ABSTRACT

PINK, BLUE AND EVERYONE IN BETWEEN: SCHOOL SUPPORT PERSONNEL’S PERCEPTIONS OF WORK WITH TRANSGENDER AND GENDER DIVERSE STUDENTS

by Alicia J Yannalfo

Transgender/gender diverse students report experiences of feeling unsafe in school due to their gender identity and expression (Gretyak, Kosciw, & Boesen, 2013). School support personnel (e.g., school psychologists, counselors, and social workers) are well positioned to collaborate with stakeholders to promote a safe and supportive environment for these students. Through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with support personnel in an urban Midwestern school district, researchers gained insight on participants’ perceptions of work with transgender/gender diverse students. Findings suggest that 5 out of 7 participants who perceived themselves as prepared to provide support services to transgender/gender diverse students actively supported their students, worked with them to navigate family situations and sex-segregated facilities, and have attended specific professional development. Despite participants’ perceived preparedness, they face challenges such as navigating systems-level policies. Findings suggest that more professional development is warranted to improve how school support personnel address transgender/gender diverse students’ needs.
PINK, BLUE AND EVERYONE IN BETWEEN: SCHOOL SUPPORT PERSONNEL’S PERCEPTIONS OF WORK WITH TRANSGENDER AND GENDER DIVERSE STUDENTS

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PINK, BLUE AND EVERYONE IN BETWEEN: SCHOOL SUPPORT PERSONNEL’S PERCEPTIONS OF WORK WITH TRANSGENDER AND GENDER DIVERSE STUDENTS

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Introduction

Recently, the rights and safety of transgender and gender diverse students have been placed in the spotlight. This at-times divisive topic has created strong opinions on both sides, which have impacted transgender and gender diverse people, specifically, within school systems whose main objective is to foster safe and inviting environments for all students to learn. Many school districts, such as, Boston, Chicago and Kansas City, have been on the proactive end, ensuring that these students feel safe, with written guidelines that protect students from beingouted in classrooms or protection from selecting a sex-segregated facility that does not match their identity (U.S Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2016). Conversely, some states have created bills that are harmful to transgender and gender diverse students such as the now repealed Bathroom Bill in North Carolina (Berman & Phillips, 2017). As federal and state policymakers navigate these issues, professional organizations representing school support personnel affirm the need to protect the rights and safety of transgender and gender diverse students (ASCA, 2016; NASP, 2014; SWWAA, nd). School support personnel (e.g., school counselors, psychologists, and social workers) are in a unique position to support the safety and well-being of students who identify as transgender or gender diverse.

Currently, the published research about school support services for transgender and gender diverse students is very limited. From 2000-2014 eight school support journals published a total of 4091 articles of which .3-3% of journal articles discuss Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer/Questioning (LGBTQ) topics (Graybill & Proctor, 2016). Moreover, the articles focus on the LGBTQ population as a whole rather than understanding each orientation and gender identity separately. Too often the “T” in LGBTQ is grouped in with LGBTQ research; however, identifying as a transgender person is not a sexual orientation and therefore specific research must be done to understand these students’ unique challenges in the education system.

The preparedness of school support personnel to address the personal, interpersonal, familial or school climate issues transgender and gender diverse students face (e.g., gender identity development, gender-based bullying, navigating gender-neutral or gendered spaces) is limited. Thus, this exploratory study seeks to answer the question: What are school support personnels’ (i.e., school counselors, psychologists, and social workers) perceptions of their work with transgender and gender diverse students in a Midwestern urban public school district? First, this paper reviews key definitions and literature relevant to school support services for transgender and gender diverse students. Next, the paper describes the research design, data collection, and analysis methods, and results of the study. A discussion of the findings and implications for research and practice are presented last.

Definitions

Prior to exploring the current research there are several terms that need defined to ensure cohesion throughout the literature. Transgender is considered an overarching term for people whose behavior, gender identity or gender expression does not conform as typically expected
with the sex they were assigned to at birth (APA, 2014). Gender identity is a person's understanding of their inner gender and gender expression is the way a person communicates their gender to others (APA, 2014). Gender diverse will be used to represent persons who do not feel as if they fit in either construct of male or female and may choose varying pronouns such as they or ze (APA, 2015; NASP, 2014). Lastly, cisgender refers to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender match with their assigned sex at birth (APA, 2014).

Issues Faced by Transgender and Gender Diverse Students

To guide a comprehensive understanding of issues faced by transgender and gender diverse students and the school support personnel who work with them, this literature review uses an ecological framework (Meyers, 2012; Ringeisen, Henderson, & Hoagwood, 2003). It recognizes that there may be different issues for transgender and gender diverse students based on developmental stage. However, this ecological perspective works to provide a holistic view of issues that affect transgender and gender diverse students at the federal/state, organizational, and individual levels. Each level holds a piece of the puzzle to enact positive social change for this population. The following sections review these levels.

Federal/State Level Issues

It is important to observe and understand the current federal and state policies that affect transgender and gender diverse students in the school system. Currently, 18 states have some version of an enumerated anti-bullying law which protect against LGBTQ bullying (GLSEN, 2015). Enumerated anti-bullying laws vary by state, but are specific laws that protect against harassment of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability and religion. These laws consist of detailed descriptions of what bullying looks like for the respective population (GLSEN, 2015). This provides teachers and school officials with specific laws that they can use to point out if they see bullying occur. A key benefit of this is that educators will be easily able to recognize anti-LGBTQ bullying behavior, leading to school staff feeling more comfortable intervening (GLSEN, 2015). Another type of law that protects LGBTQ people is non-discriminatory laws that protect sexual orientation and gender identity (GLSEN, 2015). The Success and Opportunity Act, passed in California in 2014, is an example of this type of law. This law provides guidance to schools so they can ensure transgender students, like all students, have the opportunity to do well in school and graduate (GSA Network, 2012). For instance, a transgender boy who was previously on the girls’ swim team is allowed, by the school, to try out for the boys’ swim team.

There are also laws that impede transgender students from receiving support in schools, such as no promotion of homosexuality laws (GLSEN, 2015). These types of laws prohibit state educators from discussing any LGBTQ issues. Additionally, some laws even require school educators to portray LGBTQ people in a negative light. For instance, according to Arizona law pertaining to instruction on acquired immune deficiency syndrome

No district shall include in its course of study instruction which:
1. Promotes a homosexual life-style.
2. Portrays homosexuality as a positive alternative life-style.
3. Suggests that some methods of sex are safe methods of homosexual sex
Alabama, Arizona, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Texas have similar laws (GLSEN, 2015). With these laws in place, all LGBTQ students, including transgender students, can be put more at risk and school support professionals are limited in the way they can support them.

In 2016, the Obama administration and Office of Civil Rights sent out a Dear Colleague letter to all U.S public schools advising them to allow transgender students to use gendered spaces that best match their gender identity, these include locker rooms, bathrooms, and sports teams. However, several states have disregarded this, such as a Federal Judge in Texas who has prohibited this from going into effect as sex defined in the nondiscriminatory laws stands for sex at birth rather than self-identified sex (Domonoske, 2016). Gavin Grimm, a Virginia High School student, took his case to Supreme Court to argue that he should be allowed to use the same bathroom that aligns with his gender identity. However, as the Trump administration came into effect the Supreme Court sent Grimm’s case back to the court of appeals. In large part, due to the Trump administration revoking the Dear Colleague letter (De Vogue, Vladeck & Schleifer, 2017).

Moreover, some states’ educational laws do not address transgender issues at all. For instance, Ohio has laws that prevent bullying; however, those laws do not address sexual orientation or gender identity (stopbullying.gov, 2014). This leaves a gap for interpretation by school boards and districts to address it how they see fit. In one scenario, the Troy City School board, near Dayton, Ohio, held a meeting with outraged parents who were upset that a transgender boy would be allowed in the male bathroom. The school board later noted that they were allowing this upon their lawyer’s request in hopes of avoiding litigation (Bowman, 2015). Without laws that clearly outline proper procedure, some school boards could go the opposite route for their students in a similar situation. This lack of direction for this population can cause confusion for school support personnel and their role in addressing these issues.

Organizational Level Issues

Although laws impact the broader picture for this population, school districts have even greater contact with these students, especially as seen in their school climate. School climate refers to environmental elements of schools such as physical characteristics, policies, procedures, and relationships among key participants in schools (Proctor & Meyers, 2014). School climate is a potential challenge for all LGBTQ youth; however, transgender students report more frequent experiences of victimization and feeling unsafe due to their gender expression (Greytak, Kosciw, & Boesen, 2013). Furthermore, studies have found that some educators are part of the problem, contributing to an unsafe environment either by their own remarks or lack of intervention in LGBTQ bullying (Kosciw et al., 2012). Feeling unsafe and increased harassment can result in more missed days and withdrawal from education (GLSEN, 2015; Birkett, Russell, & Corliss, 2014).
Another topic that impacts the school climate is bullying intervention. The ability to intervene in transgender bullying is an important skill for school support staff. LGBTQ harassment happens at several levels. Dragowski, McCabe & Rubinson (2016) found that 90 percent of middle and high school educator participants overheard students make LGBTQ related derogatory comments within the past year. Even more disheartening, 44 percent of educators also reported hearing school staff making derogatory LGBTQ comments. An atmosphere that fosters hateful language does not benefit LGBTQ students and contributes to poor school climate. Transgender students face a cisnormativity atmosphere--heterosexuality is regarded as the default or “normal” orientation rather than the possibility of there being many different orientations (Jones-Smith, 2016). Simply put, cis people designed policies and procedures with heterosexual people in mind. This results in difficulty with bathrooms, locker rooms, sports teams and other binary systems.

One strategy to improving school climate is the establishment of Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs). GSAs have been found to improve transgender students’ sense of safety and security within their school and transgender students rate GSAs as playing a major role in their education (Greytak, Kosciw, & Boesen, 2013). Moreover, GSA advisors recognize their integral role in informing school support of current sexual and gender minority topics. GSA advisors encourage educators to confront LGBTQ discrimination by educating anti-LGBTQ students and being proactive rather than reprimanding the students and being reactive (Graybill et al., 2009). This opens up space to allow school support staff to create proactive education-based interventions that can lessen LGBTQ harassment. Therefore, it is beneficial for school support staff to acknowledge this and utilize it to continue improving their school climate.

Individual Level Issues (Student)

Mental health. Transgender and gender diverse students are at greater risk for mental health issues. For example, often times transgender students receive harassment when it comes to picking a locker room or restroom (Kosciw et al., 2012). If they choose the bathroom based on their gender expression they may be internally satisfied but are further harassed, which may contribute to anxiety (Kosciw et al., 2012). Added victimization has been shown to lead to more frequent absences from school, internalizing behavior, and psychological distress (Birkett, Russell & Corliss, 2014; Heck et. al., 2014). Moreover, transitioning students face the added challenge of pronoun and name changes. Students are expressing their gender in 7th grade or earlier (Murphy, 2012), and the expression of their transition can lead to hormone health changes and designated name changes (Heck et. al., 2014). Currently, there are no known studies that address how school support personnel can work with transgender students in this manner. The lasting effects on transgender and gender diverse students’ mental health may also persist into adulthood. Greene, Britton, and Fitts (2014) found that transgender adults who had been victimized as children are more likely to suffer from severe internalizing behaviors such as depression and anxiety.

Support. Students that live as transgender or gender diverse often have a more difficult time finding supportive professionals in their schools. Without a staff member for a student to
turn to with questions or to seek advice the student can become withdrawn and distant at school (Greene, Britton, & Fitts, 2014). Greytak, Kosciw, & Boesen (2013) highlighted that transgender students still find it more difficult than other Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual students to find a supportive staff member, yet 9 in 10 transgender students easily recognized a staff member they felt comfortable talking to.

On the other hand, transgender students have reported that they want school support staff (school counselors and school psychologists) to be aware of non-supportive behaviors that turn them away from school (Kiperman et al., 2014; Roe, 2013). These behaviors include judgment, the inability to keep information confidential, lack of listening, political views, and lack of follow through (Kiperman et al., 2014; Roe, 2013). It was noted that although confidentiality is part of the code of ethics for both these professions, LGBTQ students may be unaware of what remains confidential and what can be disclosed to administration or parents. A clear statement of confidentiality can help alleviate this concern for students.

**Individual Level Issues (School Personnel)**

**Personnel training on LGBTQ topics.** Prior to school support professionals entering their fields, they all receive specialized higher education training. Training varies by university, however, and LGBTQ topics are grossly underrepresented in training programs. A 2015 study of Texas school nurses identified that roughly 47 percent of school nursing programs spend 1-1.5 hours training students on transgender related topics (Walsh & Hendrickson, 2015). Nonetheless, with the health risks a transgender person can experience, an average of one hour is insufficient. In fact, Woodford et al. (2014) noted that LGBTQ training that is 4 hours was still insufficient in terms of all the topics that needed to be covered. Furthermore, in a study of school nurses, social workers and counselors, school nurses were the population that felt the most lack of knowledge about LGBTQ students being at risk for suicide, depression or discrimination (Mahdi et al., 2014). Lastly, Kull, Kosciw, and Greytak (2017) reviewed survey data from 617 school counselors regarding their exposure to LGBTQ training and transgender specific training in graduate school. Findings suggest that school counselors had low exposure to LGBTQ training and significantly low exposure to transgender specific training (Kull, Kosciw, & Greytak, 2017). Educational programs must keep up to date with sexual minorities and their needs.

Similarly, school counselors also rate themselves as feeling unequipped to work with LGBTQ students. Although, Mahdi et. al. (2014) found that school counselors as compared to nurses and social workers are the most confident in making referrals to outside professionals and intervening in LGBTQ harassment, other research shows there is still uncertainty as it relates to training programs. For example, research involving 86 school counselors in the southeastern region of the United States discovered that one third of the population surveyed answered that their education did not prepare them to work with LGB students (Hall, McDougald, & Kresica, 2013). This study did not focus on transgender students; however, with the participants rating their preparedness for working with LGB students as “somewhat prepared” to “very unprepared”, it could be assumed that these professionals would perceive similar levels of preparedness for working with transgender youth. Moreover, Hall, McDougald and Kresica
(2013) note that very few school counselors had read scholarly literature or taken a course covering sexual minorities. Similar findings were discussed by Schwarz and Roe (2015), where counselors reported little graduate coursework surrounding LGBTQ topics and felt uncomfortable addressing these topics with their current student population. Lastly, it is important to note that participants who had some form of sexual minority education rated higher on lesbian, gay and bisexual affirmation (Hall, McDougald & Kresica, 2013; Kull, Kosciw, & Greytak, 2017). Therefore, it seems that the more LGBTQ exposure school support professionals have in their higher education curriculum the more comfortable they feel addressing LGBTQ issues in the field.

In regard to school social workers and psychologists, university coursework in LGBTQ topics is scarce. One study indicated 75.5 percent of school psychology participants reported no specific education surrounding the transgender population. Nonetheless, those school psychologists who had received educational training rated having a more positive attitude towards transgender students (Bowers, Lewandowski & Woitaszewski, 2015). Although the research is limited it shows there is a necessity for LGBTQ topics to be covered at the university training level. The more pre-service professionals understand about this specific population, the more confident they will become in their skill set. Schwarz and Roe (2015) suggest training programs can address areas such as discussing student identities in a school setting, techniques to affirm gender identity, role playing to provide hands on experience, and encouraging students to work with community based LGBTQ organizations.

**School support staff competencies.** Although research shows there is a lack of educational training regarding the LGBTQ population many professionals within the field rate their LGBTQ competencies as high. Comfort and confidence working with these students can come from the number of LGBTQ encounters a professional has, attitudes towards LGBTQ people, and professionals’ ability to recognize LGBTQ discrimination. In a study that surveyed school support personnel’s prior experience and confidence in working with LGBTQ youth, school nurses rated themselves as having the lowest level of knowledge for LGBTQ behavioral health-related issues (Mahdi et al, 2014). School psychologists and social workers rated their understanding of LGBTQ youth as moderate due to their lack of perceived support within their school district and limited training (Dragowski, McCabe, & Rubinson, 2016). Lastly, evidence suggests that school counselors, in comparison to school nurses, social workers and psychologists, rate themselves with moderately high understanding of LGBTQ youth (Dragowski, McCabe, & Rubinson, 2016; Mahdi et al, 2014). This comes as no surprise with more counselor literature surrounding LGBTQ topics, a total of 4 percent of counseling journal article coverage (Graybill & Proctor, 2016). School counselors feel the most confident in addressing this population.

However, school counselors as compared to community counselors and counselor educators have rated themselves the least competent out of the three. Farmer, Welfare and Burge (2013) recorded that after taking the sexual orientation counselor competency scale (SOCCS) school counselors rated themselves the lowest answering mostly “not at all true” in their self-
assessment of LGB skills. Therefore, while school counselors may rate themselves the most confident out of school support staff they fall below average in their field. Interestingly, counselor educators have the highest competency as compared to community counselors and school counselors (Farmer, Welfare & Burge, 2013).

Moreover, attitudes and exposure to sexual minorities and gender diverse individuals is shown to improve confidence and competence when working with transgender students. A strong correlation was found between attitudes that school support personnel have and their competency to work with LGBTQ youth (Bowers, Lewandowski & Woitaszewski, 2015; Dragowski, McCabe, & Rubinson, 2016; Mahdi et al, 2014). The more positive the attitude the more likely the school support staff will feel comfortable interacting with a sexual minority student. Further, the more confident school support staff feel when working with LGBTQ youth the more positive their attitude of the population becomes (Bowers, Lewandowski & Woitaszewski, 2015). This might explain why an even greater predictor of transgender competency was found based on exposure. School psychologists who had one to five encounters with transgender youth had significantly more positive attitudes and rated themselves more competent than those who had no encounter (Bowers, Lewandowski & Woitaszewski, 2015). The more exposure school psychologists had with transgender youth, the better perception they had of that population, which was associated with enhanced attitudes and improved feelings of competency.

As addressed earlier, school climate hinges on harassment prevention and intervention. To improve school support staff intervention, exposure to LGBTQ students is essential. Currently many school support staff lack competency in intervening in these issues. For instance, only 17.6 percent of school nurses and 26.3 percent of school social workers reported that they had moderate or high experience intervening to stop LGBTQ student harassment as compared with 66.7 percent of school counselors (Mahdi et al., 2014). It has been discovered that psychologists and counselors who had friends or knew someone who identified as LGBTQ were more likely to advocate for this population (Greytak & Kosciw, 2014; McCabe et al., 2013). Similarly, Bowers, Lewandowski and Woitaszewski (2015) found that the more exposure school psychologists had to sexual minorities the more accepting they were of sexual minorities. Based on these findings, school support staff with more exposure to LGBTQ students may be more likely to provide supports for these youth. Moreover, school psychologists and counselors who believed advocating to be rewarding and valuable were more likely to intervene in LGBTQ harassment (McCabe et al., 2013).

Working with transgender youth also requires school support professionals to feel confident in handling mental and physical health risks associated with this population. It was noted that oftentimes school psychologists or other mental health professionals in the school work with students who are struggling with the sexual orientation or gender identity (Graybill et al., 2009). Additionally, Mahdi et al. (2014) found that in comparison to nurses and counselors, school social workers feel the most comfortable (90 percent) addressing LGBTQ health related issues. Conversely, 68.8 percent of nurses reported low levels of knowledge and skills when
addressing concerns of gay, lesbian and bisexual students. Moreover, 55.6 percent of those nurses reported transgender health was not important to their practice (Mahdi et al., 2014). That is over half of the school nurses surveyed who have little knowledge of sexual minority health issues and considered physical health of transgender students to be irrelevant to their practice. Lastly, Schwarz and Roe (2015) found that most professional development mental health workshops are geared in a variety of other areas other than LGBTQ. Although LGBTQ youth may face a plethora of health challenges, from transitioning to battling depression, there is little research that indicates how confident school support staff feel addressing this.

In addition to providing mental and physical health services, school staff members can demonstrate their support in other ways. Roe (2013) highlights the impact of supportive school counselors in her qualitative study. LGBTQ participants noted that counselors who listened and showed supportive LGBTQ symbols (e.g., rainbow stickers, human rights campaign symbol) were easier to talk with about any and all of their concerns. Additionally, Roe (2013) discovered that counselors who were forward and direct about discussing sexual orientation had students who felt more confident speaking with them. The research is similar for school psychologists. Kiperman et al. (2014) determined LGB students felt the most supported when school staff advocate often for students and provided affirmations. Advocacy was defined as promoting and fighting for equal rights within the school (Kiperman et al., 2014). This is vital to note that affirmation of a student’s gender identity or sexual orientation helps improve their own self-confidence. Conversely, Roe (2013) advised school support staff to be cognizant of their political views, as several students mentioned that school counselors who are conservative are perceived as biased against LGBTQ individuals. It is important to be aware of all behaviors that can result in a student feeling unsupported. Further research is required to help determine how school support personnel view their role in working with this population and how they respond to the divisive opinions on transgender and gender diverse people.

**Purpose and Rationale**

The purpose of this study is to explore school support personnel’s perceptions of their work with transgender/gender diverse students. There is a call for more research in school psychology and related disciplines that intentionally addresses LGBTQ issues (Graybill & Proctor, 2016). This research aims to add more insight into school supports for transgender and gender diverse students. Moreover, we wish to help school support staff be better prepared to address unique issues transgender students face. This study aims to answer the question: What are school support personnel’s perceptions of their work with transgender and gender diverse students in a Midwestern urban public school district?

**Research Methodology**

**Participants**

The present study was designed from a constructivist perspective, utilizing qualitative research methods. The participants were selected via purposive sampling (Patton, 1990). Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling where participants of similar backgrounds and experience are targeted to take part in the study based on predefined characteristics in order to
gather in-depth information (Patton, 1990). The participants were actively recruited with
permission from the school district. Employees of the school district whose emails were
available through the district website and job titles were school social worker, school nurse,
counselors, community resource coordinators and school psychologists received an email
inviting them to take part in a 45-minute interview about their experiences with transgender and
gender diverse students, 28 emails were sent in total. With a response rate of 25 percent, 7
participants were interviewed. As the interviewees were discussing a hidden population a small
sample size is considered meaningful and reliable (Flick, 2011). This is difficult population as
there is no reliable way to estimate the prevalence of transgender students in U.S schools.
However in 2011 San Francisco schools found that 0.5% of students self-identified as
transgender (NASP, 2014). Participants did not receive any incentive or compensation for their
participation in the study.

The study involved 7 school support staff servicing K-12th grade students and included 1
social worker, 3 counselors, and 3 school psychologists in an urban public school district in the
Midwestern United States. Participants’ years of experience ranged from under 1 year to over 15
years. All participants identified as cisgender female, 5 identified as heterosexual and 2
identified as lesbian or gay. Lastly, of the 7 informants, 3 identified as Caucasian, 1 identified as
Latina and 3 identified as African American.

Measurements

In-depth semi-structured interviews were used to explore the school personnel’s experience
with transgender and gender diverse students. Semi-structured interviews allow participants to
provide information that is important to them while the interviewer guides the conversation
(Seidman, 1991). During the interview a set of interview questions (Appendix A) focused on two
aspects: detail of experience and reflection on the meaning. The goal was to achieve an in depth
understanding of the participants’ knowledge and experience (Seidman, 1991). Participants’
perceived knowledge of policies and procedures surrounding this population were recorded via
an audio recorder and then transcribed.

The principal investigator was solely involved in the data collection process and one
auditor was utilized to prevent groupthink and bias. The research team consisted of two school
psychology graduate students and one school psychology graduate educator. The interview data
was transcribed and shared with participants to ensure accuracy of information.

Trustworthiness

In order to establish trustworthiness throughout the study, disconfirming evidence and
member checking were utilized (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Once tentative codes were
established the researcher actively sought out disconfirming information in the data, which
sparked changes in the codes and organizational structure (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After the data
collection the principal researcher employed member checking, in which she established
credibility by following up and verifying with the participants that the themes derived from the
raw data were accurate (Creswell & Miller, 2000).
Analysis

The interviews were tape-recorded with permission of the participants and transcribed verbatim. Data were analyzed consistent with the phases of inductive thematic analysis as described in Braun and Clarke (2006). First, the researcher transcribed the data, re-read and highlighted potential ideas and themes. Second, she generated initial codes. These initial surface codes gave way to more latent themes in which, the principal investigator examined the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The third phase involved searching for themes within the codes and then collecting all data for those themes through the constructivist epistemology and a thematic approach. Therefore, the data were approached through the lense that the participants sought to understand their world and develop their own particular meanings that corresponded to their experience (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, the thematic approach allowed researchers to hone in on particular aspects of the qualitative data to find details in specific themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The fourth phase involved reviewing and refining the codes and themes derived in the two previous stages, as well as creating a thematic map.

Once the initial codes were defined and categorized, the second coder received the code book and began looking at one data set. This was used to help refine the codes and their definitions. From this process, three out of the seven codes were more clearly labeled and defined. All data sets were then coded by the second coder to determine inter-rater reliability. Inter-rater reliability was found to be moderate at .77. See Figure 1. for a break down of inter-rater reliability.

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<th>Codes</th>
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Figure 1. Coding inter-rater reliability
Results

Findings suggest that 5 out of 7 school support personnel perceived themselves as prepared, rating themselves 6 or higher on a scale of 1 to 10, to provide support services to transgender/gender diverse students. The findings derived three main themes and seven subthemes. See Figure 2.

![Diagram of School Support Personnel’s Work with Transgender Students]

**Figure 2. School support personnel’s work with transgender students.**

**Navigating vs. Appeasing**

Participants described two main approaches to working with transgender students and their families. The first approach, *navigating*, was defined as advocating for the student’s needs, even if the advocacy is perceived as controversial. The second approach, *appeasing*, was defined as the participant doing what is easiest when working with students and their families in order to reduce the chances of controversy.

**Gendered spaces.** Participants’ “navigating” or “appeasing” style often was discussed in the context of helping transgender students when confronted with school norms and policies.
pertaining to a transgender student’s use of gendered spaces (i.e., bathrooms and locker rooms). For example, one school psychologist stated:

Meg wanted to use the girls’ restroom…But I guess a parent had called to complain and I heard about that twice over a month. Eventually, it was really stressful, but I met with Meg, the parent, and the principal to determine how this was going to be handled. I knew I was going to have to advocate for the student, but I did not want to alienate myself from the principal. I was not super clear of the principal’s stance, but I also knew he would follow the direction given by the district and I respected him greatly. What I did in the end is that I allowed him to know there was district guidance from legal counsel and it all turned out great.

two of the four informants who described navigating situations identified as lesbian or gay. While one of the four informants who described appeasing situations identified as heterosexual. Similar to the school psychologist, a counselor described her internal struggle between wanting to do what was best for the student and avoiding actions that could cause her to be perceived unfavorably by other school staff when helping students navigate gendered spaces:

So, originally, the way I handled this with our school is that we made sure that we had a staff restroom and a student restroom available on every floor. So we put a sign on the staff single stall bathroom and left the other single stall bathroom unlocked for students. Then, I emailed everyone saying this is in support of transgender students but in no way is this supposed to be the transgender bathroom. At the same time, in my email, I struggled with this internally. However, I didn’t communicate this with them. I wanted to say, “Please bear in mind that our students still may use the student restroom with the gender that they choose.” In my mind, that should be assumed.

Family interaction. “Navigating” or “appeasing” styles of support also applied to interactions with transgender students’ families. Three practitioners described an appeasing approach to interacting with families, such as using the student’s given birth name when the student preferred to be called by a different name. For example, a school counselor reported:

We do have a student who is transgender and their family is adamantly against it. Rather than causing difficulty for that student, I go ahead and use their given name at birth. It sucks and I feel bad, but I do it. I fear and worry that if I were to change it like I do with some of the other students that it would have a more negative repercussion for them.
The two other practitioners described a navigating approach to working with families such as providing safe places at school, regardless of the parent’s preference. The two also rated their preparedness as a 7 or higher out of 10. One school psychologist gave an example:

Sam, transitioning from male to female, has a really awful, awful, there is no other way to put it, awful situation at home with her father. So she has to hide everything, but I have offered that if she wants to keep anything (clothes or make-up) here at school she can.

However, the above example is in the minority. Most school support personnel in this study reported that the family’s acceptance of their transgender student often influenced how school support personnel interacted with families. This was echoed by several participants, noting that it is easier to work with the families who are onboard with their student’s gender identity. For example, one informant stated, “I not only got to work with him, but the family as well. They were getting on board and trying to understand, so they were an active part in trying to figure out the best solution for this student.”

Participants also described using a navigating approach when transgender students had already been open about their gender identity with their families, even if the family was not accepting of the student’s gender identity. For example, one school psychologist reported:

A student was transitioning FTM (female to male) and he left our school not because of anything but his mental health. His mother was pretty awful and it was definitely a contributor to his declining mental health that year. In terms of communication with that parent, because he was having honest communication with his family about transitioning, I felt comfortable having those same conversations talking with his parents about that as well. One time, I had to call them because he was suicidal at school and his mom had to come to school. The mom did the right thing and took him to the hospital that day. If I remember right, I made him aware of the children’s transgender clinic. He actually talked to his mom and dad about going, but they both were against it. I knew though, when they agreed to go to the ER after the suicide conversation all those conversations about the clinic would transpire.

Active and Passive Supports

All participants reported that supports for transgender students were provided in their schools. These supports were categorized as active supports and passive supports. Active supports were defined as overt and engaging actions by the school system or staff members to show they support this population. These included clubs such as Gay Straight Alliance, honoring the students by addressing them by their chosen name or pronoun, and providing counseling
resources. Passive supports were considered to be indirect resources or policies were the student has limited knowledge or interaction such as ally stickers, providing a welcoming ear and having an open-door policy. For example, at one school servicing 6th grade and above, a school counselor discusses how her school just recently started providing more active supports for this community whereas previously it was more passive supports.

Just the listening ear, empathy and unconditional acceptance is a pillar of what they do here and that is what they need. We just started an LGBTQ GSA situation, which we previously did not have and felt it was missing from our program. In general, largely because we are a Montessori school there was a lot of community building, things like homeroom, we have been doing 2 times a week for, forever. Now the whole district is doing that. In homeroom it is a smaller group so we have been talking about life things and I think that (LGBTQ awareness) is built in to that specifically. But I am really excited about our gay straight alliance we are really tackling that.

In this case, the GSA was just beginning; however, LGBTQ promotion and awareness was already in place during students’ homeroom time. According to GLSEN (2015), students who had a GSA in their school were less likely to hear negative remarks about gender expression and transgender people.

Passive supports were more common throughout the interview data. Six out of seven participants shared that they were open to receiving students or they would have stickers on their doors to designate they were accepting of LGBTQ students. Of these six participants their self rated preparedness varied between 1 and 10. One participant said, “I am here. I am here I want to be a support for students, to listen and help them find their way through anything."

**Honoring the student’s chosen name and pronoun.** In addition to the open door policy, three interviewees discussed the importance of honoring the students chosen name and pronoun. These interviewees spand race and sexual orientation identities. This is a simple, active way that school personnel demonstrate their support of the transgender and gender diverse populations. Three of the interviewees learned to recognize the importance of pronouns and names through training from a national organization called Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN). One of the interviewees discussed key takeaways from the training:

Really the big thing that stuck with me is just to ask, so do not assume the student wants to go by “he” or “she” or “they” I did not even realize “they” was an option. So just ask everyone because you do not know what someone wants to go by. You might see someone that looks female but wants to go by “ze” or “they” so just ask. Which is hard because you just naturally start with just he or she. Ask everybody and I am trying to get in the habit, but it will be a long process.
In this regard, the interviewee was beginning to recognize her own cultural competence and identify areas that needed improvement. She continued to report on how her behavior changed after the professional development:

There are some people (staff members) that specifically say, “Well, whatever he goes by.” You know, those microaggressions. So I try and correct those, like, this is his name. This is what he wants to be called. He is a he.

There were only three out of five data points in which participants brought up negative staff reactions in regards to transitioning students. In each case, participants shared how they advocated for these students, stating how respecting pronouns and names is the simplest way to show students they are welcoming and supportive.

**Administrative support.** Active and passive supports extended past the individual level and manifested in the administration as well. This subtheme was defined as school staff’s perceptions of the administrative support provided when addressing the issue of birth name vs. preferred name in the computer system. School systems are tackling how best to support transitioning students by addressing the students chosen name versus birth name. School systems run the risk of accidentally outing a transitioned student if their birth name has not been legally changed, as the student record software can only report legal names. Six participants reported this as an issue that they are concerned about.

It can cause huge emotional stress that most of the adults don’t even think about. I forgot to give you this example. We do have one transgender student who is very very young. So the student’s birth name is still what is in the student record software system. And I checked with the teachers to make sure that all the communication had happened with the new teachers and they said it was all good. They did that on their own without any help from me, which is good. Typically, at the high school, the students had already known the transgender students as their previous gender. This is a case where no kids know and I do worry what is going to happen eventually.

In this instance, the teacher teams were able to proactively discuss the child and alert the new teachers to this student’s chosen name. However, this process is less permanent and therefore not sustainable. In fact, utilizing the record system extends past new teachers communicating once a year and could impact the student whenever a substitute teacher comes in. One interviewee said:

I know that the trans student is still listed with his female name and I am not sure how that goes about getting changed or if that can be changed. It is hard because all of our subs are in the electronic record system, there is no classroom list. So
when the subs would take attendance they would see the girls name. And that is not who he is, which could cause questions.

Nevertheless, some schools are actively supporting this population by circumventing the system. Two interviewees addressed potential ways in which to notify teachers of the name change. One participant believes that there is a simple note that could be created in their electronic record system.

I am sure you could do an alert in the electronic record system because we have all sorts of icon alerts in there, if a student is on an IEP (Individual Education Plan) or is homeless so they should be able to do some sort of nickname icon.

Similarly, an inner city school counselor is utilizing a preferred name roster for the entire student body, which includes nicknames or transition names. She said, “There is a roster somewhere that I have seen, where it is a nickname roster for all students shared with all staff.” Either creating a roster full of student preferred names or a note in the electronic system, the schools will be better equipped to work with this population.

**System-level policy.** This is defined as district policies related to work with transgender/gender diverse students. These policies are another way in which schools can service this population. Research has shown that clear school policies focused on sexual orientation and gender identity can influence outcomes (Russell, Day, Ioverno & Toomey, 2016). However, almost all interviewees struggled to think of policies within their school district that addressed the needs of these students, with statements that ranged from “I do not think it (transgender policies) is being addressed at all, but I am not involved so I don’t know” to “the only one that I am aware of is the bathroom policy and honestly I do not know if that is a district or a school thing.” Nonetheless, one veteran school psychologist was able to clearly articulate the bathroom policy, she stated:

When the President’s (President Obama’s) recommendation relative to bathroom use came through, we did not adopt a written policy, but I know our school worked through the bathroom policy. We had conversations with our legal counsel and he took some time to write us in the summer, his and the district's interpretation and how we should proceed as a district. It made me proud to be working in the district. And that came out of our executive director just seeking some guidance about what the district policy was, he was being proactive.

Although this guidance may not be easily found, school support personnel can refer to it if a situation arises.

**Professional Development**

The final main theme was characterized by participants’ perceptions of professional development experiences and needs. When asked to self-rate their preparedness to support
transgender and gender diverse students on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being not prepared and 10 being extremely prepared, the average preparedness was a 6.5 and the range was 1 to 8. Although these participants perceive themselves as generally prepared to work with this population, they desired additional professional development to maximize their preparedness. 4 additional participants stated something similar to this social worker: “I would say my comfort level is high. I am completely comfortable and able to provide a nonjudgmental space. However, I could stand to brush up on some of the resources and I’d benefit from trainings.”

**Experiential learning.** This was defined as experiences with gender diverse topics that participants had within their graduate studies and careers. In regard to this population, all 7 of the participants stated they did not experience formal training within their graduate program, 2 participants said that conversations about the population were informally discussed throughout the program. However, almost all the participants sought out trainings or learned about this population through experiences within their career. Five professionals who rated their preparedness as high cited training provided by GLSEN.

GLSEN does some nice professional development for teachers and I have attended some, I have not been to one in about two years. They also provide a service to come into schools to do professional development. It is kind of whatever you need. Besides the GLSEN training I don’t think there is anything else.

Of the six participants who cited some form of professional development training, all but one mentioned they had only had 1 training on this topic. Moreover, experience with the population has benefited these interviewees. 5 out of the 7 interviewed have worked directly with a transgender or gender diverse student.

**Teacher and staff training.** Was defined as the desire for more formal training for all education employees. 5 diverse participants (3 school counselors, 1 school psychologist, 1 social worker) suggested sensitivity training for teachers in particular. Although school support personnel rate their preparedness moderate to high, 5 participants with low to high preparedness desired more professional development for themselves and for other teachers and staff members. One school social worker noted:

I think it would be great, as research continues to develop, that we start to see PD opportunities for teachers specifically. On my side of the desk, we see it as just a person. We were trained that way. And I think helping teachers to see and understand and build empathy towards this population, specifically, is huge. It is definitely something that is needed. Like I said, we are a very progressive building and school so I can’t say we don’t need it, but teachers have questions still. Teachers still say, “I don’t get it. Why?” You need to let go of the why. The teachers just need to get this is causing others to have social and emotional issues.
which causes them to have a barrier for them to get the work done that the teacher needs them to. Working with teachers to let them know that sometimes these students maybe need more time or support.

**Discussion**

When exploring school support personnel’s perceptions of their work with transgender and gender diverse students in a Midwestern urban public school district, we can say that despite perceiving themselves as being prepared to work with this population, practitioners face challenges when navigating systems-level policies, such as bathroom policies and name changes in the school record system. Nonetheless, after reviewing the data, we can say that many school personnel are working to address these issues.

Based on the findings, participants who perceive themselves as adequately prepared to work with transgender and gender diverse students actively supported their students, worked with their students to navigate family situations and gendered spaces, and have attended professional development focused on this population. Previous research backs these finding as Roe (2013) noted counselors who listened and showed supportive LGBTQ symbols (e.g., rainbow stickers, human rights campaign symbol) were easier to talk with about any and all of their concern. When school support personnel are able to demonstrate their support they are perceived as more welcoming and therefore perceive themselves as better able to work with this population.

Moreover, the theme of navigating versus appeasing has similarly appeared in other research. Pyne’s (2016) research found when cisgender students expressed discomfort sharing a restroom with gender diverse students, a single stall restroom was created and this was viewed as “accommodating” the gender diverse student rather than fully including them. Parents of transgender students in Pyne’s study expressed their belief that the school was not prepared to work with their child as they chose to accommodate their student rather than include them. For school support personnel who chose to navigate a situation rather than appease they may be viewed more favorably and they may perceive themselves as being more prepared. Furthermore, making an effort to navigate gendered spaces and family situations for this population rather than accommodating or appeasing may create a more inclusive school climate. The data suggests that each situation is different however, advocating and navigate for what the student wants and needs may be beneficial. For school support personnel adopting this way of thinking, navigating situations rather than appeasing them, has a long, but rewarding road ahead of them. However, more research is needed to understand transgender and gender diverse student perspectives on this idea of navigating versus appeasing mentality.

Additionally, participants perceive their schools to be prepared if they have a policy addressing this population’s needs, and provide resources and access to professional development. Although there has been limited research on policies surrounding this population. Bartholomaeus and Riggs (2018) discuss that school counselors and psychologists can assist in making schools safer specifically through advocating for policies promoting inclusion, and broadening the language used to discuss this population within school curriculum. This is echoed
in the research data with school support personnel working towards circumventing the record system to accommodate a name change and honoring students preferred name and pronoun. Moreover, policies that may be more passive or less formal can result in some confusion amongst professionals in a large school district. Russell, Day, Ioverno & Toomey (2016) research reported a similar impact among anti-LGBTQ bullying policies, stating that clear school policies focused on sexual orientation and gender identity can influence outcomes. Proper documentation may be required to best service this population.

These data have been helpful in exploring areas of professional growth for individual persons and systems level. What we have profoundly learned is that more professional development is needed for school support personnel in the areas of working with family and other staff members who may be more resistant to change. Those professionals who have had experience with this population rate themselves more prepared. This is similar to Bowers, Lewandowski and Woitaszewski (2015) findings of school psychologists who had one to five encounters with transgender youth had significantly more positive attitudes and rated themselves more competent than those who had no encounter. Additionally, addressing the LGBTQ community within graduate programs for school support personnel would be beneficial. These data reflect similar research in which very little to no higher education formally discusses LGBTQ topics (Woodford et al, 2014; Mahdi et al., 2014; Kull, Kosciw, & Greytak, 2017). More training within formal education as well as professional development will be needed to increase school support personnel's' perceptions of preparedness and further continue to advocate for their students. More research should be conducted to further understand the benefit of professional development as it relates to this topic.

What we can gather from this study is the important social justice role school support personnel play in navigating and actively supporting what is best for this population regardless of consequences. With the support of professional development and district policies school support personnel have more perceived confidence. Professional development is crucial in preparing school support personnel to accurately advocate for these students. Specifically, as it relates to families of transgender students. Often times throughout the data participants expressed their hesitation to best support the student when their family had a negative outlook on their gender identity. Further research and trainings in this area would be beneficial to school support teams.

Lastly, it is important to note school counselors, social workers and psychologist felt more comfortable addressing any transgender situation with the backing of their building or district. School support staff are in a unique position to create system level change for this population by gaining support from their administration and district. More system level supports may be needed to best support school counselors, social workers and psychologists and the work they do with transgender and gender diverse students.

**Limitations.** Although the study provided new insight into the way school personnel work with transgender and gender diverse students, there were several limitations that could have skewed the results. Particularly, the population size was limited to 7 individuals who were all
female. The smaller population size limits the generalizability for this study. Additionally, all participants were of one gender which could have skewed results.

Lastly, all participants were selected via a response to an email highlighting transgender students, therefore the self-selection could have resulted in biased responses. The data does not gain insight on participants who have negative views towards this population or no experience with the population. Additionally, it is possible that when addressing their ability to support transgender/gender diverse students, the participants experienced social desirability bias in which they stated how they treated this population with more active supports.

**Conclusion**

In closing, this research has explored the preparedness of school support personnel. We can now say school support personnel in this Midwestern urban school district perceive themselves to be their most prepared when they are navigating, actively supporting and attending professional development for this population. Further research is still greatly needed to better understand how transgender students view the current supports put in place and their knowledge of policies within the system. It is this researcher’s hope that more studies will be conducted in order to help school support personnel grow and support gender diverse and transgender populations within their school.
References


Roe, S. r. t. e. (2013). "Put it out there that you are willing to talk about anything”: The role of school counselors in providing support to gay and bisexual youth. *Professional School Counseling, 17*(1), 153-162. doi:10.5330/prsc.17.1.5728601842662000

School Social Work Association of America. (nd). Resolution Statement: school social work supports the educational and civil rights of transgender students.


Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Introductory Statement
(Thank the participant for coming to the interview.)
Describe the purpose of the research:
“The interview we are doing today aims to add to the research on school support services for transgender and nonbinary students. Specifically, we are interested in studying how comfortable and ready school support personnel, like yourself, are to work with transgender students and students that consider themselves not to fit in one gender or another, nonbinary students. We hope data from this study contributes to improvements in school support services for transgender and nonbinary students.

Informed Consent
Begin with the statement:
“We would like to hear about your experiences with transgender and nonbinary students and what you have gathered about their needs and ways to support them. Before we continue with our interview, we need to request your consent for research.”
(Hand the participant a copy of Consent for Research.)
“Please follow along as I read the Consent for Research and feel free to stop me at any point if you have any questions or concerns. Once I have read through the Consent for Research and have answered any questions you have, you may sign the attached form to give your consent for research.”
Consent for Research

Supporting transgender and nonbinary students through school support personnel

Before you consent to be a volunteer, please read the following sections and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure that you understand what your participation involves. Thank you for your consideration of taking part in this research study.

INVESTIGATOR
Alicia Yannallo, M.S. is the principal investigator conducting this research. The faculty member who is supervising the research is Erin Harper, Ph.D.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this study is to explore school support personnel’s perceptions of their preparedness to work with transgender/nonbinary students. This research aims to add more insight and help school support personnel be better prepared to address unique issues transgender and nonbinary students face. The objective of this study is to learn how prepared school support personnel are to support this population in a midwestern urban public school district.

DURATION OF PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH
If you agree to participate, the research will take around 60 minutes of your time. The principal investigator may also contact you briefly afterward over the phone or via email to clarify a response to a question or ask to confirm his/her analysis of your response.

PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED DURING THE RESEARCH
If you choose to participate in this study, an interview about knowledge about transgender and nonbinary students will be conducted with the principal investigator. The interview questions will seek to gain an understanding of the social and emotional support for this student population. We seek to learn about school- and district-level competencies. The interview will be audio recorded for the ease of transcribing responses given by participants. All recording instruments will be visible and no recording will take place without your knowledge and consent. Notes may also be taken during the interview by the researcher.

RISKS
The risk in this study is minimal and relates mainly to the potential of sharing the students’ gender identity. The interviewee may also experience social discomfort due to the nature of interviewing. The principal investigator will do her best in building rapport and making the interview process comfortable.

**BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH**
The primary benefit offered to participants will be the opportunity to reflect upon one’s competency, which may assist in enhancing his/her practices when working with the LGBTQ population. Although not a direct benefit to the participant, information gathered from this study will help inform future research on best practices for transgender and nonbinary students. A summary of the findings of the study will be available if requested and the principal investigator will be available to offer any explanation of the findings.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**
All information identifying you will remain anonymous and confidential. Interview responses, demographic information, and recordings will be coded and a false name will be used in reporting the results of the study. Only the primary investigator and the supervising faculty member will have access to the dataset. Any information obtained in this research that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will not be disclosed without your permission or being required by law. The results of this study may be published in a scientific journal or presented at a conference using false names and ensuring that your identity is protected. In the final reports, subjects’ real names will be replaced by false names if a portion of their interview is reported. Identifying information such as race, gender, and age will not be reported with the false names.

**PARTICIPANT RIGHTS AND RESEARCH WITHDRAWAL**
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose to discontinue participation in the research once the study has started for any reason. Your choice to not participate or withdraw from the study will not penalize you for any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS ABOUT THE RESEARCH**
If you have any questions about the research you can contact Alicia Yannalfo at (603)-475-5443 or Erin Harper, Ph.D. at (404)-276-4213. Please feel free to ask any questions you may have before signing this form.

If you have any concerns about the ethics of the research or would like to report a complaint as a result of participating in the study you can contact Neal Sullivan at (513)-529-2488.

Thank you for your participation. This portion is for your records.
SIGNATURE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My signature below indicates that I, ____________________________, have read the above information and I have had a chance to ask questions to help me understand what my participation will involve. I agree to participate in the study and have my interview recorded. I acknowledge having received a copy of this agreement.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT: ____________________________ DATE: _______
SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR: ___________________________ DATE: ________

If the participant consents for research…

“Thank you for your consent. Please keep the Consent for Research for your own records and feel free to contact me after the study if you have any concerns or would like to withdraw from the study.”

If the participant DOES NOT consent for research…

“Thank you for considering taking part in this research. I appreciate your time.

Beginning the Interview

Inform the participant:

“Great! We will begin the interview now. As a reminder, this interview will be audio-recorded so that the researcher can accurately capture what you share.”

(Begin with basic questions.)

“So, how long have you been at _____?”
“What would you say your role is at _____?”
“What does a typical day look like for you?”

(Continue with research questions.)

1. Organizational level Issues

“Could you talk about the LGBTQ needs of students where you are?”
[Probes: campus climate, narrow it down to transgender]
“What are some of the ways your school provides LGBTQ support to students?”
[Probes: Schoolwide support; groups; individual counseling; community partners]
“What are some challenges they face in school?”
[Probe: Risk factors; barriers]
“How would you work with administrators and teachers to navigate those challenges?”
[Probe: Protective factors]
“What are some social or emotional needs of transgender and nonbinary students at your school?”
“What policies does your school or district have for transgender and nonbinary students?”

1. Individual level issues
“Could you talk a little about your experience working with Transgender and nonbinary students?”

“What and how much of your educational training discussed LGBTQ issues?”

(In addition: Did your training discuss transgender issues, if so, how much of your training?)

“Have you attended professional development about supporting transgender and nonbinary students, if so what did you take from it?”

“On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being extremely prepared, how prepared are you to work with this population”

“What steps should your school take to protect a transgender or gender nonconforming student’s right to privacy?”

(Prompt: accidental disclosure, name change, are there safeguards)

1. Supporting Transgender Students

“How do you believe you can be supportive of Transgender and nonbinary students?

“What are some of the ways your school supports these students?”

“In your opinion, what is the best way to navigate situations that involve the use of opposite bathrooms and locker rooms?”

a. “How would you navigate that for administration?”

b. “How would you navigate that for transitioning students?”

“What are some practices you observed that have been helpful for supporting these students?

“If it were your decision, how would you want to intervene for these students?”

Tell the participant:

“Thank you for answering all my questions thoroughly. That’s all I have prepared. Is there possibly anything else I should know about transgender and nonbinary students at your school(s) that might help my research study?”

Closing Statement

Remind the participant:

“As a reminder, we will contact you sometime in the following months to confirm that our analysis aligns with your experiences. This will most likely happen over the phone or through email. Once again, if you have any questions or concerns or would like to withdraw from the study, do not hesitate to contact me.”