

# Pre-service Teachers' Decisions for Including LGBTQ+ Children's Literature in Their Future K-6 Classrooms

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## Introduction

As a student in the Elementary Education Program, I observed reluctance to incorporate LGBTQ+ children's literature into elementary classrooms. LGBTQ+ children's literature is **necessary to include in elementary classrooms to create a space for conversations of gender identity and sexuality** (Blackburn et al., 2016). Victor Malo-Juvera (2015) found four themes to describe pre-service teachers' reasons for including or excluding LGBTQ+ Children's literature. "The four themes were: Backlash, Student Reactions, Unnecessary to Teach, and Lack of Ability to Teach (Malo-Juvera, 2015 p. 14). **Inclusion of LGBTQ+ literature in pre-service education is vital for teachers to feel equipped to teach in their future classrooms (Buchanan et al., 2019).** In efforts to improve teacher preparation, we wanted to know what factors, if any, might impact a pre-service teacher's decisions to include LGBTQ+ children's literature in their future classroom.

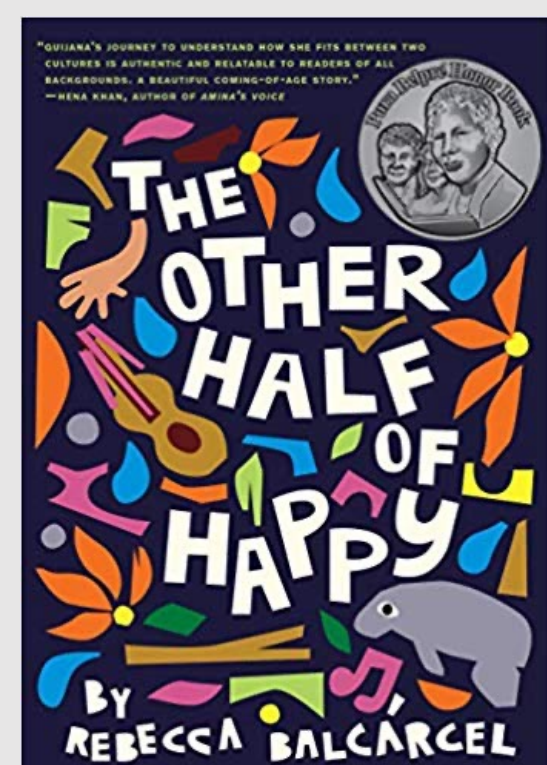


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## Research Question

How do pre-service teachers identify the factors including/excluding LGBTQ+ children's literature in the K-6 classroom?

## Methods

### Participants

Through email recruitment to universities and colleges across Indiana, pre-service teachers who were currently enrolled in a teacher preparation program were invited to participate. More than 80 responded to the survey, however we were only able to accept 52 participants who met the criteria and completed the survey.

### Survey

The online anonymous survey asks a total of thirteen questions with ten multiple choice questions, two text-entry questions, and one ranked order question. Students received a Starbucks gift card for completing the survey.

Read aloud and availability for individual use in an online and classroom library.

Available for individual use in an online and classroom library.

No individual availability, but available in school library only.

NO availability.

### Data Analysis

Preliminary data analysis identified the self-reported factors for including/excluding children's LGBTQ+ literature and matched it with the qualitative data to make sense of the responses.

## Initial Findings

**69.5% of respondents identified "knowledge of literature" as their number one reason for including LGBTQ+ literature in their future classrooms**

**And 17.4% said their main reason was community response. However, those who stated that they would read aloud a book from the LGBTQ+ literature, 75% cited knowledge as one of their main reasons.**

One respondent who would not use a read aloud but would provide access to LGBTQ+ children's literature stated:

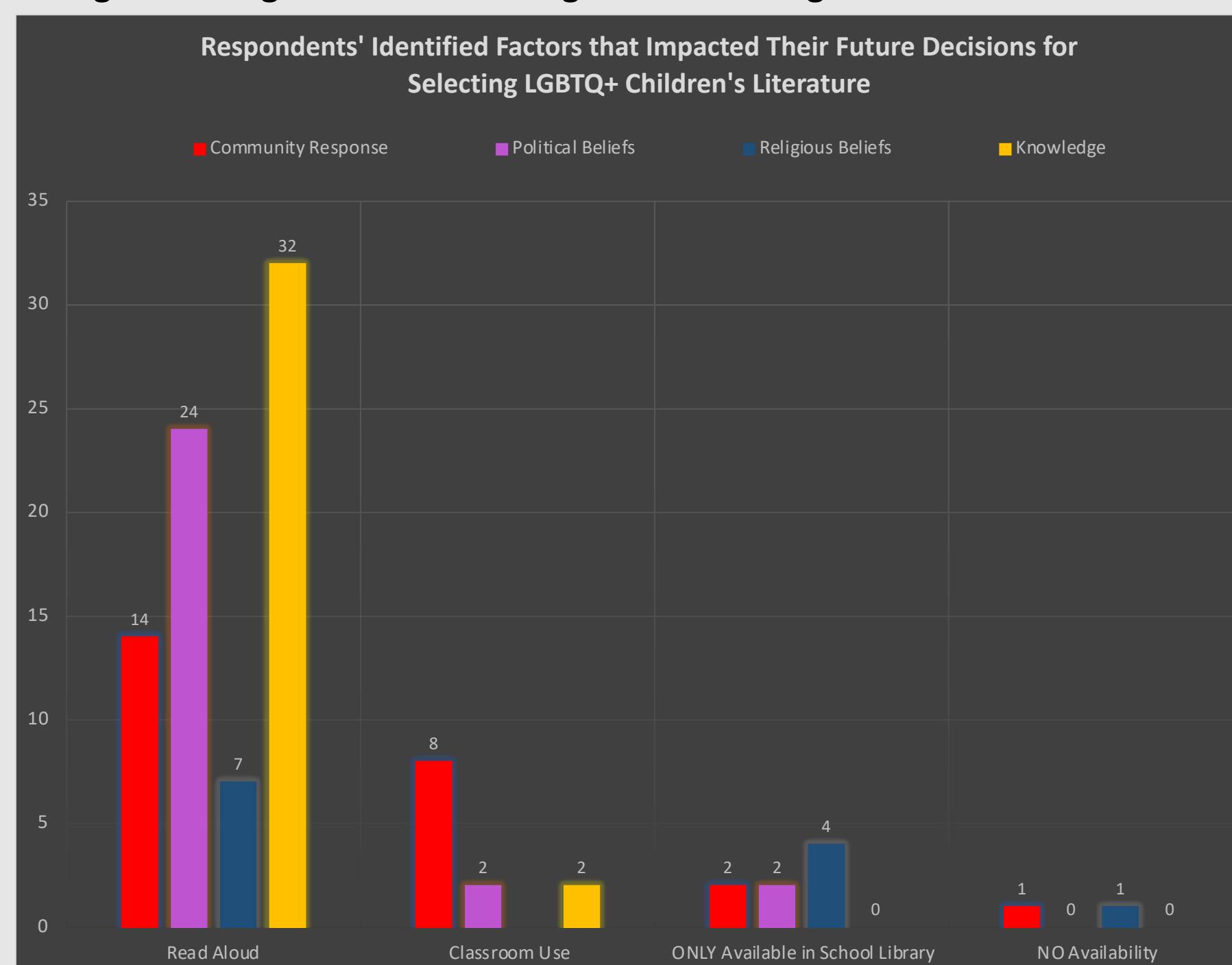
*I know schools and teachers can get a lot of backlash from the community. I think it is good to spread LGBTQ awareness, but in a safe way.*

This individual identified **community response** as a main factor in their decision-making and this may be an indicator for prohibiting utilizing a read aloud with this topic.

A respondent who would utilize a read aloud and chose **knowledge** as their number one factor said:

*To have knowledge of LGBTQ+ literature is to know that it is simply a different perspective. This literature is not pushing any beliefs on anyone, but is simply representing a different population, and it is literature that many students may see themselves in. This makes me want to include LGBTQ+ literature in my classroom.*

This response displays a desire to create an inclusive classroom while also seeing knowledge as a determining factor in doing such.



## Limitations

- Participants were able to provide their own interpretation of **knowledge** and **community response**.
- Co-PI Barrett entered the data collection with bias based on previous experiences in a teacher preparation program and may have asked different questions if that bias had been evaluated further.
- Time between data collection and analysis did not provide opportunities to evaluate all of the data pertaining to participant demographics.

Availability	#1 Factor
Read Aloud	Knowledge
Classroom Use	Community Response
ONLY Available in School Library	Religious Beliefs
NO Availability	Community Response and Religious Beliefs

## Conclusions

Based on the data we analyzed, we have found that respondents chose a variety of factors that impacted their decision to include/exclude LGBTQ+ children's literature in their future classrooms. However, when asked to identify the most important factor, knowledge of this type of literature impacted respondent's decisions. Of those who chose to limit this literature to classroom use and not perform a read aloud, identified that community response was a major factor limiting their use of LGBTQ+ literature in a K-6 classroom. These preliminary findings show how influential **knowledge** is in pre-service teacher's decisions because **knowledge** ranked as the number one influential factor in pre-service teachers' decision to include/exclude LGBTQ+ children's literature. This finding may impact teacher preparation programs' decisions to provide more opportunities for teacher candidates to examine, read, and discover LGBTQ+ children's literature.

## Recommendations/Further Research

Analyzing the demographic data will be the next step to determine if geographic location, age, race, and gender correlate to the current findings. We will also be evaluating the qualitative data for emergent themes around community response. At this preliminary stage, it seems relevant to inform teacher preparation programs that including LGBTQ+ children's literature in required coursework may support decisions to include this literature in future classroom teaching.

## References

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