a crown and shoes.”

While some principals felt that the presence of LGBTQ students within their school population was a factor in their intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum, others did not. Two principals shared that while they did have LGBTQ students in their school buildings, there were other factors, e.g. community pushback, that caused them to refrain from using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. Principal Parker spoke about

students in his school that have socially transitioned by changing their name and a transgender fourth grader who began their transition in first grade. However, Principal Parker identified the community as a huge factor in not making a specific effort to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. Additionally, Principal Brooke shared her concerns about the appropriateness of its inclusion in elementary school. She shared:

We're a Pre-K through 6 school. The students that we have, wanting to change identities, both by name, sexual identity, gender... everything is happening at a very young age and I'm not quite sure what to do with that. I'm not sure. What is the healthy thing to do? What's the appropriate way to respond to it? We have several. We're a small school, but we have several already in our elementary building, and we always have, but not to the degree that we do now. There are 275 in our elementary school and of that, off the bat, I can think of four. One, that is a boy dressing as a girl. [He's] been doing that, she's been doing that, for a year with her identity name changed. That occurred in 5th grade. We have, it's mostly like in that 4th grade 5th grade time, that we're starting to see it. Although, we did have a first grader ask for that. I guess that's where I struggle.

Principals who did not intend to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum talked about feeling more comfortable in doing so if they had LGBTQ students attending their schools. They shared that once they have confirmed these students existed in their buildings, they could argue that not allowing these students to see themselves in the curriculum would be alienating or ostracizing them. Principal Chloe shared feeling more comfortable including books in the curriculum in which the characters had same sex parents because she has students who come from families with two moms or two dads.

Her goal is to provide these children with the same opportunities as students with heterosexual parents. In addition, she said:

If I had a student who was gender nonconforming, and they went through the registration process, and they were present in the school and it was known to us that this was something that the family really prioritize the fact that the child was nonbinary or non, however, you want to say it, whatever their pronouns are, then I think then I could get the literature. So, I think that's almost like the way in. Once you have someone in your population that the literature would speak to, then as an administrator, I have more room for making these demands despite the lines kind of being gray with what the church allows, or backs, and what they don't.

Principal Carrie shared Principal Chloe's feelings. While Principal Carrie has the intention of integrating books that happen to have LGBTQ characters, she is hesitant about incorporating books that specifically teach about the LGBTQ community.

Overall, principals feel that the presence of LGBTQ students within their student population influence their intention to use LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. Principals believe these students should be supported by its use. While some principals did not have the intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum, they also stated that they would be more comfortable doing so if they could confirm those students existed in their school buildings.

#### ***Theme Five: Fear of Consequences***

A quarter of the principals interviewed shared concerns about potential job loss, getting into trouble, and/or loss of tenure as factors that impacted their intention or willingness to use an LGBT inclusive curriculum. Principal Brooke discussed her



intention to avoid explicitly teaching about the LGBTQ community and taking the route of teaching the students within her school about respecting all people and cultures in general. Her school currently participates in a program that teaches character education and looks closely at the trait attributes individuals possess. Principal Brooke feels that through this program, her school can address the practice of accepting all individuals without getting into trouble with parents and the community on pinpointing LGBTQ themes.

You're going to draw fire if you go one side or the other too quick and too fast. So, again, if I was in in middle or in a high school, it'd be a whole different topic. But at the elementary years, I can get away with not pinpointing those topics because it won't get me in trouble, right? So again, I'm going to the core of the topic of whether it's a gender issue or race issue or sexual identity issue. I'm just going to the topic of loving one another and being kind. And that's where we're keeping it and make sure that our resources and our materials are really being taken a closer look at to make sure that they're representing all aspects of cultures and people and languages.

Principal Carrie feels that it is important for LGBTQ students to see themselves within the curriculum but feels she's limited in what she can incorporate into the curriculum without jeopardizing her tenure.

That doesn't mean it's not the important work and it's not the work we should be doing. But when I'm tenured, I'll be able to push the envelope a little bit more than I can right now, you know? So, I'm pushing it where I can and where I feel like, hey, all of our kids have to be safe and all of our kids have to be respected

and all of our kids have to be treated fairly. Those are things I will say untenured or not.

Principal Chloe believes that students should be able to express and “voice the way they feel” (i.e. sexual and gender identity) but feels her personal beliefs strongly differ from her professional role as a school leader of a Catholic school. She questioned how she could express her beliefs without consequences from the community. She shared, “That's something I've had to consider. How I'll voice my opinion without offending the majority of other people in the room, or how I can advocate without kind of putting myself on the chopping block.”

When asked about his intention on LGBTQ inclusion in the school curriculum, Principal Lucas felt that it was not likely to happen because of the school's conservative Christian curriculum and the views and beliefs held by the majority of the school families and school leadership. He shared his concerns about its incorporation and his legacy as a school leader.

It's hard to answer this because we don't incorporate LGBTQ themes or books that feature that in our school and I'm pretty sure I'd be fired if I tried to bring those in. No, I won't be fired but there'd be a long conversation. I've been there for 20 years and I'm about ready to retire anyway. But I don't want to, I don't want to go out. I don't want to just fade out. I want to go out with strong leadership in our school, and just the fact that we've had this communication I'm gonna tell the board about this interview, and the fact that we need to talk. Well, we need to talk about it, but I don't know how, I don't know how.

In summary, principals are concerned about their job security, including job loss and loss of tenure, when considering using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum.

***Theme Six: Community and Parental Pushback***

Community and parental pushback were mentioned by all interviewed principals as either a reason they did not intend to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum or a barrier to its inclusion. Analysis of the open-response question revealed that several principals identified parents and the community as factors that play a role in their willingness to incorporate an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. Responses included “pushback from a minority of parents”, “community opposition”, “parent views”, “school's population of new immigrants from many countries that are not as LGBTQ inclusive as USA”, and “parents seem more untrusting of public education”.

Community and parental pushback were reoccurring themes in the responses of the interviewed school leaders. Principal Marian talked about parents as a barrier and gave an example about parents giving weird looks to other parents who were in same sex relationships. She shared, “I think parents are a huge barrier. I think they are more affected and more very often disgusted. I have absolutely had same sex parents. Some more verbal than others. And, you know, they get the weird looks from the parents, not from the kids.”

Principals reported receiving angry phone calls and emails when attempting to be more LGBTQ inclusive. Others, while they had the intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum, identified parents and the community as barriers to their efforts. Principal Lucia spoke about her tentative practice in incorporating LGBTQ books as a part of the school’s Book of the Month. The introduction of these books resulted in the loss of two

students because the parents pulled them out of the school and enrolled them in another. She said, “Sometimes I get nasty phone calls, I'm not going to lie, from parents. I had a parent, actually she's taken her child now to a more appropriate school, as she told me, that was more in line with her personal beliefs.”

Opposition from parents was also shared during school board meetings. Principal Carrie spoke about parent advocacy groups at the meetings, “We’ve got the Moms of Liberty coming to board meetings and yelling about CRT and yelling about masking and yelling about all sorts of things.” Principal Adalyn identified an instance in which parents expressed their displeasure about the district’s use of Sora, a digital library of books accessible by students, that included books with LGBTQ characters. Principal Adalyn remarked:

There are barriers. I'm not going to lie. It is a community issue. I'm not going to say it's the whole community, but unfortunately, it's the small, loud section in the back. We belong to Sora. It's just a digital library that we have a subscription to, and some community members charged the board meeting because there was a book that kids could access. Now imagine, it's a digital library about a man, had a recount of his life and his experiences, homosexual experiences, starting in 4th grade. Even though it's designed for and it's available for seven through twelve, they caused such an uproar, you know?

Two principals, Principal Kacey and Principal Scarlette, shared their experiences with parental pushback when incorporating gender neutral bathrooms. Both principals relabeled some of the single stall bathrooms at their schools as gender neutral bathrooms. Once this relabeling happened, parents reached out to the principals to express their

concerns. Principal Kacey recalled how one parent filed a report against her for putting up gender neutral bathroom signs. She said:

I got pushback, not last year, the year before when we put gender neutral bathroom signs up, which, of course, was a state law and not my idea, but, I mean, I think it's a good idea, but I got pushback from parents. One mother in particular wrote to the superintendent, the Board of Ed, saying that it was inappropriate for her daughter to see the words gender neutral and that we were trying to indoctrinate her with, transgenderism was her word, and she actually filed a DASA report against me and her daughter as the victim for having to be exposed to this.

When receiving pushback from parents about the inclusion of gender-neutral bathrooms, Principal Scarlette feels it's important to give them the facts about what they are. She shared:

I had a parent call once, and she's like, I'm concerned, you have a gender-neutral bathroom. How's my son supposed to go to the bathroom? I said, well, how many bathrooms do you have at home? She said, one. I said, you both use it? She said, yes. I said, that's a gender-neutral bathroom. I said, when you go to pizzeria, how many stalls? She goes, one. I said, do both genders use it? She goes, yeah. That's a gender-neutral bathroom. It's a single stall bathroom. I just shut her up and that's just the way I deal with things. I'm respectful. But I don't give an opinion. I just give a fact.

As stated, some principals intend to continue and/or increase their LGBTQ inclusive practices like the use of LGBTQ books within the curriculum; while others

intend to start. They all indicated parents and the community as barriers to this practice. It is important to note that some principals specifically identified the religious beliefs and practices of families and the community as reasons why they do not intend to incorporate an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. When asked about using this type of curriculum, Principal Lucas replied:

We don't, we don't. Indeed, we use a conservative Christian curriculum and it is not talked about. Well, it's when I bring it up, but I bring it up in my 9th and 10th grade Bible class and I got to be very careful cause I know the kids that are sitting in front of me, have been raised with a very strong opinions about this.

Principal Jocelyn echoed similar views as she spoke about her school community and the responsibilities of her school to keep curriculum in line with the Catholic faith. At her school, the beliefs and doctrine of the church play a strong role in the school's curriculum.

So right now, that is not something as a school community we would feel comfortable. No, it's not my intention to include those in current literature. There's some things in our Catholic faith that are very specific and very much in the doctrine laid out and because we are a Roman Catholic school; I think it's important that we do stick to the current doctrine of the Catholic faith.

In general, principals believe that the community, which includes students' families, is a huge barrier to their implementation of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. For principals who have already begun the work of incorporating LGBTQ inclusive books into their curriculum and have integrated the use of gender-neutral bathrooms, community pushback is a reality.

### ***Theme Seven: Training, Education and Resources***

A third of the survey respondents listed training, education and resources as a factor that impacted their willingness to incorporate an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. Responses included statements such as, “significant training for faculty/staff “, “professional development to support my staff”, “apprehensive staff who have not had enough training on their own and may bring their own biases”, “biases need to be mitigated through training”, “lack of familiarity with available resources” and “inclusive resources will make this easier”.

Several principals expressed training, education and resources during the interview phase as barriers to their implementation of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. Principal Parker’s district went through their schools’ libraries to ensure that books were diverse. However, they attended to race and ethnicity and not the LGBTQ community. While Principal Parker does not have the intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum, he supports teachers who chooses to do so in their individual classrooms. He feels if he made this a schoolwide policy the availability of resources would be one barrier among many. He shared:

We certainly did our homework on different publishers who presented characters more reflective of people in our world and people in our country. So, it wasn't just kind of [the] typical White character who you might have through most of the books. But I'm not sure to what extent publishers have embraced this with their texts that we buy for kids to read, or, you know, for guided reading levels or things like that. So that could be a little bit of a barrier.

Principal Carrie who has the intention to be more inclusive by adding more diverse set of books, including LGBTQ, to the school's libraries, discussed her challenge with providing her staff with training. In Principal Carrie's district, the high school has an inclusive curriculum and has provided training for their staff, but the company who provided the professional development and curriculum support to the high school was unable to offer training to her elementary school staff. She shared:

We actually just reached out to them to see if they would do work with the elementary teachers, but because their curriculum doesn't reach down to the elementary level for working with students, they also don't do the staff training at that level either. We thought they would do the staff workshops around like, how you approach education with the elementary level, but I guess they don't. So we're looking to increase teacher capacity because the more we can help our teachers become aware then the more often they select those books too.

Principal Yolanda who believes that curriculum should be inclusive of LGBTQ themes and feature books with LGBTQ characters, like Principal Carrie, finds training to be a challenge:

It's very difficult to find curriculum or books that talks about that. Even if we have the books, the other layer to it is to have professional development that all staff members are being able to talk about that without that stereotypical judgment.

Principal Yolanda also believes the education of parents is one of three challenges when planning to embrace LGBTQ inclusivity in the curriculum at her school. She shared:



Number three is also to educate the families who have the different belief as well. Cause when the kids go home, they face their parents who have the different belief, right? So, we need to also educate the parents, like, to be respectful of the diversities that we are living in.

In contrast, Principal Shayla was able to find training opportunities for her staff. She began by requiring that all staff attend an LGBTQ in-service. However, she was met with staff resistance. She recalled:

This past year, we went through an all-school LGBTQ in service. It was nonnegotiable. Every faculty member had to sit and have a conversation and it was uncomfortable for a lot of our faculty. They tried to get out of it. I rescheduled that training four times because I wanted to make sure everybody heard, you know, got that teaching and understanding.

While there were several principals who identified training and resources as barriers to their intention or implementation of using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum, a few principals did not report this as an issue. Principal Lucia reported having many books within the school's libraries and her own office that were LGBTQ inclusive about pride. She shared, "I have a whole library on LGBTQ books that I keep in my office. Every classroom gets books." Principal Scarlette discussed how books are used to teach the students within her school about acceptance of differences, "loving people for who they are no matter what" and sends a book list home to the families to let them know what books are being used. When it comes to training, Principal Kacey was able to reach out to the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network, GLSEN, for support. She finds it

important for the staff to understand the research behind gender and gender identity. She said:

We've had GLSEN come in and work with our teachers, just on the research behind why we don't use gender as a grouping strategy and different ways that we can incorporate gender fluidity into our books and just the way that we talk to kids.

In conclusion, training, education and the lack of knowledge on resources influence principals' intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. Principals expressed concerns about the locations of appropriate resources and training for teachers and staff so that the content can be taught comfortably and accurately.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, the findings from the quantitative and qualitative phase of the study were presented. Principals held positive attitudes towards transgender individuals. Attitude and perceived control significantly predicted intention. Interviews revealed principals perceived resources, parental pushback and fear of consequences as factors that influenced their intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. Chapter 5 will present the implications of these findings.

## CHAPTER 5

In this chapter, the major findings are discussed in relation to the theoretical framework (reasoned action approach) and the literature reviewed in chapter two. The convergence of the major findings from the quantitative and qualitative data sets is explored; specifically, their connection between attitudes towards transgender individuals and attitudes towards an inclusive curriculum, subjective norms and perceived control. Limitations of the study are acknowledged and recommendations for practice and future research is explored.

### **Overall Discussion of Findings**

Approximately 1% of New York's youth ages 13-17 identify as transgender and are currently being educated in our school system. Yet, transgender and nonbinary youth are more likely than cisgender youth to feel unsafe within their school climate because of their gender and gender expression (GLSEN, 2021). The incorporation of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum is related to an increase in feelings of safety in school (Greytak et al., 2013). The study surveyed 42 principals leading public or nonpublic elementary schools located in New York. Fourteen of these principals were interviewed. The survey and interviews were designed to investigate the attitudes and beliefs of school leaders towards transgenderism and use of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. It aimed to determine the influence of RAA constructs on their intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive with their elementary students during the 2022-2023 school year.

Principals overall have positive attitudes towards the use of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum based on the results of the LGBTQ-CIS. There were no significant differences in attitudes between age groups or years of school leader experience. Principals believed that an inclusive curriculum would contribute to a safe school environment but do not

believe that one is necessary. As with use of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum, principals held positive attitudes towards transgenderism. Again, there were no significant differences in attitudes between age groups or years of school leader experience.

A significant relationship between the RAA constructs and intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum was discovered. Principals who believed the use of an inclusive curriculum was within their control were more likely to have the intention to do so. Additionally, principals whose attitudes were positive towards the use of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum were also more likely to have the intention to do so.

Lastly, principals expressed a variety of factors they believed influenced their intention or was a barrier to their intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. Principals perceived community and parental pushback as influential on or barriers to their intention. In addition, concerns on the availability of resources and professional development about LGBTQ inclusivity were communicated by principals as factors that influenced their intention.

## **Connection to Research Questions**

### ***Research Question One***

In the first research question, we aimed to determine the beliefs and attitudes elementary school principals have about transgenderism, gender nonconformity and the use of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. Overall, school principals held positive attitudes towards both transgenderism and the use of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with K-5 students. Based upon the results of the ATTI scale, 93% of participants had positive attitudes towards transgender individuals (M=88.45). Study participants believe that transgender individuals should be allowed to be who they are and be accepted in society

This connects with the qualitative findings Theme One (Allow People To Be Who They Are) and Theme Two (Considering Religion).

Generally, principals believe the use of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum is age appropriate, but resources and professional development is necessary to support their staff. Religious beliefs also play a role in how principals feel about transgenderism and the use of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. Most participants conveyed their belief that people should be allowed to express their gender in ways in which they are comfortable regardless of their own personal and religious beliefs.

### ***Research Question Two***

To address the second research question, the RAA constructs were investigated to determine their influence on the intention of school leaders to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. While attitude and perceived behavioral control resulted in being a statistically significant predictor of intention, subjective norms did not.

78.5% of participants had positive attitudes ( $M=5.11$ ) towards the use of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum which connects with Theme Three (Age Appropriateness). Participants identified the importance of the LGBTQ content being presented in ways that are appropriate differentiated by grade level. Most participants believe an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum is appropriate for K-5 students and held positive attitudes towards its use.

Theme Four (Presence of LGBTQ Students in Elementary School) and Theme Six (Community and Parental Pushback) align with the quantitative findings. 52% of participants disagreed with feeling the pressure of social expectations ( $M=3.69$ ). Although school leaders identified the community and parents as barriers to their

intention and implementation of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum, this slight majority of participants (52%) did not believe it was expected of them by others (e.g. colleagues, community) to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. In addition, participants identified the presence of LGBTQ students within their school buildings as reasons to be inclusive and help to provide a safe school environment.

### ***Research Question Three***

In the qualitative phase of the study, the factors that contribute to elementary school leaders' intentions to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum were investigated using semi-structured interviews. School leaders believe that the presence of LGBTQ elementary students is a motivating factor when considering the use of an inclusive curriculum. School leaders expressed lack of control due to fear of consequences (e.g. tenure, job loss/security) and the availability of resources (e.g. curriculum, training, and books). This shows a connection between Theme Five (Fear of Consequences), Theme Seven (Training, Education and Resource) and participants' disagreement with the belief that they have the control and ability to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. In fact, 67% of participants overall believe they do not have the control and/or ability. Concerns regarding pushback from the community, absence of professional development, and fear of consequences, such as loss of tenure, influence their intention and/or implementation of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum.

### **Connection to Previous Research**

#### ***School Climate***

Feeney et al (2019) defined gender identity as behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with how assigned sexes should behave. An

individual who is gender nonconforming expresses their gender in ways that differ from the general societal expectations of that gender while a transgender person has a gender identity that differs from the one assigned at birth (Orr & Baum, 2015). New York has approximately 9,750 youth who are transgender from the ages of 13-17, which is about 0.79% of the youth population (Herman et al., 2017). Of the 14 school principals interviewed for this study, over half reported knowing students within their school buildings who identified as either transgender or whose gender expression or pronoun usage are not considered typical for their sex assigned at birth.

The school environment continues to be an unsafe space for transgender youth (McGuire, 2010; Day et al., 2018). Leaders are essential in ensuring that the school climate is a positive one for transgender and gender nonconforming youth (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2013). The decisions that school leaders make can be influenced by their beliefs (Mangin, 2020). 85.7% of school principals indicated they would feel comfortable working with a transgendered individual and a little over 88% of principals believe that transgendered individuals should be accepted completely into our society. These positive attitudes were similar to the findings in a study conducted with middle school principals in Indiana, which found that principals believed kind and empathetic attitudes towards LGBTQ youth promoted a positive school culture (Boylard et al., 2020). These findings are promising for our transgender and gender non-conforming youth.

About one-third of principals interviewed in this study believe they have a safe school environment for transgender and gender non-conforming youth. GLSEN (2008) found similar results in a study of K-12 principals, where 42% of the principals reported

that transgender students would feel safe at their school. Some of the study's participants identified the presence of caring and accepting staff members as the rationale for this belief. Supportive school staff is an important resource for LGBTQ youth and may have a significant positive impact on their experiences while in school (Kosciw, 2020). Similar to the findings of this study, Kolbert et al (2015) in a study with 200 educators in the southwestern region of Pennsylvania found a significant positive relationship between supportiveness of school staff and bullying experienced by LGBTQ students. While some principals believed their schools had safe environments for transgender and gender non-conforming youth, others identified their schools as either unsafe or unsure of its safety but hopeful that it was.

### ***Educators' Beliefs and Self-Efficacy***

Self-efficacy is the belief that an individual has in their ability to accomplish a specific task (Bandura, 1977). Hesbol (2019) found that school principals must believe in their own skills and knowledge to lead the school towards change for these changes to occur. Furthermore, when considering a particular strategy or plan of action in school reform, inefficacious school leaders are more likely to disregard the strategy (Hesbol, 2019). In this study, as principals' perceived control, or belief in one's own capability, increased, so did their intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum.

### ***LGBTQ Inclusive Curriculum***

When curricular resources are inclusive of positive representations of LGBTQ people and topics, fewer negative remarks about gender expression and transgender people are made by students (GLSEN, 2021). About two-thirds of school principals in this study believed that using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum in grades K-5 would be



beneficial and contribute to a positive, safe, and affirming learning environment and 52% believed that this type of curriculum is necessary. These findings contrasted with Thein's study of 20 language arts teachers who were resistant to the idea of teaching LGBTQ literature and issues (Thein, 2013).

Research has shown that inclusive curriculum is in fact necessary, since the absence of students' cultural identities in curriculum lead to students' understanding that their identities are not valued (Bishop, 1990). Books can serve as windows and mirrors for children (Bishop, 1990). These windows offer readers views of a world that may be familiar or have yet to explore and mirrors provide an opportunity to see the lives and experiences of oneself reflected (Bishop, 1990). While principals in this study are not currently implementing an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum fully, some principals reported having begun the process through book integration.

Text integration is one way to ensure a curriculum is LGBTQ inclusive. According to Page, schools can use a variety of approaches to integrate LGBTQ texts ranging from less to more LGBTQ visibility (2017). In addition, Page (2017) reported text integration approaches include: partial visibility (LGBTQ texts available for students' independent use in classrooms and libraries, constrained visibility (LGBTQ texts are introduced and used in literature circles and book clubs, visible with partial integration (LGBTQ texts are used in whole class units of study), and full visibility and integration (involves the use of all of the above approaches, in addition to queer theory and pedagogy that challenges heteronormativity and gender binaries).

A few of the study's participants reported partial visibility in their efforts to use LGBTQ inclusive texts. They shared examples of books that are found in their K-5

libraries, such as *My Princess Boy* by Cheryl Kilodavis, a text about a boy who wears tiaras and dresses and a book written by Jessica Herthel entitled *I Am Jazz* capturing the life experiences of a young transgender girl named Jazz. While some principals reported partial visibility through book choices in independent reading, others used the integration approach of visible with partial integration. In this integration, LGBTQ inclusive books were introduced as the book of the month. Books of the month were read by the entire school community.

Elementary school principals hold positive attitudes about the use of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. Some have begun the early stages of LGBTQ text integration through independent self-selection of books while others are taking a schoolwide approach.

### **Implication of Findings for Future Research and Practice**

School climates are directly linked to school leaders as “the school leader is considered one of the most influential factors in the development of the quality and character of a school” (Lewis et al., 2016, p. 61). The school climate is established and sustained by leadership (Lewis et al., 2016).

This study focused on the beliefs and attitudes of school leaders towards transgenderism and gender nonconformity and their intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. School leaders have the responsibility to ensure that all students are educated in a positive school climate in which they feel safe and affirmed. However, safe and affirming school environments are often out of reach for LGBTQ youth. “LGBTQ students were less likely than students of other gender identities and sexual orientations to report that they have an adult at school who cares about them” (Hanson et al., 2019,

p.1). Studies continue to show that LGBTQ youth are more likely to engage in suicide ideation and report chronic sadness and helplessness (Hanson et. al., 2019).

Transgender and gender non-conforming students deserve to be educated in schools that are affirming and supportive. Even modest efforts of LGBTQ inclusivity had profound effects on the experiences of LGBTQ youth (Peter et al., 2016). Greytak et al. (2016), based on their study's findings, recommend that schools employ specific measures to improve school climate and ensure that LGBTQ students are provided with the educational experience that they are entitled to. These measures contain bullying and harassment training programs that include preventing & addressing the victimization of LGBTQ students, curriculum that is inclusive of LGBTQ people, history & topics, provide resources and professional learning for teachers of all subjects to integrate LGBTQ issues into their curriculum & effectively address bias in their classroom and the consistent assessment of the school climate to identify need areas and measure progress particularly when supporting LGBTQ students.

Classrooms should be a student-centered space that encourages students to voice their diverse perspectives and backgrounds using culturally sustaining pedagogy (Kibler & Chapman, 2019). Schools should provide spaces that are safe and affirm students' identities. Affirming spaces "support students' feelings of safety and belonging" (Eager, 2019, p.60).

Based upon this study's findings, it is recommended that elementary schools provide students with access to LGBTQ inclusive resources, professional development for school staff on LGBTQ inclusivity, support and training for parents and principal support from school boards and district personnel.

### ***Schools Need LGBTQ Inclusive Resources & Curriculum***

It is imperative that schools have access to and are knowledgeable about the availability of LGBTQ inclusive resources. LGBTQ inclusive curricula is related to a decrease in absenteeism, fewer instances of victimization of LGBTQ youth, particularly transgender youth, and increased feelings of safety at school (Greytak et al., 2013). In general, the availability of LGBTQ resources can “contribute to a less prejudiced and safer environment for everyone” (Russell et al., 2008, p. 15).

When asked about their willingness to incorporate an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum school leaders reported concerns about resources such as “lack of familiarity with available resources”, “I can tell you our literature is really lacking across the board” and “support from the district level is needed to identify quality resources that are developmentally appropriate for K-5.” In addition, school leaders questioned the resources created by publishers. One school leader shared, “I’m not sure to what extent publishers have embraced this with their texts that we buy for kids to read, or, you know, for guided reading levels or things like that. So that could be a little bit of a barrier.”

In 2019, New Jersey, Maryland, Illinois, Colorado and Oregon put LGBTQ history requirements in place (Waxman, 2019). As states begin making LGBTQ inclusive policies, the demands for resources have grown. In 2019, Newsela, an educational platform that provides digital high interest news articles in varying reading levels and is used by 25 million students nationwide, launched an LGBTQIA+ studies collection (Waxman, 2019). This is one example of a widely used literacy resource that can assist in incorporating LGBTQ inclusive content into the curriculum.

Organizations like GLSEN offer resources on their website, [www.glsen.org/inclusive-curriculum](http://www.glsen.org/inclusive-curriculum), such as an inclusive curriculum guide that can be used as a reflection tool to increase LGBTQ representation and lists with recommended LGBTQ classroom books. Additionally, the Safe Schools Coalition works to help schools become safe places for LGBTQ youth and their families. The Safe Schools Coalition website, <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org>, offers a variety of resources for parents/guardians, school personnel, childcare providers, health care professionals and library media specialists that promote education and understanding of the LGBTQ community.

***Provide Professional Development on LGBTQ Inclusivity***

Providing professional development for school staff in understanding the history and culture of the LGBTQ community and the importance of LGBTQ inclusivity should be mandatory in supporting LGBTQ youth and creating empathetic allies. The authors of GLSEN's 2019 School Climate Survey recommend that schools provide staff with training to increase the number of supportive staff members for LGBTQ students (Kosciw et al., 2020).

In this study, school leaders reported the lack of professional development opportunities as a barrier to their intention and/or implementation of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. It is critical that we provide professional learning to school staff so that they are prepared to support LGBTQ students and create allies. When school staff engage in professional learning to develop their knowledge, they model the importance of learning for the students under their educational care and “the school becomes the center of

learning for all adults and students” (Mizell, 2010, p. 18). Pedagogical practices and student achievement can improve with professional development (Desimone et al., 2002).

Teachers who received training in LGBTQ issues engaged in more supportive behaviors of LGBTQ youth than teachers who received lower levels of training (Swanson & Gettinger, 2016). The New York City’s Department of Education Respect for All training program’s goal is to prepare educators to support LGBTQ youth through promotion of inclusive practices, serving as a resource for LGBTQ students and increasing intervention when witnessing anti-LGBTQ harassment and bullying (Greytak et al., 2010). The Respect for All program was found to be effective in increasing educators’ empathy for LGBTQ students, access to LGBTQ inclusive resources and engagement in activities that foster a safe school climate for LGBTQ students (Greytak et al., 2010). To ensure support of all LGBTQ youth, school districts must implement district wide policies and training, so that all schools within the district are supported and have access to LGBTQ inclusive resources and professional development.

### ***Parental Support and Training***

81% of principals disagreed with the statement: *my students’ parents and/or guardians approve/would approve of me using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum by the end of the 2022-2023 school year*. For principals, parents are a huge factor in their concerns regarding whether to implement an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. In addition, principals believe that students’ attitudes towards the LGBTQ community are a result to beliefs held within their homes. As one interviewed principal shared, “I think sometimes there's a parental aspect that follows kids and plays a role in how other children perceive students if they have a different gender or nonconformity.”

When considering their willingness to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum ,on the open response survey question and during the interviews, school leaders reported, “parents seem to more untrusting of public education”, “parents should have the option to discuss this issue at this age”, “will experience some parent/guardian pushback” and “we get hateful email”. Parental education and training about LGBTQ inclusivity and transparency of curriculum usage from the school could be a huge benefit in assisting parents in understanding the importance of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum and what it will include at the elementary level.

LGBTQ youth are often subjected to negative attitudes, beliefs and comments from their parents and other family members (Kosciw et al., 2019). Transgender youth are twice as likely than their cisgender peers to be ridiculed and insulted and 48% of LGBTQ youth report that their parents and families make them feel bad about being LGBTQ (Kosciw et al., 2019).

Parent education about LGBTQ issues and inclusion could potentially benefit LGBTQ youth. Wang et al (2021) found that parents who participated in a culturally responsive parent training program provided by the school reported improvement in communication between themselves and children and increased empathy. Increased empathy was also reported by parents after attending parent training designed to support children with behavior problems (Havighurst et al., 2013). Before the implementation of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum, it is imperative that school leaders work with parents and families and provide training and education opportunities to increase LGBTQ awareness and empathy.

### ***Principal Support***

Today's school principals have responsibilities that require them to be managers, leaders, innovators and reformers within their school communities (Filipov, 2021). When functioning in the role of manager, school principals take on a critical financial role in ensuring funds are used to provide resources, both capital and human, that support the education and development of the students in their charge (Filipov, 2021).

School districts must provide support to building principals as they begin the work to become more LGBTQ inclusive with elementary aged students. This study found that principals were concerned about the loss of their jobs or tenure status if they were to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. In addition, lack of autonomy in choosing the curriculum and lack of district guidance on approved LGTBTA curricular and/or resources were concerns shared by principals.

Districts can begin the work of supporting school principals by writing district policies that guide school leaders' decisions in supporting gender expansive and transgender students (Mangin, 2018). These policies should include: allowing students to participate in all sex-separated school events and facilities according to their gender identity, (including physical education classes, sports teams, and restrooms), allowing students to dress in a manner that is consistent with their gender identity, and using of students' chosen names and pronouns (Orr & Baum, 2015)

School principals should possess certain characteristics and qualities including emotional intelligence, patience, and tolerance (Filipov, 2021). To develop these qualities, professional development plays a critical role. However, principals report having limited time to attend professional development due to their massive workload



and they expressed interest in professional development that supports students' mental, physical and social emotional health (Levin et al., 2020). District leaders should provide school leaders with professional learning opportunities that support the whole child and create convenient professional development locations and times to support their professional growth (Levin et al., 2020).

When reforming educational policies, school principals demand support from their district leaders and often report the lack of district support as a factor in feeling ill equipped to implement educational reform (Acton, 2021). School principals reported beliefs that their success would improve with a whole system (schools in collaboration with the district) approach (Acton, 2021).

Based upon the study's findings, there are opportunities to extend the study in the future. This study used two instruments. The ATTI measured attitudes towards transgender individuals. The second instrument was a researcher created tool developed using the specific criteria and guidelines presented by researcher Icek Ajzen. Additional research is needed to ensure the instrument's reliability and validity. Conducting the study with principals across the United States could assist in validating this study's findings and enhance the generalizability of the LGBTQ-CIS.

The reasoned action approach links intention to action. Further research should be conducted on school leaders who had the intention and the extent to which they engaged in the actual behavior. It would be beneficial to take a closer look at how factors they identified as barriers were navigated during the implementation of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum.

The study investigated the beliefs and intentions of elementary school principals. Principals of other grade levels, such as middle and high school, were not included in the study. In addition, the perspectives of district leaders, or superintendents, and school boards were not considered. Expanding the research to consider district leadership and leaders of older grade levels may contribute to understanding how intentions to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum and attitudes towards transgender individuals may vary among stakeholders.

As previously stated, school leaders held positive attitudes towards transgender individuals. However, one statement, *there should be no restrictions on transgenderism*, held a lower mean than all the other statements on the ATTI. This brings into question how school leaders interpreted the term “restrictions.” Qualitatively, this was not explored within this study. Future research can investigate the restrictions school leaders believe should be placed on transgenderism, if any at all.

School leaders reported the community and parents as barriers to their intention and implementation of an LGBTQ inclusion curriculum. Expanding the study to incorporate the perspectives of elementary parents and guardians may contribute to a more robust understanding of the school leaders’ apprehension and concerns about parental pushback.

The findings of this study determined that school principals felt the use of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum was outside of their control or presented a barrier to its implementation due to lack of knowledge of available resources such as training, books and curriculum. The analysis of elementary curricular materials and qualitative research

with curriculum developers on LGBTQ inclusivity may offer additional insight on the availability of resources for elementary school leaders.

In summary, school principals require the support of their district leaders through professional development, district policies and a committed whole system approach when implementing an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. Curriculum is one way that schools can promote a safe and inclusive learning environment. Further research on this topic could explore the effectiveness of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum on the elementary, middle and high school learning environment. The improvement of school safety and inclusion through inclusive curriculums should guide district leaders and school policy makers in determining best practices for supporting LGBTQ youth and allies.

### **Connection to Theory**

This study aimed to determine the extent to which attitude, perceived control and perceived norms influenced the intention of school leaders to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) found that while it was widely believed that behavior was influenced by attitude, attitudes were in fact poor predictors of specific actions and that behavior is strongly determined by a person's intention. According to Ajzen (1985), a person's intention is influenced by their attitude, subjective norms and/or perceived behavioral control. This study found statistical significance between school principals' attitude and perceived control and their intention to use an LGBT inclusive curriculum.

### ***Attitude***

Eagly & Chaiken (1993, p. 1) define attitude as "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor." This

study explored the attitudes of school principals towards both transgenderism and use of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum and aimed to answer the question, “To what extent do elementary school leader’s attitude influence their intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum?”

In this study, attitude towards using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum and attitude towards transgender individuals both significantly predicted intention to use one. A positive association was found between school leaders’ attitudes and their intention. For every unit increase in attitude towards transgender people, intention increased by .058. For every unit increase in attitude towards the use of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum, intention increased by .94.

These findings are in alignment with several studies examining the influence of attitude on intention. A study conducted to examine teachers’ intention to intervene when LGBTQI+ students were bullied revealed a positive association between teachers’ attitudes and beliefs towards gender minorities and their intention to intervene (Parker et al., 2022). Teachers with positive attitudes toward gender minorities were more likely to have higher intentions to intervene when observing bullying motivated by gender and sexual minorities (Parker et al., 2022). Yan & Sin (2015) found in a study with over 200 principals in Hong Kong that principals’ attitudes were strong and significant predictors of their intention to implement practices to ensure inclusive education of special education students. School administrators’ intentions to promote adaptative physical education instructional practices for students with disabilities were higher when their attitudes were more favorable towards it (McNamara et al., 2021).

### ***Subjective Norms***

Subjective norms are derived from normative beliefs. With subjective norms, individuals' beliefs on whether they should engage in specific behaviors are dependent upon how they perceive people important, or relevant, will expect them to behave (Yang et al., 2021). This study looked at the subjective norms of school principals and aimed to answer the question, “To what extent do elementary school leader’s subjective norms influence their intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum?”

In this study, subjective norms did not significantly predict school leaders’ intention. This finding is similar to findings in other studies in the education field. In a study with 500 secondary math teachers in Vietnam, researchers found that subjective norms did not significantly predict their intention to use Realistic Math Education (Do et al., 2021). Researchers investigating the factors that influence teachers’ intention to incorporate technology during instruction found that subjective norms did not significantly impact intention (Teo, 2011).

When investigating social influence on mathematics teachers' intention to use technology in their classrooms, researchers found “social influence did not play a significant role in teachers’ intention to use smart boards.” (Stols et al., 2015, p. 11). Conversely, in a study conducted with educators in Scotland to predict their intention to use inclusive practices with students who have social, emotional and behavioral difficulties, subjective norms was found to predict teachers’ intention as teachers believed inclusive practices were expected by their school principals (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013).

While subjective norms did not significantly predict intention in this study, principals on average ( $M=3.69$ ,  $SD=1.59$ ) did not believe their professional colleagues and families of their students would approve of their intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. Participants were asked to identify the extent to which they agreed/disagreed with the statement, *my students' parents and/or guardians approve/would approve of me using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum by the end of the 2022-2023 school year*. 81% of principals in the study disagreed with this statement and believed parents were barriers to its implementation and influenced their intention. Principals reported “receiving hateful emails” and “nasty phone calls” when attempting to become more LGBTQ inclusive within their school communities. Similar findings were reported in a study with elementary teachers using an LGBTQ inclusive (Meyer et al., 2019). Teachers shared complaints from parents including concerns about the age appropriateness of the content with elementary students and discomfort with the curriculum.

### ***Perceived Behavioral Control***

This study examined the perceived behavioral control of school principals and aimed to answer the question, “To what extent do elementary school leader’s perceived behavioral control influence their intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum?” Yang et al. (2021) define perceived behavioral control as an individual’s perception on whether they have the ability to engage in specific behaviors or actions. In the current study, perceived behavioral control significantly predicted school leaders’ intention to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. 74% of principals disagreed with the statement, *I have control over using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with all students in grades K-5*

*by the end of the 2022-2023 school year* ( $M=3.12$ ,  $SD=2.17$ ). 66% of principals did not feel confident in their ability to implement an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum and 83% believed its implementation would be difficult to accomplish.

Similar to the findings in this study, studies have found that perceived behavioral control was found to be a significant predictor of intention. Lumpe et al. (1998) found that perceived behavioral control significantly influenced teachers' intent to incorporate cooperative learning in their science classrooms. Researchers noted that perceived control factors such as professional development and availability of resources may have influenced teachers' intention to include cooperative learning in their classrooms (Lumpe et al., 1998). Perceived behavioral control significantly predicted the intention of teachers intervening when witnessing instances of cyber-bullying in a study conducted with 402 middle and high school teachers in India (Sardesai et al., 2021). Having sufficient knowledge about cyberbullying was determined as a significant control factor that influenced teachers' intentions to intervene in instances of cyber-bullying (Sardesai et al., 2021).

While studies have shown perceived control as an aspect that influence intention, McNamara et al. (2021) found that while school administrators' intentions to promote adaptative physical education for students with disabilities were influenced by their attitudes towards it, perceived behavioral control did not. Researchers note that lack of certification programs for adaptative physical education and indifference towards budgeting resources for adaptive physical education as possible explanations as to why perceived behavioral control did not influence school administrators' intentions to promote adaptative physical education

## **Limitations**

There are threats to the study's external and internal validity. First, the survey invitation was sent to 2000 elementary principals (public and nonpublic) and received a response rate of 2% (42 survey respondents). Low statistical power is a threat to statistical conclusion validity as the study had a low number of participants in the quantitative phase of the study.

A second threat to external validity is the study's geographic location. This study was conducted exclusively with New York State elementary school principals. The results may not be able to be generalized to school principal populations outside of the study's sample population such as principals of middle and high school and from states other than New York.

Another limitation of the study is self-selection bias. The participants entered the study voluntarily and his type of bias can lead to biased data and may not represent the entire target population. It is possible that those who are likely to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum may have been more likely to participate in the study.

The time period during which the study was conducted could be a possible threat to the study's external validity. This year, 2022, Florida passed legislation that prevents elementary schools from discussing LGBTQ content with students in kindergarten through grade 3 and give parents rights to sue schools when there are violations. In addition, controversial talks are happening across the country on gender identity, trans athletes participating in professional, competitive sports of the gender in which they identify and simply defining the terms men and women. These current events could have influenced participants' responses.



## **Conclusion**

In summary, this study aimed to investigate the attitudes of elementary school principals towards transgenderism, the use of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with K-5 students and the factors that influence their intentions. While previous studies found school principals resisted ways to be more LGBTQ inclusive within their schools because of community backlash and belief that it was irrelevant to their educational environments, this study found the opposite to be true. Despite the fact that community pushback, lack of training, availability of resources and fear of job loss or tenure were identified as barriers, school leaders held positive attitudes towards transgender individuals, gender nonconformity and the use of an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. They believe that an inclusive curriculum would be beneficial to creating safe and affirming learning environments.

LGBTQ youth deserve to be educated in schools where they are surrounded by supportive adults and peer allies, are protected by strict anti-bullying and harassment policies and see themselves, their cultures and identities reflected in positive ways throughout the curriculum. This is critical in that so many LGBTQ youth do not receive the support that they need. I, as the researcher of the study, experienced this lack of support firsthand and was met with some resistance. When I initially began the outreach to recruit participants for the study, one principal replied to my recruitment email with, “Those who follow filth will only end up in filth! You could have chosen a better topic for your research.” This is just one example of how open conversations about the LGBTQ community can stir up strong emotions, both positive and negative.

Lastly, it is necessary that staff and parents are provided with LGBTQ inclusivity training and age appropriate, LGBTQ inclusive curricular materials are readily available to all elementary schools. With the support of school boards and district leaders, principals can ensure every LGBTQ child is seen, heard, celebrated and accepted. We can no longer accept anything less.

## APPENDIX A IRB APPROVAL



Federal Wide Assurance: FWA00009066

Apr 12, 2022 1:53:49 PM EDT

PI: Nekesha Bynum  
CO-PI: Katherine Aquino  
The School of Education

Re: Expedited Review - Initial - **IRB-FY2022-337** *What's Your Intention? Elementary School Leaders' Attitudes and Intentions Towards Transgenderism and Gender Nonconformity Inclusivity*

Dear Nekesha Bynum:

The St John's University Institutional Review Board has rendered the decision below for *What's Your Intention? Elementary School Leaders' Attitudes and Intentions Towards Transgenderism and Gender Nonconformity Inclusivity*. The approval is effective from April 12, 2022 through April 9, 2023.

Decision: Approved

PLEASE NOTE: If you have collected any data prior to this approval date, the data must be discarded.

Sincerely,  
Raymond DiGiuseppe, PhD, ABPP  
Chair, Institutional Review Board  
Professor of Psychology

Marie Nitopi, Ed.D.  
IRB Coordinator

## **APPENDIX B DEMOGRAPHIC AND BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

1. Gender: Male, Female, transgender, nonbinary, prefer not to say, other \_\_\_\_\_
2. Age: 18-25 years, 26-35 years, 36-45 years, 46-55 years, 56-65 years, 66 or older
3. Ethnicity/race: Native American, Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, White, Prefer Not to Answer, Other \_\_\_\_\_
4. Years of Experience as a School Leader of students in K-5: 1-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, and 16 years or more
5. The following describes my sexual identity: heterosexual, gay/lesbian bisexual, asexual, pansexual, prefer not to answer, other \_\_\_\_\_
6. Religion: Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Christian (Catholic protestant or any other Christian denominations), atheist, agnostic do not follow/practice a religion , other \_\_\_\_\_
7. School type: NYS public school, NYS non-public school
8. School size: 0-250 students, 251-500 students, 501-1000 students, 1000 or more students

## APPENDIX C PERMISSION TO USE ATTI

**From:** Susan Walch <swalch@uwf.edu>  
**Sent:** Saturday, September 25, 2021 6:24 PM  
**To:** Nekesha Bynum <nekesha.bynum19@my.stjohns.edu>  
**Subject:** Re: Permission to use ATTI in Dissertation Research

Hello Nekesha

The scale has been published in its entirety so that it can be used freely for research purposes. You do not need specific permission to use it.

Good luck with your dissertation research.

On Sat, Sep 25, 2021, 4:04 PM Nekesha Bynum  
<[nekesha.bynum19@my.stjohns.edu](mailto:nekesha.bynum19@my.stjohns.edu)> wrote:

Greetings!

I am writing to obtain permission to use the ATTI scale presented in your article, *The Attitudes Toward Transgendered Individuals Scale: Psychometric Properties*, published in 2012 in my dissertation research.

I am a student at St. John's University in New York City. I would like to conduct my dissertation research on elementary school leaders' attitudes towards transgender individuals and the impact it has on their school policies that support transgender and gender nonconforming students. I am in the process of outlining and planning my research. My mentor has suggested I reach out to you to obtain permission to use the scale before I go any further. I think the ATTI would be very helpful to work.

Thank you for taking the time to read my email and looking forward to your response.

Nekesha Bynum

## APPENDIX D LGBTQ CURRICULUM INTENTION SCALE (LGBTQ-CIS)

For the purpose of this study, LGBTQ inclusive refers to a curriculum that supports a student's ability to empathize, connect, and collaborate with a diverse group of peers, encourages respect for all and incorporates the history and contributions of LGBTQ individuals including transgender people and individuals who express their gender in ways that differ from, or does not conform, to traditional societal norms.

Intention:

1. I **intend** to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with all students in grades K-5 by the end of the 2022-2023 school year.
  - disagree:1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 : agree
2. I **want** to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with all students in grades K-5 by the end of the 2022-2023 school year.
  - disagree:1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 : agree
3. I **expect** to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with all students in grades K-5 by the end of the 2022-2023 school year.
  - disagree:1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 : agree

Attitude:

4. Using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with all students in grades K-5 by the end of the 2022-2023 school year would be:
  - Unnecessary 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Necessary
  - Harmful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Beneficial
5. Using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with all students in grades K-5 by the end of the 2022-2023 school year, will contribute to a positive, safe, and affirming learning environment:
  - disagree:1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 : agree

Subjective norms

6. My colleagues (i.e., teachers, other school administrators and district personnel) approve/would approve of me using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum by the end of the 2022-2023 school year.
  - disagree:1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 : agree
7. My students' parents and/or guardians approve/would approve of me using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum by the end of the 2022-2023 school year.

- disagree:1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 : agree
- 8. People who are important to me would want me to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum by the end of the 2022-2023 school year.
  - disagree:1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 : agree
- 9. It is expected of me to use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum by the end of the 2022-2023 school year.
  - disagree:1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 : agree

#### Perceived behavioral control

- 10. I have control over using an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with all students in grades K-5 by the end of the 2022-2023 school year.
  - disagree:1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 : agree
- 11. I am confident in my ability to be able to implement and use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with all students in grades K-5 by the end of the 2022-2023 school year
  - disagree:1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 : agree
- 12. For me to implement and use an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with all students in grades K-5 by the end of the 2022-2023 school year would be
  - difficult:1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 : easy

## APPENDIX E INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Talk about your beliefs regarding the incorporation of LGBTQ themes and featuring books that highlight and celebrate characters who are gender nonconforming in the school curriculum with PK-Grade 2 students? Grades 3-5?
2. Do you believe there are barriers that prevent you from implementing an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum or adapt current curricula and materials to be more inclusive of LGBTQ themes? Explain your answer.
3. Is your school safe for students to express their gender in ways that are not consistent with stereotypically male or female expectations? Why do you believe this?
4. What are your personal and/or religious beliefs about gender nonconformity and transgenderism? Do you believe your personal and/or religious beliefs about gender nonconformity and transgenderism play a role in how you make leadership decisions regarding providing a safe and inclusive environment for transgender and gender nonconforming students? Why do you believe this?

### Clarifying Questions

The following question stems will be used as necessary to clarify interviewee responses:

- What would be an example of \_\_\_\_?
- Could you explain this further?
- Why do you think that is true?
- What are your reasons for saying that?
- Would you say more about that?
- What do you mean by \_\_\_\_?



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