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# Self-Efficacy of School Psychologists: Developing a Scale for Working with and for LGBTQ Youth

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SELF-EFFICACY OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS:  
DEVELOPING A SCALE FOR WORKING WITH AND FOR LGBTQ YOUTH

A Specialist Project  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Department of Psychology  
Western Kentucky University  
Bowling Green, Kentucky

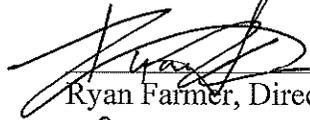
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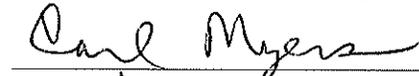
By  
Shelby Monahan

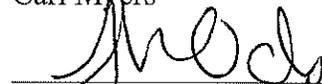
August 2019

SELF-EFFICACY OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS:  
DEVELOPING A SCALE FOR WORKING WITH AND FOR LGBTQ YOUTH

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SELF-EFFICACY OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS:  
DEVELOPING A SCALE FOR WORKING WITH AND FOR LGBTQ YOUTH

Shelby Monahan

August 2019

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Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) students report higher levels of harassment and assault, exposure to prejudiced language, and diminished feelings of safety at school compared to their non-LGBTQ counterparts. Due to the difficulties these young people experience at school as well as their increased risk for psychological distress and suicidality, these students may need additional support to be successful. Although professional organizations support school psychologists acting as advocates to support LGBTQ students, research suggests that practitioners' knowledge about issues faced by LGBTQ students as well as training related to their needs may lag behind this appeal for best practice. Given this information, it is valuable to investigate how well school psychologists believe themselves capable of fulfilling responsibilities related to working with and advocating for LGBTQ youth in schools. The purpose of this project was to create a comprehensive scale measuring school psychology practitioners' self-efficacy in working with LGBTQ youth. The proposed scale was created by reviewing existing scales and literature related to LGBTQ student needs. The proposed scale was then sent to three expert panelists who provided feedback that was incorporated to make revisions to the original scale. A finalized scale is presented, which may assist in expanding the knowledge base regarding school psychologists' self-efficacy in working with this vulnerable student population.

## Introduction

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) people have been met with several positive legal and cultural shifts in recent decades, such as “Marriage Equality” (*Obergefell v. Hodges*, 2015), the Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell Repeal Act of 2010, and openly transgender officials being elected to public office in growing numbers (Eltagouri, 2017). However, the status of LGBTQ individuals remains precarious in many ways, including their experiences in schools (Kosciw, Greytak, Giga, Villenas, & Danischewski, 2016).

As a preface to this description of LGBTQ experiences in school, it is important to acknowledge that the experiences of LGBTQ youth are in no way monolithic. Throughout this paper, the term LGBTQ will be used as an acronym to represent lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning people, although some use other acronyms such as LGBT, LGBTQ+, LGBTQIA, etc. Any variations upon LGBTQ that are included in this paper refer to individuals of specific identities within this larger group (e.g., LGB refers to lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals only).

Although LGBTQ is often used as an umbrella term for a community of people, the people within that community have incredibly varying identities and experiences not only as a result of their gender identity, sexual orientation, or gender expression, but also as a result of their race, ethnicity, country of origin, primary language, religion, disability, socioeconomic status, and other individual factors. When conceptualizing the experiences of LGBTQ youth in school, one must acknowledge that these intersecting identities greatly impact how these students are treated in their day to day life and how they navigate their home and school environments (James et al., 2016; Kosciw et al., 2016).

## **LGBTQ Issues in Schools: Climate and Harassment**

LGBTQ youth in America's schools are a population that may need additional support to feel safe and comfortable. Recent surveys suggest that LGBTQ youth experience greater levels of harassment and assault, tend to feel more unsafe in their schools, and may hear "hurtful" language more often than their non-LGBTQ counterparts (Kosciw et al., 2016). The Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network (GLSEN) surveyed lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students in 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade in the United States in 2015 as part of their National School Climate Survey. Nearly 58% of respondents reported feeling unsafe at school due to their sexual orientation and just over 43% reported feeling unsafe because of their gender expression (Kosciw et al., 2016). These feelings of discomfort and lack of safety have led to students avoiding specific spaces in schools (e.g., bathrooms or locker rooms) or school activities. Additionally, roughly 32% of students reported missing one or more days of school in the month prior to the survey due to feeling unsafe or uncomfortable.

More than half of respondents (58.8%) reported hearing homophobic slurs used often or frequently in their schools, and 40.5% reported hearing transphobic remarks often or frequently at school (Kosciw et al., 2016). Additionally, 62.9% of students reported hearing negative remarks about a student's gender expression frequently or often. These remarks were not limited to statements made by students as a significant number of students also reported hearing remarks from members of school staff that were homophobic (56.2%) or were made about students' gender expression (approximately 64.2%). Additionally, in many instances, students reported no teacher intervention following negative remarks, despite staff being present. In addition to hearing

homophobic or transphobic remarks that were not directed at the respondent, LGBTQ students also reported being victims of direct harassment.

Additionally, LGBTQ students reported high rates of harassment. This includes verbal harassment (85.2%), with 70.8% of LGBTQ students verbally harassed based on sexual orientation, 54.5% verbally harassed based on gender expression, and 47.2% based on gender (Kosciw et al., 2016). Nearly 40% of LGBTQ students reported being physically harassed at school, with sexual orientation (27.0%) and gender expression (20.3%) most often being named as the basis of the harassment. Many LGBTQ students (59.6%) also reported being sexually harassed at school, with 16.7% reporting harassment happening frequently or often. Sexual harassment tends to occur most often for lesbian and bisexual women and transgender students. In addition to high levels of harassment, 15.5% of respondents reported being physically assaulted at school, again most often based on sexual orientation (13.0%) or gender expression (9.4%).

The National Center for Transgender Equality publishes a largely comprehensive survey of the experiences of transgender people in the United States, including diverse experiences such as in military service, health, employment, and education (James et al., 2016). The 2015 survey included a total of nearly 28,000 respondents who identify as “transgender, trans, genderqueer, non-binary, and other identities on the transgender identity spectrum” (p. 23). Respondents were over the age of 18, which means that their responses may not be reflective of the experiences of young people currently enrolled in schools. However, they do represent a history or pattern of experiences typical for transgender students in schools in the United States.

Similarly to the more broad community of LGBTQ participants surveyed by Kosciw et al. (2016), the transgender individuals included in the US Trans Survey (USTS) who were either out or perceived as transgender in K-12 reported high rates of negative experiences in school such as verbal and physical harassment, discriminatory school rules, or sexual or physical assault because they were transgender (77%) (James et al., 2016). More specifically, 54% of those who were out or perceived as transgender were verbally harassed and 24% of those participants were physically attacked for being transgender. Additionally, 13% of individuals who were out or perceived as transgender were sexually assaulted in school because they were believed to be transgender. Of the individuals included in the study, 17% who were out or perceived as transgender reported leaving a school due to mistreatment.

Factors like race, ethnicity, and gender played a role in the levels of these experiences that were reported. For example, verbal harassment was reported highest among students who identified themselves as American Indian (69% reported) and Middle Eastern (61%) (James et al., 2016). Physical attack was also reported more highly by American Indian and Middle Eastern respondents. Besides race or ethnicity, gender also played a role in harassment, with transgender women most often reporting being physically attacked in school (38%), crossdressers (26%), transgender men (20%), and non-binary individuals (16%). Transgender women and crossdressers also reported higher levels of sexual assault in school (21% and 18% respectively).

### **Mental Health Outcomes and Risks**

Along with these issues faced in school, LGBTQ youth are at a greater risk for experiencing negative psychological outcomes. This increased risk for psychological

distress is often explained through the minority stress theory, which asserts that chronic stressors associated with individuals' stigmatized identities combine and over time put LGBTQ individuals at a greater risk of mental health problems than individuals without stigmatized identities and the subsequent stressors (Meyer, 1995, 2003; Nadal, Whitman, Davis, Erazo, & Davidoff, 2016). LGBTQ youth are especially at risk for psychological distress and suicidality (Espelage, Aragon, Birkett, & Koenig, 2008; Heck, Flentje, & Cochran, 2011; Marshal et al., 2011; Russell & Fish, 2016).

### **Role of School Psychologists**

School psychologists have very diverse roles in schools across the country, states, and even sometimes between districts or individual schools. For instance, some school psychologists may take on a larger counseling role for students while others may spend more time developing school wide positive behavioral intervention supports; others, still, primarily maintain a testing role (Walcott, Charvat, McNamara, & Hyson, 2016). School psychologists also reported working in a variety of employment settings, including primary and secondary schools (public, private, faith-based), colleges, independent practices, and hospitals.

Because the proportion of time school psychologists spend in their different roles may vary by district, it may be difficult to define the specific skills that school psychologists need to work with LGBTQ youth. However, as more students are self-identifying as LGBTQ and coming out at younger ages, it is essential that school psychologists be able to provide meaningful and necessary support for these students (Cianciotto & Cahill, 2012). Additionally, due to the broad nature of school psychologists' expected competencies, it is natural that to support LGBTQ youth, they

must also take on a variety of roles and demonstrate a wide range of skills. Despite the broad nature of the profession, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) incorporates certain specific requirements of school psychologists ethically and professionally in working with and for LGBTQ youth (National Association of School Psychologists, 2010, 2014, 2017).

### **Ethical Guidelines and Professional Standards**

School psychologists' expected ethical commitment to assisting LGBTQ youth is evident throughout NASP's Principles for Professional Ethics (2010). However, due to the somewhat broad and abstract nature of these ethical principles, NASP has also published more specific guidance on ways in which school psychologists may work to create safer and more supportive schools for LGBTQ students. These guidance statements are especially helpful for school psychologists who may not know how to fulfill these ethical principles or standards in all instances or with all populations, including LGBTQ youth.

One of the core ethical responsibilities of a school psychologist according to NASP's Principles for Professional Ethics (2010) is acting as an advocate for all students. This necessitates that school psychologists keep "the interests and rights of children and youth to be their highest priority in decision making," (p. 2) and "'speak up' for the needs and rights of students even when it may be difficult to do so," (p. 2). This is a broad ideological statement that does not include specific actions that a school psychologist may take to act as an advocate, but it is clear that advocacy as a concept is at the center of school psychologists' ethical duties, regardless of the identity or situation of the child.

Due to the complex nature of school policy and decision-making (often including politics, social climate, funding, community support, bureaucracy, and implementation), students who need additional advocacy from someone within the school district are a diverse group composed of students of all different identities and backgrounds. LGBTQ youth may need additional advocacy in the school due to increased risk of psychological distress, substance abuse, and victimization (Espelage et al., 2008; Hatzenbuehler, Birkett, Van Wagenen, & Meyer, 2014; Kosciw et al., 2016). Additionally, these students may not seek or receive family support for issues in school (Kosciw et al., 2016), which necessitates additional supports from others outside the family.

**NASP Principles for Professional Ethics.** NASP's Principles for Professional Ethics (2010) promotes advocacy at the individual, school, and systems-level. At the individual and school level, Standard I.3.1 enumerates that school psychologists "will not engage in or condone actions or policies that discriminate against persons," and NASP explicitly includes gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression in the list of characteristics protected in this nondiscrimination policy (p. 6). Additionally, Standard I.3.3 states, "School psychologists work to correct school practices that are unjustly discriminatory or that deny students, parents, or others their legal rights. They take steps to foster a school climate that is safe, accepting, and respectful of all persons" (p. 6). This emphasizes the importance of school psychologists acting as advocates for youth at the school-wide level, and because some school practices can be discriminatory towards LGBTQ students, school psychologists should be cognizant of school practices that may affect these students. Additionally, this standard references the importance of school climate, and the role that a school psychologist can take in promoting a school

climate in which all feel safe and welcome at school. Due to the high levels of LGBTQ students who feel unsafe at school due to their gender identity and sexual orientation, and the high rates of students reporting harassment at school, this responsibility to promote a safe and respectful school climate is especially relevant to this population (James et al., 2016; Kosciw et al., 2016).

The NASP (2010) Principles also promotes the role of school psychologists to act as advocates and change-makers at higher levels. Principle IV, Responsibility to Schools, Families, Communities, the Profession, and Society, states, “School psychologists promote healthy school, family, and community environments. They assume a proactive role in identifying social injustices that affect children and schools and strive to reform systems-level patterns of injustice,” (pp. 11-12). This supports the idea that school psychologists will act as advocates in making change at the systems level, and make change in the school and community, rather than just working with individual students. Additionally, it emphasizes that school psychologists should take a role in identifying and fighting for social justice, which through a school psychology lens has generally been defined to include promoting and protecting equal access to education for all students, working to eliminate discriminatory practice, and treating all individuals with respect and fairness (Proctor, 2016; Shriberg, Song, Miranda, & Radliff, 2013).

Besides focusing on the general importance of advocacy in school psychology, NASP also includes one specific piece of guidance regarding LGBTQ individuals in Standard 1.2.6 (NASP, 2010). This standard states:

School psychologists respect the right of privacy of students, parents, and colleagues with regard to sexual orientation, gender identity, or transgender

status. They do not share information about the sexual orientation, gender identity, or transgender status of a student (including minors), parent, or school employee with anyone without that individual's permission. (p. 5)

This ethical standard gives very clear direction to school psychologists who may be unsure of the best way to proceed with an LGBTQ student regarding disclosure of identity. Due to the potential for negative reactions, making the decision to disclose a child's identity without the child's permission may be unwelcome or even dangerous for the student. Even if the family reacts positively, sharing this information without permission takes away the child's right to decide how and when to "come out" to their family if they choose to do so.

**NASP Position Statements.** In addition to the more general ethical guidelines published in the NASP Principles for Professional Ethics (2010), the organization has also published two position statements outlining NASP's commitment to and obligations of school psychologists to create "Safe and Supportive Schools for LGBTQ+ Youth" (2017) and "Safe Schools for Transgender and Gender Diverse Students" (2014). Both statements underline the organization's support of safe, respectful, and inclusive learning environments for students regardless of personal characteristics or identity and emphasize the right of all students to learn in a school free of discrimination, violence, and harassment. However, they also provide practitioners insight into the needs and issues facing these students and give direct guidance on actions practitioners can implement to help foster support of LGBTQ youth.

***Safe and Supportive Schools for LGBTQ+ Youth.*** NASP emphasizes the importance of personal growth and insight for school psychologists to become better

advocates and allies for LGBTQ youth (NASP, 2017). They state that school psychologists should develop their knowledge regarding: (a) appropriate and current LGBTQ-related terminology and vocabulary; (b) LGBTQ history; (c) risk factors and protective factors for LGBTQ youth; (d) identity development; (e) how intersectionality of multiple identities may affect how students interact with their environments; (f) specific issues affecting transgender and gender diverse youth; (g) reputable resources for LGBTQ students to connect with online and in local communities. In addition to seeking out knowledge about LGBTQ communities, NASP states that self-reflection on the part of the school psychologist can help develop their skills in working with and advocating for LGBTQ students. NASP suggests that practitioners should use the framework of culturally responsive practice that necessitates the practitioner examine their own (a) sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression development, (b) values and beliefs regarding these topics, (c) how gender or sexual orientation related expectations were expressed in their environments (including through families, communities, and cultures), and (d) biases and stereotypes they may hold towards LGBTQ people.

Besides cultivating personal knowledge and self-reflection, NASP indicates several specific roles or actions the school psychologist can take in supporting LGBTQ youth at the school level: (a) creating or putting a comprehensive antibullying policy into place; (b) training school staff on LGBTQ topics and how to be an ally; (c) supporting the formation of a Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA); (d) helping teachers create curriculum of LGBTQ history or topics; (e) providing youth with affirmative counseling as needed (for any type of concerns); (f) working with families to provide information, help parents develop skills to talk with and support their children, and help them find

family resources such as PFLAG; (g) supporting transgender and gender diverse students in affirmative ways that allow them the room to explore their identity, and supporting inclusive policies; (h) acting as an ally by “being open, listening, validating, supporting, and standing up for LGBTQ youth and their rights,” (NASP, 2017, p. 5).

*Safe Schools for Transgender and Gender Diverse Students.* Due to the unique needs and vulnerabilities of transgender and gender diverse students in schools, NASP’s position statement regarding supporting these students includes specific strategies that may be used in addition to those outlined in their guidance for the general LGBTQ population. NASP discusses actions that the school psychologist can take on a personal level to support transgender and gender diverse students: (a) pursuing further education or supervision on issues that affect transgender and gender diverse individuals; (b) exhibiting accepting and respectful behaviors; (c) using gender-neutral language and pronouns and avoiding stereotypes based on gender; (d) only disclosing transgender identity with student’s consent (NASP, 2014). To affect change on the school-wide level, school psychologists should (a) encourage schools to establish gender-neutral spaces and safe zones, (b) educate school staff about issues affecting transgender students in schools, (c) intervene when bullying or harassment occur from students or staff, (d) support the social-emotional needs of transgender and gender diverse students and offer counseling as needed, (e) collect and distribute information about community organizations that provide resources and support to local transgender people, (f) support schools in developing and putting into place anti-harassment policies that protect transgender and gender diverse students, (g) encourage the creation of student groups that provide transgender students with support and opportunities to socialize with other transgender or

gender diverse young people, (h) mentor and encourage other school staff to mentor transgender students. Beyond these school-wide strategies, NASP also encourages school psychologists to contribute to and encourage research on how to best include transgender students in school.

NASP also provides general guidance for schools, such as structuring the building and practices in ways that are friendlier for transgender students (2014). This includes: (a) avoiding gender segregation in school and extra-curricular activities; (b) providing gender-neutral options for school bathrooms; (c) providing students with the option to attend a GSA club; (d) providing policies and procedures for staff, students, and families that describe the needs of transgender students.

**Turning Ethics and Standards into Action.** Due to the relatively recent publications of these statements and the potential gap between best practice recommendations and actual practice, it is important to examine how practicing school psychologists interact with LGBTQ students and view their work with LGBTQ-related issues in the schools. It is helpful to understand how school psychologists are interacting with, working with, and advocating for LGBTQ students so that more targeted education initiatives can address the specific areas in which practitioners tend to diverge from best practices. Additionally, due to the difficulties in collecting direct data about school psychologists' work with LGBTQ youth, the differing levels of openness to the creation of supportive environments for LGBTQ youth exhibited by individual schools/districts, and the support for self-efficacy as being a strong predictor of future performance, it is helpful to look at how well school psychologists feel that they can implement these suggestions in their day-to-day practice given the limitations and environments that they

experience at work (Bandura, 1977, 1982). With this information, we can work to develop initiatives that focus on the aspects of working with and for LGBTQ youth that school psychologists perceive themselves to be least capable of completing.

### **School Psychologists' Attitudes and Competencies towards LGBTQ Students**

Some past research indicates that school psychologists and psychologists in general report positive attitudes towards LGBTQ individuals (Bowers, Lewandowski, Savage, & Woitaszewski, 2015; Kelly, 2014; Savage, Prout, & Chard, 2004). Savage et al. (2004) surveyed a sample of 288 members of NASP. Savage and colleagues found that the respondents endorsed overall positive attitudes towards lesbians and gay males and somewhat more positive attitudes were found towards lesbians than gay males. The school psychologists sampled also showed overall low to moderate levels of knowledge about issues faced by LG youths, although they tended to show lower abilities to choose correct answers about academic challenges, dropout rates, and experiences of violence. Most respondents (85%) reported receiving no training or preparation about issues relating to LG youths, but 75% reported feeling somewhat to very prepared to work with students on these issues. Additionally, almost all (94%) of respondents indicated that they would be somewhat to very willing to address these issues while working.

These findings were supported by Kelly's (2014) study that indicated that school psychologists and school psychology graduate students tended to hold generally positive attitudes towards LGB people, but had limited knowledge of LGB history, community, and related symbols. This study showed a greater percentage of students and practicing school psychologists that had received any training on LGBTQ-related services (60% compared to 15% found by Savage et al. in 2004). Additionally, school psychologists

working at schools with GSAs tended to have higher self-perceptions of working effectively with LGBTQ students to manage bullying and coming out (Kelly, 2014). Graduate students tended to report low self-perceptions of effectiveness in these domains.

In another study examining school psychologists' attitudes towards transgender students, a survey of 248 practicing school psychologists found that participants also tended to report generally positive attitudes towards transgender students (Bowers et al., 2015). Practitioners who had knowingly encountered at least one transgender student in their work as school psychologists reported significantly more positive attitudes than those who reported not having encountered transgender students. However, 50.6% of participants reported never having worked with a transgender student to their knowledge. Greater reported confidence, willingness to address transgender issues (83.7% reported being 'willing' or 'very willing'), and specific education related to transgender issues were also significantly related to more positive attitudes towards transgender students. Due to the correlational design of this study, it is unclear whether or not there is any causal relation or the direction of such a relationship between these variables. Additionally, there appears to be a lack of education about the needs of transgender students as 75.5% of participants reported not having specific education about transgender students' needs or issues they may face in schools.

In a 2008 study, McCabe and Rubinson used focus groups of education-oriented graduate students ( $n = 81$ ) currently working in schools, including a small sample of school psychology graduate students ( $n = 9$ ), to examine beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge towards LGBT youth and LGBT issues in schools (McCabe & Rubinson, 2008). Participants did not list LGBT people as an oppressed group or harassment of LGBT

students as a school based social justice issue, indicating that these issues may not be foremost in their minds. However, when prompted, participants reported witnessing students using “gay” in a derogatory way during school. Many participants endorsed the belief that it was acceptable to ignore these derogatory comments.

Themes present across the majority of groups included a lack of knowledge about LGBT issues and lack of coverage in graduate coursework (McCabe & Rubinson, 2008). Some wished for further knowledge regarding resources for these students, while others reported believing that sexual orientation should not be discussed in schools or that their personal beliefs made it difficult for them to feel comfortable supporting LGBT youth. Additionally, many did not feel confident that they would receive support from their future school administration if they chose to intervene after witnessing anti-LGBT harassment or if a student disclosed their sexual orientation to them.

### **Self-Efficacy**

In general, self-efficacy has been defined as “people’s beliefs in their capabilities to produce given attainments” (Bandura, 2006, p. 307). Self-efficacy beliefs influence many aspects of human experience, including patterns of thinking, effort and persistence in completing difficult tasks, and future choices and behavior (Bandura, 1977, 1982). A number of factors have been proposed to affect perceptions of self-efficacy, such as past experiences or performance, witnessing others attempt tasks (vicarious experience), verbal persuasion from oneself or others, and an individual’s perceptions of physiological arousal.

While the self-efficacy of school psychologists in working with and for LGBTQ students has not been studied, there has been some prior research on LGB self-efficacy of

psychological counselors. While counseling is a separate career from school psychology, aspects of the fields and required duties do overlap to some extent. Due to school psychologists' placement within the school system, they have a unique position to act as an advocate within a greater system than counselors, who do not necessarily operate within this system that LGBTQ students interact with five days a week. However, their one-on-one interactions and relationships with their clients are similar to the relationships that school psychologists have with students in the schools, some of which are and are not therapeutic in nature.

### **Related Scales**

Several LGB-related self-efficacy scales already exist for counseling psychologists. These include: the LGB Affirmative Counseling Self-Efficacy Inventory (LGB-CSI) (Dillon & Worthington, 2003) and the LGB Working Alliance Self-Efficacy Scale (LGB-WASES) (Burkard, Pruitt, Medler, & Stark-Booth, 2009). A related scale is the Sexual Orientation Counselor Competency Scale (SOCCS), which assesses competency rather than self-efficacy (Bidell, 2005). Both competence and self-efficacy have been conceptualized to influence motivation and future behavior through separate models of human motivation (Rodgers, Markland, Selzler, Murray, & Wilson, 2014). In self-determination theory, the desire for competence is considered a basic human desire that drives behavior. Compared to self-efficacy, competence can be measured directly through observing an individual's performance on a task, although subjective judgments of performance and personal meaningfulness may affect an individual's perceptions of competence and desire to pursue higher levels of performance. Due to this difference in the variable of interest, the SOCCS includes items that assess aspects of counselor

experience in certain areas, attitudes towards LGB clients, and knowledge, rather than only self-efficacy to counsel successfully in certain situations. This scale includes items such as: “I have experience counseling gay male clients” (Bidell, 2005, p. 273) or “I have been to in-services, conference sessions, or workshops, which focused on LGB issues in psychology” (p. 273) rather than assessing individuals’ perceptions or beliefs about their capabilities to produce certain results given their current skills.

**LGB Affirmative Counseling Self-Efficacy Inventory** (LGB-CSI; (Dillon & Worthington, 2003). The LGB-CSI scale measures LGB affirmative counseling self-efficacy. LGB affirmative counseling has been conceptualized as counseling that “rejects biased heteronormative and heterosexist notions that LGB sexual orientations are representative of mental disorders, inferior status, immorality, or social deviancy. Instead, it affirms LGB people have a sexual orientation that is normal, healthy, and legitimate” (Bidell, 2005, p. 113). More specifically, Dillon et al. (2015) conceptualized affirmative counseling self-efficacy as being composed of behaviors from five domains:

- (a) Applying knowledge of LGB issues (Application of Knowledge), (b) performing advocacy skills (Advocacy Skills), (c) maintaining awareness of attitudes toward one’s own and others’ sexual identity development (Self-Awareness), (d) developing a working relationship with LGB clients (Relationship), and (e) assessing relevant underlying issues and problems of LGB clients (Assessment). (pp. 86-87)

The measurement was revised to a short form in 2015 (Dillon et al., 2015). The LGB-CSI (SF) consists of 15-items with five subscales: Application of Knowledge, Advocacy Skills, Self-Awareness, Assessment, and Relationship. Each subscale consists of three

items. The Application of Knowledge, Self-Awareness, and Assessment subscales were each found to have an adequate internal consistency reliability, as measured by Cronbach Alpha ( $\alpha = .87$ ). The Advocacy Skills ( $\alpha = .92$ ) and Relationship ( $\alpha = .81$ ) subscales also demonstrated adequate-to-strong internal consistency. Convergent validity was suggested between Application of Knowledge, Advocacy Skills, Assessment, and Relationship subscales and amount of instruction in LGB issues, relationships with LGB people, and number of clients who are LGB. Convergent validity ranged between  $r = .10$  to  $.47$ . Additionally, positive attitudes toward LGB people as measured by the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Knowledge and Attitudes Scale for Heterosexuals (LGB-KASH) were positively associated with Advocacy Skills, Self-Awareness, and Relationship subscales as well as total scores. Discriminant validity was examined with relation to the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR), which had no significant relationships between the LGB-CSI-SF and BIDR Impression Management scores. Significant, but small relationships between the LGB-CSI total scores, Application of Knowledge, and Self-Awareness subscales and the BIDR Self-Deception scales were found.

**The LGB Working Alliance Self-Efficacy Scale (LGB-WASES;** Burkard, Pruitt, Medler, & Stark-Booth, 2009). Bukard et al. promote the importance of working alliance development as a key factor in LGB-affirmative counseling (2009). The LGB-WASES measures “LGB-affirmative counselor self-efficacy beliefs that [assess] counselor’s perceived ability to develop a working alliance... with an LGB client” (Burkard et al., 2009, p. 39). The scale consists of 32 items and all items were formatted on an 11-point scale of responses. The LGB-WASES produces three subscales: Emotional Bond, Establishing Tasks, and Setting Goals. The Emotional Bond ( $\alpha = .97$ ),

Task ( $\alpha = .96$ ), and Goal ( $\alpha = .94$ ) subscales all had strong internal consistency reliability, and stemmed from 13, 13, and 6 items, respectively. The overall LGB-WASES had a Cronbach's Alpha of .98. Convergent validity was established between independent LGB-WASES subscales, Counselor Activity Self-Efficacy Scales, and Multicultural Counseling Inventory. Tests of discriminant validity with the Marlowe-2 Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSDS) did not show strong relationships between the MCSDS and the LGB-WASES, although there was a significant but small correlation with the Goal subscale. The Attitudes towards Lesbians and Gay Men- Short Form (ATLG-S) subscales had a negative relationship with the LGB-WASES.

**The Sexual Orientation Counselor Competency Scale (SOCCS; Bidell, 2005)** provides a measure of competency in working with LGB populations; all items were formatted as 7-point Likert-Type with some positive and some reverse scored items. The SOCCS produces three subscales: Skills, Attitudes, and Knowledge. The Skills ( $\alpha = .91$ ), Attitudes ( $\alpha = .88$ ), and Knowledge ( $\alpha = .76$ ) subscales all had adequate to strong internal consistency reliability; the scales stemmed from 11, 10, and 8 items, respectively. The overall SOCCS had a Cronbach's Alpha of .90. Convergent validity was established between independent SOCCS subscales and the ATLG, Knowledge subscale of the Multicultural Counselor Counseling Knowledge and Awareness Scale (MCKAS), and the subscale Skills of the Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (CSES). Divergent validity was established by comparing SOCCS scores with social desirability questions.

None of these measurements examine the variable of interest on the target population. They are made to assess self-efficacy or competencies of counselors rather than school psychologists. The differences between the practice of school psychology and

counseling psychology necessitates some differing skills that are needed for practitioners in each field. Although Bidell's (2005) definition includes important skills that are involved in developing a working alliance with LGB students, school psychologists are ethically obligated and instructed to also act as advocates for LGBTQ students at a more systemic level (National Association of School Psychologists, 2010, 2017). Additionally, the previously constructed measures do not measure perceived self-efficacy in working with transgender clients and have few items regarding bisexual clients.

### **Purpose of Study**

Given that self-efficacy is conceptualized as an individual's beliefs about their ability to successfully produce certain outcomes given the circumstances and their abilities (Bandura, 1977, 2006), self-efficacy related to work with LGBTQ youth can be described as the perceived capabilities of school psychologists to create affirming relationships with LGBTQ students in counseling roles as well as act as an advocate for LGBTQ youth in schools. Specifically, I am interested in examining self-efficacy of school psychologists as it manifests in their perceived capabilities in several domains, similar to those defined by Dillon and Worthington (2003) and measured by the LGB-CSI, which divides counselors' skills into (a) application of knowledge, (b) advocacy, (c) awareness of identity development, (d) working relationships with clients, and (e) assessment, and those defined by Burkard et al. (2009) and measured by the LGB-WASES, which divides counselors' skills into (a) emotional bond, (b) establishing tasks, and (c) setting goals. The current study will also build upon these domains to incorporate perceived efficacy in working for LGBTQ youth at a school and systems level in addition to an individual level.

These domains of self-efficacy are measured in these previous scales, which examine some of the skills of interest. However, due to the previous scales (e.g., LGB-CSI, LGB-WASES, and SOCCS) targeting counseling psychologists and the limited or lack of items regarding specific identities within the LGBTQ community, these scales do not suffice to examine self-efficacy of school psychologists in working with and for LGBTQ youth (Bidell, 2005; Burkard et al., 2009; Dillon & Worthington, 2003). Additionally, there are some limitations of these measurements that I would like to build upon in my own research. One limitation that I hope to address is that the items generally ask the respondent to rate their ability to perform with LGB individuals as a whole rather than asking about their self-efficacy in working with members of specific populations (such as bisexual clients, who may be subject to different forms of stigmatization than lesbian or gay clients).

The purpose of this project is to create a comprehensive scale that measures school psychologists' perceptions of their own ability (i.e., self-efficacy) in working with LGBTQ students across seven domains identified by Dillon and Worthington (2003), Burkard et al. (2009), and additional system's level skills. Previous scales, such as LGB-CSI (Dillon & Worthington, 2003), LGB-WASES (Burkard et al., 2009) and SOCCS (Bidell, 2005), do not adequately sample across domains as they do not include bisexual-specific items (e.g., LGB-CSI, LGB-WASES), or transgender-specific items (e.g. LGB-CSI, LGB-WASES, SOCCS), and because they were all tailored to counselors rather than school psychologists. Thus, these scales do not adequately sample school psychologist specific tasks, context-specific activities (e.g., school-based advocacy), or consider the varying ethical and professional responsibilities associated with school psychology.

## **Method**

### **Scale Development**

To create this comprehensive scale, all previous scales (Bidell, 2005; Burkard et al., 2009; Dillon & Worthington, 2003) were reviewed and items were selected based on how well they sampled each necessary domain. Items were then modified to ensure representation of transgender and bisexual students. A scale blueprint was developed wherein a total score would represent self-efficacy of school psychologists in working with LGBTQ students, with seven subscales including (a) Application of Knowledge, (b) Emotional Bond, (c) Relationship, (d) Establishing Tasks, (e) Advocacy, (f) Self-Awareness, and (g) School Level Skills; the original version of the scale is provided in Table 1. Within the Application of Knowledge subscale, 4 items were selected from previous scales. Within the Emotional Bond subscale, 6 items were selected from previous scales. Within the Relationship subscale, 2 items were selected from previous scales. Within the Establishing Tasks subscale, 5 items were selected from previous scales and 2 items were developed with assistance from experts. Within the Advocacy subscale, 7 items were selected from previous scales and 4 were developed from the literature. Within the Self-awareness subscale, 4 items were selected from previous scales and 2 were developed from the literature. Within the School Level Skills subscale, 20 items were developed from the literature.

### **Analysis**

The scale was sent to a panel of three content experts from the field of school psychology (one expert on self-efficacy and two experts on LGBTQ youth in schools) to measure inter-rater agreement regarding the content of the scale. The experts rated

Table 1

*Expert Panelist Interrater Agreement and Recommendations*

Subscale/item	Inter-rater Agreement	Agreement	Action	Second Review
<b>Application of Knowledge</b>	100%			
1. I can identify specific mental health issues associated with the coming out process	100%	Change	Changed	Same
2. I can assist a lesbian or gay student to develop effective strategies to deal with homophobia	100%	Same		Same
3. I can assist a bisexual student to develop effective strategies to deal with biphobia	100%	Same		Same
4. I can assist a transgender or gender diverse student to develop effective strategies to deal with transphobia	100%	Same		Same
<b>Emotional Bond</b>	50%			
5. I can empathize with a lesbian or gay student who expresses pride in their sexual orientation	0%	No Agreement		Change
6. I can empathize with a bisexual student who expresses pride in their sexual orientation	0%	No Agreement		Change
7. I can empathize with a transgender or gender diverse student who expresses pride in their gender identity	0%	No Agreement		Change
8. I can feel compassion for the struggle that a LGBTQ student might experience in the coming out process	100%	Same		Same
9. I can express empathy for a LGBTQ student	100%	Same		Change
10. I can express care toward a LGBTQ student	100%	Same		Change

(continued)

Subscale/item	Inter-rater Agreement	Agreement	Action	Second Review
<b>Relationship</b>	50%			
11. I can help normalize a LGBTQ student's feelings during different points of the coming out process	0%	No Agreement	Changed	Same
12. I can establish an atmosphere of mutual trust and affirmation when working with a LGBTQ student	100%	Same		Same
<b>Establishing Tasks</b>	30%			
13. I can help a LGBTQ student determine if it is safe to come out	0%	No Agreement	Changed	Same
14. I can help a lesbian or gay student with the coming out process	0%	No Agreement	Changed	Change
15. I can help a bisexual student with the coming out process	0%	No Agreement	Changed	Change
16. I can help a transgender or gender diverse student with the coming out process	0%	No Agreement	Changed	Same
17. I can identify actions that would be beneficial in counseling a person who identifies as LGBTQ	0%	No Agreement	Changed	Same
18. I can work collaboratively with a LGBTQ student to meet their specific counseling goals	100%	Same		Same
19. I can help create an inclusive, affirming environment for LGBTQ youth	100%	Same		Same
<b>Advocacy</b>	50%			
20. I can provide a list of local or national LGBTQ-affirmative community resources and support groups to a student	100%	Same		Same

(continued)

Subscale/item	Inter-rater Agreement	Agreement	Action	Second Review
21. I can assist a LGBTQ student in connecting with openly LGBTQ role models or mentors	100%	Same		Same
22. I can provide a LGBTQ student with appropriate and positive LGBTQ-related educational materials	100%	Same		Same
23. I can refer a LGB student to affirmative resources in cases of estrangement from their families of origin	0%	No Agreement	Changed	Same
24. I can refer a transgender or gender diverse student to affirmative resources in cases of estrangement from their families of origin	0%	No Agreement	Changed	Change
25. I can refer a LGB student to affirmative legal and social supports	0%	No Agreement	Changed	Change
26. I can refer a transgender and gender diverse student to affirmative legal and social supports	0%	No Agreement	Changed	Change
27. I can offer appropriate LGBTQ affirmative referrals for a LGBTQ student whose presenting concern is related to discrimination	0%	No Agreement	Changed	Same
28. I can provide a student with school, state, federal, and institutional ordinances and laws concerning civil rights for LGB individuals	100%	Same		Same
29. I can provide a student with school, state, federal, and institutional ordinances and laws concerning civil rights for transgender and gender diverse individuals	100%	Same		Same

(continued)

Subscale/item	Inter-rater Agreement	Agreement	Action	Second Review
30. I can connect a LGBTQ student with a school's Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) or other LGBTQ student organization	100%	Same		Same
<b>Self-Awareness</b>	70%			
31. I can identify my feelings about my sexual orientation and how it may influence a student	0%	No Agreement	Changed	Change
32. I can examine my sexual orientation/identity development process	100%	Same		Same
33. I can examine my personal feelings, biases, and personal boundaries concerning sexual orientation	100%	Same		Same
34. I can examine my personal feelings, biases, and personal boundaries concerning gender (identity) and expression	100%	Same		Same
35. I can examine my gender identity development process	100%	Same		
36. I can recognize my real feelings vs. idealized feelings to be more genuine and empathic with LGBTQ students	0%	No Agreement	Changed	Change
<b>School Level</b>	65%			
37. I can provide school staff training related to issues LGBTQ students face in school	100%	Same		Same
38. I can provide school staff trainings on creating a safer and more affirming school climate for LGBTQ students	100%	Same		Same
39. I can assist in the development and organization of a Gender and Sexuality Alliance or other LGBTQ student organization in my	100%	Same		Change

(continued)

school (if it does not already have one)

Subscale/item	Inter-rater Agreement	Agreement	Action	Second Review
40. I can work as a faculty advisor for a Gender and Sexuality Alliance or other LGBTQ student organization	100%	Same	Changed order	Change
41. I can encourage staff members to support a Gender and Sexuality Alliance or other LGBTQ student organization	100%	Same	Changed order	Same
42. I can identify legal resources to assist students if the development of a Gender and Sexuality Alliance or other LGBTQ student organization receives push back	100%	Same		Same
43. I can increase visibility of LGBTQ issues around the school	0%	No Agreement	Changed	Same
44. I can increase visibility of LGBTQ+ issues by incorporating LGBTQ+ media in the school library	0%	No Agreement	Changed	Same
45. I can provide school staff and administrators with information on school, state, federal, and institutional ordinances and laws concerning civil rights/student rights for LGB students	0%	No Agreement	Changed	Same
46. I can provide school staff and administrators with information on school, state, federal, and institutional ordinances and laws concerning rights for transgender and gender diverse students	0%	No Agreement	Changed	Same
47. I can consistently use correct language when discussing	100%	No Agreement	Changed	Same

LGBTQ+ related issues with staff and students

48. I can work with students to assess school climate 100% Change Changed Change

(continued)

Subscale/item	Inter-rater Agreement	Agreement	Action	Second Review
49. I can work with students to improve school climate		Same	Changed	Change
50. I can work with parent associations to improve school climate	100%	Change	Changed	Change
51. I can work with administrators to improve school climate	100%	Same	Changed	Change
52. I can work to include resources on the school's website that help parents spot bullying	100%	Change	Changed	Same
53. I can work with staff to discuss/develop methods to discipline students who harass LGBTQ+ students or use homophobic/biphobic/transphobic language	100%	Change	Changed	Same
54. I can work to educate school staff if I hear them using incorrect or offensive language or expressing homophobic/biphobic/transphobic attitudes	0%	No Agreement	Changed	Same
55. I can work to have sexual orientation included in existing non-discrimination and anti-harassment policies	100%	Same		Same
56. I can work to have gender identity and expression included in existing non-discrimination and anti-harassment policies	0%	No Agreement	Changed	Same

*Note.* All items including “LGBTQ” were recommended to be changed to LGBTQ+ by an expert panelist, but this was not presented as recommended changes to individual items. Many items adapted from LGB-CSI, LGB-WASES, SOCCS (Bidell, 2005; Burkard et al., 2009; Dillon & Worthington, 2003).

whether each item and construct should be removed, changed, or remain the same. The experts also gave any additional feedback, such as how items should be changed or moved within the scale. Subscale level data is presented as the mean overall agreement between LGBTQ content area reviewers on the appropriateness of the subscales included and the range of agreement for items in each subscale. Item level data is presented by the mean overall agreement between reviewers for each item.

The scale was first sent to two experts on LGBTQ youth in schools for feedback. These experts included a school psychology practitioner with substantial experience working with LGBTQ youth (Reviewer I) and a school psychology trainer who has authored numerous publications related to LGBTQ student experiences (Reviewer II). Feedback from Reviewer I and Reviewer II was considered and integrated. However, when Reviewer I and Reviewer II provided contradictory feedback, feedback from Reviewer II was prioritized given this reviewer's expertise in the content area. Minor changes, including changes to wording or changes made to clarify meaning, were accepted from the Reviewer I. More significant changes that may have altered content or the constructs measured by items recommended by Reviewer I were discussed with Reviewer II and feedback from both reviewers was then used to determine how to incorporate the changes into the revised scale. This revised scale was then sent to an expert on self-efficacy for feedback. Minor changes proposed by the self-efficacy reviewer, including wording changes, clarifications, or separation of items measuring

more than one construct were put into place. Changes proposed by the self-efficacy reviewer that would alter the content or constructs being measured by items were not put into place at this time due to this being outside the scope of the current study.

Inter-rater agreement is presented for the experts on LGBTQ youth in schools, whether both experts agreed the item should be changed or kept the same, and any actions taken to modify the item. Additional feedback from an expert in self-efficacy is presented, but is not combined with the feedback from the LGBTQ content area experts due to the differences in the content they were examining the scale for at this preliminary stage in the scale's development.

## Results

**Application of Knowledge.** In the Application of Knowledge subscale, the two LGBTQ expert reviewers agreed on 100% of their recommendations. Of the original four items, the LGBTQ expert reviewers as well as the self-efficacy expert agreed that item 1 should be changed (all item numbers refer to the numbers listed in the original scale in Table 1). The item was modified to specify potentially negative responses to coming out about one's gender identity or sexual orientation. The self-efficacy reviewer did not indicate any needed changes related to self-efficacy in this domain, but recommended adding additional questions or combining this subscale with another.

**Emotional Bond.** In the Emotional Bond subscale, the two LGBTQ expert reviewers agreed on 50% of their recommendations. One LGBTQ expert reviewer recommended that the wording of items 5, 6, and 7 be changed due to negative connotations of the word empathize. These changes were not put into place after this was discussed with the second LGBTQ expert reviewer (Reviewer II) and it was decided that "empathize" would be the most appropriate and specific term for these items. The self-efficacy reviewer did not recommend changes related to self-efficacy within this subscale. This reviewer recommended six items be changed due to potential redundancy within the subscale.

**Relationship.** The two LGBTQ expert area reviewers agreed on 50% of their recommendations in the Relationship subscale. One LGBTQ expert reviewer recommended that item 11 be changed, while both LGBTQ expert reviewers agreed that item 12 should be kept the same. Item 11 was altered to include both feelings and experiences of students. The self-efficacy reviewer did not indicate any issues regarding

this scale measuring self-efficacy and did not recommend changes be made to items. This reviewer recommended items be added to this subscale or for it to be combined with another subscale.

**Establishing Tasks.** In the Establishing Tasks subscale, the LGBTQ expert reviewers agreed on 30% of their recommendations. One LGBTQ expert reviewer recommended changes on five items, while both LGBTQ expert reviewers agreed that two items should be kept the same. Item 13 was altered to specify if it was likely safe to come out. Items 14, 15, and 16 were changed to refer to assisting students to understand their coming out process to avoid connotations of practitioners persuading students to come out. The content of item 17 was changed to reference possible topics rather than actions that may be beneficial in counseling. The self-efficacy reviewer did not indicate any issues regarding this subscale measuring self-efficacy. This reviewer recommended changing two items due to potential overlap between items measuring skills working with different populations.

**Advocacy.** In the Advocacy subscale, the LGBTQ expert reviewers agreed on recommendations for 50% of the items. One LGBTQ expert reviewer recommended that five items be changed and both LGBTQ expert reviewers agreed that 6 items should be kept the same. The self-efficacy reviewer recommended changes to three items. The self-efficacy expert reviewer recommended that items 25 and 26 be divided into two questions due to the items examining the practitioners' knowledge in legal supports and social supports. Items 23 and 24 were altered to examine the practitioner's ability to help students find resources due to the possibility that there may be areas where such resources are not available. Items 25, 26, and 27 were expanded to include resources

locally or online. The self-efficacy reviewer did not indicate any issues regarding this scale measuring self-efficacy. This expert reviewer's additional recommended item changes related to the items measuring skills relating to separate identity groups.

**Self-Awareness.** The LGBTQ expert reviewers agreed on their recommendations for 70% of the items in the Self-Awareness subscale. One LGBTQ expert reviewer recommended changes to two items and both LGBTQ expert reviewers agreed that four items should be kept the same. The self-efficacy reviewer recommended changes being made to items 31 and 36 to increase the clarity of these items. Item 31 was altered to emphasize how the practitioners' sexual orientation may affect the process of working with a student. Item 36 was altered for clarity. No concerns were reported regarding these items measuring self-efficacy.

**School Level.** In the School Level subscale, the LGBTQ expert reviewers agreed on their recommendations for 65% of the items included in this subscale. One or more LGBTQ expert reviewers recommended making changes to 11 items and these reviewers agreed that nine items be kept the same. The order of items 39 and 40 were switched at request of one reviewer. The wording of item 43 was altered from "LGBT issues" to a more specific description. Item 44 was altered to specify the inclusion of media with LGBTQ+ characters. The wording of items 45, 46, 47, 53, and 54 was changed from "staff" to "staff members." Item 48 was altered to specify that student perceptions of school climate would be assessed. The wording of item 52 was changed to be more inclusive of guardians/caretakers and to include more specific language of identifying bullying. Item 56 was changed to specify gender expression. The self-efficacy content area expert recommended changes be made to six items in this subscale. Item 39 was

changed to eliminate the parenthetical statement. Item 40 was recommended to be changed to clarify the meaning of “faculty advisor,” but was kept the same at this time. Items 49, 50, and 51 were condensed to measure the ability to work with a variety of school stakeholders to assess school climate. The self-efficacy expert did not report concerns about the items measuring content other than self-efficacy.

The content of 27 out of the original 56 items was altered in the modified scale. Additionally, the term “LGBTQ” was changed to “LGBTQ+” at the recommendation of the expert panel; however, while this change resulted in a change to a number of items, we did not count every item as altered for this change alone. Due to the purpose of this study, recommended changes targeting aspects of the scale other than improving content validity were not implemented at this time. The final set of items is presented in Table 2. Many items included in Table 2 were adapted from LGB-CSI, LGB-WASES, and SOCCS (Bidell, 2005; Burkard et al., 2009; Dillon & Worthington, 2003).

Table 2

*Finalized LGBTQ School Psychology Self-Efficacy Scale*

<b>One-on-one</b>
<i>Application of Knowledge</i>
1. I can identify specific mental health issues that influence or are a result of coming out in terms of sexual and/or gender identity 2. I can assist a lesbian or gay student to develop effective strategies to deal with homophobia 3. I can assist a bisexual student to develop effective strategies to deal with biphobia 4. I can assist a transgender or gender diverse student to develop effective strategies to deal with transphobia
<i>Emotional Bond</i>
5. I can empathize with a lesbian or gay student who expresses pride in their sexual orientation 6. I can empathize with a bisexual student who expresses pride in their sexual orientation 7. I can empathize with a transgender or gender diverse student who expresses pride in their gender identity 8. I can feel compassion for the struggle that a LGBTQ+ student might experience in the coming out process 9. I can express empathy for a LGBTQ+ student 10. I can express care toward a LGBTQ+ student
<i>Relationship</i>
11. I can help normalize a LGBTQ+ student's feelings and experiences during different points of the coming out process 12. I can establish an atmosphere of mutual trust and affirmation when working with a LGBTQ+ student
<i>Establishing Tasks</i>
13. I can help a LGBTQ+ student determine if it will likely be safe to come out 14. I can help a lesbian or gay student understand their coming out process 15. I can help a bisexual student understand their coming out process 16. I can help a transgender or gender diverse student understand their coming out process 17. I can identify possible topics that would be beneficial in counseling a person who identifies as LGBTQ+ 18. I can work collaboratively with a LGBTQ+ student to meet their specific counseling goals

(continued)

19. I can help create an inclusive, affirming environment for LGBTQ+ youth

*Advocacy*

20. I can provide a list of local or national LGBTQ+ affirmative community resources and support groups to a student
21. I can assist a LGBTQ+ student in connecting with openly LGBTQ+ role models or mentors
22. I can provide a LGBTQ+ student with appropriate and positive LGBTQ+ related educational materials
23. I know how to help a LGB student find emergency affirmative resources in cases of estrangement from their families of origin
24. I know how to help a transgender or gender diverse student find emergency affirmative resources in cases of estrangement from their families of origin
25. I know how a LGB student can access affirmative legal supports either locally or online
26. I know how a LGB student can access affirmative social supports either locally or online
27. I know how a transgender or gender diverse student can access affirmative legal supports either locally or online
28. I know how a transgender or gender diverse student can access affirmative social supports either locally or online
29. I can offer appropriate LGBTQ+ affirmative referrals for a LGBTQ+ student whose presenting concern is related to discrimination either locally or online
30. I can provide a student with school, state, federal, and institutional ordinances and laws concerning civil rights for LGB individuals
31. I can provide a student with school, state, federal, and institutional ordinances and laws concerning civil rights for transgender and gender diverse individuals
32. I can connect a LGBTQ+ student with a school's Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) or other LGBTQ+ student organization

*Self-Awareness*

33. I can identify how my own sexual orientation may influence the process of working with a student
34. I can examine my sexual orientation/identity development process
35. I can examine my personal feelings, biases, and personal boundaries concerning sexual orientation
36. I can examine my personal feelings, biases, and personal boundaries concerning gender (identity) and expression
37. I can examine my gender identity development process

(continued)

38. I can recognize when the feelings I present to others about LGBTQ+ students are not consistent with my real feelings towards these students

**School Level**

39. I can provide school staff training related to issues LGBTQ+ students face in school
40. I can provide school staff trainings on creating a safer and more affirming school climate for LGBTQ+ students
41. I can assist in the development and organization of a Gender and Sexuality Alliance or other LGBTQ+ student organization in my school
42. I can work as a faculty advisor for a Gender and Sexuality Alliance or other LGBTQ+ student organization
43. I can encourage staff members to support a Gender and Sexuality Alliance or other LGBTQ+ student organization
44. I can identify legal resources to assist students if the development of a Gender and Sexuality Alliance or other LGBTQ+ student organization receives push back
45. I can increase visibility of positive LGBTQ identities, history, and acceptance around the school
46. I can increase visibility of LGBTQ+ issues by incorporating media with LGBTQ+ characters in the school library
47. I can provide school staff members and administrators with information on school, state, federal, and institutional ordinances and laws concerning civil rights/student rights for LGB students
48. I can provide school staff members and administrators with information on school, state, federal, and institutional ordinances and laws concerning rights for transgender and gender diverse students
49. I can consistently use correct language when discussing LGBTQ+ related issues with staff members and students
50. I can assess student perceptions of school climate
51. I can work with school stakeholders (including administrators, staff members, families/guardians/caretakers, students) to improve school climate
52. I can work to include resources on the school's website that help families/guardians/caretakers detect signs of bullying
53. I can work with staff members to discuss/develop methods to intervene with students who harass LGBTQ+ students or use homophobic/biphobic/transphobic language
54. I can work to educate school staff if I hear them using incorrect or offensive language or expressing homophobic/biphobic/transphobic attitudes
55. I can work to have sexual orientation included in existing non-discrimination and anti-harassment policies
56. I can work to have gender identity and gender expression included in existing non-discrimination and anti-harassment policies

## **Conclusion**

The current study sought to propose a comprehensive scale of school psychology self-efficacy in working with LGBTQ students as well as examine content validity of this proposed scale. While other scales have been developed that measure the self-efficacy of counselors in working with LGB populations (Bidell, 2005; Burkard et al., 2009; Dillon & Worthington, 2003), this scale seeks to expand counselor-specific scales to assess skills specific to school psychology and to include additional bisexual and transgender specific items. Given the lack of scales measuring school psychologists' self-efficacy or competency in this domain, the proposed scale may allow researchers, practitioners, and trainers to better understand how school psychologists perceive themselves capable of completing these tasks and take actions accordingly.

The results of this study indicate varying levels of content validity regarding the subscales included within the original proposed scale. Overall, the self-efficacy expert reviewer did not express concerns regarding the content validity of any items in the scale regarding their measurement of self-efficacy, although other concerns were reported as described above.

Following review, there were seven subscales with between two and 18 items each in the finalized scale. Each item was on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The first subdomain, Application of Knowledge, consisted of four questions measuring school psychologists' self-efficacy in applying knowledge of LGBTQ youth and issues faced by these students in practice. The second subdomain, Emotional Bond, consisted of 6 items measuring self-efficacy in expressing and feeling empathy or compassion towards LGBTQ youth. The third subdomain, Relationship,

consisted of 2 items measuring self-efficacy of practitioners in establishing a therapeutic relationship with LGBTQ youth built on trust. The fourth subdomain, Establishing Tasks, consisted of 7 items measuring the school psychologists' self-efficacy in developing tasks within the therapeutic setting, including helping LGBTQ students understand the process of potentially coming out to others about their sexual orientation or gender identity. The fifth subdomain, Advocacy, consisted of 13 items measuring the school psychologists' self-efficacy in assisting LGBTQ students gain access to affirmative resources online and within the community. The sixth subdomain, Self-Awareness, consisted of 6 items measuring the practitioner's self-efficacy in understanding their own identity development and how it may affect their work with LGBTQ youth. The seventh subdomain, School Level, consisted of 18 items measuring school psychologists' self-efficacy in working within the school setting to advocate for LGBTQ youth and educate stakeholders on policies that would be beneficial to these students.

### **Implications**

Due to the ethical obligations of practicing school psychologists stated in NASP's Principles of Professional Ethics (2010) and the specific recommendations outlined in the organization's position statements regarding LGBTQ youth in schools (National Association of School Psychologists, 2014, 2017), school psychologists are obligated to build their skills in the areas outlined in this scale. Given the unique difficulties and harassment LGBTQ students face in schools (James et al., 2016; Kosciw et al., 2016) and the role of school psychologists to act as advocates for all students (NASP, 2010), knowledge and skills in advocating for these students are valuable for practitioners.

The use of this scale to examine practitioners' levels of self-efficacy in accomplishing tasks related to working effectively with and for LGBTQ youth in schools may be a beneficial step to understanding which of these skills school psychologists are confident with, and which skills they feel they need more training, practice, or supervision with. This scale may be useful in training programs for evaluating the development of student confidence in providing services across coursework, practicum, and internship placement.

Additionally, practitioners may be able to examine their own level of self-efficacy in accomplishing the tasks outlined in the scale, which may encourage individuals to pursue future training if their self-efficacy levels are low. Such self-reflection may be a starting point for individuals to pursue further development of their skills related to working with LGBTQ students. Given NASP's statement that school psychologists have an ethical obligation to advocate for LGBTQ youth (NASP, 2010), it is a pertinent question to know if these practitioners perceive themselves capable of completing the tasks that they are encouraged and expected to do.

### **Limitations**

One limitation of this study is the small number of expert panelists included. Instances of disagreement between the two LGBTQ expert panelists necessitated the researcher to use best judgement and research evidence, when available, to determine which recommendation to follow. Additionally, only one self-efficacy expert was included in the review process. A second self-efficacy reviewer may have provided additional insights and opportunities for further scale development. Incorporating

additional panelists with expertise in LGBTQ-related knowledge and self-efficacy would provide useful information for this scale's development.

Potential limitations for this scale include the nature of the scale relying on self-report for measurement. Due to the nature of self-report scales, individuals completing the scale may not accurately rate their actual performance or skill mastery regarding the skills proposed in the items. Future use of this scale may be bolstered by comparing an individual's self-efficacy ratings in these domains to an outside measure, such as review by a supervisor, a test of LGBTQ-related content knowledge, or observation of the individual's performance in these areas. Additionally, individuals with more knowledge concerning LGBTQ students or issues in schools may rate their self-efficacy lower due to the understanding of what all may be involved in completing the activities listed in the items, whereas those with little knowledge may assume the tasks would be less difficult or complex. Finally, some subscales included in this scale may need to be expanded to ensure content are adequately covered. As it currently exists, the Relationship subscale only has two items, which may limit our ability to adequately sample from that construct. This few items may result in subscales with low reliability and thus, limited validity and utility.

### **Future Directions**

As indicated previously, next steps for this project would include the addition of new items to increase construct representation and create sufficient items to measure the constructs. Specific subscales that will likely need to be expanded include the Relationship and Application of Knowledge subscales. Further examination of the literature would need to be completed to identify tasks relevant for school psychologists

in these areas. Upon the addition of novel items, review of this scale by additional experts in the areas of LGBTQ content knowledge and self-efficacy would be necessary to refine the present scale and any additional items. The addition of more reviewers would enable a more comprehensive evaluation of the scale.

Before any form of application, the finalized LGBTQ School Psychology Self-Efficacy Scale needs further psychometric testing. Specifically, scale reliability, structural validity (e.g., results of exploratory factor analysis), and convergent validity evidence would need to be obtained before it could be used meaningfully for evaluation of competencies. Eventual piloting of the proposed scale to practicing school psychologists and university trainees would be necessary for this process. In future research, this scale may be used to examine correlations between related constructs and LGBTQ-related self-efficacy.

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