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Affecting Social Change for Transgender and Gender-Expansive Children: Exploring Advocates' Perspectives

Cortny Stark

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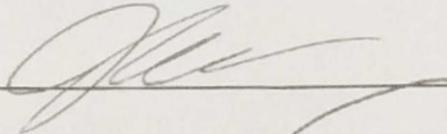
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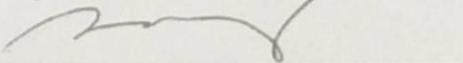
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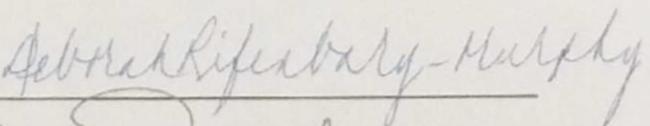
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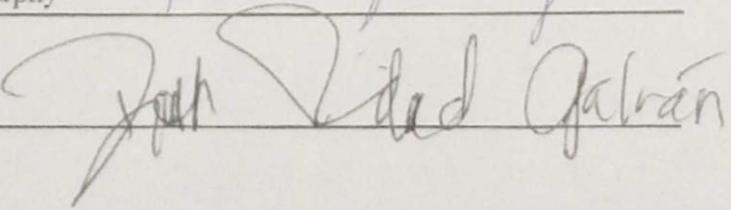
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Advocates' Perspectives**

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CHILDREN: EXPLORING ADVOCATES' PERSPECTIVES**

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ABSTRACT

This interpretive case study explored the experience of advocates as they pursue social change for transgender and gender-expansive children (ages 4-12). The aim of the study is to improve current understanding of the process of advocacy for this population, as well as the context in which advocacy efforts occur. Data consisted of hour long interviews, advocacy artifacts as recommended by participants, and the researcher's field journal. Participants included 12 advocates from a variety of backgrounds and geographic locations within the United States, to include educators, community advocates, and helping professionals. Implications of this study may include increased understanding of the advocacy process, and the various ways individuals navigate social systems to affect positive change for transgender and gender-expansive children.

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“None of us get into this work because it's fun or because it sounds interesting. We get into the work because we're somewhat touched by it, broken by it, and need to heal in some way, shape, or form. And that was certainly a part of it for me.” – Participant Amanda

Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

“Indeed, we can argue that no one achieves autonomy without the assistance or support of a community, especially if one is to make a brave and difficult choice such as transitioning”

(Butler, 2004, p. 76)

Defining Gender

Gender consists of three primary components: Identity, body, and expression. Identity refers to one’s “deeply held, internal sense of self as male, female, a blend of both, or neither” (“The Gender Spectrum”, 2018), while the bodily aspect of gender attends to one’s experience in their body, and how society “genders” their body. The expression of gender is how one presents their gender to others, and how society, community, and family may attempt to shape or influence one’s gender (“The Gender Spectrum”, 2018). Forces within society, one’s community, and the school environment may either reinforce oppressive social norms about gender, or support and affirm gender-variant identities, and advocate for social change.

Transgender and gender-expansive youth self-identify their gender as early as three years of age (Lopez, Stewart, & Jacobson-Dickman, 2016), and express their gender identity in a variety of ways. Young children may articulate their transgender identity and expression verbally or behaviorally by indicating a preference for dressing like the gender with which they identify, preferring playmates of the gender with which they identify, expressing a strong dislike for their sexual anatomy, and exhibiting a desire for sex characteristics of their (use of gender pronoun intentional) identified gender (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). When compared to children merely exploring gender identity and expression, the experience of children who

identify as transgender is distinct, as transgender children consistently, insistently, and persistently describe their gender identity as that which does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth (Zucker, 2005). While persons who are transgender often identify with one of the binary genders (e.g. male or female), both transgender and gender-expansive individuals may describe their gender identity as both male and female genders, neither male nor female, or may describe their identity in their own unique terms (The Gender Spectrum, 2018). In other words, the meaning assigned to the terms transgender and gender-expansive are specific to the individual who uses this term to describe their identity, and the definitions provided in this manuscript may not be accurate for all transgender and gender-expansive individuals.

Affirming Gender & Contrasting Perspectives

The medical community and mental health professions conceptualize transgender and gender-expansive identities as a normative part of human development (Stein, 2017; Association of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues in Counseling, 2009), and “not inherently pathological” (American Psychological Association, 2015, p. 835). The Association of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues in Counseling (ALGBTIC) (2009), a branch of the American Counseling Association (ACA), provides helping professionals with competencies for counseling with transgender and gender-expansive clients. The ALGBTIC (2009) competencies articulate an affirmative approach to working with this population. The ACA also provides continuing education courses to ensure competent practice in addressing the needs of these individuals. The American Psychological Association endorses the Gender Affirmative Model, a best practices approach to working with transgender and gender-expansive youth that supports and affirms these individuals’ right to live as their authentic selves (Keo-Meier & Ehrensaft, 2018).

Although these foundational professional organizations publicly support and affirm transgender and gender-expansive identities, non-evidence based “reparative” and “conversion” therapies are still practiced by helping professionals in the United States. Professionals practicing this form of therapy aim to alter transgender person’s identity to align with the sex assigned at birth. As of March 2018, the practice of reparative and conversion therapy with youth under the age of eighteen is banned in nine states (Movement Advancement Project, 2018). The methods associated with conversion therapy promote and reinforce client self-hatred, and have been associated with increases in client suicidal ideation, anxiety, depression, and genital mutilation (Hicks, 1999). Despite the rejection of this mode of therapy, reparative therapy is still practiced by licensed therapists and endorsed by organizations such as Positive Approaches to Healthy Sexuality (PATH, formerly known as Positive Alternatives to Homosexuality) and the Alliance for Therapeutic Choice and Scientific Integrity.

Marginalization, Discrimination & Politicization at the Individual and Systems Levels

In spite of the consensus of foundational institutions regarding the unethical nature of “conversion” and “reparative” therapy, and the validity of transgender and gender-expansive identities, the American public remains divided on whether transgender persons’ gender identity is enough to allow access to the bathroom of the gender with which they identify. According to the New York Times/CBS poll, 46% percent of the general public “say they think that transgender people should be allowed to use only public restrooms corresponding to their gender at birth”, while 41% state that transgender persons should be able to utilize the facilities of the gender with which they identify (Thee-Brenan, 2016).

Transgender youth are experiencing discrimination as a result of the highly-politicized bathroom issue, with multiple publicized examples of transgender K-12 students who previously

were able to utilize the facilities of the gender with which they identify, suddenly informed by their school district administration that new school policy requires them to use the restroom that aligns with the sex listed on their birth certificate. The families of several of these students have entered litigation with the school districts, arguing that such bathroom policies are “unconstitutional under the Fourteenth Amendment, and violate Title IX of the U.S. Education Amendments of 1972” (American Civil Liberties Union, 2017). Both in the public arena and school environment, transgender and gender-expansive youth experience the stigma assigned to persons whose gender does not align with the binary identities of male or female.

Discrimination in schools is evident in more than bathroom policy. School anti-bullying protocols tend to focus on general acts of aggression, and fail to address the unique aspects of gendered and transphobic harassment (Meyer, 2009). The adverse consequences of school administration’s failure to incorporate adequate interventions for addressing gendered harassment is evident in the GLSEN National School Climate Survey findings. According to the survey, 56.4% of students report frequently hearing negative and transphobic comments from fellow students, with 42.3% of students stating that teachers or staff failed to intervene when they were present for such derogatory remarks (Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer, and Boesen, 2014). Unaddressed gendered harassment in schools directly affectss students educational experience. Students who experienced Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) discrimination in the school environment were:

More than three times as likely to have missed school in the past month as those who had not (42.3% vs. 13.8%); have lower GPAs than their peers (3.0 vs. 3.3); and have lower self-esteem and higher levels of depression (Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer, and Boesen, 2014, p. 20).

Reflecting on the results of the GLSEN school climate survey, Kosciw, Greytak, Giga, Villenas, and Danischewski (2016) call for family members, educators, and community members of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) youth to advocate for anti-bullying policies, and school policy that protects LGBTQ youth and ensures equal access to a safe educational environment conducive to learning. The role of advocates is critical in addressing the discrimination these youth face, as their efforts challenge discriminatory beliefs and policies, and oppressive behavior. The pervasive nature of discriminatory beliefs and attitudes towards LGBTQ persons, particularly those who are transgender or gender-expansive, influences this groups' experience in numerous other contexts outside of the school environment.

The Effects of Marginalization, Stigmatization & Politicization

Young people who fail to fit within the male or female gender binary often experience a “radical dislocation” from society (Butler, 1986, p. 27). Transgender and gender-expansive youth experience additional barriers when presenting as their authentic selves, as they experience higher rates of stressful childhood experiences (Schneeberger et al., 2014; Grossman & D’Augelli, 2006), verbal and physical violence within the school environment (Kosciw, Diaz & Greytak, 2010), and discrimination throughout the lifespan (Schneeberger et al., 2014). In the healthcare setting, gender-expansive and transgender youth experience discrimination in the form of physician’s refusal to provide medical services necessary for gender transition, and health insurance refusal to pay for gender transition related services (Safer et al., 2016).

Transgender and gender-expansive youth experience the stigmatization of their gender identity in the public arena, school environment, and within institutions responsible for medical and mental health care. Youth facing discrimination experience additional disadvantage, as their status as minors often prevents them from engaging in self-advocacy without parent/caregiver

support. One example of this dilemma is the district policy of Rio Rancho Public Schools (RRPS), a school district in the Southwest United States. Rio Rancho Public Schools requires parents/caregivers of transgender and gender-expansive students to meet with school administration before school personnel will: 1) acknowledge the child using appropriate pronouns, and “preferred” name, and 2) allow the child to access the facilities (e.g. restrooms, locker or changing facilities) of the gender with which they identify (T. Burgos, December 1, 2016). Thus transgender and gender-expansive youth may be unable to achieve basic recognition of their gender identity in environments such as school without the support and advocacy efforts of parents/caregivers.

Addressing Marginalization, Discrimination & Politicization: The Role of Advocacy

Transgender and gender-expansive youth may face challenges that require advocacy efforts beyond that available from supportive and affirming parents/caregivers. Social service and healthcare clinicians may serve as advocates, helping transgender and gender-expansive youth and their loved ones to navigate institutions such as healthcare, and mental health services. Community advocates (also referenced in this manuscript as community-based advocates) may connect these young people with affirming social service clinicians and healthcare providers, provide information about additional resources, and provide guidance regarding methods of addressing barriers to services. Individuals in a variety of settings, from counselors to healthcare professionals, may engage in efforts to support and affirm transgender and gender-expansive youth, using their own resources to promote positive change for this population (Holman & Goldberg, 2006). It is the efforts of advocates that shed light on sources of discrimination, and work to diminish the adverse experiences of transgender and gender-expansive youth.

This manuscript aims to explore the experiences of adult advocates for transgender and gender-expansive youth, specifically young people ages 4-12 years, to illuminate *how* these advocates pursue social change for this population. The discrimination, barriers to services, and social stigma faced by transgender and gender-expansive youth has dire lifelong consequences (Institute of Medicine, 2011). Advocates for this population act as instruments of change, as their efforts work to diminish the experiences and effects of discrimination and empower transgender and gender-expansive young people. The purpose of this study is to utilize interpretive case study (Merriam, 1988) to provide readers with a rich description of how advocates address sources of oppression and pursue social change for transgender and gender-expansive youth.

Purpose of the Study

“Nothing about us without us” (Charlton, 1998)

Why Advocacy? Why Now?

Although there is a growing body of research concerning the role of counselors (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001), psychologists and other mental health professionals (Edwards-Leeper, Leibowitz & Sangganjanavanich, 2016), and parents/caregivers (Ryan, 2009; 2014) in empowering and advocating for social change for transgender and gender-expansive youth, there is a distinct lack of qualitative literature regarding the experience of advocates and the context surrounding their efforts. This study contributes a unique perspective to the existing literature by exploring the personal and professional experience of advocates as they pursue positive social change for gender-expansive children. Advocates will include helping professionals such as licensed social workers, counselors, and psychologists, as well as educators, and community-based advocates who work with or on behalf of transgender and gender-expansive youth in their local area to address discriminatory practices, reduce barriers to resources, and empower the

individual. These advocates may attend to both systems-level variables (e.g. discriminatory practices at a child's school that prevent the child from utilizing the facilities of the gender with which they identify) as well as individual concerns (e.g. a child would like to address emotional distress related to lack of congruence between current physical presentation and gender identity) (Singh, 2010).

The core phenomenon or “unit of analysis” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545) explored in this project is the process of advocating, which includes those efforts which aim to elevate the voices of transgender and gender-expansive youth (ages 4-12 years). The interpretive case study research design best fits this phenomenon, as the process of advocating for this population is bounded by contextual variables (Johansson, 2003), to include: Time (relative to history, current events, and political context), space (geographic location, and surrounding community), participant's demographic characteristics, and each participant's unique approach to advocacy.

This study includes participants from across the United States (US) and occurs in the year 2018, two years into the presidency of Republican Donald Trump. The current U.S. government administration has promoted policies that directly impact the lives of transgender and gender-expansive youth, from the rescission of the Department of Justice Title IX guidance that specifies the inclusion of transgender and gender-expansive students as a protected population, to the Supreme Court's failure to hear the case of Gavin Grimm—a high school student whose school denied him access to their male facilities due to his transgender identity. Advocacy efforts play an essential role in reducing the vulnerability of transgender and gender-expansive youth (Grossman & D'augelli, 2006). Considering the critical need for advocacy in the current political and social climate, now is the time to explore and interpret the process of advocacy for this population, and the context in which this process is embedded.

Transgender and gender-expansive children are at the front lines of a revolutionary shift in American culture as their very existence and visibility challenges one of the country's strongest cultural beliefs, that gender and sex are synonymous and have only two binary identities, male or female. Advocates sustain this revolution by sharing their stories, pursuing social change, and supporting the next generation of gender-expansive individuals (Stryker, 2017). This study aims to explore how advocates who work to elevate the voices of transgender and gender-expansive youth pursue social change for this population. Merriam's (1988; 1998) approach to interpretive case study was utilized as the research design, guiding data collection and data analysis, with themes and concepts emerging from the review of each participant's case, followed by comparison of themes and concepts across cases.

Significance of the Study

Study Context & Relationship with Current Literature

Numerous texts are advertised as the essential "hand book" for educating caregivers and advocates about the gender identity development of gender-expansive children and how to support them in their journey. Texts such as Brill and Pepper's (2008) *The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals* assists caregivers and advocates to determine whether a child is transgender, and discusses the role of family and community acceptance, and affirming parenting strategies in these children's health and wellbeing.

The handbook, which is recommended by a multitude of national advocacy organizations (i.e. Genderspectrum.org, Human Rights Campaign's Welcoming Schools Initiative), provides some suggestions for advocating for gender-expansive youth. These portions of the text include a discussion of school-based advocacy, encouraging advocates to help supportive caregivers of gender-expansive youth to: Seek trans-inclusive changes in policy, update their child's

identifying information to ensure preferred name and pronouns are honored and privacy maintained, and educate school staff and other parents about transgender identity (Brill & Pepper, 2008). Although this handbook provides an overview of the practical advocacy interventions, the text is geared more towards families and caregivers who are unfamiliar with the transgender or LGBTQ community.

Brill and Pepper's (2008) text provides pragmatic guidance in layman's terms and fails to provide guidance or insight concerning systems-level advocacy. A comprehensive model of advocacy for this population must include references to systems-level advocacy, as community-based advocates, helping professionals, and parent/caregiver(s) often confront systems-level sources of oppression that exist within institutions. The primary association for the counseling profession has endorsed a conceptual model that goes beyond Brill and Pepper's (2008) pragmatic guidance for supporting gender-expansive youth, and describes advocacy as occurring within a multitude of arenas and at both the micro and macro levels.

The American Counseling Association (ACA) Advocacy Competencies provide a conceptual model for understanding the multiple levels and domains in which advocacy efforts can occur (Lewis, Arnold, House & Toporek, 2003). The approaches to advocacy described in this model seem to parallel the work of a variety of advocates, from those working at a community level, to helping professionals, and educators. No matter their profession or field, those individuals who act with or on behalf of gender-expansive children work towards the common goal of promoting the child's wellbeing. The similarities in advocate's efforts seem to allow the application of the ACA Advocacy Competencies Model as a means of conceptualizing advocacy efforts, even though this model was originally developed to explain the advocacy efforts of counseling professionals.

The Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler & McCullough, 2015) further describe those counseling interventions and advocacy efforts that enable social justice work at multiple levels. These competencies outline the attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, skills, and actions that inform social justice counseling. Counselors practicing from a social justice perspective know when to engage in systems advocacy, to assist a client to develop self-advocacy skills, and when to “address the historical events and persons that shape and influence privileged and marginalized client’s developmental history” (p. 12). These competencies outline the many ways that counselors can affect positive change through their privileged role as helping professionals. These competencies also contribute to the overall conceptualization of advocacy efforts for marginalized populations.

Another essential organizing framework for understanding the advocacy process comes from the counseling literature. Recent counseling literature explores professional counselor’s role as advocates for disenfranchised, stigmatized, and marginalized populations (Kress & Paylo, 2012). Within the therapeutic setting, counselors work one on one with clients to identify sources of oppression and discrimination, and brainstorm ways to diminish the effects of marginalization through empowerment and social action (Kress & Paylo, 2012). Effective counselors are expected to engage in advocacy efforts with, and on behalf of their clients. Per the ACA Code of Ethics (2014):

Counselors are expected to advocate to promote changes at the individual, group, institutional, and societal levels that improve the quality of life for individuals and groups and remove potential barriers to the provision or access of appropriate services being offered (p. 8)

Counselors fulfill the role of advocate in order to address those environmental variables that impact client's ability to achieve their goals, develop across the lifespan, and access resources (Brubaker & Goodman, 2012). Counselors who effectively advocate for their clients are described as maintaining the following characteristics: 1) an appreciation for the suffering of others, 2) the ability to effectively communicate verbally and non-verbally, 3) maintaining a multisystemic perspective, 4) maintaining competence in individual, group, and systems-level interventions, 5) understanding how to effectively use technology and media, and 6) having adequate research skills and abilities (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001).

Advocacy competencies and related skills and abilities are cultivated in counselors-in-training during their Masters-level educational programs. Counselor education programs are required by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (CACREP)—the primary accrediting body for counselor education programs—2016 standards to train counselors to engage in advocacy efforts. Specifically, these standards indicate that curriculum in counselor preparation programs must address “2.F.e. advocacy processes needed to address institutional and social barriers that impede access, equity, and success for clients” (CACREP, 2016, pg. 10). Per these standards, counselors-in-training who specialize in mental health, school, career, or rehabilitation counseling are required to receive further training in the advocacy needs of the specific populations with which they plan to work (CACREP, 2016).

Sensitizing Concepts

The counseling literature, coupled with Brill and Pepper's (2008) text and Lewis, Arnold, House and Toporek's (2003) *Advocacy Competencies*, and the literature outlined in chapter 2 of this manuscript, act as essential sensitizing concepts for this research study, providing “a starting point in thinking about a class of data in which the social researcher has no definite idea and

provides an initial guide to her research” (Van den Hoonaard, 1997, p. 2). Chapter 3 provides a summative list of sensitizing concepts and categories borrowed from the literature that act as a conceptual lens through which to view the data. As a researcher, counselor, educator, and parent-advocate for my eight year old gender-expansive daughter, I have utilized the aforementioned literature as a means of informing my own advocacy efforts with clients, and for my child. As sensitizing concepts, these resources also informed the creation of interview questions, and my initial conceptualization of the advocacy process. The breadth and depth of counseling literature regarding counselor advocacy lead me to create a more detailed interview protocol for study participants who are helping professionals (see appendix 2 for Interview Protocol for Advocates, appendix 1 for Interview Protocol for Helping Professionals). The interview questions for these participants are similar to those questions posed to other advocates, but include additional questions regarding specific concepts described in the counseling-advocacy literature. Although informed by counseling literature, this protocol will be used for helping professionals from all backgrounds (e.g. counselors, social workers, psychologists).

The current literature on the process of advocacy, which is further discussed in chapter two of this manuscript, is based primarily on: Models outlining a social justice and advocacy approach to supporting transgender and gender-expansive youth in schools; the special needs of gender-expansive and transgender youth in the school environment; the role of family in the health and wellbeing of this population; and the role of mental health counselors in empowering and advocating on behalf of transgender and gender-expansive youth. Although the current literature elucidates a myriad of perspectives and provides critical guidance for advocates seeking to support this population, current research fails to attend to the process of advocacy for

transgender and gender-expansive youth *within the context of advocate's lived experience, and the political and social context.*

The significance of this study lies in its unique contribution to the field of human services, as the goal of this project is to provide persons involved in human services with an increased understanding of how the advocacy process works, and the contextual variables that influence this process. Human services is broadly defined as those individuals who work in a helping capacity (e.g. helping professionals, community advocates, healthcare professionals, educators), interacting directly or indirectly with individuals, working to elevate the voices of disenfranchised and marginalized populations. My intention was to illuminate aspects of the process of advocacy, and the context in which these acts are embedded, in order to provide human service professionals with insight regarding the advocacy process. This study elicited the perspectives of advocates who have, and/or are currently pursuing social change for transgender and gender-expansive youth. Each participant's perspective and self-reported demographic information were analyzed to identify themes within each case, then compared to other cases to determine shared or contrasting categories. Categories consist of overarching themes or concepts that include multiple factors. Results will provide human service providers with a holistic understanding of the advocacy process and context.

Advocates from a variety of backgrounds (e.g. educators, community members, helping professionals) engaged in an audio-recorded interview lasting approximately one hour, during which they were asked a series of questions regarding their advocacy efforts, and asked to recommend any pertinent advocacy-related artifacts (e.g. articles, books, videos, movies, documentaries). Participants also completed a brief demographic questionnaire. Participants were provided the opportunity to review their transcripts, and engage in a second interview to

provide feedback about their transcript or expound upon previous disclosures. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed using Merriam's (1988; 1998) interpretive case study design. Data for each participant underwent intensive analysis with the goal of generating categories for each individual participant that capture the essence of the participant's experience (Merriam, 1988). Cross-case analysis was also utilized to explore common and contrasting categories between participants. The final write-up of results followed a case study format, with descriptive individual case studies or "portraits" (Lightfoot, 1983) provided for each participant, followed by an explanation of results derived from the cross-case analysis (Merriam, 1988). The use of case study design for the collection of data, data analysis, and write-up of results ensured methodological congruence, and provided readers with a holistic conceptualization of the advocacy process.

Research Questions

The primary questions examined through this interpretive case study design are:

1) How do advocates pursue positive change at the individual and systems levels for transgender and gender-expansive children (ages 4 to 12)?

Secondary questions include:

2) What contextual variables have influenced advocate's ability to advocate for transgender and gender-expansive youth?

Definitions

Language is ever evolving, as persons along the LGBTQ spectrum name their experience through the development of new terms. The development of affirming language that describes the experience of gender-expansive individuals is in and of itself a continual act of self-advocacy. Examples of affirming language include the phrase "gender confirmation surgery" to

describe what was formerly referred to as “gender reassignment surgery.” The new evolution of the title speaks to the use of a medical intervention to confirm one’s gender identity, rather than “reassign” it. Another example includes referencing one’s pronouns as one’s “pronouns” rather than “preferred pronouns”. The previous inclusion of the term “preferred” seemed to imply that one’s gender identity is a preference rather than an inborn trait, thus the removal of the term “preferred” reinforces the understanding that one’s gender and associated pronouns are part of one’s inborn identity (Stryker, 2017).

The following section provides general definitions for those terms and concepts referenced in this manuscript. At the time of this writing, these terms are considered the most current and non-pejorative. Multiple national organizations maintain web-based glossaries of terms related to LGBTQ identity that are consistently updated. Interested readers may access these lists through the Trevor Project (2017a) the Human Rights Campaign (2017), and the Gender Spectrum (2018) online data bases.

Advocacy: “A continuum of counseling action ranging from empowerment to social...that tend to focus on...assisting clients in recognizing and addressing sociopolitical barriers to well-being” (Toporek, Lewis & Crethar, 2009, p. 262)

Advocacy competence: “The ability, understanding, and knowledge to carry out advocacy ethically and effectively” (Toporek, Lewis & Crethar, 2009, p. 262)

Advocate (the following definition is derived from Kiselica & Robinson, 2001, and was originally utilized to describe solely counselor-advocates): An advocate is an individual who “pleads on behalf of a client or some social cause...[taking] action to eliminate or reduce social problems such as poverty, unequal access to opportunity, and various forms of prejudice, which adversely affect clients” (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001, p. 387); this definition refers to individuals

from a variety of backgrounds, and may include community advocates, educators, and helping professionals.

Gender-expansive: “An adjective used to describe people that identify or express themselves in ways that broaden the culturally defined behavior or expression associated with one gender” (Human Rights Campaign, 2017a). Persons who identify as gender-expansive may or may not identify as transgender.

Gender non-conforming: Individuals whose gender expression and/or identity fails to meet society’s expectations (Lambda Legal, 2017). Persons who identify as gender-expansive may or may not identify as transgender.

Gender-variant: “The term is deliberately broad, encompassing such specific terms as transsexual, butch and femme, queen, sissy, tomboy, travesty, or hijra” (ALGBTICAL, 2018). Persons who identify as gender variant may or may not identify as transgender.

Helping professional(s): Licensed individuals (at the state and/or national level) who provide therapeutic interventions aimed at alleviating psychological or emotional distress. Within the context of this study, the label “helping professional” includes Licensed Mental Health Counselors, Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors, Licensed Clinical Social Works, Licensed Psychologists, and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists.

Transgender: “Refers to people whose gender identity, one’s inner sense of being male, female, or something else, differs from their assigned or presumed sex at birth” (Lambda Legal, 2017). Persons who are transgender may identify with the gender binary, and thus may not identify as gender-expansive or gender-variant.

Transgender or gender-expansive children AND Transgender or gender-expansive youth:

Within the context of this study, these phrases refer to young people ages 4 to 12 years of age whose gender identity does not align with the gender assigned at birth.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this research became apparent during the planning stages, with restrictions relating specifically to scope of applicability of results, and replicability. While the use of qualitative data is essential to developing the study's conceptualization of advocacy for this population, it also limits the scope of applicability of the results. Limiting this study to only narrative descriptions of individual's experiences in the United States provides an in-depth understanding of participant's process advocating for gender-expansive youth, but fails to provide results that speak to the breadth of experience of advocates and gender-expansive children at an international level. Readers are encouraged to consider the cases and contextual variables described in this study, and explore the applicability of results as relates to their own personal and professional experience (Shenton, 2004).

This study is preceded by a pilot study which utilized interviews with 3 community-based advocates, and this researcher's auto-ethnographic data to explore how advocates pursue social change for transgender and gender-expansive youth. The pilot study included researcher-as-participant, and was limited in its scope. Results from the pilot study emphasized the role of collaboration with community-based advocates in parent/caregiver's ability to reduce discriminatory practices in their child's school. Institutionalized oppression that limits transgender and gender-expansive access to resources was identified as one of the most common themes within the interviews and autoethnographic documents utilized as data. A full explanation of the results of the pilot study is well beyond the scope of this text, but can be found

in the initial unpublished manuscript (Stark, 2017). The current study utilized more diverse data, thus the results had greater breadth, depth, and a wider range of applicability.

Delimitations of the Study

The scope of the study is limited to exploring advocacy efforts made in support of children. Research that supports and empowers transgender and gender-expansive youth is essential, as this population faces multiple intersections of oppression due to discriminatory beliefs about the agency and self-knowledge of children, particularly in reference to gender identity (UNICEF, 2014). Interview questions will not elicit information regarding participants' perspectives concerning adolescent issues. Experiences with adolescents or concerning the adolescent age group will be excluded because the issues faced by transgender and gender-expansive individuals in this age bracket have a variety of needs that are distinct from transgender and gender-expansive children. For example, advocates working with transgender adolescents who have elected to begin medical transition may be primarily focused on helping the young person to access the necessary services needed for medical gender confirmation. Individuals who work with gender-expansive children may engage in psychoeducation regarding medical transition, but are likely more focused on empowering the child within their communities and addressing gender-based harassment.

Summary

Transgender and gender-expansive youth face a multitude of challenges, from accessing resources to coping with gendered-harassment. The adverse experiences of transgender and gender-expansive youth may be attributed to the stigma assigned to persons who fail to conform to the gender binary. Advocates play an essential role in helping to empower these youth, and address sources of discrimination and oppression at the individual and systems levels. The

literature regarding advocacy efforts is robust, providing practitioners and supportive persons with essential strategies for assisting transgender and gender-expansive youth, yet lacks the rich descriptive detail and contextual information that so strongly influences the advocacy process. The chapter that follows provides a more comprehensive description of sociopolitical events that influence advocacy efforts, and literature pertinent to the conceptualization of advocacy within the school, community, and family contexts.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

“The personal is political” (Hanisch, 1970)

“Thus, whether we interact with strangers or intimates, we will find that the finger tips of society have reached bluntly into the contact, even here putting us in our place” (Goffman, 1963, p. 53)

Overview: The Interplay between Sociopolitical Context & Professional Conceptualization

As the title of Hanisch’s (1970) famous text on the Women’s Liberation movement points out, “The personal is political.” Hanisch’s statement sheds light on the relationship between the actions of individuals with status and power, and the personal experience of disenfranchised groups. Hanisch’s words are just as relevant today as they were in 1970, as the experience of today’s transgender and gender-expansive youth is significantly impacted by – and at times completely determined by – the city, state, and national political context in which the individual is embedded. Thus “the fingertips of society” (Goffman, 1963, p. 53), consisting of individuals and groups with power and influence, apply stigma as a means of reinforcing the importance of conforming to the social norms of the dominant group. Gender diverse youth who do not align with the male/female gender binary are continually impacted by institutions, groups, and individuals with political power. The relationship between sociopolitical events and the experience of transgender and gender-expansive youth, and their advocates and allies, cannot be overstated.

The following review of the literature begins with a review of the Western conceptualization of gender and sex, and the evolution of these constructs over time. Impactful sociopolitical events, the experience of these youth in the school and family context, and advocacy strategies employed in these contexts will also be discussed. The aim of this review of

the literature is to describe the most pertinent contextual events that impact the advocacy process, while also elucidating the myriad of perspectives and practice guidelines provided to advocates supporting transgender and gender-expansive youth. Categories discovered during this review of the literature will act as a conceptual framework for the deductive portion of data analysis.

The Evolution of “Gender” & “Sex”

Sex, and gender are independent complex constructs, with each aspect of the individual's identity existing along a continuum (The Trevor Project, 2017b). Sex refers to one's natal sex, or biological sex assigned at birth (American Psychological Association, 2012). Natal sex may include: Female, referencing a person who presented at birth with female genitalia and/or reproductive organs; male, an individual born with male genitalia and/or reproductive organs; or intersex, which is categorized as a “health condition [that]...can affect the genitals, the chromosomes and/or other body structures” (Lambda Legal, 2008p. 25), causing the individual to fit into neither male nor female sex categories. Utterly separate from natal sex, gender describes how a culture or community defines what “attitudes, feelings, and behaviors” are associated with the male, or female roles in society (American Psychological Association, 2012, p. 11).

The concept of gender identity stands in stark contrast to natal sex, as gender identity is self-defined and may or may not align with society's prescribed beliefs about gender. Gender identity refers to one's internal gendered-experience (American Psychological Association, 2012), existing along a continuum that includes: Male or female-to-male transgender, gender fluid, gender queer, bigender (an individual who identifies as both male and female), non-binary (an individual who identifies as neither male nor female), or woman or male-to-female

transgender, or other gender identities as defined by the individual. Individuals may or may not elect to outwardly present in alignment with their natal sex or gender identity. How an individual presents themselves as a gendered being is referred to as gender expression (The Trevor Project, 2017b).

The Gender Spectrums & the Genderbread Person

At this time, the Association for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Issues in Counseling (2009) division of the American Counseling Association (ACA), American Psychological Association (2015), and American Academy of Pediatrics (Fernando and Remley, 2017) conceptualize gender identity and gender expression as existing along a spectrum, with all gender identities acknowledged as normative and healthy. Killerman (2015), a self-described activist and social justice advocate used his skills in graphic design to create a comprehensive illustration of the numerous spectrums related to gender identity.

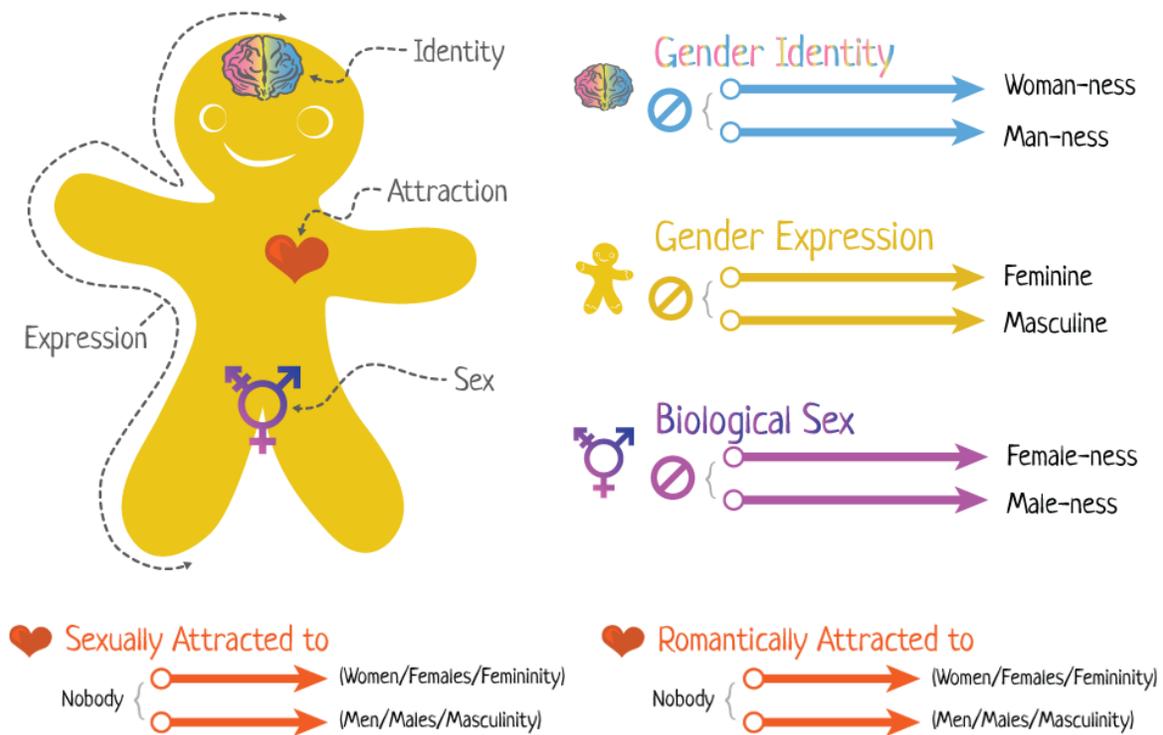
Killerman's (2015) graphic titled the *Genderbread Person* illustrates the many spectrums of identity associated with one's gender. Killerman (2015) encourages the use and reproduction of this uncopyrighted image, as they (gender neutral singular pronoun intentionally used here) hope that their illustration will help educate persons about the importance of deconstructing our Westernized understanding of gender. Killerman's (2015) graphic (see figure 1: The Genderbread Person v3) separates the spectrums of gender identity as "woman-ness" and "man-ness", gender expression as "feminine" and "masculine", biological sex as "female-ness" and "male-ness", sexual attraction as "nobody" to "women/females/femininity" and "nobody" to "men/males/masculinity", and romantic attraction as "nobody" to "women/females/femininity" and "nobody" to "men/males/masculinity". The artist states that one of the most recent additions

to this third edition of the Genderbread Persons is the separation of romantic and sexual attraction as two separate aspects of one's identity and experience.

Figure 1

The Genderbread Person v.3 (Killerman, 2015)

The Genderbread Person v3.2 by its pronounced METROsexual.com



The Gender Binary: Traversing Gender Norms

The prevailing Western system identifies gender as a dichotomous construct, with only two acceptable gender presentations: Male or female (Gagne, Tewksbury, & McGaughey, 1997).

The origins of this binary system have been traced back to the philosophical understanding of gender as paralleling naturally occurring oppositions such as light and dark, activity and passivity. The polarity of gender is also attributed to the lack of differentiation between sex, and

gender identity (Colebrook, 2004). This Western understanding of gender as inextricably connected to and determined by one's natal sex stigmatizes persons whose gender identity is incongruent with their sex assigned at birth.

The culturally defined construct of gender as male or female provide a "line in the sand" for society to define what is normative, and non-normative. When an individual's gender identity aligns with their natal sex, the individual is considered cisgender, the socially prescribed norm. Persons whose gender identity does not align with their sex assigned at birth are deemed transgender, or gender-expansive (American Psychological Association, 2012). Individuals who cross the socially defined boundaries of gender often experience social dislocation from their community, the threat of violence, and the "sense of their own unreality, which can lead to suicide or a suicidal life" (Butler, 2004, p. 219).

The non-normative status of persons whose natal sex and gender identity are not congruent, places these individuals at greater risk for adverse experiences. Persons who traverse the gender binary face significantly higher rates of verbal and physical violence within their schools (Kosciw et al., 2014), rejection and social exclusion from family members (Sherer, 2016), and fatal violence motivated by hate of one's gender identity (Human Rights Campaign, 2017c). Thus the primary message conveyed by advocacy efforts, that these identities are normative expressions of identity, challenges the greater social paradigm at the root of acts of oppression, hate and violence – the belief that certain identities devalue the humanity of the individual.

Advocacy in Educational Settings

Humanizing Transgender and Gender-Expansive Youth

Persons in an educational setting who are exposed to the personal narrative of a transgender child, and encouraged to empathize and take the perspective of the child and their loved ones, exhibit a decrease in transprejudice, and increased desire for social contact with this population (Tompkins, Shields, Hillman & White, 2015). Tompkins, Shields, Hillman, and White (2015) administered two separate educational interventions to two separate groups of undergraduate students, with each group containing 50 students. One group received a “humanizing intervention” (Tompkins et al., 2015, p. 19) consisting of viewing the 20/20 documentary *My Secret Self – A Story of Transgender Children* (Dauer, Goldberg, Paul and Ruff, 2007, p. 6), and a “perspective-taking writing exercise...[where students] were asked to imagine they were transgender and to write a letter “coming out” to their parents as transgender” (Tompkins et al., 2015, p. 12). The second group received an educational intervention which consisted of a PowerPoint presentation outlining the diagnostic criteria for Gender Identity Disorder (GID) as described in DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 2000), and the viewing of a video-recorded interview with a mental health professional regarding the presentation of children with GID.

The individuals who were exposed to the humanizing intervention exhibited a significant decrease in prejudice against transgender individuals, and an increase in desire to interact with this population socially. Transprejudice was described as a form of “emotional disgust” towards transgender and gender-variant individuals. Prejudicial beliefs and attitudes motivate discriminatory behavior, verbal “gender bashing”, and cause the individual to distance themselves socially from persons who are perceived to belong to this population (Tompkins et al., 2015, p. 4). Participants in the educational group evinced a significant increase in prejudice against transgender individuals, and no change in desire to socially interact with this population.

The authors conclude that strategies aiming to educate and promote empathy and perspective-taking through exposure to the narratives of transgender individuals, help to decrease stigma and prejudicial attitudes and beliefs about transgender persons (Tompkins et al., 2015). Tompkins, Shields, Hillman and White's (2015) study is a shining example of how advocacy for transgender and gender-expansive youth can occur in educational settings.

The Role of the School Counselor as Ally and Advocate

In 2014, Scharron-del Rio, Dragowski, and Phillips published a summary of the previous 10 years of foundational research regarding the treatment of gender-variant children. The article provided guidance for school psychologists working with this population. The year the article was published, the DSM-IV was the standard reference for conceptualization of symptoms and diagnosis for transgender and gender-expansive youth. In 2014, the only diagnosis available to describe these children's experience was Gender Identity Disorder (GID). This diagnosis pathologized these children's presentation of gender, and supported corrective treatment approaches that aimed to decrease gender non-conforming behavior. The pathologization of gender-variance created an atmosphere where two polar perspectives developed within the helping professions— transgender and gender-expansive identities as a normative part of human development, and variations in gender outside of the male/female binary as pathological, to be treated with corrective interventions.

Scharron-del Rio, Dragowski, and Phillips (2014) described treatment approaches for gender-variant youth as either corrective, or supportive/affirming. Corrective treatment approaches used behavioral interventions, and collaboration with family members to promote "normative gender behaviors" associated with the child's assigned gender. This may include requiring the child to play with stereotypical toys, and dress in ways that are associated with their

natal sex. Supportive treatment emphasized affirmation of the child's gender expression, with treatment focusing on environmental stressors that invalidate the child, while promoting parental empathy and understanding of the child, and investing in the child's strengths and sources of resilience. Per Scharron-del Rio, Dragowski and Phillips (2014), helping professionals are encouraged to remain aware of their own biases about sexual orientation and gender identity, and to validate the child's autonomy and sense of agency in expressing or suppressing their gender identity. The authors also caution against clinicians getting "caught in the middle of an ideological battle" (p. 51), as parents and adults within school administration may use the school environment as a battleground for pushing their own ideology (Scharron-del Rio, Dragowski & Phillips, 2014).

Advocacy Strategies in the School Setting

The American School Counseling Association (ASCA) (2016) *School Counselor and Transgender/Gender Non-conforming Youth Position Statement* further emphasizes the importance of school counselors' validation of the self-expressed gender identity of their student clients, stating that:

School counselors recognize that the responsibility for determining a student's gender identity rests with the student rather than outside confirmation from medical practitioners, mental health professionals or documentation of legal changes (p. 64).

In accordance with Title IX and the guidance provided by the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) (OCR, 2014), ASCA (2016) advises school counselors to address students by their chosen name and accurate pronouns and alter their unofficial educational records to reflect the chosen name and accurate pronouns. ASCA (2016) also directs school districts to amend secondary educational records at the request of parents. School counselors are called to affirm

and support their students, and are thus expected to reference students by their chosen name and accurate pronouns at school and in the classroom, but use the student's legal name and sex assigned at birth when speaking with parents (unless the child or parents have indicated otherwise). Counselors should support transgender and gender-expansive youth's right to decide if and when to disclose their gender identity to others, and ensure that all students have access to the restrooms or gender-segregated facilities of the gender with which they identify. Furthermore, school counselors must ensure that transgender and gender-expansive students are provided the opportunity to engage in interscholastic and physical education activities with the gender with which they identify, and express their gender identity in their dress and physical presentation without fear of harassment (ASCA, 2016).

In addition to being charged with validating the self-expressed identity of their child clients, school counselors are also called to promote an affirmative environment at the "individual, cultural, and systemic levels" (Chen-Hayes, 2001, p. 1). The American School Counseling Association (2012) provides school counselors with an action-oriented model that enables and supports school counselor's advocacy efforts for disenfranchised students.

The American Counseling Association (ACA) advocacy competencies (Lewis, et al., 2002) further affirm the need for school counselors and helping professionals to act as "social change agents" (Ratts, DeKruyf & Chen-Hayes, 2007, p. 90), advocating for the removal of barriers to resources at the individual, community, and systems levels. Ratts, DeKruyf and Chen-Hayes (2007) further elaborate on the ACA advocacy competencies call to action-oriented approaches by recommending counselors adopt a social justice approach to their work. The authors translate the advocacy competencies into a series of recommended advocacy strategies, to include: Promoting reform of prejudicial school policies, addressing inequalities in access to

resources within the school, and seeking change in educational environments that are not conducive to learning for LGBTQ students. The social justice approach identifies the system, rather than the child or student, as that which needs adjusting (Ratts et al., 2007).

School counselors who employ a social justice approach can utilize the ACA advocacy competencies to inform their advocacy efforts in the school system. Ratts, DeKruyf and Chen-Hayes (2007) provide guidance for the translation of competencies into the practice of advocacy in the school environment. The advocacy competencies (authored by Lewis, Arnold, House and Toporek, 2002) describe 3 levels of advocacy: The client/student, school/community, and public arena. Within each level, advocates may act with (e.g. empowering the individual, or teaching self-advocacy skills) or on behalf (e.g. working with school administration to address discriminatory school policies) of transgender and gender-expansive students. Table 1 summarizes the primary goals, and interventions recommended by Ratts, DeKruyf and Chen-Hayes (2007) at each level of advocacy.

Table 1

Recommended School Counselor Advocacy Interventions (adapted from Ratts, DeKruyf and Chen-Hayes, 2007)

Level of Advocacy	Primary Goals	Recommended Interventions
Client/Student	Student empowerment through advocacy with, and on behalf of students	Working with students: - Assisting students individually or in small groups with “self-advocacy tools” (p. 92) in the classroom environment → Self-advocacy may include: Providing students with the language necessary, and/or the opportunity to rehearse speaking with their teacher or classmates about their identity or disability, and the things they need to be successful academically; discussing ways the child can protect themselves when experiencing bullying, and how to reach out to an adult for assistance - Parents of students should be informed of their right to due process should their child need an accommodation

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educational lessons focusing on “communication skills or dependable strengths” (p. 92) - Engaging groups of students in discussions of peer mediation, or bullying <p>Working on behalf of students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Act as an ally and referee to support children in situations where the child must work with peer, teacher, or administrator with whom they feel unsure or disempowered - Address acts of discrimination, or the perpetuation of oppression by school administration - Address generational poverty or other systemic issues, through the implementation of programs that attend to unmet
School/Community	School counselor acts as ally, working with individuals and community members to affect systemic change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborate with organizations to challenge the status quo, and achieve systemic change - Using knowledge of systems, leadership abilities, analysis of data, planning skills, and group collaboration to reduce barriers to resources →These skills assist school counselors to identify disparities, and needs of particular groups of students in the school environment
Public Arena	School counselors work to inform the public of institutional biases, and unmet needs of students, and advocate for necessary changes in public policy to address these issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of technology to increase public awareness of sources of oppression - Understand the inner workings of systems - Develop collaborative relationships with persons in power - May include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> →Recruiting school board members, or government officials who are willing to advocate for policy change →Coordinating trainings and workshops on topics where teacher competency requires attention

Policing Gender Norms

The School Environment

On a national scale, 64.4% of LGBTQ students report feeling unsafe while at school because of peers and teachers adverse reactions to their LGBTQ status (Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer, & Boesen, 2014). The school environment can be an unsafe and hostile place, with

approximately 80% of students reporting experiences of relational aggression (i.e. having lies told about them, or rumors spread), and 22.7% reporting physical assault attributed to their gender expression. Teachers and school administration, the first point of contact for students experiencing discrimination, often report feeling underprepared to address incidents of gendered harassment and trans-phobia. The culture of the school and “principal’s leadership style, personal values, professional priorities, and policy implementation” also influence teachers’ ability to address harassment of LGBTQ students (Meyer, 2009, p. 28). Many of the current mechanisms within schools that are intended to address and reduce instances of bullying fail to address the systemic problem of harassment aimed at policing gender norms (Meyer, 2009). The ultimate aim of gendered harassment is to communicate condemnation of non-conforming gender expression, and push individuals to conform to “normative” gender practices.

The Family Context

The policing of gender norms occurs not only in the school environment, but also within the family context. Families may respond to a transgender or gender-expansive child’s “coming out”, or openly sharing their gender identity, in a variety of ways. The Family Acceptance Project categorizes family’s responses as fitting various levels of acceptance, ambivalence, or rejection (Ryan, 2014). There is a significant correlation between family responses to their child’s “coming out” and health outcomes, with children experiencing high levels of family or caregiver rejection being more than 8 times more likely than the general population to attempt suicide, and more than 6 times more likely to experience severe depression (Ryan, 2009). While the role of family rejection has significant negative health implications for LGBTQ youth, family acceptance can positively impact the health and wellness of LGBTQ young persons.

The Advocacy Efforts of Parents/Caregivers

Affirming and Supportive Families

Families who accept their transgender child's gender identity express their support by using the appropriate gender pronouns and name when referencing their child, and enabling their child to dress, wear their hair, and present themselves how they wish. A transgender child who changes how others reference them, and begins presenting as the gender with which they identify, is said to have "socially transitioned." A longitudinal study of transgender children whose families supported their social transition, found that these children's rates of depression, anxiety, and adverse mental health symptoms was on par with their cisgender peers (Sherer, 2016). Children whose families prevented their child from socially transitioning experienced significantly higher rates of depression, anxiety, and psychological distress (Sherer, 2016). The results of this study indicate the importance of supporting transgender children in presenting as their authentic selves, as the health consequences of family rejection are dire.

The simple act of family and friends utilizing a young transgender or gender-expansive person's accurate name and gender pronouns can have a significant impact on their mental wellbeing. Russell, Pollitt, Li and Grossman (2018) study of transgender and gender-expansive youths who were referenced using their appropriate name and pronouns at home, school, work, and with friends found that these individuals risk of depression and suicidality was dramatically lower than peers who were not referenced by their proper name and pronouns. Specifically, participants whose appropriate names and pronouns were used in all 4 environments (home, school, work, and with friends) exhibited a 65% reduction in suicide attempts, a 34% decrease in suicidal ideation, and 71% fewer symptoms of depression than transgender peers whose name and pronouns were not acknowledged (Russell et al., 2018). Family members play a critical role

in not only validating their child's gender identity, but also in advocating for their child in other settings to ensure that their needs are met, and sources of discrimination are reduced.

The Advocacy Efforts of Parents and Caregivers

In response to changes in political climate and policy, affirming parents and caregivers of transgender children across the country have written letters to the Trump administration. One such letter, co-signed by the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) was signed by more than 1,000 parents of transgender children. The letter outlined the fear and worry experienced by families of transgender children in the wake of Trump's recension of an interpretation of Title IX that ensured trans-specific protections in schools which received federal funds (Human Rights Campaign, 2017b). In the school setting, other advocacy efforts employed by parents and caregivers include: Ensuring that the child is provided equal access to the facilities with which they identify, that the child's accurate name and gender pronouns are acknowledged by school personnel, and that all instances of gendered-harassment and bullying are addressed by school administration (Brill & Pepper, 2008).

The advocacy efforts of parents and caregivers often arise in response to an unmet need of their transgender or gender-expansive child, or experience of discrimination or limited access to a resource. Popular media is riddled with examples of occasions where supportive and affirming parents/caregivers acted as advocates in response to some outside source of oppression. One such example of parent-advocacy-out-of-necessity is the story of Joanna Smith of Austin, Texas. When the Texas Legislature was considering a bill that would require students to use the restrooms and facilities of the sex assigned at birth, or use a designated gender-neutral facility, Joanna elected to speak with the media about how this policy would hurt her 7 year old transgender son who was "going stealth", as his transgender identity was unknown to fellow

students. The act of having her son (Joanna chose to keep his name private) switch from the facilities of the gender with which her identified to the female restroom or gender neutral facilities, would make his transgender identity evident to his peers. Joanna, and several other parents of transgender children residing in Texas shared their stories with the Associated Press (Hoffman, 2017). Although Joanna chose not to disclose her son's name, going public about their experience still presented a risk to her son's choice to keep his transgender identity private. The act of going public about their child's story, of vocalizing their concerns about discriminatory systems-level policies, is often a risky but necessary form of parent advocacy. Parents/caregivers must weigh the pros and cons of going public about their child's journey, because public advocacy may open the child, their siblings, and the family to harassment and hate speech from individuals or groups who reject gender diversity (Human Rights Campaign, 2018c).

The advocacy efforts of parents and caregivers of transgender and gender-expansive children may also take the form of one-on-one interactions with other parents or community-members regarding their child's journey (Human Rights Campaign, 2018c). For individuals who may have never personally known a person who is transgender or gender-expansive, exposure to the story of a transgender child may enable these individuals to better understand and empathize with this population (Tompkins, Shields, Hillman & White, 2015). Therefore, the mere act of navigating social spaces and communities as a transgender or gender-expansive youth is in and of itself an act of advocacy. Mental health professionals, much like caregivers and parents, are often entrusted with responsibility of providing transgender and gender-expansive youth with a safe and supportive space. The following section reviews the role of mental health professionals in attending to the needs of this population through competent practice, and advocacy efforts.

Advocacy in Mental Health

The Advocacy Competency Model & Counseling Competencies for Transgender Clients

Lewis, Arnold, House and Toporek's (2003) advocacy competencies introduced a conceptual model for organizing counselor's advocacy efforts and was endorsed by the American Counseling Association governing council in 2003. This model provides a means of broadly conceptualizing advocacy efforts and may be applicable to other helping professions. Lewis, Arnold, House and Toporek's (2003) advocacy competencies describe advocacy as occurring in three domains: With the client/student, school/community, and/or public arena. Advocate's efforts fall along a spectrum of acting with the client towards empowerment and self-advocacy, or on behalf of the client promoting change within the client's community, or social or political context. Advocacy efforts may be further conceptualized as working towards micro or macrolevel change. This model provides enough ambiguity to accurately conceptualize advocacy for a multitude of populations. Where specificity is needed for counselor's working with a specific population, additional competencies provide specific multiculturally-informed information to guide counselor decision making. Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Bulter & McCullough's (2016) multicultural and social justice counseling competencies further explain the role of advocacy in cultivating the attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, skills, and action necessary to pursue positive social change for marginalized populations.

Chen-Hayes (1999) provided guidance regarding one multiculturally-informed approach to advocacy for persons whose gender and sexual identities do not meet the heterosexual-cisgender norm. Chen-Hayes (1999) stated that prior to engaging in advocacy work, counselors must take inventory of their own privilege. Examples of heterosexual cisgender privilege include: Not having your gender identity challenged by mental health or medical professionals,

being able to be affectionate with one's partner in public without fear of harassment or assault, no worry of job loss due to gender identity or sexual or affectual orientation, availability of positive representations of one's gender identity and sexual orientation in the media, lack of fear of being "outed" around unsafe individuals, and not being expected to educate others about one's gender identity and sexual orientation (Chen-Hayes, 1999).

Advocacy strategies employed by counselors should challenge systems that perpetuate homophobic and transphobic beliefs and attitudes, and address transgender and gender-variant clients internalized oppression, and sources of external oppression. Internalized oppression occurs when members of a non-dominant group begin to believe negative myths and stereotypes about their group and internalize these beliefs. Externalized oppression for LGBTQ persons consists of "what is done, consciously or unconsciously, by members of dominant sexual orientations and gender identities to keep resources out of the hands of LGBT persons" (Chen-Hayes, 1999, p. 89). Advocacy strategies employed by counselors that address these sources of discrimination include: Writing letters to one's political leaders about discriminatory policies, challenging individuals who verbalize "hateful jokes about LGBT persons" (Chen-Hayes, 1999, p. 90), using inclusive language such as referring to one's husband/wife as "partner" or "spouse" and not assuming that other's partners are of a particular gender, promoting education about LGBT persons in K-12 school curriculum, supporting media outlets that include positive displays of LGBT identities, and challenging religious-based belief systems and members of the community who pathologize LGBT identities (Chen-Hayes, 1999).

The 2009 Association for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues in Counseling (ALGBTIC) *Competencies for Counseling with Transgender Clients* is another example of culturally informed competencies aimed at providing unique supports for transgender and

gender-expansive clients. Clients who traverse the gender binary face significantly higher rates of verbal and physical violence within their schools (Kosciw et al., 2014), rejection and social exclusion from family members (Sherer, 2016), and fatal violence motivated by hate of one's gender identity (Human Rights Campaign, 2017c). Counselors working with gender-expansive individuals must address the oppression and discrimination experienced by this population.

The ALGBTIC competencies (2009) call for counselors working with transgender individuals to:

B.10. Use empowerment and advocacy interventions when necessary and/or requested (e.g. employment and education discrimination, transgender people of color, housing discrimination), [and] E.11. Serve as advocates for transgender individuals within professional counseling organizations, and specifically advocate for anti-discrimination policies concerning transgender individuals

The ALGBTIC competencies (2009) seem to parallel the levels of advocacy described in the advocacy competencies conceptual model adopted by the American Counseling Association (ACA) in 2003. The following section discusses the essential role of community collaboration in advocating for transgender and gender-expansive youth, as outlined in the ACA advocacy competencies model.

Advocacy through Community Collaboration

The ACA advocacy competencies inclusion of advocacy through community collaboration acknowledges the importance of this form of advocacy as a means of addressing oppression at a systems level (Lewis et al., 2010). This advocacy domain may include assessing the ability of local agencies to competently assist transgender and gender-expansive individuals, identify barriers to the development of resiliency, and collect information for local organizations that provide resources and support for gender-expansive individuals (Singh, 2010). Community-

based advocates play an essential role in helping professionals ability to collaborate with local organizations, as these advocates are often the primary points of contact for trans-affirming agencies.

The label “community-based” originated in the victim’s advocacy movement, and originally referred to those individuals within the local community who provided assistance to victims of violent crimes or intimate partner violence. These individuals were considered para-professional helpers, as they often received some training in reflective listening and basic case management (Victim Support Services, 2013). This study uses the label “community-based advocates” to reference those individuals within the local community who provide assistance and support to transgender and gender-expansive young people. Despite their essential role in helping this population to access resources and address oppression, the literature regarding how these advocates pursue social change is lacking. One of the most comprehensive texts on the historical context of activism for transgender and gender-expansive communities is Stryker’s (2017) *Transgender History: The Roots of Today’s Revolution*.

One of the dominant themes in Stryker’s (2017) text is the importance of community in making strides towards equality for transgender and gender-expansive individuals. Stryker notes the achievements of transgender and gender-expansive youth whose visibility and activism are increasing public awareness of the discrimination and inequality experienced by those young people who traverse the gender binary. Forms of community-based advocacy discussed in Stryker’s (2017) text include: Participation in pride parades and/or demonstrations; advocacy efforts facilitated by community resource centers, such as peer groups and educational workshops for community members. Community collaboration may also include advocates working with group homes who serve homeless LGBTQ youth. The author speaks of a shifting

paradigm in the United States, a paradigm that views gender identity as an evolving construct defined by each individual. Stryker (2017) attributes this progress in social construction (or deconstruction) of gender to the advocacy efforts of LGBTQ individuals and communities, courageous transgender and gender-expansive youth, and advocates in a variety of settings.

Summary: Addressing a Niche

This study is situated within the literature as a unique contribution to understanding advocacy efforts for transgender and gender expansive children. Previous studies have focused upon the role of advocacy in the experience of gender variant youth in the school environment, and family context. Multiple mental health professions have endorsed conceptual models that emphasize the importance of practitioners addressing the systemic sources of oppression that impact transgender and gender-expansive clients experiences. Research considering the experience of advocates for this population has remained focused on historical accounts of the sociopolitical context and events that promoted change (Stryker, 2017). Peer-reviewed publications are primarily conceptual in nature, focusing on recommendations for advocacy interventions for transgender and gender variant clients. This study explored the advocacy process and gave voice to the narratives of advocates for transgender and gender-expansive youth, and articulated the contextual elements that impact advocates' efforts.

Chapter 3

Methods

Design of the Study

Single Holistic Interpretive Case Study

This study utilized Merriam's (1988) interpretive case study to guide data collection, analysis, and the write-up of results. Case study design is defined as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon" (p. xiv). Case study is further described as a "basic design that can accommodate a variety of disciplinary perspectives...and can test or build theory" (Merriam, 1988, p. 2). The purpose of the case study was not to test or develop theory, but to generate categories and themes that help the reader better understand the advocacy process for transgender and gender-expansive youth. This project focused on the study of a single holistic case, with the unit of analysis (or focus of the study) being the process of advocacy for transgender and gender-expansive youth. The interpretive nature of the case study means that the analysis of data, and decisions about data collection "rest upon [the researcher's] intuition" (Yazan, 2015, p. 148). In line with the interpretive approach, knowledge (i.e. categories, themes, and rich description) is conceptualized as emerging from researcher-participant interactions. This data is then interpreted by the researcher who derives meaning based on their own intuition (Yazan, 2015).

The study is also considered holistic because it emphasizes the relationship between the phenomenon and contextual variables. While the case under study is the advocacy process, data will be organized and reported per individual participant in the form of case "portraits" (Yin, 2002). Another critical characteristic of this case study design is its bounded nature. Boundaries relating to time and place, activity, and definition and context prevent the research project from

collecting an “explosion of data” due to lack of boundaries, boundaries that ensure that all data adequately speaks to the research questions and process under study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The boundaries that “fence in” this case study are further discussed in the delimitations section in chapter 1. Other critical characteristics reviewed in this chapter about methods include: The rationale for selecting a case study design, explanation of congruence between the process of advocacy and case study as a method of inquiry, sample selection, essential elements for effective case study design, and the role of the researcher.

Why Case Study?

There are three primary approaches to case study research, with each approach having either positivistic or constructivist leanings (Yazan, 2015). Of the three approaches, Merriam’s (1988) case study methodology was selected, as her approach follows a constructivist understanding of knowledge. Merriam (1988) described research as generating knowledge, rather than discovering it. Merriam’s constructivist approach best fits this study because the process of advocating for transgender and gender-expansive youth is strongly influenced by the context in which it occurs. Advocacy is a process, and consists of multiple behaviors influenced by attitudes, beliefs, and environmental variables (Hill, Harrawood, Vereen, & Doughty, 2012). The process of asking questions of participants and recording their verbal disclosures illuminated how each participant constructed reality and understood the process of advocacy. Themes and categories, and rich descriptions of experience that emerged from participant interviews provided a holistic understanding of the unique reality of each participant, as interpreted by the researcher. Following analysis of each individual participant’s data, cross case analysis provided insight regarding commonalities and distinctions between participants (Merriam, 1988).

Merriam's (1988) approach to case study design is the most fitting method for the exploration of the process of advocating for transgender and gender-expansive youth. In her foundational text *Case Study in Education* (1988) Merriam described case study methodology as best fitting the study of a program, policy, person, group, institution, process, social unit, or phenomenon. She stated that as long as the researcher can identify the phenomenon and "fence" it in, or delineate boundaries around what they chose to study, then the phenomenon is amenable to a case study inquiry/design. Merriam (1998) distinguished case study from casework, case methods, and case history, describing case study as 1) particularistic as it focuses on a specific unit of analysis (program, policy, process, etc.), 2) descriptive, providing the reader with a rich description of the context and experience of the individual/phenomenon, and 3) heuristic, providing the reader with a greater understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Each of the aforementioned characteristics apply to this research study, as this study attended to the advocacy process as the unit of analysis, provided the reader with a rich description of the advocacy process and the context in which this phenomenon is embedded, and ensured that the audience achieved a greater understanding of the topic addressed in the study.

Case Study and the Advocacy Process: Congruence Between Topic and Method of Inquiry

Yazan (2015) described case study design as most appropriate for studies that: 1) Do not manipulate the phenomenon being studied, 2) ask "how" or "why" questions, and 3) the context of the phenomenon plays an essential role in the inquiry, as the phenomenon cannot be separated from its context. The topic studied in this research best fits a case study design as the study's focus was answering a "how" question, and the phenomenon under examination was not manipulated. Furthermore, case study research is most appropriate for those studies that prioritize the exploration of contextual conditions because of their relevance to phenomenon

(Yazan, 2015). The attention given to contextual variables in case study made the design an excellent fit, as one of the study's primary foci was understanding the contextual variables that influence the advocacy process.

Logistics and Planning

Twelve advocates were recruited for one 1 hour interview each. A minimum number of 10 participants was sought, as a minimum of 10 participants was necessary to achieve adequate breadth of data and capture the complexity the advocacy process. Per Yin (2011), a more positivistic case study theorist, an effective case study design requires anywhere from 25-50 units, with units defined as "data sources". This study obtained a minimum of 4 sources of data per participant, with each participant contributing a demographic questionnaire, 1 interview, 1 or more advocacy documents, and each participant acting as the inspiration for at least 1 observation field note/field journal entry completed by the researcher (see Data Sources section for further information about observation field notes). Thus 10 participants was expected to produce anywhere from 4 to 5 "units" each, with the total number of units for the study falling within the realm of 30 to 50 units, within the minimum range outlined by Yin (2011). The twelve participants recruited for the study contributed all necessary data sources, thus the necessary number of units was exceeded.

Participants were provided the opportunity to complete a second interview if either of the following conditions were met: 1) After the first interview, the participant indicated that they were unable to answer the questions to their satisfaction, and desired the opportunity to complete a second 1 hour interview to provide further disclosure, and/or 2) after reviewing their interview transcript (during member-checking process), the participant indicated that they did not agree with some aspect of what was said during the interview, and wanted to complete a second 1 hour

interview to clarify certain points. The second interview was to be unstructured, with the researcher inquiring generally about those disclosures from the first interview that the participant wished to clarify, or those interview questions from the first interview that the participant wanted to revisit.

The first interview followed a semi-structured format, with the researcher asking a series of questions outlined in the interview protocol. This interview followed a semi-structured format, as participants were asked questions as they fit into the conversation rather than in a mechanized, sequential, verbatim way. The wording of questions was altered by the researcher to fit the flow of conversation. This format was selected, rather than a highly structured interview protocol, as it “allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (Merriam, 1988, p. 74). Two interview protocols were used, with the Interview Protocol for Advocates (see appendix A) utilized with all participants who were not helping professionals, and the Interview Protocol for Helping Professionals (see appendix B) utilized with all professionals who described themselves as helping professionals. While the first interview protocol was developed to elicit general information about advocates efforts, the second interview protocol inquired generally about helping professionals’ advocacy efforts while also inquiring about more specific aspects of advocacy as described in the counseling and helping literature.

During the initial interview, participants also completed a brief Demographic Survey (see Appendix E), followed by a series of interview questions which elicited information about how participants pursued social change for transgender and gender-expansive youth. Prior to the first interview, all potential participants were screened to ensure that they had the experience and background necessary to contribute relevant data. The recruiting materials were potential

participant's first introduction to the study, and included a Nomination Recruiting Letter (see appendix C) sent to individuals who were nominated by the LGBTQ allies and scholars in my professional network, and the General Recruiting Letter (see appendix D) which was disseminated widely through LGBTQ organizations and other allies/advocates' professional and personal networks (see the section "Sample Selection" for further details about the recruiting process). These recruiting materials indicated that in order to participate in the study, participants must have either identified as an advocate for transgender or gender-expansive children (ages 4-12 years) or have acted with or on behalf of a transgender or gender-expansive child to address a negative experience, or unmet need related to their gender identity or expression.

Sample Selection. The sampling strategy utilized in this study was purposive (Chein, 1981), as participants were selected based upon their ability to provide data that contributed to the overall understanding of the process of advocacy. In line with the purposive sampling strategy, all potential participants must have met at least 1 of 2 criterion. Recruiting materials informed each participant that they must meet have met at least 1 of the 2 following criteria. Once potential participants responded to recruiting materials, they were asked whether they identify with either of the following statements. These statements acted as inclusion criteria, as participants must have answered yes to at least 1 of the statements listed below to have been eligible to participate in the study:

- 1) Do you identify as an advocate for transgender or gender-expansive children (ages 4-12 years)?
- 2) Have you ever acted with or on behalf of a transgender or gender-expansive child to address a negative experience, or unmet need related to their gender identity or expression?

Participants who answered yes to at least 1 of the aforementioned statements were asked to review a copy of the informed consent, then indicate whether they would like to proceed with participation in the study. Participants who meet inclusion criteria and had provided their informed consent after reviewing the informed consent document (appendix F: Informed Consent) were scheduled for the 1 hour interview.

Initial participants consisted of prominent advocates within the community, and individuals that I had become acquainted with through my personal and professional advocacy efforts for my gender-expansive daughter. These individuals were informed that, because of their publicly known efforts (i.e. one potential participant recently provided one of the local news stations with an interview regarding the unmet needs of transgender and gender-expansive youth) and experience supporting transgender and gender-expansive youth, they have been identified for possible participation in a study exploring how advocates pursue positive social change for transgender and gender-expansive youth (see appendix C for the Nomination Recruiting Letter).

The initial participants were recruited from the following organizations and groups. The following list also describes the method of contact for individuals within each group:

- Board members, paid employees, and volunteers at the **New Mexico Transgender Resource Center**: The co-directors of the resource center were provided with information regarding the study and criteria for participants and asked to reach out to individuals he/she/they believed would be eligible to participate.
- Helping professionals who are members of the national level or **New Mexico branch of the Association for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Issues in Counseling (ALGBTIC)**: Helping professionals who attended

my presentation during the July 2017 ALGBTIC state-level conference actively participated in a discussion of the research design and results from the pilot study. Those individuals who participated in the discussion disclosed that they would be willing to participate in future research regarding advocacy for transgender and gender-expansive youth. I emailed those presenters to inquire about whether they were interested in participating in the study (see appendix D: General Recruiting Letter).

- **Members of the New Mexico Transgender Resource Center Parent Group:**
Many of the parents/caregivers who attend this group engage in advocacy efforts for their child(ren) that attend to multiple levels of need for their child and help to improve the experience of all transgender and gender-expansive youth. I currently attend monthly group meetings as a member of this group and made a verbal announcement (following approval from the University of New Mexico Institutional Review Board, and permission from the group facilitator) about the study, asking that interested group members (who are 18 years or older) please meet with me after the group to discuss possible participation.
- **Members of the National Parents of Transgender Children Facebook Group:**
This group is a closed Facebook group, meaning that the administrators for this group screen all group members and monitor all posts. Administrators require that all recruiting fliers or letters be sent to group administrators. I sent a copy of the General Recruiting Letter (see appendix D) to the group moderators and asked that the letter be shared with group.

- Educators and advocates from various backgrounds as recommended by initial participants.

Following this first round of recruiting, additional participants were identified using the snowball sampling strategy (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981), whereby initial participants were asked to recommend new participants who met the study criteria. I contacted participants who were recommended by initial participants via email, using the Nomination Recruiting Letter (see appendix C).

Effective Case Study Design

An effective case study design typically includes the following components: a) “multiple sources of evidence”, b) “a case study database (a formal assembly of evidence distinct from the final case study report which helps the novice researchers understand how to handle or manage data”, and c) “a chain of evidence (explicit links between the questions asked, the data collected, and the conclusions drawn” (Yazan, 2015, p. 142). Each of the aforementioned components will be further explored in the text below.

A) Sources of Evidence

Case study design calls for multiple sources of data to ensure that the complexity and breadth of the topic is fully captured. Merriam (1998) stated that effective case study design should include interviews, observations, and the mining of documents, and that these data sources should “triangulate” with one another. This study utilized 1 to 2 1-hour interviews with 12 participants, a demographic questionnaire (completed by each participant), researcher observations recorded in a field journal, and the review of advocacy-related artifacts recommended by study participants. The selection of these sources of data was informed by the results of a pilot study facilitated in spring 2017.

Interviews & Demographic Questionnaire. Participants completed a minimum of 1, approximately 1 hour interview with the primary researcher. Prior to engaging in discussion, each participant completed a brief demographic questionnaire to provide contextual information about the participant. Interviews were facilitated in a location that is most convenient to the participant, and adequately attended to the participant's need for privacy. Locations that interviews occurred included: Local coffee shops and restaurants, and the participant's office or home.

Participants were provided the option to complete the interview via phone or Zoom Conference platform. The Zoom Conference platform provided a confidential and secure means for facilitating and recording a video interview, as all video and audio information was encrypted and securely transmitted (Zoom Video Communications Inc., 2017). Recorded video interviews were to be stored locally, meaning that all recorded information would be stored solely on the interview facilitator's computer, and would not be saved to an online database or "cloud" or maintained by Zoom. In order to use the Zoom platform, participants would have been required to download the Zoom Video Conferencing application to their computer, phone, or smart device. The download and use of Zoom for study participants is completely free.

Zoom recorded interviews were to be transcribed and analyzed using the same strategies for the processing of audio-recorded interviews, as outlined in the Data Analysis Procedures portion of this manuscript. Regarding the privacy needs of participants during the interview process, I anticipated facilitating all Zoom interviews from a quiet private location, where others were unable to hear or view any portion of the interview. Interviews were to be facilitated when my personal laptop was connected to my secure, personal hotspot for internet service. At the beginning of each Zoom facilitated video interview, participants were to be informed of the

aforementioned measures used to attend to participant privacy. Participants were to be asked whether the set-up of the interview met their privacy needs, or if they wanted to change some aspect of the set-up prior to beginning the interview. No participants elected to utilize this option, and instead completed their interviews in person, with one participant asking to complete the interview over the phone.

The Field Journal. During the pilot study, community-based advocates engaged in hour long semi-structured interviews. After each interview, I sat down with my field journal and recorded the details of my experience during the interview. Over the course of the pilot study, my post-interview reflections became indispensable sources of data, as they provided insight regarding important contextual variables that were not distinguishable in the interview recording (e.g. participant non-verbal behaviors, expressions of emotion, the influence of interview setting). I followed a similar process in the current case study, recording my observations about the participant and the interview process immediately after each interview. The field journal also included reflexive statements regarding my experience during the research process. Each entry in the field journal included the following components: Nature of relationship with researcher, experience during interview, and a reflexive statement. The purpose of these field notes was to record relevant contextual information. These notes were coded and referenced in the individual participant case portraits.

Advocacy-Related Documents and Artifacts. The pilot study shed light on the importance of advocacy-related documents and artifacts, as all three participants in the pilot study recommended—without prompting—specific books, articles, websites, or films that they felt related to some aspect of their own advocacy process. During the current case study, participants were asked during the interview if they would recommend any specific advocacy related

documents (e.g. a state-level policy regarding gendered harassment in schools, or a book about the LGBTQ rights movement in the United States), what their rationale was for recommending the document, and what they wanted me to notice or review in the document.

Thus to attend to the essential elements outlined in Merriam's (1988) text, and to incorporate the suggestions of participants from the pilot study, interviews, demographic surveys, observations (in the form of field journal entries), and advocacy-related artifacts were utilized as data sources. Advocacy-related artifacts were analyzed by a brief review of the artifact by the researcher (i.e. through the reading of documents, and viewing/listening to videos or audio recordings), and coding of the information provided by the participant. A summary of each participant's recommended artifacts was included in their case portrait.

Analytic Memos. Whenever a change was made to the research design or an evolving question identified, an analytic memo was produced detailing the change or development and the rationale behind the change. Analytic memos also attended to how codes or themes were identified and the evolution of the relationships between concepts. The purpose of these memos was to provide a record of the evolution of and contextual variables related to the data collection and analysis process.

B) The Case Study Database

The case study database was stored in the Atlas.ti computer program, saved to my personal password protected laptop computer. Each interview transcript, demographic survey, field journal entry, information regarding recommended advocacy-related artifacts, and analytic memos were uploaded to Atlas.ti. Atlas.ti allows for the creation of separate saved projects, with each project containing only those data files that I upload to the specific project. By creating a separate saved project in Atlas.ti for each participant, I was able to keep the data sources for each

participant completely separate. Each participant's project was named using the pseudonym assigned to the participant. Separating the data by participant helped me to review data per participant, with each project containing the individual participant's interview, demographic questionnaire, advocacy-related artifact information, field journal entry, and analytic memo. Once each participant's data were evaluated, copies of the coded data files (e.g. coded transcripts, field journal notes, advocacy document information) were uploaded into another project in Atlas.ti. This new project (to be titled "Cross Case Analysis") was dedicated to the analysis of data sources across cases, reviewing which codes and themes were similar or distinct.

C) The Chain of Evidence

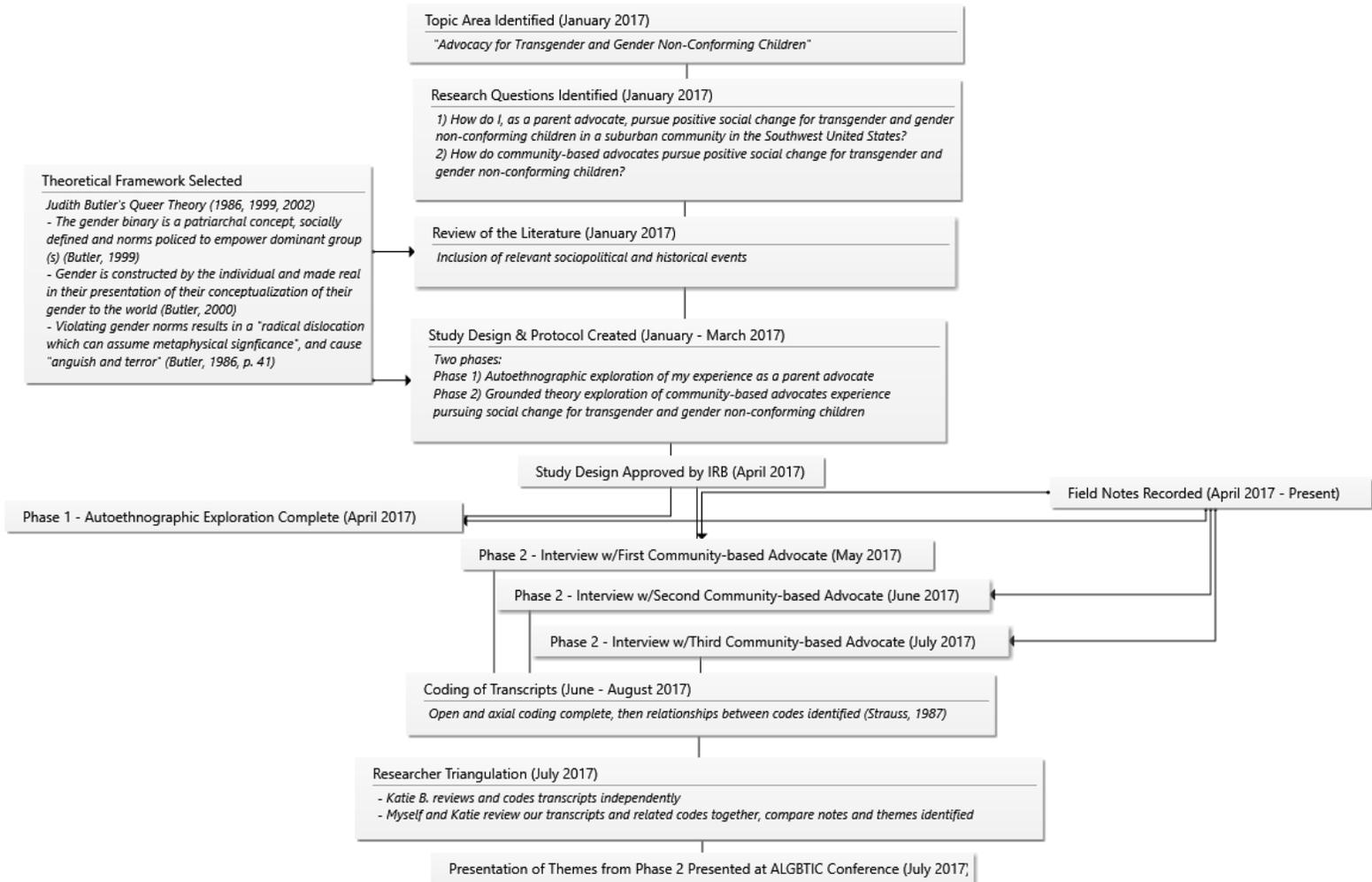
The chain of evidence described by Yazan (2015) links the research questions with data sources. Table 2 provides an outline of the chain of evidence.

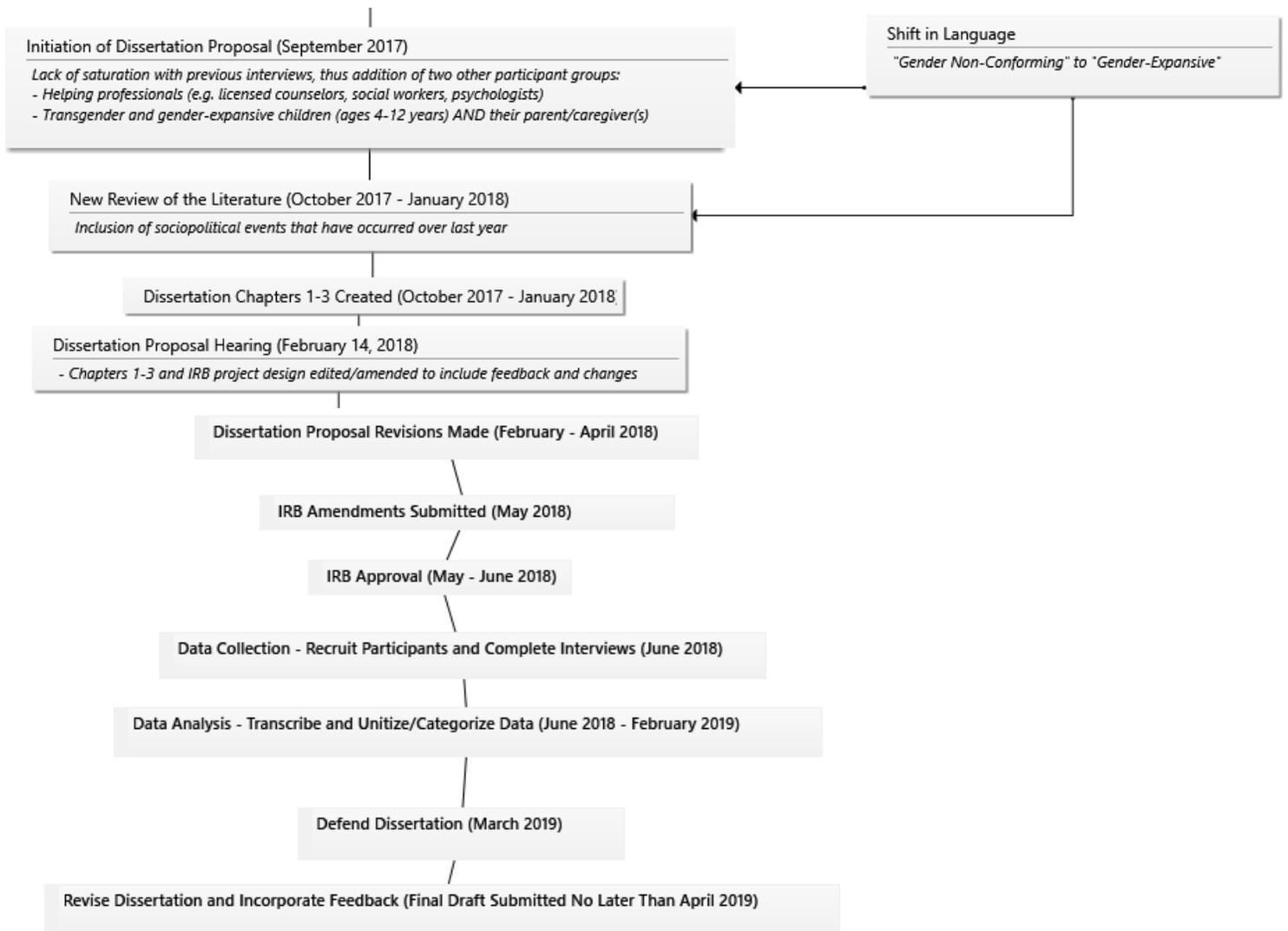
Table 2
Chain of Evidence

Research Questions	Data Collected
1) How do advocates pursue positive change at the individual and systems levels for transgender and gender-expansive children (ages 4 to 12)?	Interviews Field Journal Entries
2) What contextual variables have influenced advocate's ability to advocate for transgender and gender-expansive youth?	Interviews Demographic Survey Information regarding recommended Advocacy-related Documents Analytic Memos

Yin (2002) recommends a similar method for illustrating the different components of the research study, and evolution of the research design. Yin (2002) titles this the "Road Map" of case study design, and describes the diagram as providing the researcher with a clear protocol for the investigation. Figure 2 provides a roadmap of the research protocol for this case study.

Figure 2 – Case Study Road Map





Role of the Researcher

My role in this study was that of student investigator, meaning that I was the primary author, and facilitated all aspects of the project from data collection to analysis. In relation to the participants involved in the study, I was both an insider and outsider (Lapan, Quartaroli & Riemer, 2012) and participant-observer (Bernard, Wutich & Ryan, 2017). Although I am the parent of a gender-expansive child, and a community-based advocate for gender-expansive youth, I myself am a cisgender heterosexual white female. Although the melding of my identities provided me access to many of the participants who were recruited for the study, my identities

also placed me in the role of “ally” and outsider, as I was not and am not a member the LGBTQ community. While I knew the majority of the participants included in the first round of data collection, the second round of participants consisted of individuals with whom I was not well acquainted.

My experiences addressing discriminatory practices in my 8-year-old daughter Zelda’s school inspired the pilot study that preceded this project. Agency-based advocates and other parents/caregivers provided myself and my partner with indispensable support and advice as we obtained legal representation and negotiated change within our school district. Our family joined a transgender-youth play group where Zelda gained a sense of empowerment through her supportive interactions with advocates, other parents, and fellow gender-expansive youth.

These experiences shaped my identity as an advocate, a licensed helping professional, and an academic. Advocating for Zelda as a parent and counselor-advocate introduced me to a multitude of community-based advocates and provided a platform upon which to build rapport with these individuals and related organizations. The participants interviewed for this pilot study were known to this researcher as acquaintances, colleagues, and friends before the initiation of the research.

The nature of this researcher’s relationship to the topic and participants involved some ethical implications, as this researcher’s insider status with initial participants required extra precautions to ensure privacy of participants, and confidentiality of information disclosed during interviews. As my family and I will continue to attend support group meetings and other events where individuals who may participate in the study may be present, it is essential that I do not discuss any of the details disclosed during the interviews *even when the identity of the participant is not revealed*. The intimate nature of relationships among study participants and

with this researcher, and the size of the community challenge the maintenance of confidentiality regarding who has participated in the study.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data was analyzed using Merriam's (1988) approach to case study. Immediately after each interview is complete, the following occurred: 1) a pseudonym was assigned to the participant, and this identifier was recorded at the top of the demographic questionnaire (no identifying information was recorded on the questionnaire), 2) the audio recording for the interview was transcribed, 3) a list of the participant's recommended advocacy artifacts was recorded, and 4) a field journal entry was completed describing the nature of relationship between researcher and participant, researcher's experience during interview, and a reflexive statement. Hard copies of all data sources were printed for initial review. All data sources were also uploaded into Atlas.ti. Each data source was reviewed 3 to 5 times from beginning to end. The initial two readings and open coding of the transcripts and other data sources occurred using printed copies, with "notes, comments, observations, [and] queries" (Merriam, 1988, p. 131) recorded in the margins of the document. According to Merriam (1988) this initial reading of the data is akin to "holding a conversation with the data" (Merriam, 1988, p. 131). The notes and codes recorded in the margins were then entered into Atlas.ti. All additional reviews of these documents occurred in the Atlas.ti program.

Those themes and concepts that seemed to stand out, and that appeared to "cut across the data" (Merriam, 1988, p. 131) were recorded in analytic memos. The notes recorded in the margins of the data files were then developed into a primitive list of categories. This initial list or outline provided the beginnings of a classification system that enabled me to identify patterns in the data. The categories outlined in this classification system consisted of words or phrases. The

concepts and themes related to each category, also known as “factors”, included phrases or full paragraphs derived directly from the data (e.g. interview transcripts, field notes for advocacy artifacts or regarding researcher reflexivity, researcher memos). Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe this intensive analysis of the data as “unitizing” the data, as the information is broken up into small pieces that can then be categorized.

Once data was adequately “unitized”, I began reviewing categories and related factors looking for relationships between categories, and the presence of overarching relationships between categories that cut across multiple participant’s data. In line with Merriam’s (1988) case study design, the construction of categories emerged from both the content analysis and borrowed from previous literature. According to this approach, inductive and deductive comparative strategies are employed to identify categories that are: Relevant to the purpose of the research, and independent of one another so that no one variable fits in more than one category. Per Merriam (1988) and Glaser and Strauss (1987) an inductive approach to categorization is most desirable in qualitative research, as it ensures that categories are congruent with the data, and relevant to the purpose of the research. Although categories may be borrowed from other research, these deductively derived categories may be less evident in the data and fail to adequately capture the richness of data (Merriam, 1988).

During the planning stage of the research process, the concepts previously discussed in chapters 1 and 2 of this manuscript came together to inform the analysis of data. During the categorization process, concepts from previous literature and the pilot study were used as a lens through which to view the data. If any of the concepts from previous literature or the pilot study appeared evident in the data, then that data was categorized according to those borrowed

categories. Table 3 provides a summary of these deductive categories, related factors, and their source.

Deductive Category	Related Factors	Source(s)
Micro/Individual Level and Community Level Sources of Affirmation and Support for Transgender and Gender-Expansive Youth (i.e. individuals or groups that provide direct services to this population)	<i>Family & Caregivers</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affirm, accept and support gender identity; utilize appropriate name and pronouns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot study Brill & Pepper, 2008 Russell, Pollitt, Li and Grossman, 2018
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for child in all environments, ensuring their safety, and equal access to spaces (e.g. gender segregated facilities) and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot study Brill & Pepper, 2008
	<i>LGBTQI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex) Community</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource centers that provide connection to a greater community of affirming individuals, and community-based advocates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot study
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online support groups (many facilitated by social media providers) that connect transgender and gender-expansive youth with one another, and promote communication between their allies and advocates across geographic regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brill & Pepper, 2008
	<i>School Counselors</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educators and school counselors may use in-class interventions to encourage empathy, increased understanding, and perspective-taking for transgender and gender-expansive children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chen-Hayes, 1999 Tompkins, Shields, Hillman and White, 2015

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School counselors must validate the student’s expressed gender identity, and ensure that students have access to the gender-segregated facilities, and extracurricular activities of the gender with which they identify 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The American School Counseling Association (ASCA), 2016
	<i>Family & Caregivers</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May enhance child’s ability to express gender through financial support, and assistance with accessing gender-transition related medical care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot study • Brill & Pepper, 2008
Macro and Systems Level Advocacy Efforts for Transgender and Gender-Expansive Youth (i.e. organizations and groups that play an active role in supporting this population by advocating for change at a policy level, and do not typically interact directly with this population)	<i>LGBTQI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex) Community</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations that lobby for policy change that supports equality for transgender and gender-expansive individuals (e.g. the American Civil Liberties Union, Lambda Legal, Human Rights Campaign) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Rights Campaign, 2017
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations that provide pro-bono legal representation for transgender and gender-expansive youth experiencing discrimination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lambda Legal, 2008
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations that advocate for LGBTQI affirming and inclusive education in schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lambda Legal, 2008 • Human Rights Campaign, 2012 • Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer and Boesen, 2014
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prominent public figures and celebrities who are “out” about their transgender or gender-expansive identity; these individuals visibility as gender-diverse persons challenges stereotypes and myths about non-dominant gender identities, and provides youth with positive role models with which they can identify 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot study
	<i>Healthcare</i>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to gender-transition related services for transgender and gender-expansive individuals who wish to undergo some level of medical transition to increase congruence between physical presentation and gender identity (e.g. puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, removal or augmentation of breasts, gender confirmation surgery) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot study • Safer et al., 2016
<i>Counselors</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselors who aim to advocate for this population should be aware of their privilege, particularly privilege related heterosexual sexual orientation and cisgender identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chen-Hayes, 1999
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping professionals who assist with community collaboration to access important resources, empower clients, and assist transgender youth self-advocacy skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lewis, Arnold, House & Toporek (2003) • Holman & Goldberg, 2006 • Lewis, Toporek and Ratts, 2010
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselors should utilize advocacy strategies to: Challenge heterosexist and transphobic systems and belief, and address clients internalized (when members of a non-dominant group begin to believe myths and stereotypes about their group, and internalize these beliefs) and externalized oppression (“what is done, consciously or unconsciously, by members of dominant sexual orientations and gender identities to keep resources out of the hands of LGBT persons” (Chen-Hayes, 1999, p. 89) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chen-Hayes, 1999
<i>School Environment</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May facilitate an affirming environment that celebrates the many spectrums of identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot study • Tompkins, Shields, Hillman and White, 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts as a supportive space where accurate name and gender identity are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The American

acknowledged, even when parent/caregivers are ambivalent or reject child's identity	School Counseling Association (ASCA), 2016
<i>School Counselors</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School counselors are also called to promote an affirmative environment at the "individual, cultural, and systemic levels" (Chen-Hayes, 2001, p. 1). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chen-Hayes, 2001 Lewis, Arnold, House and Toporek, 2002
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ratts, DeKruyf and Chen-Hayes (2007) recommend school counselors adopt a social justice approach to their work, engaging in advocacy efforts to reform prejudicial school policies, inequalities in access to resources within the school, and environments that are not conducive to learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ratts, DeKruyf and Chen-Hayes (2007) Chen-Hayes, 2001
<i>Legal System</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Center for Transgender Equality guidance regarding obtaining a passport with accurate gender marker (since the majority of transgender and gender-expansive individuals are unable to alter their birth certificate or other legal documents) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Center for Transgender Equality, 2016a
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to change legal name 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Center for Transgender Equality, 2016a
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal advocates available through American Civil Liberties Union and Lambda legal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> American Civil Liberties Union, 2017

Inductive strategies were also utilized during data analysis to ensure that all categories emerging directly from the data were identified. Following Merriam's (1988) approach to the analysis of content of case study data, the following inductive comparative strategies were utilized (Merriam, 1988, p. 136):

- 1) "Categories will reflect the purpose of the research",
- 2) "Categories should be exhaustive": All identified themes and concepts should be amenable to being categorized,
- 3) "The categories should be mutually exclusive—no single unit of material should be placed in more than one category", unless units/themes have distinctive features that enable them to apply to more than one category,
- 4) "Categories should be independent",
- 5) "All categories should derive from a single classification principle".

Data analysis first occurred individually for each participant, with the data sources for each participant analyzed and compared to only data sources for that participant. Results were reported individually for each participant, in the form of participant "portraits". Portraits contain: A summary of demographic information; how the participant was recruited, logistical information regarding the interview, and the participant recommended advocacy artifacts and their information (derived from the analytic memo and interview transcript); rich description of those contextual variables that impacted the participant's advocacy process; and the themes and concepts identified in the participant's data (to include: Phrases, words, and text descriptions in the form of short paragraphs derived directly from the participant's data). The individual portraits were followed by a section dedicated to the analysis of themes and concepts across cases.

Methods for Verification

Multiple verification strategies were used throughout data collection and analysis to ensure that the study was adequately rigorous. This study maintained trustworthiness by attending to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four concepts: Credibility, transferability, dependability,

and confirmability. Triangulation of investigators was utilized to test the accuracy of findings, and attend to alternate perspectives (Carter et al., 2014). In order to achieve this form of triangulation, my colleague Katie Brammer, a fellow PhD student in counselor education, reviewed and coded all data independently. Katie was selected to review the data because of her experience advocating for LGBTQ youth as a counseling professional and as a community member. Katie volunteers in the non-profit industry, and previously ran a private practice specializing in the treatment of LGBTQ children, adolescents, and their families. She and I met regularly during the data collection and analysis phase to discuss emerging themes.

Credibility. Lincoln and Guba's (1985) concept of credibility refers to the degree of congruency between reality and the construct being studied. This study accurately explored advocates' experiences with advocacy by utilizing the literature, and research in counseling to sensitize the development of interview questions. The application of a case study design to the exploration of this phenomenon was the first of its kind, thus no comparable studies were available for comparison of methods of data collection and analysis. Credibility was attended to through the use of triangulation of informants/participants, as the perspectives of multiple sources—educators, helping professionals, and community advocates for gender-expansive and transgender children—were explored during the interview process (Shenton, 2004).

The initial pilot study provided this researcher with engagement with artifacts related to community-based and parent facilitated advocacy efforts. A detailed review of cultural events as part of the literature review helped set the stage for understanding the sociopolitical context of the construct being studied. This prolonged exposure to the construct and culture of the community prior to data collection ensures an informed approach that is more likely to

effectively capture data that accurately reflects the experience of advocates for transgender and gender-expansive youth (Shenton, 2004).

Transferability. The unique context of the advocates interviewed in this study strongly influenced the transferability of data-derived themes. While it is unlikely that the results from this study are generalizable, readers may determine that the experiences of advocacy described relate to personally or professionally witnessed examples of advocacy for gender-expansive youth. This study provided rich descriptions of the phenomenon to enable readers to make their own case for transferability of results (Shenton, 2004).

Dependability. Dependability references the ability of researchers to replicate the study and achieve equivalent results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The constant evolution of the movement for equality for transgender and gender-expansive individuals means that this study captured aspects of advocacy as a phenomenon that are context dependent. What was described, recorded, and emerged from the data reflects a specific time in history within a rather conservative sociopolitical context, and at a unique space in each participants' journey and development. Any and all changes to research design or developments during the data collection process were described in-depth in analytic memos authored by the primary investigator. These memos were distinct from the field journal entries as the memos discuss only research design, where the field journal explored experience during interviews and contextual variables related to each individual interview. Memos about the research process ensured that the description of research design in the final write-up of this dissertation provided the reader with an adequate understanding of each step in the research process.

Confirmability. Confirmability references the degree of objectivity of the researcher, to ensure results that are accurately reflective of the phenomenon under study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Although investigator bias inevitably influenced aspects of data collection and interpretation of results, multiple strategies were employed to reduce bias. This researcher attended to investigator bias by consistently journaling throughout the process, addressing this researcher's reflexive process, and any perceived countertransference (countertransference is counseling-related term that references the counselor's experience when some aspect of the client, or in this case participant, triggers an unanticipated response in the counselor).

Transparency of researcher decision making was achieved through the provision of a detailed diagram outlining the methodological process (see Figure 2). This diagram provided an "audit trail" illustrating step-by-step the decisions made and procedures utilized. The "audit trail" ensured that readers are aware of each step, and the variables that influenced researcher decision-making. The ultimate goal of such transparency is to allow the reader the ability to decide the confirmability of results (Shenton, 2004).

Summary

This research study utilized Merriam's (1988) approach to case study design to inform the development of a single holistic interpretive case study of the advocacy process for transgender and gender-expansive youth. The advocacy process cannot be divorced from the sociopolitical context in which it occurs. This form of case study design pays homage to the critical role of contextual variables in the phenomenon under study. Case study was also used for the write up of results, with a section dedicated to each participant's "portrait". An additional section was devoted to analysis across cases. The case study format ensured that the study adequately attended to the voices of each participant, while also providing an organized conceptualization of results that allowed readers to develop an improved understanding of the topic. While the previous 3 chapters provide the foundation and background information

necessary for understanding the basis of this study, the following chapters outline the results or data analysis.

Chapter 4

Findings

Research Design: Evolution During Data Collection

Case Study Data: Adequacy of Number of “Units” or Data Sources

According to Yin (2011), case study research design requires 25-50 “units” in order to ensure that the data adequately illustrates the phenomenon under study. Yin (2011) loosely defines these units as “the number of interviewees, practices, policies, or actions included in a study” (p. 91). This study conceptualizes these units as sources of data, to include: A demographic questionnaire, one 1-2 hour interview (no participants elected to participate in a second interview, but several participants elected to extend their initial interview to 1.25-2 hours), 1 field journal entry, and 1 or more advocacy artifacts or documents. Each participant had 1 of each of the aforementioned data sources, thus contributing 4 “units” each to the total number used in this case study design. A total of 12 individuals participated in the study, thus the analysis ultimately utilized a total of 48 data units, falling on the upper end of the 25-50 unit range provided by Yin (2011).

The initial case study design listed each individual advocacy artifact recommended by a participant as an individual “unit” or data source. The original design called for a full review of each advocacy artifact by the researcher, to include the coding of each item. Participants were expected to recommend 1-3 advocacy artifacts. During the data collection process, all participants referenced more than three artifacts, with some participants recommending as many as 12 artifacts. Rather than consider each advocacy artifact referenced as a “unit” and engage in in-depth analysis of each recommended item, the participant’s provision of artifact information was considered 1 unit. In the interest of time and available resources, I chose to limit the analysis

of these artifacts to the information provided by the participant, and my brief review of the literature and popular media sources regarding the advocacy artifact. Each case portrait concludes with a table containing the advocacy artifacts recommended by the participant. When multiple participants recommend the same advocacy artifact, the artifact is described in detail in the first participant's case portrait then briefly mentioned in the case portraits of subsequent participants who recommended the item.

Member-Checking of Transcripts

The initial research design indicated that participants would be provided the opportunity to review their interview transcripts. Due to concerns about maintaining complete confidentiality of participants, member checking of transcripts was not completed. The concerns related to confidentiality were two fold: Once interviews were transcribed, assigned pseudonyms, and the recordings erased, there was no definitive way to ensure that the transcript belonged to a specific participant. Also, providing the participant with a copy of the transcript via email would risk identifying the participant with their transcript and the information contained therein. For these reasons, member-checking was not completed with the interview transcripts.

Changes to Interview Protocol

Duration and Frequency of Interviews. The initial case study design provided participants the opportunity to engage in a second interview should the participant feel that 1) at the end of the first interview they still had more information to share and wished to complete a second interview to provide further information, and/or 2) the participant reviewed their transcript during the member checking process and felt that the information contained in the transcript did not adequately reflect their experience, and they would like to meet for a second interview to clarify certain points. Participants were not provided the opportunity to review their transcripts

due to confidentiality concerns (see previous section for further details), but 4 of the 12 participants elected to increase the time spent from the initial interview from 50-60 minutes to 83-102 minutes in order to provide more detailed response to the interview questions. None of the participants elected to complete a second interview.

Interview Setting: In-Person, Zoom, and Phone. The original research design stated that participants would be provided the option of completing the interview in person, or via Zoom, a confidential HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) compliant online conference platform. Of the 12 participants, 11 lived locally (in the state of New Mexico) and elected to complete the interview in-person. Only 1 participant lived outside of the state of New Mexico, and she asked to complete the interview via phone. This participant stated that she was unfamiliar with the Zoom conference platform, and that she felt that completing the interview via phone would adequately meet her need for privacy. This participant did not state her full name during the phone interview and reported completing the interview in her private home office. I completed this interview in a private office at the Women's Resource Center at the University of New Mexico and ensured that none of the participants disclosures could be heard by others.

Case Portraiture

The proceeding case portraits provide the reader with an in-depth description of each participant's experience advocating for transgender and gender-expansive children. Each participant was selected for their experience with the phenomenon of advocacy for transgender and gender-expansive children and served as an independent case. Interpretive case study, the primary approach utilized in this study, calls for the independent analysis of each case followed by a cross case analysis. The analysis of independent cases enables the researcher to attend to "the contextual variables...that might have bearing on the case" (Merriam, 1988, p. 154) and

facilitates the creation of case “portraits” (Lightfoot, 1983). Each case portrait attended to five essential features: 1) Context, 2) voice, 3) relationship, 4) emergent themes, and 5) the aesthetic whole (Given, 2008).

Context

The primary source of data for each participant was one, 1 to 2 hour interview. Prior to delving into the categories and themes that emerged from the data, the setting in which each interview occurred was described. The historical, temporal, and cultural context of the individual participant was also articulated through reference to their demographic information, and disclosure of the personal experiences that lead them to advocacy work. Reference to participant’s individual historical context “considered the origins and evolutions of each participant” (Given, 2008, p. 645).

Voice

My voice as researcher, and one who has ongoing interactions with several of the participants, is present within each case portrait. This voice is evident in the summarization and interpretation of data as I act as a witness, giving voice to each participant’s lived experience. The descriptions provided are rich with contextual information, and the participant’s own words, enabling the reader to decipher how generalizable the results are to his/her/their own experience.

Relationship

Although only one interview was conducted to collect data, the relationship between participant and researcher was essential to the collection of data. Relationship in case portraiture refers not only to the rapport between researcher and participant, but also to the researcher’s recognition of the value of the participant’s time, disclosure, and space. Each case portrait

includes a description of the researcher's relationship with the participant and attends to any references made during the interview regarding this relationship.

Emergent Themes

While filtering through the data, certain themes were "consistently born from the data" (Given, 2008, p. 674). These themes informed the interpretation of data, and subsequent structuring of categories. Themes included metaphors, specific acts, and experiences that gave voice to the participant's reality.

The Aesthetic Whole

Viewing the entirety of the individual case portrait, the structure of the inquiry and participant's overarching narrative are evident. Categories and emergent themes are sequential and build upon one another. The whole of the participant's portrait links back to the questions that informed the research design.

Participant Case Portraits

Valerie

Valerie's Background Information

Valerie describes herself as a white heterosexual cisgender female, and states that her pronouns are she and her. Valerie was born in the 1960s, and describes her upbringing as teaching her only "negative" things about the LGBTQ community. A few years ago Valerie earned her masters degree in the human services field, and began working in a shelter for persons experiencing homelessness. She says that her personal experience with discrimination coupled with witnessing the stigma her brother experienced while experiencing homelessness strongly motivated her to work with disenfranchised populations. About 2 years ago Valerie began working in the non-profit industry; she describes her annual income as between \$35,000 and

\$49,999. She describes her current position as including advocacy for the transgender and gender-expansive community through outreach and education, and advocating for change at the community, city, and state levels.

Valerie currently resides in New Mexico and lives with her partner in a rural community just outside of a major metropolitan area. She was nominated for participation in this study by another study participant, who also works in the non-profit industry. Valerie and I attend the same support, myself as an attendee and parent of a transgender child, and Valerie as a human services professional. I informed Valerie in-person during one of the support groups that she was nominated to participate in the study. I asked if Valerie were interested in participating in a 1 hour interview about her experience as an advocate, and she readily agreed.

Interview Context

Valerie and I arranged to meet at a Starbucks near Valerie's home, immediately before lunch time. Although Valerie stated that she felt that completing the interview at Starbucks would provide adequate privacy, I showed up to the location 30 minutes prior to the interview to identify the most private seating area. I changed tables multiple times until I was able to obtain seating in a back corner of the coffee shop, away from the other seating areas, where the background music and noise seemed hushed.

Despite our location in the shop, customers consistently walked by our table who could potentially hear some bits and pieces of our conversation. Valerie appeared aware of this and seemed to speak in hushed tones whenever she said the words "transgender", "Trump", or "conservative". She also appeared to look around whenever she made statements about the conservative media, and the Trump presidency. Valerie completed the demographic survey,

verbally provided a list of advocacy artifacts, and she completed the interview in a total of 53 minutes.

Inductively Derived Categories & Related Themes

The following themes were inductively derived during the coding of Valerie's interview transcript. During the initial 3 readings of the transcript, portions of Valerie's narrative were assigned themes based upon the meaning Valerie's words seemed to convey. These themes were then grouped into categories (also known as code groups) based upon their relatedness to one another. For example, Valerie referenced her personal and professional development as an advocate throughout the interview. This category included a variety of themes, or inter-related aspects that cumulatively described Valerie's journey as an advocate. Themes within the category of personal and professional development as an advocate included: Valerie's experience as a helping professional, her personal motivation and inspiration to advocate and help others, and her sense of privilege due to perceived identity. These inductively derived categories and themes may be present in other participant's data, but will be unique to their lived experience and perspective. Shared themes and categories will be further discussed in the cross case analysis portion of this manuscript.

Personal and Professional Development as an Advocate

Inspiration and Motivation for Advocacy Work

Valerie describes herself as a lifelong advocate, working to elevate the voices of persons who have experienced discrimination and stigma. She reports advocacy being a big part of both her personal and professional interactions with others, from her family to community members. As a helping professional, Valerie describes herself as having "that kind of drive in me to advocate for people who don't have their voices heard".

Valerie's journey to becoming the advocate she is today is interwoven with a variety of experiences that inspired her to seek work with disenfranchised populations. Valerie describes having experienced discrimination and oppression in her personal life, as well as witnessing the oppression her brother faced while he was experiencing homelessness. She states that these experiences have helped her to empathize with transgender and gender-expansive individuals who are often faced with discrimination and family rejection for "just being you". Valerie references her age as helpful when it comes to understanding the oppression experienced by persons with diverse gender identities, saying that she has "seen a lot". Per Valerie:

I've had my own things happen in my life. I think that helped me to understand what it means to be discriminated against when you're just being you. I know what it feels like when your family is not very supportive. I've seen a lot. My age helps me sometimes.

Since beginning her work as an advocate, first with a shelter that serves persons experiencing homelessness, then later as an advocate within the non-profit industry, Valerie says that her advocacy work has transformed her personal life and relationships. She describes discussing her work with her family members, including those who reject transgender and gender-expansive identities as invalid or seem ambivalent and unsupportive of this population. Valerie says that her work has enabled her to educate her family and help them become more accepting of the transgender and gender-expansive community:

My whole family is really interested in my work now. I think it's kind of cool because I've educated them and they are wanting to know more. It's cool to hear that my brother changed the way he talks, and he's really open minded to [other gender identities]. I never thought I'd get there with him.

Privilege Due to Perceived Identity

Working as an advocate within the non-profit industry, Valerie states that her age not only helps her to empathize with clients, but also seems to influence other's assumptions about her perspective on gender identity. Valerie describes herself as a white, heterosexual, cisgender female, with her physical presentation aligning with these identities. She says that her physical presentation, coupled with her being raised in a conservative environment, "really shocks people when they hear my opinion because I didn't know anything about [the LGBTQ] community except for what I was told when I was raised, which was negative". Valerie states that the identities associated with her physical presentation are associated with the hetero-cisgender "norm" and thus afford her the opportunity to engage in discussions and have her voice heard in spaces where persons of oppressed identities might not be heard.

Other's perception of Valerie as a cisgender heterosexual white woman in her 50s influences the way that others interact with her, particularly when discussing the topic of gender identity. Valerie describes interacting with individuals who are non-affirming or rejecting of gender identities outside of the male-female binary who seem to assume that she is "on that side" because of her age, or their belief that she may be identify with a LGBTQ rejecting religious organization. According to Valerie:

I always wonder if it's because I am a cis woman and they think I'm on that side because of my age. I'm like, "excuse me, how dare you!". But it gives me that opportunity to use my opinion too. It's like, if you want to give me yours then I'm going to give mine. Jesus has nothing to do with it.

Valerie says that she has utilized those experiences where individuals identify her as non-affirming or rejecting as opportunities for advocacy through discussion. She describes using these instances – where others initiate conversation based on their perception of her identity – as

the foundation for advocacy on a micro-level. In Valerie's case portrait, micro-level advocacy serves as a category or umbrella concept, with multiple themes residing beneath this umbrella.

Micro-level Advocacy

Advocacy through Verbal Interactions and Discussion

In situations where individuals assume that Valerie is a cisgender heterosexual Christian white woman with beliefs that align with these dominant groups, Valerie describes allowing these individuals to share their opinion with her, then shares her own perspective coupled with education about gender-identity. Although Valerie describes feeling appalled that persons make assumptions about her beliefs based on her appearance, she also views these instances as opportunities to engage in discussion. Lewis, Ratts, Paladino and Toporek (2011) define micro-level advocacy in counseling as those actions taken by helping professionals at an individual level on behalf of the client. This level of advocacy is described as typically occurring between the counselor and an organization or individual, to address discriminatory action or barrier to resources. Valerie describes micro-level advocacy in the form of verbal interactions/discussion as one of her primary methods of advocacy.

Valerie's narrative contains numerous examples of micro-level advocacy through verbal interactions and discussion with individuals who are rejecting or ambivalent towards persons of diverse gender identities. Valerie's reference to micro-level advocacy overlaps the deductive theme of "Micro/Individual Level and Community Level Sources of Affirmation and Support" identified in the literature, and pilot study that preceded this project. Valerie's use of micro-level advocacy strategies seems to be her primary approach to pursuing social change for this population, as she uses this method to both address discrimination and to support and affirm the gender diverse community. The themes described below relate specifically to Valerie's

experience as relates to the category of micro-level advocacy, and do not reference those deductive themes described in the literature.

Sub-themes relating to the theme of micro-level advocacy through discussion include: 1) The act of hearing another's perspective, 2) providing education, 3) engaging in discussion, and 4) challenging opinions. These themes were illustrated in Valerie's response to the interview question regarding instances of advocacy that were particularly memorable. Her perceived identities are closely related to her ability to engage in this level/form of advocacy, as Valerie states that her discussions with ambivalent/rejecting individuals were usually initiated by the individual who approached her because of their belief that she was "on that side".

1) Hearing Another's Perspective. One example of Valerie's use of hearing another's perspective occurred while Valerie was at a continuing education conference for helping professionals. Valerie states that she managed the vendor table for a non-profit entity she works with and was chatting with the individuals at the neighboring table when an individual approached her table and stated, "I think boys are born boys and girls are born girls". Valerie describes the individual as "in my age group" and a helping professional.

Valerie describes feeling appalled, stating "I just found it really interesting that somebody would come up to a table and interrupt a group of people talking and state their opinion loudly. I was really surprised by it". During the interview, she described her training as a helping professional as being counter to this individual's behavior, stating that her graduate-level training in health and human services emphasized "cultural competencies" which includes "not stating your biases or putting it out there, keeping your opinions to yourself because it's not necessarily right". While Valerie identifies this helping professional's rejecting statement as unprofessional

and indicative of a lack of cultural competency, she also describes how she and her colleagues listened to the individual's "opinion" before sharing their own beliefs and providing education.

2) Providing Education. During the aforementioned memorable instance, Valerie describes herself and her colleagues as responding to the individual's statement about the gender binary with their own "opinions" and accurate information. She defines this act of education as making informed statements and providing factual information about gender diversity, with the primary aim of increasing the individual's understanding of this population and challenging the individual to conceptualize gender as a spectrum (rather than male female binary). Valerie's description of another memorable instance of advocacy emphasizes the role of education when utilizing discussion to advocate for gender-diverse individuals.

3) Engaging in Discussion. The non-profit entity Valerie works with is near a residential area. As part of her work with the entity, Valerie frequently walks these streets picking up trash and used syringes. She states that keeping the streets clean near the agency is essential to maintaining amicable relationships with neighboring businesses. The non-profit entity provides some harm reduction interventions, to include syringe exchange. Valerie says that despite the availability of syringe disposal and exchange, she sometimes finds used syringes discarded outside the non-profit entity's building and near neighboring businesses.

One day while picking trash up off the streets near the building, a gentleman who works in the area stopped his car in the street and struck up a conversation with Valerie. Valerie stated that "he was really negative because people left needles" and he said that "these people just want attention". Valerie described engaging the gentleman in conversation, responding by "explaining why we offer our services, how not all the needles were used for drugs, how we provide services for people to inject their testosterone into their legs, and why we provide a good service where

they don't have to go someplace [to inject] where they feel uncomfortable". Valerie described advocating through conversation, saying that "I talked to him. I just educated him. By the time we were done he was like really nice about it and he says, 'maybe I should look into this a little more' ...it was a really good conversation".

4) Challenging "Opinions". Both of Valerie's memorable instances of advocacy include the act of hearing someone's opinion about gender-identity, responding with education, engaging in discussion, and challenging the rejecting or ambivalent individual's "opinion". Valerie's conversation with the man while picking up trash is a perfect example of how she verbally challenges other's beliefs. Valerie describes her challenging the man, "I asked, 'do you really think people are doing this to get attention?'. Because one of his opinions was that these people just want attention. When I was done he says, 'no, I guess you're right'".

Valerie's interaction with the man on the street also provided an example of the role of advocacy in positive change, particularly positive change in the negative attitudes of others towards transgender and gender-expansive persons. In addition to her work with adults, Valerie also reports interacting with adolescents and children through outreach and education efforts aimed at promoting understanding of gender identity as a spectrum.

Acts of Advocacy

Valerie's advocacy efforts for transgender and gender-expansive youth include many facets and occur in a variety of settings. Over the course of a week, Valerie may spend one day at a local middle or high school providing an educational workshop about gender identity to students as part of their health education curriculum, and another day facilitating a support group for for transgender and gender-expansive youth. When working with children and adolescents within the schools Valerie's primary aim is to educate about the gender identity spectrum, and

the importance of acceptance and inclusion of all gender identities. When working with school administrators, Valerie presents a similar curriculum with additional information about how to support transgender and gender-expansive students through acceptance, addressing discrimination and harassment, and ensuring these youth maintain equal access to resources.

In addition to the aforementioned individual themes, one major category emerged from Valerie's data. This category is best described as "acts of advocacy" and contains a multitude of themes, with each theme describing a specific act or advocacy effort aimed at pursuing or catalyzing social change. The aim of promoting acceptance, addressing discrimination and harassment, and ensuring equal access to resources appears to continue as a uniting thread among the themes listed within the category "acts of advocacy". Table 4 outlines the themes included in the category "acts of advocacy" and provides a summarized description of each theme. Valerie frequently referenced each of the following acts throughout the interview but did not provide context of specific instances where these acts occurred, thus the summarization of these themes in table format seems best fitting.

Table 4
Advocating for Transgender and Gender Expansive Youth: Summarization of Category "Acts of Advocacy"

Themes	Description
Cultivating safety	Ensuring safety of transgender and gender-expansive youth in situations (such as during interactions with administration and peers at school), relationships (to include relationships with family members and peers), and when accessing resources (e.g. helping young people to find healthcare and behavioral health practitioners that are affirming).
Meeting basic needs	Ensuring that youth who are homeless can access those local shelters that will house them according to their gender identity (rather than sex assigned at birth). Helping youth who have limited resources obtain necessary hygiene products, clothing, and food. Assisting young people from affirming less resourced families, and those from rejecting homes to access healthcare and, if over age 14 (the age of consent in New Mexico) obtain gender transition related medical care

	(such as hormone blockers, cross-sex hormones, and the enhancement of secondary sex characteristics associated with gender identity).
Collaboration, education and outreach	<p>Collaborating with affirming agencies and practitioners, and engaging other community agencies</p> <p>Through the non-profit entity, educating providers about services transgender and gender-expansive young people need or reaching out to providers to offer educational workshops to help providers become more informed.</p> <p>Outreach is described as calling, communicating with individuals or organizations to inquire about their interest in further education in working with transgender and gender-expansive community. Outreach is also considered a form of networking, linking the advocate with providers who are affirming of the gender-expansive community. Using education (i.e. workshops, sharing information during discussions) to address attitudinal barriers rooted in lack of information, and address inability to empathize due to fear and lack of knowledge.</p>
Modeling affirming attitudes in educational settings	In educational settings, educators and administrators model positive affirming attitudes during educational workshops for young students, to include: Asking appropriate questions, listening and remaining engaged throughout.
Supporting students in the school environment	Support students as they pursue access to the facilities (e.g. bathrooms) of the gender with which they identify, and request acknowledgement by teachers and school administration to be recognized by the appropriate name and gender pronouns.
“Galvanizing others” in a group setting (responding to rejecting or ambivalent perspectives)	While training adults in a group setting to work with transgender and gender-expansive youth, responding to an individual’s opinion or perspective that is rejecting of transgender and gender-expansive individuals with information/education. The process of hearing another’s rejecting/non-affirming perspective then providing accurate information that contradicts the individual’s perspective is described as “galvanizing” others in the group to maintain a more affirming perspective about the transgender and gender-expansive community.
Addressing legal barriers	Helping a child and/or their family to address legal concerns; often involves youth's rights to healthcare, particularly medical interventions and mental health interventions.
Maintaining list of resources	Identifying local and national agencies, resource centers, healthcare and behavioral health providers who are affirming and able/willing to provide gender transition related services; provides transgender and gender-expansive youth and their caregivers with referrals for these providers and resources.
Collaborating with parent advocates	Working with parents who support and affirm their child’s identity to address instances where the child experiences discrimination.

Discrimination & Rejection

Valerie describes transgender and gender-expansive youth as facing discrimination and rejection in numerous forms, perpetrated by family and caregivers, peers and school administrators, and community members (e.g. individuals who live within the same neighborhood or town). She defines discrimination as those acts or speech that reinforce the gender binary and reject other gender identities. Valerie provides examples of discriminatory actions, to include healthcare providers refusing to provide patients with gender-transition related services, or a behavioral health facility requiring patients to disclose whether they “were born with a penis or vagina”. Speech may include statements such as “boys are born boys” or “girls are born girls”. The overwhelming message communicated by these acts and words is that of rejection, and the stigmatization of gender-expansive identities.

The category “discrimination and rejection” includes themes related to the forms and types of rejection and discrimination, and the individuals/organizations who perpetrate such discrimination. Another prevalent theme within this category is the contrasting perspectives of youth versus older generations regarding gender identity. According to Valerie, the majority of young people (ranging from early childhood to mid-twenties) seem to be open to individuals defining their own gender identity. Per Valerie:

This is what's cool about kids. They seem to be okay with each other. Doesn't matter. It's like if you like me, you like me, if you don't, oh well.

Valerie describes young individual’s acceptance of diverse gender identities as standing in sharp contrast to the perspectives of persons her age. In response to an interview question about barriers or challenges to advocacy work for this population, Valerie states:

It's usually the adults...it's more people my age because that generation is not very open-minded, and older people seem to be more. So, it's like my generation seems to have a lot of issues.

The aforementioned themes are further described in table 5.

Themes	Description
Contrasting perspectives between youths and adults	Children are described as usually having a much more open perspective about gender and identity, viewing gender and identity as fluid and self-defined, while adults are described as "opinionated" and seem insistent that all gender-identities must fit the male-female binary.
Influence of religion	Religious groups are described as promoting conceptualization of gender according to the male-female binary and rejecting those identities that fall outside of the binary.
Rejection as the basis for discrimination within institutions (e.g. healthcare, behavioral health)	Providers (e.g. physicians, mental health providers) refuse to provide care or treatment due to lack of knowledge about gender-diversity and gender-transition related care, or personal beliefs about transgender or gender-expansive identities.
Family and/or caregiver rejection	Some family members and/or caregivers respond to child's disclosure or presentation of transgender or gender-expansive identity with rejection. Rejection may include removal of support, policing of gender presentation (reinforcing only behaviors associated with gender assigned at birth).

Consequences of Rejection & Discrimination

The final theme in the category "rejection and discrimination" is the consequences of rejection and discrimination. Throughout the interview, Valerie described working with transgender and gender diverse adults whose families failed to provide "that loving environment" needed for typical growth and development, and thus experienced a variety of difficulties in their adolescent and adult life. According to Valerie, many of these gender diverse adults experienced sexual abuse, emotional neglect or rejection, and the withdrawal of financial support from family

members during their youth. In the following quote, Valerie describes her personal and professional experience witnessing the relationship between the trauma of rejection by one's family, and negative outcomes such as homelessness, addiction, and mental health concerns:

Not having that [family] support, most of them don't complete their education. So, they are high school dropouts. They have tons of arrests because of soliciting [sex] and street economics. They have drug and alcohol and mental health issues as well because they've been told they've been wrong all their lives, and it's not medicated or taking care of the way that it needs to be, so they're living inside their own heads with this horrible stuff that they've been through. A lot of sexual abuse has happened as well. That's one thing I seem to hear a lot about within their families.

Affirmation of Gender Diversity

Parent/Caregiver Acceptance

Although Valerie's experience paints a bleak picture of the consequences of family rejection in early life, Valerie also describes an evolving counter culture of parents accepting and celebrating their gender diverse children. The primary themes in this category include: Parent's efforts to maintain "healthier relationships" with their gender diverse children, and parent's desire to "not lose their child" to suicide. Just as she attributed some individual's rejecting attitudes towards gender diversity to age and generational beliefs, Valerie also describes parent/caregiver acceptance of gender diversity as related to a new generation of parents, "I feel like we have a lot more supportive parents now compared to some of the older people".

Valerie's experience assisting with facilitation of support groups for gender-diverse youth have provided her with unique insight regarding the perspectives of accepting and affirming parents. All of the children involved in the support groups are accompanied by an affirming

supportive parent/caregiver or family member. According to Valerie, affirming parent's efforts to maintain healthy relationships with their gender expansive child(ren) often includes acts of advocacy.

One example provided by Valerie was affirming parent's awareness of the discrimination their children face while at school. Valerie describes these parents as "fighting the schools more" to address instances of discrimination. Valerie states that parents describe their children experiencing the following difficulties in the school environment:

it's always a bathroom...and how to get to where kids can use the bathroom of the gender they identify with. Why do they have to be singled out [when using the restroom]? Also, teachers using the correct pronouns.

Affirming parents not only provide a loving environment and validation of their child's identity, but also advocate for their children when teachers fail to use the correct pronouns, or schools refuse their child to use the restroom that aligns with their gender identity. Valerie describes the presence of these sources of support as also acting as a protective factor, reducing the likelihood that gender-diverse youth will experience homelessness, addiction, and mental health concerns.

Sociopolitical Context

The Trump Administration

During the interview, Valerie seemed to speak in hushed tones when using politically-affiliated words such as "Trump" and "conservative". Valerie referenced the current political administration, specifically President Trump and his cabinet, throughout the interview. Her response to almost every interview question included some reference to how President Trump's politics and policy are negatively impacting LGBTQ youth. Particularly impactful quotes from

Valerie regarding the effect of the Trump administration and conservative politicians on the LGBTQ community include:

Just knowing who our president is...I'm not a political person by nature, but I suddenly am because I am sickened by that man and what he does. It makes my heart ache. I feel like he's promoting genocide.

I think he's taken us backwards. I think he's going to be harmful to our youth. I mean if he gets his way. So, so it's made me more politically active and really more in tune to what's going on and how can I be involved to help do my part.

Valerie describes the current political climate as acting as a powerful motivator for her, inspiring her to pursue positive social change through her advocacy efforts. She describes her work with participants in the Youth Group as particularly impacted by socio-political climate, as she often assists these young people to identify affirming resources and cope with non-affirming statements by politicians. Per Valerie:

I mean [the political climate has motivated me] to provide more support to the youth.

Like the [support group for youth]. For them, I try making sure that they're aware of more resources for therapy and behavioral health stuff because it really affects them, like when certain changes are made. They hear it and then some of them are right there at that 18, 19 year old cusp, and some of them don't have families that are providing support so they're homeless.

As much as Valerie's direct statements articulate the impact of politics on gender-diverse youth and her own advocacy efforts, her consistent reference to this contextual variable also speaks volumes about the role of socio-political context on advocacy for this population. Themes under the umbrella category of socio-political context include: Advocate's personal response

(e.g. “I am sickened” and “it makes my heart ache”), rejecting political actions and policies as motivating advocacy efforts, and Trump and politically conservative individuals as “harmful to our youth”.

Summary of Inductively Derived Categories & Related Themes

The categories and related themes inductively derived from Valerie’s interview illuminated Valerie’s personal and professional development as an advocate, her sources of motivation and inspiration, and the many acts and elements of micro-level interactions that comprise advocacy efforts. Other categories described by Valerie include transgender and gender-expansive youth’s experience of rejection and discrimination, and the consequences of this rejection. Throughout the interview, her references to the impact of politics on gender diverse youth spoke to the relevance of socio-political context as a category or umbrella concept. Valerie also described her experience with affirming parents, caregivers, and family members, and how these experiences shed light on the positive effects of affirming family members advocating for their gender-diverse child(ren).

These categories and themes illustrate how Valerie utilizes her role as advocate to pursue positive change for transgender and gender-expansive youth and adults. They also speak to the contextual variables that influence the advocacy process. During the final portion of the interview, Valerie was asked to recommend any advocacy related documents, films, or other references. Her recommendations provided further contextual information about her experience as an advocate, as her recommendations consisted primarily of practical resources for affirming healthcare, behavioral health, and legal resources for transgender and gender-expansive individuals.

Advocacy Artifacts

Towards the end of each interview, participants are asked the following questions:

Are there any advocacy-related media, such as videos, documentaries, films, books, or articles, that you would recommend? Why do you recommend this item? What would you like me to notice about this item?

Each participant defined “advocacy artifacts” differently, and their interpretation of this question provided contextual information about their experience as an advocate for this population.

Valerie’s recommended advocacy artifacts seemed to speak to her pragmatic approach to advocacy, as she provides information about direct services for transgender and gender-expansive youth and adults, and educational resources for persons looking to learn more about gender diversity.

Table 6 outlines the advocacy artifacts recommended by Valerie, to include the title, type, Valerie’s description of the artifact, and a summary description of item from the source.

Table 6

Recommended Advocacy Artifacts - Valerie

Artifact Title	Artifact Type	Participant Description	Summary Description from Source
Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico Provider List Accessible on-line: https://www.tgrcnm.org/provider-list/	Comprehensive list of providers for the state of New Mexico	The participant describes constructing and maintaining this list of resources: "I have a lengthy list. It's all LGBTQ, social work, or mental health providers." "I always tell people when I refer them to the list, I can't promise...I can only tell you these people I know I've had some people have good results with. But everybody's not for everybody"	The provider list is community-generated, meaning that members of the LGBTQ community or local providers who provide care to this population have provided the information contained in this list ("Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico Provider List", 2018, September 12).
University of New Mexico (UNM) Southeast Heights Clinic James Wilterding, MD 82 Central Ave SE, ABQ, NM 87108 (505) 272-5885	Resource for healthcare and medical interventions	"We do have certain doctors that are affirming...this particular provider just opened up a trans-clinic, but it's just starting. It's on Tuesday afternoons at the Southeast Heights Clinic"	The University of New Mexico Southeast Heights Clinic website lists their practice as specializing in family medicine, serving individuals across the lifespan, but does not explicitly state that they provide gender transition related care or an LGBTQ-affirming environment ("University of New Mexico Health Sciences", 2018, September 12).
Southwest Cares 649 Harkle Road Ste E, Santa Fe, NM 87505 info@southwestcare.org 505-989-8200	Resource for healthcare and medical interventions	"We also have another [affirming provider]. They are starting to see trans clients too, but they're only 18 and up. They're very new as well"	The Southwest Cares website describes this medical practice as community-oriented, serving persons from all socio-economic brackets. The site does not explicitly state that Southwest Cares provides gender transition related care or an LGBTQ-affirming environment ("Southwest Cares Center", 2018, September 12).

<p>Transcend Legal https://transcendlegal.org/</p>	<p>Legal resource for understanding one's right to access transgender-related healthcare</p>	<p>"I use that and Transcend Legal for healthcare. A lot of times insurance will deny people for surgery or breast removal or whatever they're looking for. But a lot of times healthcare insurance does provide that service, so it's just a matter of getting to know the system. We go through those kinds of organizations, I use them a lot"</p>	<p>Transcend Legal describes their mission as assisting persons to understand their right to transgender-related healthcare. Their services include educational videos, trainings, and community-education about legal rights to transgender-related healthcare. They also manage a network of legal professionals whose mission is to assist transgender and gender-expansive individuals to access healthcare without discrimination ("Transcend Legal", 2018 September, 12).</p>
<p>National Center for Transgender Equality: National Transgender Discrimination Survey (2016) https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/usts/USTS-Full-Report-Dec17.pdf</p>	<p>Research documenting transgender and gender-expansive individuals experience of discrimination in the United States</p>	<p>"I always refer people to the transgender discrimination summary...of the discrimination survey that was done. I use this survey for numbers"</p>	<p>"The report of the 2015 USTS provides a detailed look at the experiences of transgender people across a wide range of categories, such as education, employment, family life, health, housing, and interactions with the criminal justice system. The findings reveal disturbing patterns of mistreatment and discrimination and startling disparities between transgender people in the survey and the U.S. population when it comes to the most basic elements of life, such as finding a job, having a place to live, accessing medical care, and enjoying the support of family and community. Survey respondents also experienced harassment and violence at alarmingly high rates" (James et al., 2016, p. 4)</p>

Craig

Craig's Background Information

Craig identifies as a white, cisgender, gay male, and states that his pronouns are he and him. Craig was born in the 1970s and began his work in advocacy during his undergraduate studies when he assisted at a homeless shelter. He states that it was at that time that he began working with LGBTQ youth who were experiencing homelessness and noticed that this population faced rejection and discrimination from family, community, and society. Craig has a Masters in health and human services and works as a human service professional in the state of New Mexico.

Craig currently works as a helping professional in New Mexico. His practice is near a school that provides an affirming community for LGBTQ students. Craig's office is also near a youth center that serves LGBTQ youth. Craig explained that the location of his office has enabled his clients to access services such as support groups, youth events, and an affirming educational environment. He describes having a number of clients who attend the affirming school during the day, see Craig after school one day a week, then receive services at the youth center.

Craig was recruited to participate in the study when, during a conference regarding LGBTQ issues for human service providers, Craig attended my presentation about the pilot study that preceded this case study. At the end of the presentation, I asked that any attendees interested in participating in future studies on the topic provide their contact information. Craig spoke to me after the presentation and indicated that he was interested in sharing about his experience working with LGBTQ youth as a helping professional, and provided a copy of his business card.

He was contacted approximately one year later, after the Institutional Review Board approved the current case study.

Interview Context

The interview took place in Craig's office at 8 am on a weekday, prior to Craig seeing clients for the day. Since his office is typically used for providing confidential counseling services, the set up of the space provided adequate privacy for the interview. Craig appeared comfortable and open to discussing all topics during the interview. He completed the demographic survey, verbally provided a list of advocacy artifacts, and completed the interview in a total of 52 minutes.

Inductively Derived Categories & Related Themes

Craig's interview was transcribed, and the transcript reviewed 5 times. During each reading, portions of the text were assigned brief titles based on the major themes identified. Categories were then identified based upon similarities among themes. These categories acted as umbrella concepts explaining a variety of related themes. The following section describes those categories that emerged from the data and their related themes.

Advocating as a Helping Professional & Human Service Provider

As a licensed human services provider working with LGBTQ youth, Craig describes working with a number of transgender and gender-expansive young people and their families. According to Craig, the role of the helping professional as advocate requires the helping professional to utilize their role as confidential confidant to provide direct services to the young person that help them to navigate their experience and achieve positive outcomes. Themes under the umbrella of the category "advocating as a helping professional" include micro-level

advocacy efforts, namely: Advocating for youth within their family/caregiving unit, and addressing sociopolitical context.

Advocating for Youth within the Family/Caregiving Unit

Craig describes much of his human services work with transgender and gender-expansive youth as almost always including the child's parents and/or caregivers to some extent. He states that in New Mexico, once a child turns 14 they are able to consent to receive mental health and some medical services without the consent of their parents. Thus when working with clients under the age of 14, Craig always includes the parents/caregivers in the helping process. When working with parents/caregivers, Craig describes his role as advocating for the needs and wants of the child.

Advocating for the transgender or gender-expansive youth when working with the parents requires premeditation and strategy. Per Craig, interacting with parents/caregivers follows a specific process or trajectory. This process includes: 1) Normalizing the parent's experience with the child, 2) navigating parent/caregiver's expectations for the helping process, 3) educating parents about the statistics and the stakes concerning their choice to either reject or affirm their child's identity, and 4) holding space for the transgender or gender-expansive child.

1) Normalizing the parent's experience with the child. The first step when working with a transgender or gender-expansive minor client and their parent/caregiver is to ensure that the parent's experience is normalized. Per Craig, when first working with the parent, the human service professional ought to:

Just kind of normalize it. Saying you're not the only parents who feel this way. That's often really helpful.

Craig describes normalizing as a process whereby the human service professional ensures the parent that their emotional response to their child's transgender or non-binary gender identity is similar to other parents/caregivers in the same situation. Normalizing the parent's feelings about their child's identity serves multiple purposes. Normalization helps Craig to meet the parents where they are with regards to their rejection, ambivalence or support of their child's identity. This strategy also helps Craig to build rapport with the family and avoid them not coming "back to [the office]", by being "gentle" and not going "full force" and challenging their worldview with too much education. Per Craig:

I think like being an advocate in this setting, you have to be gentle. You can't go full force saying, "no, listen, [their gender identity] is perfectly acceptable. This is perfectly okay. There's nothing wrong with your child. They're just different. They just have a different gender identity than the rest of us". Just explaining what it means to be transgender is sometimes helpful, but there have been a few times where I've had people decide not to come back to [the office] because of that. And I try really hard not to make that happen. So that means going really slow when I try to engage.

2) Navigating Parent's Expectations for Counseling. Craig describes parents/caregivers as often bringing their child to his office with pre-conceived notions about what their child is going through, and what they need to do to feel better. He states that some parents/caregivers are aware that their child is "coming out" to them as being somewhere on the LGBTQ spectrum and are seeking assistance to better support their child. He describes other parents/caregivers as being unaware of why their child is struggling, and bring their child to therapy in hopes of obtaining some assistance. Craig says that some parents are rejecting of their child's gender diversity and

are “under the assumption that I’m going to side with them, and try to make their child untransgender”.

Although Craig says that he attempts to be “gentle” with parents to ensure that they keep coming back to the office and continue to allow their child to engage in human service interventions, he draws a hard line with how “gentle” he is willing to be. Craig states that “it’s not always completely possible” to meet parents where they are, particularly rejecting or ambivalent parents “because I’m not going to separate myself from my own morals”. Craig describes himself as willing to normalize parents’/caregivers’ negative emotions or rejecting response to their child’s transgender or gender-expansive identity and will even discuss their beliefs about gender diverse identities, but that he will not go so far as to allow parents/caregivers to believe that he approves of their rejecting attitudes or behaviors.

No matter the difference in parents’/caregivers’ expectations for human service interventions or beliefs about gender diversity, Craig stated that all parents essentially “bring their child to get some more information”. By identifying the foundation of his role as a helping professional and advocate as that of educator, Craig is able to meet the parents/caregivers of his transgender and gender-expansive youth wherever they are in their journey with their child.

3) Educating Parents. As a helping professional and advocate for transgender and gender-expansive youth, Craig states that educating parents/caregivers about gender identity requires a delicate balance between providing information and gently challenging misinformed beliefs. Craig described the primary topic areas where parents require education as: Understanding gender identity as a spectrum; the role of hormone therapy and medical transition in treating dysphoria and related mental health symptoms; the relationship between lack of congruity between physical gendered appearance and internal gender identity and mental health symptoms,

and the role of parental/caregiver rejection or acceptance in transgender or gender-expansive child experience of suicidal ideation.

When discussing his approach to educating parents, Craig describes challenging parent beliefs and behaviors that reinforce gender as a binary concept. He states that parents often struggle to allow their child to explore their gender, as many tend to view gender as still male or female. This belief prevents children from stepping outside of stereotypical gender norms, such as boys play with trucks and girls play with makeup, even though both cisgender and transgender children may not fit stereotypical gender expectations. Thus Craig describes challenging parents in the following way:

If a kid is transgender, it becomes this real hard and fast rule of what they are going to be like. If it's a Trans feminine child that child should only wear girls' clothing and put on lots of makeup and grow their hair really long and they have to be this stereotypical female. It can't be a mixture or a combination, or a process of discovery for this child. I think that can be more difficult, and it causes confusion. They'll say stuff like, "Well sometimes you like to play with trucks" to the trans feminine boy, or "Sometimes you like to play with transformers". My whole approach would be to say, "Well yes, but some cisgender little girls like to do that too. Is that such a bad thing?"

Craig also emphasizes the importance of learning from children, and expanding society's definition of gender, viewing gender as a spectrum and a self-defined experience:

These children really make us question and look more broadly at these definitions of gender and gender identity, and what that means and not making it so binary and not making it so specific, and pushing that onto our kids.

Another essential area of education for parents is understanding the role of hormone therapy and medical transition in treating dysphoria and related mental health symptoms. Craig describes hormone therapy as the use of hormone blockers in children as young as 12, and cross sex hormones in the later teen years. Per the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (2011) hormone blockers prevent the development of secondary sex characteristics associated with the child's natal sex. Hormone therapy also includes the use of cross sex hormones (e.g. estrogen for transgender females, testosterone for transgender males), typically started during late adolescence. Craig discusses the importance of hormone therapy, stating:

What's happening more recently is that they are doing what they call hormone blockers. I've been noticing a much better trend of this happening, where they start hormone blockers as early as 12 years old, and that's so good. It's so, so, so, so helpful. I really advocate for these blockers. It's part of the advocacy work I do, helping the parents understand because they do have to consent for these gender treatments or it won't happen.

But the hormone blockers are so great because it prevents the child from not having to go through a second puberty, which is so challenging and it's such a whirl wind.

Craig describes hormone therapy as essential to addressing psychological distress associated with the lack of congruity between internal gendered experience, and external gender presentation. He references clients who present to counseling with symptoms of depression and thoughts of suicide who, after beginning hormone therapy, have experienced a drastic reduction of symptoms. Per Craig, hormone therapy plays a positive role in promoting mental health for transgender and gender-expansive youth:

It really helps, from a [human services] perspective. I do basic screenings for depression and it is absolutely amazing how the level of depression decreases when a child starts on hormones. It's amazing. They can be fairly suicidal, with immobilizing depression, but when they are on hormones, when they start the process confirming and affirming their gender, it's like something just happens. They feel so much better. They're doing something positive for themselves. Then they feel like they want to stay with the game. They want to keep up with life and keep going.

When transgender and gender-expansive youth fail to have their gender affirmed, whether through medical intervention or a lack of parental support, mental health can be adversely affected. Per Craig, these youth experience a much higher rate of suicide than their peers, and parental rejection of their gender identity seems to be a contributing factor. When these youth are accepted and supported by their parents/caregivers, their risk of experiencing suicidal ideation or attempting suicide decreases. Craig's statements about increased suicidal ideation in transgender and gender-expansive youth with rejecting families is validated by quantitative studies facilitated by the Family Acceptance Project (Ryan, 2009). Craig describes educating parents about the high-stakes of parental acceptance in the following quote:

Trying to do some education, talking about gender identity. I think what can really help parents come to an understanding of their child is to know that transgender youth have a very high rate of suicide, that's much higher than the average teenage population. I think that knowing that, and the fact that if one parent accepts them then that's going to decrease the rate of suicide or the risk of suicide for that particular kid - that really helps. I think that most of these parents really love their kids. With rejecting parents, I think they're thinking about the child's overall life and they don't question the fact that if they

don't receive the support they need - being in such an isolated group, and some having really severe gender dysphoria - if they don't get that type of support, and if they're rejected then that can increase the rate of suicide.

4) Holding space for the transgender or gender-expansive child. Craig describes his advocacy work with transgender and gender-expansive youth as centered around his role as a human services provider. He speaks to sitting with his young clients and the “dark things” they share with him. Craig emphasizes the importance of holding space for these young people in the following quote:

It can be really challenging to work with kiddos and to sit and bear witness to and hear about really atrocious dark things that are going on in somebody's life. This is what [human service providers] have to do. We have to like sit with people and be brave with them as they recall traumatic events.

Holding space for transgender and gender-expansive youth in the human services/helping environment also means challenging negative beliefs. Craig describes the negative beliefs these young people present with in counseling as often originating with the child's parents and consisting of self-deprecating beliefs about the self. These beliefs include self-statements about their lack of worth, being “bad” or a “freak”, and not deserving of fair treatment or to have their gender acknowledged, all because of their gender identity. In the following quote Craig describes challenging these beliefs as a form of advocacy as he advocates for his clients to harbor more positive beliefs about their self and abandon these negative thoughts and patterns:

They need to know that they're not a freak. They're not bad. They're not a bad person. They have worth. They deserve to be treated well. They deserve to have their gender pronouns respected. I've been providing a lot of that support and countering some of

those negative thoughts, patterns, and belief systems that were passed down from their parents to them. There's a lot of that in [human services], and that's a way that I advocate for my clients. There's a lot of sort of like working against those negative stereotypes.

Sociopolitical Context

The Trump Administration

When asked about whether political climate affects his young transgender and gender-expansive clients, Craig confirms that political changes drastically impact these youth. Craig describes the transgender and gender-expansive community as at “the precipice...[as they are] just barely getting to that place where they are truly recognized by the medical fields, society, and the government”. He states that the recognition and affirmation of the transgender community by medical, social, and government entities is political progress, but that this is jeopardized by the current government administration. Per Craig, “[political progress] needs to be taken so much further. But it’s so scary when you have this lunatic elected to office”. In addition to the aforementioned views on the Trump administration, Craig’s statements about sociopolitical context include the following themes: Transgender is the new gay, and the political is personal.

“Transgender is the new gay”

According to Craig, “transgender has become the new gay as far as discrimination goes”. Craig states that about 15-20 years ago, Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) youth were likely to be kicked out of their homes, forced to submit to therapy aimed at changing their sexual orientation, and rejected by their parents/caregivers because of their identity. He says that today these children are more likely to be accepted by their families and seem less likely to have these adverse experiences.

Craig states that in his experience as a human service provider working with LGBTQ youth, his LGB clients are less likely to be rejected by their families or experience the aforementioned adverse experiences, while his transgender and gender-expansive clients/patients seem more apt to see such negative responses from loved ones. Craig describes the families he has worked with as seeming more open to their child having a non-heterosexual sexual orientation, but “not okay” with their child being transgender or gender-expansive. He views this shift in parent/caregiver/family perspective as reflective of a shift in stigma and discrimination. Per Craig, where being gay could cause a child to lose their family’s support, it’s now non-binary gender identities that appear to illicit this level of rejection from family members and/or caregivers:

Fifteen to twenty years ago, a lot of kids were kicked out of their house because they were gay or forced to go to some sort of conversion therapy. That still happens in different parts of the country with the LGB part of the population. But as far as transgender, non-gender, non-binary, or gender variant folks, they're dealing with that currently. So now transgender is the new gay, which is kind of a weird way to say it. I think that LGB kids are accepted by their parents much more. That's a more common thing. Definitely not all parents, there's certainly less acceptance with highly religious parents as they seem to be more anti-gay. But a lot of parents who are actually very okay with their child being gay, lesbian or bisexual are not okay with them being transgender. And that's been my experience.

Craig describes some “highly religious parents”, and parents/caregivers in “different parts of the country” as continuing to reject all LGBTQ identified youth, but states that there remains a trend towards acceptance of LGB youth. The parallel between the historical rejection of LGB

persons by institutions, communities, and political leaders and the current rejection of transgender persons is irrefutable. The following theme “political is personal” describes recent political events and effects on the transgender and gender-expansive community. The events and context discussed support Craig’s claims that “transgender is the new gay”, as they provide evidence of the stigma and oppression once applied to LGB persons, now shifted and applied to community members whose gender identity violates the traditional male/female binary.

Political is Personal: Effects of the Trump Administration

Craig’s statements are rooted in current American politics. At the time of Craig’s interview, Republican and political conservative Donald Trump had held the office of president for two years. During that time, President Trump had rescinded the Title IX guidance that ensured that transgender and gender-expansive students received fair treatment in the public education system (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016), attempted to ban persons who are transgender from serving in the military (Levin, 2018), and legally define gender as based on physician’s interpretation of genitalia at birth (Green, Benner, & Pear, 2018). Craig viewed these political actions as indicative of an anti-LGBTQ agenda and reported feeling fearful and concerned for the safety and wellbeing of his clients, the LGBTQ community, and himself as a gay man.

Craig’s description of how he and LGBTQ members of his community felt following the 2016 presidential election illustrates the impact of political events on personal experience:

After the presidential election, I was in a really dark place. I’m watching that whole thing...it felt a lot like a rollercoaster. The whole week after the election, it was horrible for the youth that I work with. I actually emailed my group [of LGBTQ counseling colleagues and friends] and was like, I feel like I’m in despair here. I don't know what to

do. We kind of encouraged each other through email. There was this big line of encouragement. I woke up that morning was like, “Shit”. As a gay man to see somebody who's vague policies regarding transgender issues and gay issues, and then to see the people that president Trump is hiring, who has appointed to all of these major offices, it was so scary. Just the insanity of what happened and what it could possibly mean.

The aforementioned quote references Craig's “group” of LGBTQ counseling colleagues and friends. During his interview, Craig describes maintaining a group of LGBTQ colleagues who also work with LGBTQ individuals with whom he meets once a month to share resources and discuss current events. He describes this group as also communicating frequently via email, and that following Trump's election into office, the group processed the event via email and provided one another with emotional support. Craig's description of he and his community's response to Trump's election provides a shining example of how advocates for this population experience political events as highly personal.

Summary of Inductively Derived Categories & Related Themes

Participant Craig's role as a helping professional seemed to significantly impact his conceptualization of his role as an advocate for transgender and gender-expansive youth. Working with these youth within the context of the human services environment provided Craig with a window into how their experience with their families/caregivers affected their mental health, and enabled Craig to advocate on behalf of the child within the family. His role as a helping professional also afforded him the opportunity to see how political climate and events impacts this population. It was during our discussion of the impact of political context on transgender and gender-expansive youth that Craig explained how he as a gay man, and his

LGBTQ colleagues have also been personally affected by the current conservative LGBTQ-hostile presidential administration.

Advocacy Artifacts

The aforementioned themes speak to how Craig's advocacy efforts are inextricably tied to his professional role, and socio-political context. The advocacy artifacts Craig recommends also seem strongly tied to his role as a human services professional. When responding to the interview question requesting recommendations for advocacy artifacts, Craig recommended primarily resources that his clients/patients had accessed and found helpful, or that his colleagues had recommended. These artifacts are listed in the following table, and include the artifact type, Craig's description of the artifact, and a brief description of the artifact from its original source. The Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico was mentioned by Craig but was also previously mentioned by another participant and included in their advocacy artifacts table, thus this artifact was not included in the table.

Table 7

Recommended Advocacy Artifacts – Craig

Artifact Title	Artifact Type	Participant Description	Summary Description from Source
Nate Sharon, MD Psychiatry University of New Mexico	Healthcare provider	“Nate Sharon has been like a really awesome person in New Mexico. He did a lot of initial advocacy to get out there and teach medical providers how to prescribe these different medications for hormone therapy”	Dr. Sharon is a practicing physician, a board member of the Center of Excellence for Transgender Health and is involved with the Truman Clinic at the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center.
Truman Clinic University of New Mexico Health Sciences 801 Encino Pl NE Albuquerque, NM 87102	Clinic providing health services	“The Truman Center has been doing a lot of advocacy, to get out there and teach medical providers how to prescribe these different medications. From a [human services perspective], it really helps.”	The Truman Clinic at the University of New Mexico specializes in testing for Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), providing primary care for persons with HIV, and assisting transgender and gender-expansive individuals over age 16 with hormone therapy.
Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Mexico	Health insurance company	“For hormones, there have been a lot of people who've been able to get Blue Cross Blue Shield to pay for it. I think some insurance companies are better than others. It seems like Blue Cross right now is fairly safe as far as getting medications and getting the medical portion covered”	According to Transcend Legal (2018) Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Mexico covers “Gender Assignment Surgery and Gender Reassignment Surgery and Related Services”, to include hormone therapy.
TEEN'MPower 136 Washington St SE, Ste E, Albuquerque, NM	Community center for LGBTQ youth ages 13-18	None provided.	Teen'MPower is a youth community center providing HIV prevention education, support groups, community events, and a safe space for LGBTQ youth ages 13-18.

Media Arts Collaborative Charter School (MACCS) 4401 Central Ave NE, Albuquerque, NM, 87108	High school	“MACCS (Media Arts Collaborative Charter School) is the most accepting school for transgender kiddos by far. It's just amazing.”	The Media Arts Collaborative Charter School (MACCS) is a charter high school in Albuquerque, NM, known locally for its LGBTQ inclusive policies.
<i>Trans Bodies, Trans Selves: A Resource for the Transgender Community</i> (Erickson-Schroth, 2014)	Book	“There's a really awesome book for people who are wanting understand what it is to be transgender, it's called Trans Bodies and Trans Selves. It's a very great book, I highly recommend it.”	<i>Trans Bodies, Trans Selves: A Resource for the Transgender Community</i> (Erickson-Schroth, 2014) is intended as a guide for people who are transgender or gender non-conforming, or persons interested in learning more about the experience of transgender and gender non-conforming persons. Each chapter is written by a person who is transgender, gender-expansive, or queer.

Bobbie

Background Information

Bobbie is a “Hispanic Latino/a/x” transgender female in her 40s residing in New Mexico. She uses female pronouns and describes her affectual orientation as heterosexual. She reports her highest level of education is a high school diploma, and her current income as between \$35,000-\$49,999. Bobbie works as a bartender and hair dresser.

In her free time Bobbie acts as a community organizer and fundraiser for local LGBTQ community events. Bobbie is also a board member for a non-profit agency, and volunteers with local non-profits that assist persons experiencing homelessness. Her work in the community has included fulfilling a mentorship role with transgender and gender-expansive youth, and young LGBTQ persons participating in drag shows and related events.

I became acquainted with Bobbie during an LGBTQ youth event she coordinated. After seeing Bobbie at several other LGBTQ community events, I asked her if she would be willing to participate in a 1 hour interview to discuss her experiences as an advocate. Bobbie agreed to participate in the study and invited me to complete the interview at her place of work – a bar owned and operated by a member of the LGBTQ community.

Interview Context

Bobbie and my interview occurred at about 5 pm on a Friday, before Bobbie began her shift at work. We sat in the lounge area under a huge disco ball and variety of colored lights and projection equipment. Two club employees were also in the building at the time of the interview, but Bobbie stated that she felt comfortable with their being in and out of the space during the interview and that there was adequate privacy.

Prior to the interview, when I saw Bobbie at events she was always dressed in full drag, complete with big beautiful hair, dramatic make up, and perfectly coordinated outfits. During the interview, Bobbie wore sweats and a t-shirt, her hair in a pony tail and no make-up. Before beginning the interview, she described how self-conscious she sometimes feels when she has not styled her hair or applied make-up, as she feels that the signs of aging are more evident and she is less likely to pass as female. She defined “passing” as the likelihood that someone “walking by on the street” sees you as the gender you identify with and present as, rather than seeing the person as the sex assigned at birth, or as transgender. Bobbie described passing as more an issue of safety than of her “caring what other people think”.

After briefly catching up, Bobbie and my interview began. The interview lasted a total of 82 minutes, running about 20 minutes over the 60 minutes slated for the interview. Bobbie and I spent this additional time discussing how Bobbie’s personal experience with homelessness, addiction, sex work, and family rejection impacted her development as an advocate for transgender and gender-expansive youth. Her personal story and narrative seemed intertwined with her growth as an advocate and activist, as she describes herself as engaging in “trans activism work for probably 20 years”.

Over the course of the interview, Bobbie’s response to several of the interview questions included references to my experience as the parent of a transgender child. It seemed that my acceptance of my transgender child, and advocacy efforts to support her, had left an impression on Bobbie. Her pre-existing beliefs about me as a parent and LGBTQ ally seemed to affect how she responded to my interview questions, and her willingness to be vulnerable with her sharing. Although I cannot know how Bobbie would have responded during the interview if she had not known me previously, I do believe that she was more willing to discuss intimate details of her

past because she felt comfortable with me as a friend/acquaintance. The following quotes are examples of the impact of my relationship with Bobbie on the information she shared during the interview:

You've been accepting. You're breaking the cycle for Zelda, but most of us were tormented and picked on all through high school. We come out and people don't want to have sex with us. When we are being used, we don't understand what being used is because we're 19. Do you know what I mean? Then I realize that I'm 24 years old and I have AIDS and I was just used. There's just a lot of animosity that many of us have never dealt with.

We [transgender people] come into the adult world damaged. We never fixed ourselves. The majority don't ever get fixed. We get used and end up with diseases from being used. It's just a brutal world. Hopefully you break that cycle with Zelda. I know she is picked on in school, but hopefully she's confident enough in herself that she can tell you, and she can tell them to fuck off.

Inductively Derived Categories & Related Themes

The coding process revealed three major categories: 1) Bobbie's development as an advocate, 2) the acts of advocacy in which Bobbie engaged, and 3) the sociopolitical context of Bobbie's advocacy efforts and experience. Each category contained a variety of themes related to Bobbie's lived experience as an advocate for transgender and gender-expansive youth. The section that follows outlines the primary themes within each category, and their relationship to existing literature.

Development as an Advocate

The Influence of Previous Transgender Female Activists

Bobbie describes the transwomen of previous generations as creating the current climate where she (Bobbie) and other transgender and gender-expansive individuals can present as their authentic selves. She describes Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera, and other transgender and queer people who fought during the Stonewall Riots as contributing greatly to the transgender rights movement. Regarding the contributions of previous transgender women, Bobbie stated, "They fought and struggled. Just living as a Tran's person is a rebellion. They went through a lot". Bobbie's statement emphasizes that a transgender individual's visibility as a transgender person is in and of itself an act of "rebellion", or act of advocacy for the right of transgender persons to live as their authentic selves.

Regarding her own direct experience with transwomen of previous generations, Bobbie states that when she first came out as trans, "older trans women" were the only people to advocate for her. She says that their generation believed trans women could "only be a hairdresser or a bartender or a prostitute". She describes the lives of the transwomen before her as fraught with violence – from law enforcement, to "johns" or customers of sex work. One such example of the violence experienced by these women is evident in the story of "Momma Val":

I was talking to the one named Momma Val. They used to wear these elaborate wigs only because they could put razor blades in them so that when the cops would grab them – the cops would grab them and try to steal their money because they were turning tricks – they would grab the razor blades. The cops would let them turn tricks and try to get their money from them. Val had those razor blades in her hair. It was a very, very violent time.

Bobbie describes herself as being steeped in this violent environment as a young transgender woman, not always recognizing the danger around her. She says that during her early 20s she moved from New Mexico to California. While working the streets one night, an older

transwoman warned Bobbie that the time and place Bobbie was attempting to work was dangerous and that she needed to “be safe and work a friendly freeway”. This other woman told Bobbie “You don't need to be out on the streets with us right now. It's too dangerous for you. You are from a small town”. Bobbie further describes her experience engaging in sex work in Santa Monica:

Even talking about it, when I picture it in my head, it's like I'm watching a movie. I can't believe I lived that life. Like I was out there doing those crazy things. I was, because I was strung out, and I didn't know no better, and if she wouldn't have told me anything I would have gotten in cars with people right there.

Although living and working on the streets meant confronting a number of dangers, Bobbie says that she and other transgender women built a “survival mode type of community” where they ensured each other's basic safety:

We didn't have the community back then. We had a community where we made sure we were alive, generally fed, and that we had some place to sleep inside, even if it was a room where there were eight girls stuffed on the floor. We had that kind of a community. It was just survival, a survival mode type of community.

Bobbie's connection to those transgender women who bravely presented to the world as their authentic selves seems to have strongly influenced her identity as an advocate. She describes these women as teaching her how to survive and remain resilient in a world that is hostile towards transgender people. Her experience with these women also highlights the prevalence of discrimination, rejection, and hate towards persons who traverse the male female gender binary.

Coming Out and Becoming an Advocate

For Bobbie, coming out as transgender to her family was an integral part of her development as an advocate. She describes growing up “on a military base, very sheltered”, informing her family of her gender identity in her late teens early 20s. Bobbie says that her family “didn't understand”, and that “there was no one to back then in the early nineties that advocated for me. You did it for yourself or your drag family did it for you”. Later in the interview, Bobbie references her “drag family” as her “trans family” and defines this form of family as chosen family consisting of those persons who were transgender and supportive of her and other members of the LGBTQ community. For Bobbie, coming out meant losing the support of her biological family and developing a new chosen family within the LGBTQ community.

Presenting as her authentic self, Bobbie has experienced uncomfortable situations when interacting with her biological family. She described these interactions as centered around her family member verbalizing some discriminatory belief about the LGBTQ community, and Bobbie responding in such a way as to advocate for her community and transgender identity. According to Bobbie, advocating for the transgender community when interacting with her family means:

Just being loud and being vocal, and sometimes being uncomfortable in an uncomfortable situation. You're talking to people who are your family, your blood family - your cousins, aunts and uncles. They say they love you but then they're pro-Trump so they can't realistically be supportive. It's very awkward.

Powerlessness

Bobbie's drive to be vocal about transgender rights and to advocate for transgender youth seems rooted in her own experience of powerlessness in coming out to her biological family, and being unable to stop the oppression and discrimination perpetuated by rejecting and/or hateful

persons. Her sense of powerlessness regarding the rejection of her biological family and the oppression she has experienced within society appears to parallel the powerlessness she confronts through her advocacy work. Bobbie describes her advocacy work as confronting this sense of powerlessness in the following quotes:

A lot of the stuff I do is because I feel powerless. I feel powerless. How can I stop Trump from removing protections for trans kids? I'm going to do something. I've gotta do something.

We're all in it together. A lot of time I just felt powerless. How to help? How do you help? There's nothing you can do. Absolutely nothing except being vocal.

Acts of Advocacy

Youth Events

Although Bobbie reports engaging in advocacy and activism for transgender rights consistently over the last 20 years, she stated that she only recently began advocating specifically for transgender and gender-expansive youth. When asked how she became involved with efforts to support transgender youth, Bobbie stated:

I kinda just fell into it. My first thing that was specifically for youth was right after the president removed the Title IX protections for Trans and GNC [Gender Non-Conforming] kids in school. I thought it was very important that we reach out to the younger generation. Let them know that we're here. So just by force of politics I guess.

Bobbie's youth events were funded through fundraisers facilitated during LGBTQ community events.

One specific event, held for transgender and gender expansive youth, was funded by donations obtained during LGBTQ community events. Although the event was intended for

transgender and gender-expansive youth, it was open to multiple generations of transgender and gender-expansive individuals. Bobbie stated that while planning the event she elected to invite all transgender community members. Her rationale was that the presence of adult transgender people would show the youth in attendance that transgender persons can be successful, have intimate partnerships, families, and build careers. She stated that she also intended the event to show transgender and gender-expansive youth that the transgender community supported them and did not condone the Trump administration's rescission of the Justice Department's Title IX interpretation.

Bobbie described the youth event as also having unexpected consequences, particularly on the "older" generations of transgender and gender-expansive persons present. Per Bobbie:

[A leader from a non-profit entity] said, "well, I don't know about mixing all the generations of trans people together". I said, "we'll find out". But I think the older people liked it better than the younger ones! We were crying afterwards, saying, "oh my God!", just seeing Zelda and Amber.

The aforementioned quote speaks to the emotional experience of the adult attendees of the Stand up for Trans Youth event when interacting with two transgender/gender-expansive kids, Zelda (age 8) and Amber (age 3, name changed to protect identity). Bobbie's effort provided transgender and gender-expansive youth with support and validation and introduced many of the youth to the adult LGBTQ community. The event also seemed to inspire the adult LGBTQ community members in attendance by connecting them with youth as young as 3 and 8 years of age, youth who were bravely living as their authentic selves. Bobbie's youth event is a shining example of how one advocate can mobilize financial resources and community support to provide transgender/gender-expansive youth with a safe, validating, and inspiring experience.

Sociopolitical Context

The Trump Administration

All of the themes identified in Bobbie's interview transcript have political context as a central variable, with the influence of the Trump administration consistently referenced. Bobbie described her entry into youth advocacy as initiated "by force of politics", specifically by her anger and sense of powerlessness upon learning of the Trump administration's recension of the interpretation of the Title IX guidelines. She states that her fundraising for the transgender and gender-expansive youth event was a direct response to her feeling "powerlessness" after the election of Trump as president. Bobbie also describes her rejection by her biological family as intensified by their support of president Trump, as Trump's policies directly negatively impact Bobbie and her community, thus her biological family's support of the president means they are "anti-trans".

Consequences of Oppression

The connection between Bobbie's journey as an advocate and sociopolitical context is also present in Bobbie's experience of oppression. As a transgender person, Bobbie has experienced social discrimination and rejection because of her gender identity. This oppression is correlated with low socioeconomic status, substance use, street economics or "underground economy experiences" (James et al., 2016) and homelessness, all of which Bobbie reports struggling with during her young adulthood. Bobbie's experience with the aforementioned social problems provide just one example of the adverse effects of oppression. Homelessness, substance use, street economics, and low socioeconomic status impact the transgender community at a much higher rate than the general United States (U.S.) population.

According to the U.S. Transgender Health Survey (James et al., 2016) (n = 27,715) 29% of respondents from the transgender community reported illicit substance use, a rate three times higher than that of the U.S. population. The survey also determined that 15% of respondents were unemployed, a rate three times higher than that of the general population, and 29% were living in poverty, a rate twice that of the U.S. adult population. A total of 23% of respondents reported experiencing homelessness during the last year, and 12% of the sample reported engaging in “income-based sex work” as part of the underground economy over the course of their lifetime. The results of the Transgender Health Survey and Bobbie’s lived experience illustrate the ill effects of oppression and discrimination against the transgender and gender-expansive community.

Social Pressure and In-Group Politics

Another aspect of oppression present in Bobbie’s interview is the internalized social norms regarding gender identity that are perpetuated by members of the transgender community. Bobbie describes members of the trans community as pressuring one another to be “passable”. Passing is defined as one’s ability to present as the gender with which one identifies while appearing cisgender. According to Roen (2002), persons who are transgender may make efforts to pass in order to avoid prejudice and transphobia, and threats to personal safety. Passing has become a politically charged issue within the trans community as it sometimes viewed as hiding one’s identity, and “may pose a risk to other transpeople, maintaining them in isolation and failing to provide supportive models or networks for future generations” (Roen, 2002, p. 504).

Some individuals within the transgender community view passing as denying their transgender identity by attempting to appear cisgender, and thus perpetuating the male/female gender binary that is often the basis of transphobia and oppression. Other members of the

community seem to value passing and exclude those members of the community who fail to pass (Roen, 2002). Bobbie speaks to the tension within the trans community regarding passing, stating that the community's emphasis on passing is the result of the internalization of oppressive social expectations:

We put a lot on ourselves as a Trans community. I'm not sure if you see it with your interactions, but we put so much into having to be passable. We have to be this we have to be that, but we don't have to. You've seen it. Is society making us feel like that?

There's a whole sea of stuff that we're processing and we make it hard on ourselves and on each other.

Members of the trans community who expect all trans persons to pursue being passable as cisgender male or female also seem to have ascribed to the male female gender binary. Bobbie described this view of gender as being problematic within the trans community, as it promotes the idea that all trans people ought to: 1) Identify as male or female (rather than viewing gender as a spectrum and self-defined), and 2) engage in medical interventions to physically transition to their accurate gender. Bobbie stated that she disagrees with both of these beliefs as each individual is on their own journey and defines their gender identity in their own way. According to Bobbie:

We're forcing people to have to fit into the blue and pink as trans people. I've met Trans people who say, "Well I am further along with my gender transition". No, there is no roadmap. There's no end of the road, and the older I get the more I see it. I have never had any surgeries and that doesn't make me less trans than people that have had a million dollars' worth of surgery. They're not further along than I am. It's not a race. It's not a distance. It's not a something measurable like that.

The category “sociopolitical context” is particularly relevant in Bobbie’s experience as an advocate for transgender and gender-expansive youth as it was “force of politics” that inspired Bobbie to become an advocate, and politics continues to act as a motivating factor for her work. Numerous aspects of Bobbie’s lived experience have been significantly impacted by the social and political realities that affect the transgender community. Bobbie’s narrative not only spoke to the adverse effects of oppression on the individual, but also illustrated the impact of internalized stigma on the interactions between persons within the transgender community.

Summary of Inductively Derived Categories & Related Themes

The coding process revealed themes related to those factors which influenced Bobbie’s development as an advocate, to include the impact of the lives and work of previous transgender women, her own personal coming out process, and experience of powerlessness. This process also provided insight regarding Bobbie’s motivations and process when facilitating community events for transgender and gender-expansive youth. After multiple reviews, Bobbie’s narrative revealed one consistent common thread – the role of sociopolitical context in her development as an advocate, experience of oppression, and social pressure (also referred to as “internalized stigma”) within the transgender community. The following section provides an overview of the advocacy artifacts recommended by Bobbie.

Advocacy Artifacts

Bobbie seemed to define advocacy artifacts as those films, spaces, or resources that accurately depict or contribute to the transgender community’s fight for equal rights. A major theme among the artifacts described by Bobbie are their attention to social justice and activist’s efforts. Table 8 outlines the advocacy artifacts recommended by Bobbie, to include the title, type, Bobbie’s description of the artifact, and a summary description of the item from the source.

Table 8

Recommended Advocacy Artifacts - Bobbie

Artifact Title	Artifact Type	Participant Description	Summary Description from Source
Life and Death of Marsha P. Johnson	Documentary	“It’s about Stonewall. It’s about Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera. There’s very back and forth that they weren’t even there, or that they showed up when the riots were going on, but they took the notoriety and they started a thing called the street transvestite action revolution, and this is all in the show.”	“Victoria Cruz investigates the mysterious 1992 death of black gay rights activist and Stonewall veteran, Marsha P. Johnson. Using archival interviews with Johnson, and new interviews with Johnson’s family, friends and fellow activists” (IMDb, 2018).
New Mexico HIV Walk and 5K Fun Run http://hivwalknm.org/	Community fundraising/awareness event	Participant described role in founding this event, but did not describe the event.	“HIV Walk New Mexico and 5K Fun Run is presented by Albuquerque Pride in conjunction with UNM Truman Health Services. The funds raised by HIV Walk New Mexico & 5K Fun Run 2018 support organizations that provide treatment, medication, prevention education, behavioral health services, substance abuse counseling, and research to those living with and affected by HIV/Stage 3(AIDS)” (HIV Walk New Mexico, 2018)
The Social Club	LGBTQ community business/bar and nightclub	Participant described her role with this business as a member of the executive board, but did not describe the business.	Unavailable.
When We Rise	Television show, miniseries	None provided.	“A chronicle of the gay U.S. Civil Rights movement” (ABC, 2018).
NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt	Memorial	None provided.	“The NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt, often abbreviated to AIDS Memorial Quilt, is an enormous quilt made as a memorial to celebrate

			the lives of people who have died of AIDS-related causes. Weighing an estimated 54 tons, it is the largest piece of community folk art in the world as of 2016" (Wikipedia, 2018).
Pose	Television show, miniseries	None provided.	"Pose is set in the world of 1987 and "looks at the juxtaposition of several segments of life and society in New York: the rise of the luxury universe, the downtown social and literary scene and the ball culture world" (IMDb, 2019).
Paris is Burning	Documentary	"Paris Is Burning came out in the early nineties but it was filmed in the eighties about the eighties ball scene. The ball had predominately black drag queens, trans people, and gay men. They'll say they have categories like most feminine."	"A chronicle of New York's drag scene in the 1980s, focusing on balls, voguing and the ambitions and dreams of those who gave the era its warmth and vitality" (IMDb, 2019).
Rupaul's Drag Race	Television, miniseries	None provided.	"RuPaul's Drag Race is an American reality competition television series... The show documents RuPaul in the search for "America's next drag superstar." RuPaul plays the role of host, mentor, and head judge for this series, as contestants are given different challenges each week" (Wikipedia, 2019).
Beautiful Darling: The Life and Times of Candy Darling, Andy Warhol Superstar	Documentary	None provided.	"Beautiful Darling: The Life and Times of Candy Darling, Andy Warhol Superstar is a 2010 feature-length documentary film about Candy Darling, the transsexual pioneer, actress and Andy Warhol superstar" (Wikipedia, 2019).
Wigstock: The Movie	Documentary	None provided.	"Documentary/Concert film covering the annual Drag festival in New York City. Highlights include a performance by drag diva, Ru Paul, and the infamous Lypsinca" (IMDb, 2019).

Alexis Arquette: She's my Brother	Documentary	None provided.	“As a portrait of a personality in flux, Alexis Arquette: She's My Brother (More4) was a masterpiece of expressionistic evasion. Filmed in 2005, this series of wobbly video diaries and disjointed interviews captured the transgender actor (and sibling to Patricia, Rosanna and David) in the months leading up to sex reassignment surgery” (Dempster, 2010).
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Suzanne

Background Information

Suzanne identifies as a “mixed race” heterosexual cisgender female who uses female pronouns. She was born in the late 1970s and spent her childhood in the southern United States.

Suzanne states that her parents were “very conservative” and that she was:

Raised with half of my family being [religious] and the other half not. The side that is not [religious] is the issue as these are people who were in the clan, and I was expected to be nice to them and be polite because they love me, but I was taught to not talk too much about being [religious].

At this time in her life, Suzanne describes herself as having the resources and privilege necessary to advocate for change and have her voice heard.

Suzanne currently resides in the northeast United States/New England and describes her state as having more progressive policies and “senators and congress people who are woke” (“woke” meaning aware of social justice related issues), particularly when compared to the more southern states in the U.S. Suzanne has a PhD and works as an educator and researcher in higher education, describing her annual income as between \$50,000 and \$74,999. Her professional work focuses on understanding the experience of transgender and gender-creative children and advocating for this population. Suzanne describes herself as a lifelong feminist, whose transgender child inspired her to pursue research and advocate for transgender and gender-expansive youth.

I became acquainted with Suzanne when, after my own transgender daughter socially transitioned in October of 2016, I found Suzanne’s research regarding transgender youth and reached out to her. Suzanne responded to my inquiry, recommending resources and asking

whether I would like to participate in her research study. After participating in an interview for her study, Suzanne and I remained in contact. When I started recruiting participants for this research, I reached out to Suzanne to ask if she would be willing to serve as a participant, and she agreed. Her unique perspective as a mother, researcher and educator, and advocate contributed incredibly rich data with diverse themes.

Interview Context

The interview occurred via phone, Suzanne's preferred method of communication. The geographical distance between Suzanne and myself made an in-person interview impossible, and she did not feel comfortable using the Zoom online platform. I facilitated the interview from my office at the Women's Resource Center on the University of New Mexico main campus, and Suzanne completed the interview from her home office. The interview occurred during the late afternoon and lasted 58 minutes. Suzanne completed the demographic questionnaire in Microsoft word and submitted it via email.

Inductively Derived Categories & Related Themes

During the coding process, a number of highly related categories were identified. The end result was the differentiation of 3 umbrella categories, with all themes containing some reference to sociopolitical context, even though the final category speaks directly to the role of sociopolitical context in Suzanne's advocacy efforts. The 3 categories that emerged from Suzanne's data include: 1) Personal and professional development as an advocate, 2) acts of and motivations for advocacy, and the role of sociopolitical context, and 3) the costs and consequences of visible advocacy for transgender and gender-expansive youth.

Development as an Advocate

Definition of Advocacy

Suzanne's definition of advocacy seemed to evolve as she worked to meet the needs of her transgender child Danny (name changed for privacy). For Suzanne, advocacy consists of her actions as a mother to ensure her daughter's safety and wellbeing in school and extracurricular activities (visible advocacy), and Danny's own efforts to advocate for herself (self-advocacy).

Child Self-Advocacy. Suzanne describes Danny as identifying as a female at age 3, but being "very reserved, very quiet, very, very quiet, retiring, passive and gentle", so much so that Danny would not correct others when they referenced her using the incorrect pronouns. When Danny was 6-7 years old, she began correcting people when they failed to use the correct gender pronouns, to include family members who were unsupportive of Danny's gender identity. Per Suzanne:

My parents were not forthcoming with their support, which is not surprising, but they would constantly say "he" and then make a big deal about it, saying "oh, I mean she!".

Danny would just melt into the floor. Finally one day Danny said, "no mamaw it's 'she'", and that stopped it.

Visible Advocacy. Suzanne describes engaging in "visible advocacy" beginning when her daughter Danny socially transitioned at age 4. One example of this aspect of Suzanne's advocacy was a letter she created for Danny's teachers and school nurse stating, "Danny is transgender and this is what it means, and what we expect". Suzanne stated that she provided this letter at the beginning of each school year to ensure that Danny's identity was respected, and she was referenced using the appropriate pronouns.

Suzanne states that visibility is essential when advocating for transgender and gender-expansive youth, as it ensures that "it's not just my child who benefits". She describes using her status as an educator, her literally "loud" voice, and she and her husband's physical presence as a

means of ensuring that her child – and other transgender and gender-expansive children - are safe and respected. The following quote further describes the visibility of Suzanne's efforts in her own words:

Part of my approach is visible advocacy. I don't know anybody that would cross me personally, because I'm so visible. I cry easily, but I think the fact that I'm an [educator] in [higher education] and I'm loud and very vocal, and physically very large, and I have this gigantic six foot four husband...I think I take up a lot of space both physically and socially. The fact that I am proactive and I know what I'm doing, and I make a lot of noise about my child - I don't think anybody would touch that child. So the good part about that is it's not just my child who benefits.

Suzanne describes her ability to have her voice heard as a matter of privilege, privilege she receives because of her access to financial resources, her status as an educator, and her understanding of the rules and policies that affect transgender and gender-expansive youth. This privilege, and her ability to affect change seem to motivate Suzanne to pursue positive social change for this population.

Acts of Advocacy, Motivations for Advocacy, & the Role of Sociopolitical Context

During the interview, Suzanne frequently described both her motivations and methods for pursuing positive change within the same narrative. Those factors that inspired her seemed inextricably intertwined with her advocacy efforts making the differentiation between the categories "acts of advocacy" and "motivation for advocacy" rather difficult. The organization of Suzanne's case portrait parallels the flow of her narrative, with examples of advocacy efforts described alongside her stated motivations for her approach. Also, rather than attempt to separate

sociopolitical context as a standalone category, I include the sociopolitical context of Suzanne's advocacy efforts and motivations with each listed theme.

Catalyzing Change for Others

Suzanne describes not only advocating for change for her daughter, but for all transgender and gender-expansive youth, particularly those whose voices are silenced by social oppression. Her desire to pursue change seems motivated by the injustice experienced by those disenfranchised transgender and gender-expansive children and their parents. Suzanne describes advocating visibly and loudly:

Because after me comes the quiet parent, or the parent who doesn't speak English, or who is disenfranchised for whatever reason and has a transgender child. They can walk in our footsteps a little bit. That lays the path for other people. This is the advocacy, it starts with your child, but never ends with your child.

Suzanne also describes advocating in environments where change will not directly impact her child but may help others in the LGBTQ community. One example of this form of advocacy occurred when Suzanne went to for a chiropractic appointment. Suzanne states that once in the office she “noticed on their wall they had a nondiscrimination policy that did not include sexual orientation or gender identity”. When she questioned a staff member about the lack of inclusion of gender and sexual orientation in their nondiscrimination policy, the staff member stated “oh well we just haven't updated it”. Suzanne says that she used her privilege to advocate for change in that moment by doing the following:

I said, “well, I’m not going to be a client here until you update it”, and I stood there until they changed it and printed out a new one because it matters to be able to point to the sign on the wall. I’m a middle aged lady. In some ways, I’m invisible. I’m at that point in

my life where I can go ahead and be ugly and it doesn't matter because that's what people expect, and that's what I should be doing with that power. I made a big stink and made a lot of people really mad that were behind me in line waiting for them to retype that document. I'm not the one who benefits from it.

“Giving Bigots Consequences” & the Power of Social and Political Context

A couple of generations back, members of Suzanne and her husband's family were murdered during the Holocaust. This trauma significantly impacted how both Suzanne and her husband respond to acts of hate, and the lessons they teach Danny and their other children about responding to those who perpetuate hate. Suzanne describes she and her husband's approach to interacting with family who are unsupportive of Danny's gender identity in the following quote:

My husband's whole family was slaughtered in the Holocaust. So he believes you maintain relationships with family no matter the price you have to pay. I tell the girls this is the way it is [with unsupportive family]. You can make your choices, you can still love them, but you need to remember what they did to you.

Suzanne emphasizes the importance of holding those who perpetuate hate accountable. Holding those persons accountable who support a system and government which oppresses the transgender and gender-expansive community is itself a method of advocacy. Suzanne views systems level change, particularly within the U.S. government, as essential to improving the lives of transgender and gender-expansive youth. Suzanne's belief in holding individuals accountable, and the need for systems level change is evident in her statements about the “price” of supporting hate, and the need for “consequences” for “bigots”:

The idea that you can vote for Trump and support what he does, and then turn around and enjoy the love of your grandchildren. That's just not going to happen. There is a price, there's a price.

I think that if people had given the old bigots and their families consequences, we would never be in this mess. If people did not allow their family members to denigrate their transgender children or denigrate transgender adults or gay and lesbian adults in front of them, then things would be different. If you don't give people consequences and shame, they're going to just do whatever they want.

In line with this thinking, Suzanne describes the importance of advocating for change, even when it means not being “nice”:

We got into this mess with Trump because white women were too nice. I'm a nice person. I'm a nice Jewish lady. Nice middle-aged lady with gray hair. But I'm over being nice. We need to give bigots consequences.

Suzanne draws a parallel between the inaction to stop acts of hate and injustice against transgender and gender-expansive persons in the U.S. and German citizens' failure to attempt to stop the murder of the Jewish people during the Holocaust. In the following quote, Suzanne describes a conversation between herself and a German woman she met while working abroad:

I think that giving bigots consequences is very, very important. Rather than just saying, “oh, it doesn't matter”, because it does matter. I do a lot of work in Germany and I was just there a couple weeks ago. While I was visiting with some people I started talking with this very old woman. She told me my German was good, but not that good. She told me, “I would give anything to be able to wash my hands of the crime of having supported Hitler all those years ago”. She was in the Band of German Maidens, which is the Hitler

girl's wing [of the Nazi Youth movement] when she was younger. She didn't have much choice. But you always have a choice. You always have a choice on whether or not you turn your back and put your support behind hate. You have to live with it forever. So I do think all of us should pitch in giving bigots consequences.

Suzanne's experience during her conversation with the German woman – hearing the woman's regret about supporting a man who perpetrated so many acts of hate – highlights Suzanne's belief in the need for change. Suzanne's connection to the trauma and loss experienced by previous generations of her family during the holocaust seems to act as a motivating factor for her pursuit of social change for transgender and gender-expansive youth. She views the rights of transgender and gender-expansive individuals as a “human rights issue”, and believes it is the role of the advocate to hold bigots accountable.

Current Social & Political Context: Transgender Rights are Human Rights

In addition to the parallels drawn between Hitler's reign in Germany and the current Trump administration, Suzanne also notes the similarities between fighting for the rights of the transgender community, and the historical civil rights movement. She describes the U.S. government voting on issues that determine whether transgender and gender-expansive children receive the same protections as cisgender children as essentially deciding “whether or not my child is a person”. As an advocate and parent of a transgender child, Suzanne states “Nobody gets to vote on whether or not my child is a person”.

Suzanne states that human rights issues should not be up for debate, as human rights should be inevitable rights afforded to everyone no matter their identity. In the following quotes, Suzanne further articulates this belief and describes the role of freedom of speech and religion in the human rights debate:

Nobody gets to vote on human rights issues. Like how everybody got to sit around and vote on whether or not gay people can get married. That's a state benefit. That's nothing to do with your precious God. It's a state benefit that has tax benefits and has a real impact on financial wellness and access to retirement. Nobody should vote on civil rights and human rights issues.

It's not that nobody gets to voice their opinion. They say, "but free speech!". You can wad that up and you can shove it, because you don't get to have an opinion about whether or not my child has a right to exist and access healthcare. You don't get to have an opinion on that. You can have an opinion on whether or not the sky is blue, and that doesn't change anything, but you don't get to have an opinion about my child or anyone else's child's access to basic human rights, and freedom from being pummeled to death at school.

The second of the aforementioned quotes goes beyond merely describing Suzanne's perspective about the human rights debate and articulates the consequences of disallowing transgender and gender-expansive persons to have basic rights and equal access to resources. Specifically, Suzanne mentions trans youth's "freedom" to not be "pummeled to death at school"; this reference speaks directly to the results of the GLSEN school climate survey (Kosciw et al., 2014), which indicated that trans and gender-expansive youth experience higher rates of physical violence at school motivated by perpetrators' hateful beliefs about these youth's gender identity. Suzanne's statements speak to the consequences of allowing politicians to make decisions about the rights of transgender people and allowing hate speech in the name of free speech and freedom of religion.

Consequences & Costs: "The other side of advocacy"

As a researcher and parent, Suzanne's advocacy efforts for gender-expansive youth have had great personal and professional costs. Suzanne describes those members of her extended family who are unsupportive of Danny's gender identity as ostracizing her, her children, and her husband. She says that her parents have gone so far as to remove themselves from her life. Suzanne attributes her family's behavior to both their rejection of Danny's gender identity, and to Suzanne's intolerance of family member's discriminatory remarks towards the transgender community. Suzanne describes this rejection as "the other side of advocacy" in the following quote:

I think advocacy is difficult because there's a cost. It certainly would've been easier for me just to go ahead and pretend I hadn't heard their [discriminatory] comments. And then I would have parents. Because now I'm an orphan, I have zero family and nobody speaks to me. But I'm happy to pay that price if that's the other side of advocacy.

Suzanne also discusses experiencing work-related consequences for her advocacy efforts, as much of her research and professional work focuses on supporting transgender and gender-expansive children. One example of her public advocacy adversely affecting her professional work is when Suzanne was declined for a teaching job at a Catholic university:

In this arena we protect and insulate our transgender child. I did this very public work of insulating my child and there are places where I cannot get jobs. I applied to a Catholic University in [another country] that was looking for an educator and they didn't even write back to me. There's no way my publication record and what I study, there's no way they would hire me. So there's always a cost and I'm happy to pay it, but its better I pay it than my child pay it.

Summary of Inductively Derived Categories & Related Themes

The themes that emerged from Suzanne's data were highly connected and fit under three major categories: 1) Acts of advocacy, motivations for advocacy, and the role of sociopolitical context, 2) development as an advocate, and 3) consequences and costs: "The other side of advocacy". Each theme included discussion of the influence of sociopolitical factors, such as the Trump presidency in the U.S. and hate speech excused as "freedom of speech" or religion. In her interview, Suzanne not only described examples of her specific acts of advocacy, but also spoke to the societal and historical context surrounding these efforts. The advocacy artifacts recommended by Suzanne, which consist primarily of resources for transgender/gender-expansive youth and their advocates, also reflect Suzanne's systems-level thinking.

Advocacy Artifacts

When asked during the interview what advocacy artifacts she would recommend, Suzanne readily listed a number of educational resources. Suzanne seemed to define advocacy artifacts as those educational resources that would be helpful to anyone looking to learn how to better support the transgender/gender-expansive community. In addition to providing specific resources, Suzanne made the following statement:

Basically, any organization that is fighting on the left is going to have a statement about transgender rights and have helpful policy documents. If you look at progressive democratic senators and congress people, they usually have a Trans or gay and lesbian advocacy wing as well.

Table 9 outlines the advocacy artifacts recommended by Suzanne, to include the title, type, her description of the artifact, and a summary description of the item from the source.

Table 9

Recommended Advocacy Artifacts – Suzanne

Artifact Title	Artifact Type	Participant Description	Summary Description from Source
Lambda Legal	Organization with list of online resources	“lambda legal has tremendous resources for things you can do”	“Lambda Legal, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, is a national organization committed to achieving full recognition of the civil rights of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people and everyone living with HIV through impact litigation, education and public policy work” (Lambda Legal, 2019).
On-line Facebook groups for parents of transgender and gender-expansive youth (ex/ Parents of Transgender Children closed group)	On-line social media support group	None provided.	“This group is comprised of parents and parenting figures, as well as a select group of advocates INVITED by the admin staff to assist & help us with understanding legal and other concerns. We hope all members find support, empathy and understanding here” (Facebook, 2019).
Gender Moxie Project	Grant funded research project exploring experience of transgender and gender-expansive youth and their caregivers, ongoing recruitment of participants	None provided.	“We are a research at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst looking at the experiences and resiliencies of transgender, gender-fluid, gender-nonconforming and genderqueer (to name a few) young people, ages 18months-11 years old. There is very little research outside of the biomedical field (and limited there, too!) that examines the resilience and strength, as well as life experiences and trajectories, of transgender and gender-nonconforming (etc.) young people, but almost NONE that focuses on very young children, despite the fact that we know that children as young as 18 months begin to express stress at the rigidity of the gender binary.

			We want to learn about and support children, their families, their teachers and their peers. We also want to support and educate communities” (Galman, 2019).
GenderSpectrum.org	Website with numerous resources	“I would look at gender spectrum.org. It's still my favorite in terms of providing concrete tools.”	“Gender Spectrum’s mission is to create a gender-inclusive world for all children and youth. To accomplish this, we help families, organizations, and institutions increase understandings of gender and consider the implications that evolving views have for each of us” (The Gender Spectrum, 2019).
The Human Rights Campaign	Website with numerous resources	None provided.	“The Human Rights Campaign represents a force of more than 3 million members and supporters nationwide. As the largest national lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer civil rights organization, HRC envisions a world where LGBTQ people are ensured of their basic equal rights, and can be open, honest and safe at home, at work and in the community” (Human Rights Campaign, 2019).
Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network (GLSEN)	Website with numerous resources, and network of advocates	“For education, GLSEN provides hands on tool for educators and parents to make schools safer.”	“Our mission is to create safe and affirming schools for all, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression” (GLSEN, 2019).
Safe Schools Coalition	Organization promoting safe school environment for LGBTQ youth	None provided.	“Safe Schools Coalition, located in Washington State, is a public-private partnership, in support of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender, queer and questioning youth, working to help schools become safe places where every family can belong, where every educator can teach, and where every child can learn, regardless of gender, gender

			identity or sexual orientation” (Safe Schools Coalition, 2019).
Planned Parenthood	Healthcare	None provided.	“For more than a century, Planned Parenthood has been the nation’s leading sexual and reproductive health care provider, educator, and advocate. Planned Parenthood health centers provide contraception, testing, and treatment for sexually transmitted infections as well as lifesaving cancer screenings to millions of people in the U.S. each year. Fifty-six Planned Parenthood affiliates operate more than 600 health centers across the country, with a presence in all 50 states and Washington, D.C.” (Planned Parenthood, 2017).
American Academy of Pediatrics	Policy documents, research, and published standards of care	None provided.	See https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/AAP-Policy-Statement-Urges-Support-and-Care-of-Transgender-and-Gender-Diverse-Children-and-Adolescents.aspx for more information.
United Nations Human Rights Document	Document articulating universal human rights	None provided.	“The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a milestone document in the history of human rights. Drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world, the Declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948 (General Assembly resolution 217 A) as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations. It sets out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected and it has been translated into over 500 languages. ” (United Nations, 2019).

Black Lives Matter	Statement regarding transgender rights	None provided.	See https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/herstory/ for Black Lives Matter statement regarding the rights of oppressed groups.
Democratic Party	Statement regarding transgender rights	None provided.	See https://democrats.org/people/lgbtq-community/ for statement regarding rights of LGBTQ community.

Amanda

Background Information

Amanda identifies as a white, Gay/Lesbian, Queer cisgender female, whose pronouns are she/her. She was born in the early 1980s into highly religious family, and survived conversion therapy facilitated by a faith leader from the church her family attended. Upon graduating high school, Amanda entered the military and served from 2000 to 2006. After her discharge from the military, Amanda attended a “very, very, very liberal arts college in [another state] that helped radicalize me a little bit in my politics”. She completed her Bachelor’s and masters degrees at this university before returning home to New Mexico.

After returning to New Mexico, Amanda was hired as the executive director of a large non-profit whose primary aim was enhancing the wellbeing of the LGBTQ community. Amanda stated that she:

Liked the idea of being able to come back home and fight for a community that I was now deeply a part of yet hadn't had the opportunity to really be a part of at home because I left home at 17 and was still not really out in my community at that time.

She describes reconciling with her family after returning to NM, stating that her family “came around”, with her father even testifying publicly about the harmful effects of conversion therapy and supporting a statewide ban of the practice.

Amanda now describes herself as a “recovering executive director”, as she discontinued her leadership activities in the non-profit industry and is now completing a project as part of a fellowship. Amanda is also assisting a non-profit entity with fundraising and event organizing and assisting with a democratic candidate’s campaign. She describes her current income as

between \$50,000 and \$74,999, and states that leaving the non-profit sector for her current work resulted in a significant increase in income.

Amanda and I initially met when myself and my partner participated in activities to support the statewide ban on conversion therapy, and to allow transgender and gender-expansive individuals to change their gender marker on their birth certificates.. A little over a year later, when I began recruiting participants for this study, one of my participants recommended I contact Amanda for participation. Amanda recognized my name and seemed excited about the prospect of participating in this study.

Interview Context

After communicating back and forth via email, Amanda and I determined that a coffee shop near the university campus was most convenient for both of us to meet. We met during the mid-morning hours on a weekday, when the coffee shop was almost empty. Although the coffee shop was small, the healthy distance between tables fostered a sense of privacy. Amanda did not at any time speak in hushed tones and stated that she felt the location was adequately private. The interview lasted a total of 84 minutes, approximately half an hour over the one hour initially scheduled. Much like the other participants whose interview time exceeded the one hour time frame, Amanda shared her own coming out story and how her identity as LGBTQ impacted her development as an advocate.

Inductively Derived Categories & Related Themes

During the interview, Amanda provided rich descriptions of her experience, carefully weaving together explanations of her process as an advocate and specific examples of her advocacy efforts. She also attended to systems-level work, an area of advocacy that most other participants reported less experience with. Amanda's experience with policy work and large-

scale community organizing lead to the generation of many themes that were unique to her data. Although the categories that emerged from Amanda's data were similar to those of other participants, the themes seemed distinct, thus her case portrait contains a more extensive write up.

Development as an Advocate

Personal Journey: Coming Out & Surviving Conversion Therapy

Amanda's personal story of coming out as Lesbian and being forced to participate in conversion therapy during adolescence significantly impacted her career choices, and future development as an advocate. She describes leaving her home in New Mexico to serve in the military at age 17 with "things not resolved with my family" and staying "away for almost 15 years" before returning home. During those 15 years, Amanda says that she attended a liberal arts university and obtained her bachelors and masters degrees and was inspired to participate in social justice work.

When Amanda elected to return to New Mexico, she stated that she wanted to invest in the LGBTQ community, so she accepted a job working as a leader in the non-profit industry. She describes realizing now that she entered the field of advocacy work and social justice because:

It was an opportunity to do things differently, to be vindicated in a way. None of us get into this work because it's fun or because it sounds interesting. We get into the work because we're somewhat touched by it, broken by it, and need to heal in some way, shape or form. And that was certainly a part of it for me.

Amanda emphasizes the role of her advocacy work in healing from family rejection, and her highly traumatic experience with conversion therapy. When Amanda began engaging in advocacy work surrounding the banning of conversion therapy, she describes being

“retraumatized” and that “it just wiped me out emotionally...wiped me out emotionally”. Despite the emotionally taxing nature of social justice work, Amanda describes her identity as an activist and advocate as part of her core identity.

Identity as an Advocate

Since she was a child, Amanda has believed in the importance of justice and equality. Growing up, she says that even her family noticed her interest in social justice. Amanda describes her family as seeing her desire to help others, but failing to provide an environment where she could further explore this aspect of her identity:

When my parents talk about me as a kid, I was always very concerned with justice and fairness. I always kind of had that spot for people where I just was always concerned with things being fair and seeing things that were wrong in the world. But I didn't know how to put it together then, and I certainly wasn't in an environment where that was nourished.

As an adult, Amanda has pursued her passion for social justice through advocacy work in the non-profit industry. She describes loving her work facilitating fundraisers, promoting the organization through digital communications and advertising, and assisting with providing clients with direct services:

I like what I'm doing now. I really love the [non-profit setting]. I believe in the services that they provide people. It's more tangible, as I see the people that they help every single day.

Throughout her interview, Amanda describes herself as focused on helping the LGBTQ community by organizing events and members of the public in support of causes important to the LGBTQ community. Amanda seems to view advocacy and activism as a calling in life, rather than just a job, and views herself as a helper, elevating the voices of the LGBTQ community

through her efforts. In the following quote, Amanda describes how negative changes (which she later references in the interview as related to the current conservative political climate) as like “drinking from a fire hose”:

We're kind of drinking from a fire hose right now. There have been people - myself included – that have had to check out from time to time. It's just been too much. Every single day there's something new, something terrible. There's some new terrible thing happening. I'm an activist, and I know there are a lot of people feeling this way, so it's important to show people the tangible things they can do about it.

Amanda defines her advocacy efforts as not only helping the LGBTQ community, but also helping members of the public who wish to support a cause or feel that they are contributing to change. She describes herself as showing people “the tangible things they can do” about a problem or to address an issue. Advocacy is not only taking action to pursue change, it also helping others find ways to contribute to positive change.

Acts of Advocacy

The Role of Trauma in Advocacy: “Connecting the Dots”

While completing the coursework for her masters degree, Amanda was “really fascinated with adverse childhood experiences”. She says that this interest inspired her to consider the effects of the highly traumatic experience of conversion therapy on LGBTQ youth. Amanda describes “connecting the dots” between the trauma of conversion therapy, and negative outcomes in adulthood. Amanda states that her leadership role in the non-profit industry enabled her to support banning the practice of conversion therapy. She states that advocating for this ban is “all about the young people” and “preventing trauma and trying to set young people up for positive outcomes in their adulthood”.

Amanda articulates her belief that banning conversion therapy for LGBTQ youth (defined as under age 18) will, for some of them, reduce the adverse events they experience.

According to Amanda:

We're not going to prevent all trauma. The more we can, the less trauma in young people's lives, the better the chance of better outcomes in adulthood. We know what trauma can do. That was another interesting thing that I started to connect some dots on. When I really started diving into the conversion therapy campaign, I thought you've got to start connecting the dots on adverse childhood experiences. Then I was able to start having conversations with legislators about this, showing them that conversion therapy is a traumatic experience and that we're talking about an adverse childhood experience. You have to start connecting these dots. We can actually stop this form of trauma, or at least try.

In the aforementioned quote, Amanda describes not only “connecting the dots” between the adverse experience of conversion therapy and negative outcomes in adulthood for LGBTQ persons, but also her recognition that she needed to help members of the community connect these dots. She says that in order for her to affect social change, she needed to ensure that the community understood that the conversion therapy ban would help reduce and even prevent one form of trauma currently impacting our youth.

While the potential for prevention of trauma plays a role in political strategy, the actual experience of trauma by persons involved in advocacy efforts requires the leaders involved to consider the needs of trauma survivors. Amanda explains that the majority of conversion therapy is practiced by persons within faith communities and in church settings, and that many of the persons involved in supporting the conversion therapy ban had highly traumatic experiences that

occurred in the church environment. She says that the community organizers she worked with during the conversion therapy ban campaign scheduled meetings at churches because the spaces were usually free. Amanda describes having to challenge these organizers to find “neutral” spaces for meetings in order to honor the experience of community members who had experienced trauma in the church setting:

There's some assumption that these faith communities are safe. While some are great and wonderful, accepting, open and affirming, and I appreciate them more than anything, that doesn't mean that people necessarily want to go into a church building. No matter how safe and affirming it is. Yet we constantly organize meetings in these spaces. People usually like to point back to the civil rights movement and they say, “well the civil rights movement was organized in churches”, but it's important that they know that that was out of necessity; that they weren't allowed to be other places. Now we have meeting halls and rooms all over our communities that are neutral.

Employing Professional Skills in Advocacy & Community Work

Using Testimony as an Intervention. Amanda describes several specific methods she employed to help the community understand the traumatic effects of conversion therapy. During events, she informed the community that professional counseling and psychology organizations had deemed the practice of conversion therapy unethical, and stated that many states had already banned it. Amanda also encouraged a number of youth survivors of conversion therapy to share their stories publicly. In the following quote, Amanda describes how the testimony of these youth affected the audience:

We had youth participation through the roof during our [events], and I'll tell you those young people testifying was just incredible. It was just amazing and they left [community

members] in tears because they're talking about just wanting to be able to be themselves, and talking about their experiences. There's nothing more powerful than when you hear it from a young person. It was just amazing.

Amanda states that her own personal story of surviving conversion therapy “was at the center” of the activities she participated in regarding the conversion therapy ban. It seems that Amanda’s experience with conversion therapy, and she and her father’s testimony about the adverse effects of the practice contributed to Amanda’s credibility as an advocate. During the interview, Amanda shared about her experience coming out to her parents and surviving conversion therapy stating that “[when] I went through it at my church, I went between two people. One was a pastoral care counselor and the other was a psychotherapist”. Listening to Amanda share about this trauma during the interview, I found myself brought to tears. The trauma Amanda experienced, and her passion for ensuring that others are spared this experience, was both inspiring and painfully sad.

Amanda states that as an adult she eventually made peace with her father. Her father now supports her advocacy work, and even assisted her with some advocacy efforts. It seems that Amanda’s father’s status as a public figure within the community, and previous support of conversion therapy, meant that his testimony had a greater impact on the audience/legislators:

My Dad was at the center of the conversion therapy [ban activities] too, because my dad decided to come forward to provide testimony. According to the National Center for Lesbian Rights it's very rare to get a parent who made the decision to put their kid in conversion therapy to then come forward and say I was wrong, but my dad was willing to do that, and my dad's a pretty big public figure too.

From employing the voices of young LGBTQ people, to sharing her and her father's experience with conversion therapy, Amanda's use of testimony is one example of her use of strategy and skill in advocating for change. In addition to her abilities in planning and organization, Amanda has also utilized her knowledge of technology to advocate for the LGBTQ community.

Use of Technology in Advocacy Efforts

As a technologically savvy individual with extensive experience managing in the non-profit industry, Amanda has knowledge of organization's needs and the challenges they face in providing services and advocating for their target population. Amanda utilized this knowledge along with her technological skills to create a tool that enables non-profits to invest in advertising and web-based communications that are within their budget. This act of advocacy serves as an example of how advocates utilize their skills to pursue positive change. Amanda describes the application of her professional knowledge of technology to contribute to change efforts in the following quote:

I built a tool that allows small nonprofits to go to a website that they can enter their budget, their staff levels, their digital communications goals, everything from building a better email program to what social media sites do. It helps non-profits determine what they actually need to be messing with, and what they need to ignore. It also shows them how to do digital advertising and to how to build a mobile friendly website. With this tool, they can get a blueprint of where to start with the different kinds of tools available that are either no cost or low cost and require no tech skills to actually use, so that it's manageable within their budget and staffing levels, and they don't actually need to hire a

consultant or have a communications person. I created this because I want nonprofits to be self-sufficient.

Pursuing Systems-level Change

Much of Amanda's advocacy work centered around generating systemic change. While working within the non-profit industry, Amanda maintained a political focus, aiming to change policies that oppress LGBTQ communities and generate new policies to ensure equity. In order to achieve this goal, Amanda spear headed several programs/advocacy efforts at any given time. While promoting the conversion therapy ban, Amanda also brought together a multitude of organizations for a "bullying prevention program":

We built a statewide bullying prevention program where we had state and local government agencies and foundations from around the state, and community organizations, parents, and students all at the table. It was a really powerful program.

Amanda describes this initiative as impacting more than just LGBTQ youth in the school environment, as bullying is not "organically arising from young people" but is instead "an adult problem". Conceptualizing bullying as arising from young people's home environments and interactions with adults ensures that the interventions aimed at preventing bullying address the systemic factors contributing to the problem. Per Amanda:

Bullying Prevention isn't just about what's happening in the schools. With young people, it's more than just their stuff that's coming into these environments. Actually, it's not organically arising from young people. This is an adult problem, so the work we need to be doing is outside of the school to help create conditions for what is being brought into the schools by young people.

The bullying prevention program included adult trainings outside of the school environment that emphasized awareness of personal bias, and ways to prevent violence. These trainings focused on the ill effects of bullying and violence on youth (particularly LGBTQ youth), with Amanda describing bullying as putting these youth on a “negative path”:

We did some amazing work through the [bullying prevention program] that included training outside of the schools that was focused on adults. It included bias training and violence prevention, all within this frame of how these adverse experiences put young people on a negative path.

Including adults from across the state from a variety of organizations and settings ensures that the information is disseminated widely, and most likely to affect systems level change. In addition to addressing bias and violence prevention, Amanda also described organizing initiatives for groups within the LGBTQ community who have historically been forgotten, such as LGBTQ persons with disabilities. She indicated that all of these initiatives are in addition to her organization’s “bread and butter work” of ensuring that the needs of the LGBTQ community are attended to:

We had a number of other initiatives too. We built a disability community advocacy program where we looked for ways to reach populations that haven't typically been at the table in terms of LGBTQ organizing and LGBTQ work. This was in conjunction with making sure that we still did kind of our bread and butter work, which was the policies we need to get passed at the state level to keep creating really great conditions for LGBTQ New Mexicans.

Sociopolitical Context

In-group Politics within LGBTQ Advocacy Organizations

Sociopolitical context affects the efforts of advocates in a variety of ways. Advocacy is affected by the sociopolitical context in which efforts occur, such as public perception or the policies created by persons in power. It is also influenced by politics within the field of advocacy, and the LGBTQ community. One example of the influence of this form of ingroup-politics is Amber's discussion of the need for leaders within the LGBTQ community who are "people of color" or who "have disabilities". She states that leaders from minority backgrounds are needed to ensure that the needs of all members of the community are represented and all voices are heard:

We've never been just one thing. Even though we are led by people who identify as LGBTQ, we also need to be led by people who identify as people of color, who identify as having disabilities. We need to be led by people who have a number of different identifiers in their lives, that that played a part in who they were culturally and politically. It was really important to us that even though we were in LGBTQ advocacy organization that all of those things are able to be a part of our work in one way or another.

Amanda states that although advocacy organizations must attempt to ensure all voices are heard, it is also difficult to control this process. She says that it is a messy process and impossible to say, without a doubt, that an organization effectively elevates the voices of ALL members of the LGBTQ community:

It's messy. It's really messy and regarding people being heard - you can't always control whether people feel heard, and it's not really something that you can bestow on people either. You can create the conditions for it, but after that it's kind of out of your hands.

Amanda describes collaborative efforts as also "messy" and challenging. She reports experiencing difficulty when trying to ensure that the viewpoints of everyone involved in a given

collaborative advocacy effort are honored. Amanda attributes this difficulty to the fact that all community members bring their own “baggage” and “set of circumstances” to the table. She says that the idea that LGBTQ persons are part of a “monolithic community” is false, as there are innumerable “absolute differences” among members related to their experiences and identifiers:

Collaboration is tough because we're all bringing our own set of circumstances, our own baggage, and our own viewpoints to the table. I think this idea that we're a community is just a complete falsity. The LGBTQ community is not a monolithic community where we're all the same. Until we can get used to the idea of absolute difference, we're really probably not going to get very far. We want to feel connected to each other because we need that. We crave that, but that doesn't mean we're the same.

Amanda acknowledges that the belief in one united LGBTQ community is essential as it allows members to feel a sense of connection, but also problematic in that it leads people outside of the community to make assumptions about what all LGBTQ identifying individuals believe. Amanda argues that this conceptualization of LGBTQ persons all belonging to one community also acts as a barrier to the organizing of advocacy efforts. She says that viewing LGBTQ persons in this way leads political organizers and politicians to believe that identifying as LGBTQ means that the individual “should fall in line this way” politically, and should “vote this way”:

We assign these things in our community, “well you’re this, so then this”, and it’s not true. When you’re doing [organizing for advocacy efforts], it makes it really challenging. People say, “we’re an LGBTQ community, so therefore you should fall in line this way” or “therefor you should think this way or vote this way”, and that’s not necessarily the

case. It creates a lot of challenges, and challenges how organizing should happen and how we should be involved. We all make a lot of assumptions.

Community-based Advocacy: “Uplifting what is already there”

During the interview, Amanda seemed to define “community” differently based on context. For instance, “LGBTQ community” in the context of organizing advocacy efforts or collaboration references a monolithic community about whom a number of automatic assumptions are made. When referencing community-based advocacy, Amanda describes communities as the existing social groups with their own “centers of power” and unique culture and norms. She describes these communities as spread throughout New Mexico, with members having a variety of identifiers (e.g. LGBTQ, disabled, of a specific ethnicity). Amanda states that these communities are often doing their own advocacy work, aiming to build power within their community, and that it is the task of the advocate/advocacy organization to “uplift what is already happening”:

We need to do our due diligence and see what amazing things are already happening because it's there, when you're looking at building power in a community, it's not like coming in and saying we have this new shiny thing. It's how do we uplift what is already happening.

When entering a community in order to engage in some advocacy project or effort, it is essential that existing members of the community facilitate the effort. Amanda states that it is the members of the community that best know the needs and interests of that community, and that using these individuals – rather than “transplanting” strangers – honors their identity and history:

Another part is, you're not transplanting people in a community. You're saying the people who need to be here, need to be people who are from the community and who know the

community. It shows that we are trusting that they know what's best, and we are just giving them the resources that they need to thrive.

Amanda provides an example of this approach to advocacy work when she describes the disability community program her non-profit helped build:

It's how we built [a] disability community program. We built something, we brought somebody on who had been doing disability community work for years there and had never been a part of an organization before. They had been doing it on their own for years. We said, "do you want to come and just do whatever you want here with us?" And they did, and it was awesome.

Advocating for Systemic Change vs. "changing hearts and minds work"

During her interview, Amanda made a powerful statement about the purpose of the different types of advocacy work in which she engages. She describes her work as creating the "conditions" necessary for young LGBTQ people to live as their authentic selves and have their rights protected. Amanda distinguishes programmatic work from her community-based efforts, stating that it is the community organizing involved in initiatives such as the antibullying program that facilitate "changing hearts and minds". According to Amanda, both forms of advocacy are necessary for positive change:

Both the conversion therapy ban and [ability to change birth certificates] - they're very much focused on young people, and about creating conditions for young people to have the most support possible in their lives. I think that's what a lot of the work that we tried to do [in the non-profit industry] and the [programmatic] work is all about. The [programmatic] work doesn't change hearts and minds. It just doesn't, but it helps create conditions in which your rights can be defended and it creates the conditions for systems

to create a pathway for people to have their rights and dignity realized. That's why we do the [anti-bullying] initiative. That's why we do the immigrant advocacy work. That's the changing hearts and minds work and you can't really have one without the other.

Marriage equality didn't end homophobia.

Summary of Inductively Derived Categories & Related Themes

Amanda's extensive experience with non-profit work, and her personal experience as a survivor of conversion therapy, provided data that was rich with information and broad in scope. The largest category that emerged from the data was "acts of advocacy", which contained two major themes ("role of trauma" and "employing professional skills") and three subthemes ("using testimony", "using technology", and "pursuing systems-level change"). The second most prevalent category was "sociopolitical context" which contained three themes: "ingroup politics", "community-based advocacy", and "policy work v. changing hearts and minds". The final category that emerged from the data was Amanda's "personal and professional development as an advocate", which included themes about Amanda's "personal journey" of coming out and surviving conversion therapy, and her "identity as an advocate".

Advocacy Artifacts

Amanda seemed to define advocacy artifacts as those organizations who most contribute to advocacy efforts for transgender and gender-expansive individuals, and members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Queer communities. Throughout the interview, Amanda described several organizations that have been involved in advocacy efforts for the transgender and gender-expansive community in New Mexico. Table 10 outlines the advocacy artifacts recommended by Amanda, to include the title, type, and a summary description of item from the source. Amanda's

verbatim description of each artifact is not included in this case portrait as Amanda listed her recommendations verbally and did not provide descriptions.

Table 10
Advocacy Artifacts - Amanda

Artifact Title	Artifact Type	Summary Description from Source
New Mexico Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice	Advocacy organization	See https://nmrcrc.org/we-believe for more information. Provide patients seeking abortion with access to resources, and engage in legislative advocacy to protect abortion access.
Equality New Mexico	Advocacy organization	See http://eqnm.org/#what-we-do for more information. Engage in legislative advocacy efforts at the state level, pursuing equality for LGBTQ New Mexicans; also provide community education regarding LGBTQ issues.
Genders and Sexualities Alliance (GSA)	Advocacy organization	“GSA clubs—originally called Gay-Straight Alliance clubs when they first established in the 1980s—are student-run organizations, typically in a high school or middle school, which provide a safe place for students to meet, support each other, and talk about issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression” (GSA, 2019).
National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR)	Advocacy organization	“Achieving LGBTQ Equality Through Litigation, Legislation, Policy, and Public Education” (NCLR, 2019).
I Am Me: Understanding the Intersections of Gender, Sexuality, and Identity	Documentary	“This educational training film explores the challenges that LGBTQ+ youth face and how adults can be supportive allies” (Pearlman, 2016).
Boy Erased	Film	“The son of a Baptist preacher is forced to participate in a church-supported gay conversion program after being forcibly outed to his parents” (IMDb, 2019)
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)	Advocacy organization	“For nearly 100 years, the ACLU has been our nation’s guardian of liberty, working in courts, legislatures, and communities to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties that the Constitution and the laws of the United States guarantee everyone in this country” (ACLU, 2019).

Hank

Background Information

Hank is involved in the non-profit industry serving transgender and gender-expansive persons in the Southwest U.S. He identifies as a white, queer, transgender man. Born in the early 1970s in the southern U.S., Hank describes identifying as a “butch lesbian” for years prior to learning about transgender identity and recognizing that this gender identity aligned with his experience. He reports maintaining a strong relationship and respect for his mother who was “always accessible and someone I can talk to” and describes emulating her openness “since I was young”.

Hank has a bachelors in education, and describes his degree as helping develop his skills as a public speaker, and abilities as an educator/trainer. Hank also describes his experience as a butch lesbian as being particularly impactful, stating that he learned how to “steer interactions” to help people “go over the hump of my gender variance”. He shared that during that time of his life, when interacting with people (particularly potential employers) he had to “not let them get bogged down here...I’m gonna make [them] see me as a person, and somehow help [them] skim past the thing that some people get hung up on”.

These skills remain particularly pertinent today, as Hank utilizes his abilities as an educator and ability to relate to others to advocate for the transgender and gender-expansive community. Hank currently resides in New Mexico and is an active member of the LGBTQ community. His work in the non-profit industry provides a yearly income between \$50,000 to \$74,999.

I first met Hank in October of 2012, when he presented on gender identity during a training I attended. This presentation was my first introduction to transgender and gender-expansive identities, and the struggles individuals in this community face due to social and

political oppression. Four years later, when my 8 year old daughter asked to socially transition from presenting as male to presenting as female, I contacted Hank to ask for guidance. Hank provided my family with education about the needs of transgender/gender-expansive youth and our child's rights within the school environment. He also connected us to a community of affirming families and caregivers of transgender/gender-expansive youth. When I began recruiting participants for this study, Hank was the first person I contacted to inquire about his possibly participating in the project. He not only volunteered to participate, but also recommended several other advocates who might be willing to contribute their perspectives.

Interview Context

After agreeing to participate in the study, Hank graciously offered for us to use his living room at home to complete the interview. When I arrived for the interview (around 4 o'clock in the afternoon), Hank introduced me to his partner, child, and dogs. Hank appeared very comfortable in the space and seemed willing to experience vulnerability during the interview, as he discussed personal experiences related to his own coming out and journey as a transgender man. The interview lasted a total of 58 minutes, with Hank indicating several resources for improved understanding of how to advocate for and better understand the experience of transgender and gender-expansive persons.

Inductively Derived Categories & Related Themes

Hank's experience working in a non-profit agency serving the transgender and gender-expansive community has afforded him the opportunity to advocate in a variety of spaces, at both the macro or systems-level and the micro/individual level. Reflecting on these experiences, Hank describes patterns of behavior among teachers, parents, and practitioners in health and mental healthcare who are entrusted with the care of transgender and gender-expansive youth. Over the

course of the interview, Hank also made multiple connections between current experiences and historical events. This participant's ability to attend to his own experience while also noting the connection between his experience and the wider societal context lead to the emergence of many interconnected themes. The diversity of Hank's experience is reflected in the themes outlined below.

Connection Between Individual Advocacy Efforts & Macro-Level Variables

Non-Profit Industrial Complex

One example of Hank's attention to the macro-level context of his advocacy efforts was his description of the "non-profit industrial complex". Hank described the non-profit industrial complex as referring to the role non-profit agencies play in perpetuating the social problems they aim to alleviate or reduce:

There is an argument to be made about non-profits perpetuating problems by trying in vain to address those societal problems that need to be addressed at a much larger structural level. If we were really a "good society" we wouldn't allow people to not be housed. Why should we at [a non-profit entity] be trying in vain to do the little bit we can do to help folks who aren't housed, instead of America saying "We won't stand for people living like this. We won't let people in our culture live this way. If you are in our country you get these basic needs met".

Non-profits have exploded since the 70s. There's been this huge proliferation of non-profits trying to do these little things, and each trying to struggle for the same funding as the others. They keep us locked in this sort of hamster wheel of making sure our writing is good, and that we're getting grants, instead of saying, "What would get to the bottom of this? Is it poverty? Then let's all address poverty". But we don't do that. We are like "I

save the pandas” and “I save the trans people” and “I’m queer legislative advocacy”, it’s all “non-profit, non-profit, non-profit, non-profit”.

In the preceding quote, Hank situates his efforts working in the non-profit industry serving transgender and gender-expansive individuals as only contributing to the problem by failing to hold society accountable. Hank calls upon greater society to deem social problems such as homelessness unacceptable, and to act to address this problem. He describes non-profits as only treating the “symptoms” and failing to address the causes:

We really don’t have our eye on the ball with what we need to deal with to change our world, to change our culture. Even if we just think about the U.S., what would change the U.S? We are not looking at causes, we are looking at symptoms, and we don’t even realize we are looking at the symptoms and not looking at the cause...even if we could solve the symptoms, we couldn’t solve the sickness.

Hank further elaborates on the ill effects non-profits have on the social issues they aim to alleviate when discussing the impact of asking for donations. He states that by providing members of society the option to donate to a cause, they are able to feel that they have helped, even though they have not actually contributed to an effort that will change the problem. Enabling people to feel that they are contributing through their donations is also problematic because it allows the individual to avoid seeing the ugly face of poverty, oppression, discrimination – the “sickness” causing our current social problems:

The existence of non-profits really keeps people from looking at the problem. People can give money to [our non-profit], and they never have to see the transgender women [who receive services]; they never have to encounter them. We keep this person from ever having to really see what’s going on in the city that they live in. People going hungry,

selling their body for food or drugs...right down the street. But you don't really have to look at that person, or think about their existence, because you give us money to take care of them. We just use that money to take care of them, and what does that mean?

“Respectability Politics”

Hank states that his outreach and education efforts often indirectly reinforce the gender binary. He explains that the standard of practice provided by the American Academy of Pediatrics regarding gender identity development continues to frame children as knowing their gender is “male or female” by age 4. This standard of practice does not provide a frame of reference for the gender identity development of non-binary or gender-expansive children. Hank states that this lack of information, coupled with the social expectation that transgender individuals only traverse from one end of the binary to the other, forces him to temper his message during education sessions.

One example of ‘tempering the message’ is Hank’s decision to utilize those panelists during a presentation about gender identity who would appeal to the “movable middle” (defined as those individuals who seem open to the possibility of changing their perspective on a given issue). Hank describes having one panelist who presented as bi-gender, with secondary sex characteristics of both male and female genders. Hank chose not to include this individual as a panelist for a school education session. He states that he did not include the bi-gender panelist because he sought to speak to the “movable middle” within the school and was afraid that including the perspective of someone who is too far outside of the male/female gender binary might cause some open minds to close. Regarding this education session at a local school, Hank states:

I'm kind of pushing the non-binary people to the back of the bus, even though I don't mean to do that, and don't want to do it. I think the question that all of us have to ask – no matter who we are advocating for – how much is it worth it to sell it to the middle? What they call the “movable middle”. Is it at any cost? What if we push peoples' voices to the margins even further because we've got to reach these middle people? Versus if it doesn't include everybody, it's not worth it. That's another tight rope I think we walk, the tight rope of respectability politics. How far am I willing to push with panel members? Is it more important for an individual trans person to have a voice and tell their story, or is it more important that the whole room of people gets moved a little, if we can?

Adult Treatment of Transgender and Gender-Expansive Children

Hank also describes the treatment of transgender children by adults as rooted in society's “adultist” attitude. He describes society as viewing children as “cute little idiots” and refusing to acknowledge children's awareness of their own identities, to include gender identity. One example provided by Hank is how adults will say to children that they “don't know” their gender identity and will “feel different” when they are “older”:

It is just another intersection of oppression. We are a super adultist society, and we do things as though kids were like cute little idiots that have no self-awareness, and no identity-integrity. I think we do that around lots of stuff, trans is just an example. Many times I hear people say to kids, “you don't know, you'll feel different when you are older”. And some things they will grow up to feel different, but what does that say to say that to them? To invalidate them all of the time like that?

Hank further describes this adultist attitude when discussing the reaction of some adults to children who wish to present as a gender other than that assigned at birth. Specifically, Hank describes how transgender females had to “bargain” to wear barrettes and headbands:

They used to bargain back in the day about barrettes, and headbands and things. Like “she could wear the headbands if she doesn’t cry”, when she was only crying because she was getting bullied. You wouldn’t tell a girl “you can only wear barrettes if ‘some requirement’”. You wouldn’t think you had the right to actually have control over her barrettes. This girl you do, but that girl you don’t. When I back up from it, I think how much of this is across society.

Development as an Advocate

“It didn’t have to be perfect, it just had to ‘be’” - Hank

Coming Out & Experiencing Transition

Hank describes his own coming out journey as intertwined with his decision to advocate for the transgender/gender-expansive community. He describes his coming out process as one of self-discovery, impeded by numerous challenges, and a lack of information and resources. It was during this experience that he was inspired to help other people who confront the same barriers and challenges during their coming out and/or gender transition. While explaining his coming out journey, Hank states that he identified as a “butch lesbian” during his young adulthood, until he was introduced to transgender identity through the text *Stone Butch Blues* by Leslie Feinberg (1993):

I didn’t know that I knew any trans people, and I didn’t have the internet, so I was on this historical cusp when I was coming out. When *Stone Butch Blues* was published in the mid 90s, I read it and that’s when I thought, “oh my god, that’s what I am – that’s me,

now I get it". It took me 8 more years after that to take the first medical steps; it was still so scary, so unknown.

After identifying his experience in this way, Hank encountered a number a myths and misconceptions about medical interventions for the transition process. These misguided beliefs left him fearful of pursuing a medical gender transition, despite his desire to align his physical presentation with his inner experience:

I always get embarrassed to talk about it, because I sound so ignorant. At the time, even in the early 2000s, building up to my medical transition I knew I wanted it, but I was so scared to do anything or move it forward at all. Some of the information that was coming out, slow trickles of information, like documentaries, we saw stories of guys who had been lesbians, and then they went on T [Testosterone], and then they started to date guys, and they were gay. So even though now it sounds really dumb, I could not figure out if there was some kind of a correlation between taking T and having your sexual orientation shift like that. In my mind, I was lesbian for a long time, so if I was gay I would be proud to be gay and be in the gay pride parade and everything. I had a partner, and we were just about to have a baby, and he was coming, and I didn't want to wake up gay and lose my family for T.

The process of exploring his options for a physical, medically assisted gender transition, and being confronted with fear-inducing misinformation left Hank wondering about the experience of other transgender people. Hank states that he was particularly concerned about those members of the transgender community who have multiple intersections of oppression, and who – unlike him – have little to no privilege:

I couldn't find what I needed. It was dark and scary, and I was isolated. I went back into puberty, but I didn't know that's what I was going through; that was really dark, and scary, and isolating. I felt like there had to be other people, people who are getting lost. If this is so hard for me – as a resourced and resilient person – what was happening for others who were more fragile. What were they doing when they couldn't figure it out. Was anyone doing anything to help them? Trans people? I looked, and there wasn't.

Privilege

Hank seemed to transform the trauma of transitioning with little information or support into a source of inspiration to help others. He identified his experience as still one of privilege, stating:

I had some awareness of it, but my awareness is now much more vivid. I'm aware that I am a privileged person. I am a person that has the expectation of being helped, being able to find the resources, and get in the car that I have, and go to the doctor, and have this stuff.

Hank acknowledged that although his experience with medical transition was difficult, he was still more resourced and privileged than many individuals in the transgender community. Hank reached out to a close friend who was also a member of the transgender community to talk about his experience, and desire to help others in the community. Through this friendship, Hank and his friend entered the non-profit industry with the goal of improving the wellbeing of the transgender and gender-expansive community.

Acts of Advocacy

Founding a Non-Profit Entity

For Hank, the creation of a non-profit entity seemed to be the culmination of years of advocacy work. Prior to establishing the entity, Hank was participating in and helping to coordinate panels with other LGBTQ organizations. He states that engaging in public speaking regarding issues that affect the transgender community contributed to his decision to help establish a non-profit entity:

I was starting to do panels, and I was getting a lot of good responses. I started saying “Should we do this thing? And create this thing? The [non-profit entity]?”. And that was the first obvious moment when we decided to start [it]. We started doing education out in the community. That for me has felt like the biggest platform for my advocacy, because you just don’t know who all you are talking to and what impact you are having. You don’t get to hear about your impact, it’s just sowing all of these seeds. And I always really liked working with people one on one too, I’m lucky that I get to do both. So for me it was a clear avenue for me as an advocate, to try to take it out to the cis-public.

Hank describes providing outreach and education to the “cis-public” (cisgender public) as a means of “sowing seeds” of understanding. In this quote, Hank is referencing experiences where individuals who have attended his presentations have become allies or advocates for the transgender community. I believe that Hank may have also been referencing his own experience with me, a cisgender heterosexual parent of a transgender child. At the beginning of our interview, I mentioned to Hank that I reached out to him and to the agency about my daughter because I had attended one of his presentations years ago. I had attended the training when she was just a baby, and when she was old enough to articulate her gender identity as transgender, I knew that his non-profit entity could provide me with more information and support to help me better meet my daughter’s needs.

Developing the non-profit entity not only provided a home base for Hank's education and outreach efforts, but also provided a hub for the provision of resources to community members.

Hank states that his decision to establish the entity required a bit of a leap of faith:

For us, it was just having the philosophy that "it didn't need to be perfect, it just needed to be". The space that we moved into first was so crappy, and not at all what worked for our needs. We decided "let's just open". Let's just open and start figuring out more about it and then we can move. We don't have to be stuck in this place, but let's not wait until we have the right place.

Education & Outreach

As part of his work with the agency, Hank frequently attends conferences for a variety of professions, providing practitioners with presentations regarding diverse gender identities.

Although Hank personalizes each training to the needs of the individuals in attendance, his presentations always cover: Introductory information about gender identity development, transgender and gender-expansive identity and the gender spectrum, aspects of medical and social gender transition, and the standard of care for this population. Hank also includes a question and answer session at the end of each training where he informs the audience:

Ask me embarrassing questions, ask me stupid questions, ask the weird stuff you don't want to ask people, and let's just talk about it, this is the time. This is when we can do it. And so I can't be mad when they do!

The act of providing practitioners and the "cis-public" with information about the diversity of gender identity and fostering open conversation enables Hank to help people who are in the "movable middle" traverse to a position of acceptance. Hank describes his advocacy work providing these trainings as helping people see the humanity in the transgender community, and

the importance of supporting transgender and gender-expansive youth to be their authentic selves.

Galvanizing Members of the Movable Middle

In response to the interview question, “Please describe a particularly memorable instance where you were called upon, or where circumstances permitted you to advocate for a transgender or gender non-conforming child”, Hank described a presentation where a nurse practitioner (NP) labeled medical interventions for gender transition for youth as “child abuse”. He stated that this practitioner approached the microphone during the question and answer portion of the training, and “was like a dog with a bone about it, it was really interesting”. Hank says that this NP’s staunch rejection of medical interventions for transgender and gender-expansive youth “galvanized the rest of the room”:

To me, the most fascinating thing that day was that it galvanized the whole rest of the room. And I didn’t have to rebut her, because another NP took the mic to say, more forcefully than what I would have said, “You are wrong, it is child abuse to hurt these kids...to let them kill themselves”. Then the other NP said “Yeah we just need to be worrying about adolescent suicide”, and I said “No, no no no. No. Noo.” You want your head in the sand about this, but other people in the room knew well what we were talking about which is that this is a life or death juncture for these kids.

By allowing persons attending the training to share their perspectives, the audience is provided the opportunity to hear from persons who would deny transgender and gender-expansive youth support or access to gender transition related care. In Hank’s experience, it seems that many of those individuals who are willing to share their lack of support are not looking to have their perspective changed. These individuals can be adamant about their disbelief

in transgender identity, or in Hank's words "like a dog with a bone about it". Thus sharing their perspective and having a dialogue with Hank and other audience members does not change their beliefs, but it does impact those persons in the room who are in the "movable middle". As described in the quote above, audience members responded "forcefully" to the nurse's statement about medical treatment being a form of child abuse. Hank further describes this experience:

The fascinating thing was that even when I had a crappy encounter with this woman, I had a more magical encounter with everybody else in the room. I wouldn't be surprised to see a bunch of other ripples, like people wanting to volunteer and do things for the transgender community. They got kind of passionate in that moment by her being oppositional.

Hank describes the audience as having a shocked, "passionate" response to the nurse's opposition, such that they were motivated to speak out against her statement and her lack of support for transgender and gender-expansive youth. He believes that this experience may have created additional "ripples" of change, by motivating audience members to "volunteer and do things" for the community. When advocating for this population, Hank's experience speaks to an advocate's ability to facilitate open and honest dialogue among persons with a variety of perspectives, and his ability to cultivate growth and change through this process.

Working with Ambivalent & Rejecting Adults

Rejection as Protection

As the founder of a non-profit entity, Hank often comes into contact with parents, caregivers, and teachers who attempt to censor the gendered expression of the transgender/gender-expansive child in their care. Hank describes these adults as attempting to help the child by preventing them from "being a target". In their efforts to prevent the child from

being targeted by bullies, these adults may shame the child for choosing clothing that does not align with the stereotypical dress of the sex assigned at birth. These adults believe themselves to be helping the child and fail to see that their behavior communicates a message of rejection:

People are afraid for trans girls. There is their own fear that comes into it, their own gender stuff and fears. So they feel like they are trying to do you a good thing by not letting someone hurt them for being weird and being a target. You are trying to help me not be a target, but instead you're targeting me!

Adult's Unresolved "Gender stuff"

Many adults inadvertently communicate messages of rejection to transgender and gender-expansive youth, when their intention is to protect these young people. Hank attributes this "rejection as protection" response to many adult's "own gender stuff" and "conflicting stuff". "Stuff" seems to be a reference to unresolved difficult experiences involving gender, such as an adult's own childhood trauma with bullying by a parent or peer for some failure to conform to stereotypical gender expectations. He also notes how this perspective places the blame for bullying and harassment on the child victim, rather than on the bully. Hank further describes "rejection as protection" in the following quote:

You're trying to be helpful, but you're actually the one traumatizing me! You're my teacher, even though I'm sure you're probably feeling the most conflicting stuff on the inside, including "I'm afraid for this kid, and I don't want them to be atypical". That mentality in schools is hard. I can't say how many times I've met teachers like that – like "if he wouldn't dress like that then they wouldn't do these things".

The theme "rejection as protection" speaks to the role of gendered harassment in the policing of gender norms, particularly in the school environment. While these adults may view

their actions as preventing bullying or harassment, their behavior in fact contributes to the overall aim of such harassment, the condemnation of non-conforming gender expression and pressure to conform to “normative” gender practices (Meyer, 2009).

Summary of Inductively Derived Categories & Related Themes

The primary categories “acts of advocacy” and “development as an advocate” contained a variety of themes that were similar to those that emerged from other participant’s data. Themes within the category of “development as an advocate” included: Coming out and experiencing transition, and awareness of privilege. The category “acts of advocacy” contained themes including: Founding a non-profit entity for the transgender/gender-expansive community, education and outreach, and galvanizing members of the movable middle.

Two major categories emerged from Hank’s data that were distinct from other participants, that of “working with ambivalent and rejecting adults: Rejection is protection” and “individual advocacy efforts and macro-level variables”. These two categories articulated how social mores and in-group politics shape advocacy efforts. Hank seemed to have unique insight into these aspects of advocacy because of his own experience as a transgender man, and diversity of experience advocating for transgender and gender-expansive youth and adults in a variety of settings.

Advocacy Artifacts

Hank appeared to define advocacy artifacts as those specific items that contributed to his development as an advocate, and journey as a transgender man. Table 11 outlines the advocacy artifacts recommended by Hank, to include the title, type, Hank’s description of the artifact, and a summary description of the item from the source.

Table 11

Recommended Advocacy Artifacts – Hank

Artifact Title	Artifact Type	Participant Description	Summary Description from Source
<i>Stone Butch Blues</i> by Leslie Feinberg	Book, autobiography	“For me, I didn’t know that I knew any trans people, and I didn’t have the internet, so I was like, it’s almost like a historical cusp, when I was coming out, you know. When <i>Stone Butch Blues</i> was published in the mid 90s, I read it and that’s when I was like oh my god, that’s what I am – that’s me, now I get that, you know”	“ <i>Stone Butch Blues</i> , Leslie Feinberg’s 1993 first novel, is widely considered in and outside the U.S. to be a groundbreaking work about the complexities of gender. Feinberg was the first theorist to advance a Marxist concept of “transgender liberation” (Leslie Feinberg, 2019).

Chad

Background Information

Chad is a transgender queer man, of an ethnic and cultural minority. He was born in the 1970s, raised by traditional parents who understood Chad's masculine presentation as a child as a "tomboy phase". He describes his parents support of his gender identity as ambivalent, indicating that he and his parents did not have the knowledge or language to understand Chad's transgender experience:

I wouldn't say that I didn't have support when I was younger. That's probably factually true, but I don't think anybody knew. We didn't have the language for it. Nobody knew what was going on, not like now. So I don't want to say my parents weren't supportive, I would say we just didn't know what's going on. When I was transitioning in my twenties, yes, they did fight it, but they eventually came around.

Chad spent his childhood and early adulthood in the eastern U.S. He describes identifying as butch lesbian during adolescence and early adulthood until he entered college. He states that when he started college he began meeting new groups of people, and people with identities he had not previously been aware of or familiar with. It was this process of learning about new people and new identities that Chad found a name for his gender experience – transgender:

It was when I actually went to college and met gay people. I was like, "Oh, maybe I'm gay". That was mid to late nineties, and at that time people were already starting to use the word transgender and talk about it and I was like, I'm Trans. So I dropped out of school. Figured out how to transition. Then transitioned.

Chad describes his choice to transition socially and medically as affecting his decision to stay in school. He describes the process of recognizing his transgender identity as "scary and

freaky”, but says that finally having the terminology necessary to label his experience gave him the ability to start making changes and “get right with myself”. Chad states that discontinuing school was a necessary part of this life changing transition:

I really had been spinning my wheels in school and I couldn't figure out what was wrong. I think that when I was finally able to accept that I was trans and that I needed to do something - it took a while for me to swallow that one because it was really scary and freaky. I was like, I need to get right with myself first and then with my life. So I dropped out of everything – it was mostly just school - so I could fix myself and move on.

After leaving school, Chad entered a male dominated trade that from the beginning recognized Chad as a man. Chad says that this environment simplified the gender transition process, as he “didn’t have to deal with using the mens’ rooms and the womens’ rooms because on the job site it’s just a bunch of Port-o-Johns”, and his place of work recognized his male identity. Chad’s lack of support in childhood and adolescence as a transgender child, and adult gender transition process, contributed to his decision to engage in advocacy efforts upon moving to New Mexico.

I became acquainted with Chad through my participation in panels facilitated by a non-profit agency. Chad was another volunteer with the agency who frequently attended panels and shared about his experience. I obtained Chad’s email by reaching out to the individual who facilitates the agency’s panels. I then emailed Chad to inquire about his willingness to participate in this study. Chad agreed to participate and stated that he was excited to contribute.

Interview Context

The interview occurred at a Starbucks coffee shop near campus, just down the street from Chad’s work place where he works for the city. Although Chad stated that the location provided

adequate privacy, he seemed to speak in hushed tones when using the words “transgender”, “lesbian”, or “gay”. During the interview, Chad disclosed that although he is open about his transgender identity, he does not often have the opportunity to be “out” as a transgender man.

Chad stated that at his place of work, very few coworkers are aware that he was assigned female at birth, and know him only as the male he presents as. Chad also stated that his queer identity is not known, as his partner is female presenting, and sexual and affectual orientation are not common topics of discussion. Chad stated that he discusses his transgender identity when it “comes up”:

It's nice when someone who is also trans comes up and we can relate on something down to earth because I think that it normalizes it. Trans people, queer people, we're everywhere and you wouldn't even know. We're just like you. I mean not, not that you're trying to dress like everyone else, but the point is like, it's not a big deal.

It seemed as though Chad was not necessarily uncomfortable speaking openly about these aspects of his identity in public, but simply that he was not accustomed to it. He also reported feeling concerned that he would not have enough experience with transgender and gender-expansive youth to contribute to the study. Chad not only provided a rich, diverse narrative about his experience as an activist within the transgender community, he also shared his own personal experience transitioning medically and socially as a transgender man. His willingness to be vulnerable during the interview enabled me to see the connections between his experience as a transgender person, and his perspective as an advocate.

The interview lasted a total of 54 minutes, which included the time spent completing the demographic questionnaire. Chad also provided a brief list of advocacy artifacts.

Inductively Derived Categories & Related Themes

While reviewing Chad's data during the analysis process, three major categories emerged: "Development as an advocate", "sociopolitical context" with an emphasis on cultural context and events, and "acts of advocacy". The experiences Chad disclosed during the interview were distinct from other participants, as he grew up in the eastern U.S., in a traditional family, navigating both cultural and social mores that rejected any diversion from the sex assigned at birth.

Development as an Advocate

Personal Motivation to Advocate

Throughout the interview, Chad seemed to minimize the difficulties he experienced when transitioning without the support of family, and with little resources. Chad describes himself as establishing relationships with members of the LGBTQ community upon entering college, but that he was "spinning [his] wheels" in school and needed to "drop everything" to "get right" with himself. Chad's experience transitioning medically and socially with few supports inspired him to seek opportunities where he could support transgender and gender-expansive youth, providing these young people with the love and encouragement that he was unable to find during his own transition.

Chad describes initially lacking awareness of this being a motivating factor for his advocacy work. He says that it was not until a colleague and friend in the non-profit industry gave him a "heads up" that working with transgender and gender-expansive youth could be triggering that he recognized his own unresolved grief. Chad reports having to engage in self-grieving while engaging in advocacy work in order to process the grief associated with making it through the difficult process of transitioning without the love and support of others. Even during the interview, Chad became overwhelmed with emotion while discussing this experience:

I get a little verklempt, but I have to tell you, I remember this distinct moment where I thought to myself, “I still want to be here for these youth”, and yet I really grieved the fact that I couldn't be there for myself. Nobody was there for me in that way. It's weird, you're happy to be able to be there for young people but can't help but feel a little bit of self-grieving that you didn't have that when you were going through that stuff. Yes we made it, but we need to take that little bit of time to stroke our young self and say, “It's okay. It's okay”.

Witnessing a Shifting Worldview

While noting the lack of support and resources available to him and other transgender and gender expansive individuals 20 years ago, Chad also described a recent shift in many members of society's worldview. He says that more people are aware of the multitude of gender identities, and existence of transgender children:

Even though that's only 2 years ago, what struck me at the time was - since I was transitioning 20 years ago - how things are now, how trans stuff has blown up. Just the idea that we're having an interview about Trans children! People never recognized Trans children when I was transitioning, much less when I was growing up.

Chad seems to view the new awareness within society of transgender and gender-expansive identities as a dramatic and positive shift from when he transitioned 20 years ago. He appears excited about this shift and attributes the change to the work of advocates and visibility of transgender and gender-expansive persons, particularly youth within the transgender and gender-expansive community.

Acting as an Agent of Change

Upon moving to New Mexico, Chad became acquainted with two transgender men who facilitated a social group. The social group consisted of several transgender men who would “go out socially” or meet at one another’s homes about once per month. Chad describes this initial group as bringing together members of the transgender and gender-expansive community who eventually mobilized the resources necessary to initiate a non-profit entity:

The [people] who [started the non-profit entity]...I was friends with them, so I first moved here back in 07' and there were no resources. There were some coed support groups it was through the coed groups that a bunch of Trans men met; we'd go out socially. But what we started to do was we got into the habit of meeting once a month in each other's houses, and that went on for a couple years, then it kind of died down. But what came up its place was the [non-profit agency]. It was not just for us, but for everybody.

When the founders officially opened the non-profit entity, they announced that they were looking for someone to facilitate the support group. Chad says that he learned about the non-profit entity’s need for a youth group support facilitator because of his friendship with the founders of the agency. He describes feeling called to volunteer to assist with the group because he had not engaged in activist work since he had left the eastern U.S. Chad’s desire to promote the empowerment and wellbeing of the transgender and gender-expansive community played a major role in his decision to act as a group leader:

I’m not originally from here. I’m from [the eastern U.S.], and I transitioned in early 2000. I was really an activist back then - but once I moved to New Mexico - not so much. It's something about the timing that in 2014 I felt like I should do something for the

community here. So it just kind of fell into place. I volunteered to facilitate the youth group for the [non-profit entity] at that time and I did it for about two years.

Chad's approach to advocacy is to act as an agent of change by providing transgender and gender-expansive youth with a safe space, validation, and group support. Chad's own experience with lack of access to support and resources during his medical and social gender transition helped inform his decision to volunteer in a role that enabled him to provide youth with the resources and support that he himself had lacked. His experience as a transgender man and former trans youth provided a source of motivation, and foundation of knowledge for enabling him to relate to and meet the needs of this population.

Later in the interview, Chad describes how his own coming out process is inextricably intertwined with his advocacy work. He states, "It's weird, I don't even think of [advocacy] as separate. It was all part of transitioning. So it felt like it was just part of my personal transition". Chad seems to view his own work in advocacy and activism as part of transitioning, of embracing his identity as a transgender man, and contributing to his community.

Perspective as Rooted in Personal Experience

Chad describes a period of time during his medical and social gender transition where his outward appearance was still perceived as feminine, and his legal documents and identification reflected his accurate male identity. He says that he was placed in situations where people had to accept the discrepancy between their original perception of his gender, and his self-reported gender identity. Chad also describes having to explain his changing appearance and male identity to persons who had previously known him as a female. It was during this period of time that Chad became aware of the importance of "taking someone's word for it" when they share something about themselves. Chad describes this experience:

I told people, “Look, I don't know what to tell you. I understand that I was assigned female at birth. I understand that you used to know me as a woman. I understand that you still agree I'm a woman. I get it. I understand that I haven't had access to medical transition. I understand all those things. Maybe the legal changes haven't gone through. I'm telling you I am not a woman and you can either believe that or not”. What I remember from those days and what I learned, what I still try to remember now when I'm faced with my own prejudices, is that if someone tells me something about themselves, I should take their word for it and that's it. Because that was me and that was it. It was all I had. My body was contradictory to how I felt. Circumstances are contradictory to how I felt. I felt that papers were contradictory. It was all I could do to get people to see that. And so I'm constantly being reminded that I have to do that for others.

In the preceding statement, Chad seems to acknowledge how personal experience with prejudice and the dysphoria associated with a lack of congruence between outward appearance and inward experience taught him the importance of respecting other's disclosed identities. Chad also seems to have tapped into a well of empathy, such that when confronted with a person at this extra difficult point in their gender transition, Chad's emotional experience from that time in his own life is re-experienced. The field of counseling and psychology recognize this experience as a common experience for helping professionals when assisting a client whose experience in some way parallels their own. The formal title for this experience is “countertransference”, and if the helping professional is aware of this phenomenon it can enhance empathy between helper and helped (Burwell-Pender & Halinski, 2008).

The strong connection between Chad's personal experience and his perspective on advocacy work is also evident in his statements about the high stakes of gender dysphoria. Chad

states that he did not have a choice about whether or not to pursue medical transition, that he had to physically change his gender presentation to align with his internal experience in order to continue living. He further speaks to this experience within the transgender community, stating that the increased rate of suicide may be related to the experience of gender dysphoria, which occurs when one is unable to achieve congruence between outward appearance and internal identity:

I think what's at play - because it was at play for me - is there's courage, and then there's that you can't do anything else. I mean you could do something else, which is why I guess suicidality is really high in the trans community, but if you're going to choose to live and not die, then you almost don't have a choice. People talk about being courageous and all this stuff, but really you don't have a choice. This is who I am and I can't be any other way and I don't have a choice.

Sociopolitical Context

During his interview, Chad provided a timeline of personally impactful sociopolitical events that occurred during his gender transition and his active years as an activist and advocate. One example of these events was when a city employee in Chad's hometown became the first person employed by the to be open about their transgender identity. Chad described this person as being part of his social circle of LGBTQ activist friends. He also in a march in a pride parade that 20 years ago previously excluded members of the transgender community to participate in the major pride demonstration.

Cultural Events

These experiences, and other sociopolitical events, contributed to Chad's development as an activist. He also describes personal experiences as a youth, specifically with members of his

family and community, as impacting his understanding of the needs of trans and gender-expansive youth. Chad describes how gender norms promote masculinity as the most desirable characteristic for both genders, until puberty. He states that society requires youth to “fall in line” when they reach puberty, aligning their gender presentation with the sex assigned at birth:

If you want to run around looking like a boy and acting like a boy to a certain degree, it's okay. I think once you hit puberty, people start to expect you to kind of fall in line. The reason I say that is only because I don't see that same space for people who are assigned male at birth, I don't see a lot of school age boys who are allowed to grow their hair long, or God forbid wear a skirt. I don't think I've ever seen that. It's just not allowed. I think we live in a culture that's still misogynistic and the masculine rules. If you want to act like a dude, that's fine, up to a certain point. Once you hit puberty, you better do your thing. God forbid a little boy wants to act like a girl. I don't think it's safe, and that's our fault as the adults. The point is, I don't see a lot of safety for those little trans kids.

Chad further explains how his own experience as a child who was labeled a “tomboy” aligned with the aforementioned description of society's expectations of gender. He describes how his parents, whose culture influenced their beliefs about gender norms, encouraged Chad's masculine “tomboy” behavior and presentation until he reached puberty. Chad says that at that time, his father and mother expected him “fall in line”. Chad describes his parents' rejection of masculine behavior as contributing to his decision to remain closeted until college, and that this experience has also helped him to relate to young transgender and gender non-conforming youth who have experienced rejection.

Acts of Advocacy

Trans Youth: Seeking “Reflections of themselves” and a Safe Space

Tapping into his experience as the leader of a support group for transgender and gender-expansive youth, Chad provided insight regarding the needs of this group. Where one might expect to hear that these young people needed access to hormones, or hormone blockers, or gender transition related care, Chad instead described how these young people are seeking “reflections of themselves” and a safe space to meet other transgender and gender-expansive people:

For the youth, it was more about just finding each other, and a little bit about finding role models. It was about finding reflections of themselves. To establish rapport, we just had to be supportive and then get out of their way. Just provide a space for them to be with each other.

Chad further describes being visible as a transgender person as an act of advocacy that provides transgender youth with more opportunities for seeing themselves represented positively in the world. He states that visibility of transgender members of the community shows that the crisis that accompanies rejection and gender dysphoria is temporary, and that there is “a way out”. In the quote below, Chad speaks to the need for youth to have people they can think of who have survived gender dysphoria and rejection, and built fulfilling lives:

...seeing a way out, being in the moment of crisis and not being able to think to yourself – other than a celebrity because celebrities are so far out of reach anyhow – “Oh I know so and so and they were able to find a partner and they have a good job and they live a normal life and this is just a phase and all the shit I’m dealing with right now is only temporary”. You need to have something that you could think about that's beyond that moment.

Chad further describes how his role as an advocate and youth group leader is to ensure that transgender and gender-expansive youth have a “safe space”:

I think that my job in that role was mainly to provide a safe space and be an accessible

Trans adult so they could be with each other and could also see adults that reflected them.

Education & Outreach

Referring back to his experience as an activist while living in the eastern U.S. immediately before, during, and after his medical and social gender transition, Chad reports assisting with efforts to provide interested community members within the queer community with education about gender identity. He also describes collaborating with “gay advocacy groups” to gain permission for the transgender community to participate in the pride parade. These efforts ensured that the transgender community had a home within the greater LGBTQ community, and that community members had an accurate understanding of the T in LGBTQ.

Chad also participated in panels at the university he had previously attended, where Chad was asked to participate and “be the trans presence on the panels”. He states that his participation as a panelist helped “start to brand a community” for transgender and gender-expansive students on campus and introduced many students to transgender identity.

Summary of Inductively Derived Categories & Related Themes

The primary categories that emerged from Chad’s data included: “Development as an advocate”, “sociopolitical context”, and “acts of advocacy”. Chad’s interview narrative outlined his development as an advocate, to include motivations for becoming an advocate/activist, his experience witnessing a shift in U.S. society’s view on gender identity development in young people, and how Chad’s personal experience as a transgender person has impacted his perspective and efforts as an advocate. Chad’s disclosures during the interview also spoke to his

specific approach to advocacy, and how he has sought to provide transgender and gender-expansive youth with a “reflection of themselves” in him and other advocates. Chad also described using education and outreach as a means of increasing both the LGBT community and society’s understanding of the T in LGBTQ.

Advocacy Artifacts

One of the questions posed to Chad during the interview was whether he had any advocacy related materials he would recommend. When Chad asked for clarification about what these materials ought to include, I emphasized the role of these materials in helping me better understand advocacy for this population, and/or his perspective on advocacy. Chad seemed to define advocacy artifacts as those resources that helped him to understand transgender identity, and the history of the transgender community. Table 12 outlines the advocacy artifacts recommended by Chad, to include the title, type, and a summary description of item from the source.

Table 12
Advocacy Artifacts - Chad

Artifact Title	Artifact Type	Summary Description from Source
Personal video diaries of transgender individual’s experiences with gender transition	Youtube videos	See Youtube.com keyword “gender transition” for more information.
“Boys Don’t Cry”	Film, based on a true story about Brandon Teena	“Young female-to-male transgender Brandon Teena (Hilary Swank) leaves his hometown under threat when his ex-girlfriend’s brother discovers that he’s biologically female. Resettling in the small town of Falls City, Nebraska, Brandon falls for Lana (Chloë Sevigny), an aspiring singer, and begins to plan for their future together. But when her ex-convict friends, John (Peter Sarsgaard) and Tom (Brendan Sexton III), learn Brandon’s secret, things change very quickly” (Google.com, 2019).

Janet

Background Information

Janet is a white gay/lesbian cisgender female, whose highest level of education is a masters degree and post graduate Educational Specialist (EdS). Janet currently resides in New Mexico and works in K-12 education. At the time of the interview, she was planning to retire and reported her income as between \$50,000 and \$74,999.

I became acquainted with Janet through my faculty supervisor who recommended I reach out to her regarding her work supporting transgender youth in the school system. My faculty supervisor had assisted Janet with trainings and presentations regarding the needs of LGBTQ youth within the school environment. He provided me with Janet's contact information and gave permission for me to disclose that he had recommended I reach out to her. When I called to inquire about her willingness to participate in the study, Janet agreed to participate, and we arranged to meet at a coffee shop to complete the interview.

Janet reports a rich history of advocacy for LGBTQ students, beginning with her participation an LGBTQ task force in K-12 education 15 years ago. Janet's involvement with the task force included assistance with identifying LGBTQ student's unmet needs, organizing trainings, developing LGBTQ affirming policy, and consulting with school administration regarding LGBTQ student's needs. She describes creating her own job description, as she attended to the needs of the students and administration in her school district. She says that she plans on retiring soon and is concerned about whether her predecessor will continue her advocacy work.

Some of Janet's major achievements as an advocate include establishing a Safe Zone program, creating transgender and gender-expansive affirming school policies, and infusing

school personnel trainings with gender identity education. The Safe Zone program consisted of a training which at least one teacher or administrator from each school was required to attend. Those adults who attend the training are labeled “safe” persons and provided a Safe Zone rainbow sticker to display in their office or classroom indicating that they are an LGBTQ affirming person. Safe Zone ensures that at least one school employee within each school has the education and skills necessary to effectively support LGBTQ students.

The transgender and gender-expansive affirming school policies Janet helped to create included specific instructions regarding how to address harassment of LGBTQ students, and a structured “Gender Support Plan” created to guide school administrators in their support of a student’s gender transition within the school environment. Janet’s final major achievement in the realm of LGBTQ advocacy was her infusion of gender identity education in the sexual harassment and bullying prevention training all school personnel are required to attend. Janet’s ability to generate change and create new programming left a legacy that will serve multiple generations of LGBTQ youth.

Interview Context

Janet and I completed the interview at a coffee shop located at the corner of a busy intersection in a metropolitan area. It was late in the afternoon, after Janet had completed a full day of work, but she seemed fully engaged and excited to discuss her advocacy efforts. The coffee shop was busy, and the background music loud, so Janet spoke directly into the microphone of my recorder for the majority of the interview. Although the noise made recording a bit difficult, it ensured that our conversation was inaudible to other patrons in the coffee shop, and Janet stated that the space provided adequate privacy. The interview lasted a total of 57 minutes.

Inductively Derived Categories & Related Themes

As a researcher, one of the primary lessons I learned through the interview, transcription, and analysis process was that each participant has a unique story regarding how they came to advocate for transgender and gender-expansive youth. That unique story is often tied to their own coming out process, and experience with friends, family, and members of their community. In order to understand this part of each participant's journey, all I needed to do was follow up my questions from the interview protocol with more summative reflections of what they had shared.

Janet's interview was one of the first three interviews to be completed and transcribed, thus I had not yet learned the importance of reflecting back my participant's statements. These reflections allowed my participants enough space to share what was essentially a painful complex narrative about coming out, experiencing rejection and ambivalence from others, and finding peace and healing by giving back through advocacy work. The categories and themes listed below are similar to those identified in previous participants' data but lack the inclusion of personal details and sense of vulnerability evident in some participant's narratives.

Personal Journey & Development as an Advocate

Janet is an expert in understanding the school as an institution, and system. Her work as an advocate blossomed out of her belief that LGBTQ students have a right to a learning environment free from discrimination and harassment. As an advocate within K-12 education, Janet describes working on both the individual and systems levels to assist LGBTQ students. She seems inspired by the "happy endings" her work has helped to create:

I love being the one that schools call to consult with when they are like "We don't know what to do". And I don't know that I would have the perfect answer, but helping them navigate the best that we can, because I feel like if I wasn't here to do it I'm not sure who

would do it. I feel good about having resources and I love to do that. And over the years it seems that different things that have come up, some that have had happy endings.

Learning to Strategize

Janet's advocacy evolved over time, as she learned how to effectively construct and propose LGBTQ affirming policy in her school district. She says that when proposing new policy, it is important to "be strategic and not go crazy". Specifically, Janet describes how she and the advocates who collaborated to create the affirming school policies were careful to ensure that they proposed the new policies at the appropriate time. She says that they recognized that in order to get the policies approved and implemented, they needed to propose the new policies when supportive school administrators were in power:

I knew I needed to go underground. I had been pushing too much and it was clear I needed to go underground. So once [the unsupportive school administrator] left and we got the interim, I very quietly – very quietly had called [the co-director of the resource center] and said you need to get the community together, now is the time to push if we want to get stuff through.

Janet also speaks to the importance of maintaining positive public relationships with school administrators. She describes reining in her passion for pursuing positive change for these youth in order to ensure that she treads lightly and is not "an activist in your face". Janet re-emphasizes how essential timing is when proposing new policy, as reflected in her statement about "waiting on the administration" to ensure that LGBTQ affirming programs such as Safe Zone are maintained:

I had gotten braver over the years, I was a lot more skittish in the beginning, but you know I'm an administrator, I'm not going to be an activist in your face, because PR

(Public Relations) is not going to go away. You've got to get organized, you've got to get in very carefully, because if you don't programs like Safe Zone are going to go away in a year or two. So our goal was to wait on the administration, so that it wouldn't get destroyed, and I think we've done a good job of that.

Strategy is necessary to prevent outright rejection of overtly LGBTQ affirming policy and programming. Janet points out how many individuals exposed to the current Safe Zone and other LGBTQ positive programs and trainings have asked why these programs are not offered at the elementary school level. Although she believes strongly that these programs ought to be offered in the elementary schools, she acknowledges that many people "start freaking out" when LGBTQ programming is offered to younger school age children. As an advocate pursuing positive change for these youth, Janet states that she initially focuses on LGBTQ positive policies and programming for older students, as she is less likely to meet opposition when proposing programs for this age group:

A lot of people asked when I was doing the trainings "Why is this not in elementary schools?". And I think that I would like to see it there, and there was a lot of discussion about it early on, but early on we were like we are not taking that on because that could make other things change because when you start looking at elementary that's when people start freaking out. So I hope that that is on the horizon

Another essential aspect of strategy in advocacy work is enabling persons belonging to the LGBTQ community to share their narrative and facilitate education about their community and identity. Janet describes the value of having LGBTQ individuals, or the parent(s) of an LGBTQ student who has been harassed, help facilitate the "tolerance curriculum". She reports some difficulty in gaining permission from the schools to allow her "to bring in a gay person",

but that when she is able to include a community member as part of the training, it greatly improves the delivery of the message:

Right, and a piece of that was a pilot that was called the Tolerance Curriculum. That's what they've done, it's been different things over the years, but it includes programs with the kids where they talk about different kinds of diversity. I remember the counselor who has mainly done it over the years, she brought in a guest speaker when it was time for the sexual orientation piece but she couldn't actually get permission to bring in a gay person. So it was the parent of a gay student who had been harassed; like how can you argue with a mom who is crying because her kid was beat up because they were gay?

The need for such strategy when pursuing positive social change for transgender and gender-expansive youth (and LGBTQ youth in general) brings to light the pervasive nature of oppression. Janet describes how affirming policy for this population is often responded to so negatively by the community, even though these policies are in no way detrimental to the experience of other students. When faced with the reality that so many members of the community oppose LGBTQ affirming programs and policies, advocates such as Janet must become creative in how they propose change.

Acts of Advocacy in the School Environment

Pursuing Systems-level Change

Transgender and gender-expansive youth face a variety of challenges in the school environment, from gendered harassment from peers, to unequal treatment from teachers and school administration. Janet describes multiple instances where – prior to the creation of the transgender and gender-expansive affirming policies – one school's administration would accommodate a transgender child (i.e. changing their name and gender marker in the school's

computer system and on educational materials), while another school's administration would refuse to make any changes saying "We can't do that".

Janet collaborated with multiple LGBTQ advocacy groups to address each of the aforementioned challenges faced by transgender and gender-expansive youth in the school environment. Regarding these efforts, Janet stated:

They had a bunch of really great ideas, and a lot of those required the principal's permission. But one of the people who came to me was John (name changed for privacy) who volunteered with [a non-profit entity], and we had talked about some programs, like the national Safe Zone program, which no one had heard about, we didn't have it here in New Mexico at all. And it was basically defining safe adults in the high school that a kid is in, that they could go to without being revictimized.

Collaborating with community members and other LGBTQ groups lead to the creation of the LGBT task force, transgender task force, and LGBT advisory council. These task forces/councils worked together to generate affirming policies and programs, to include the aforementioned affirming policies, and Safe Zone program. Janet describes these groups as identifying a school district in San Francisco with "model" policies for accommodating and supporting transgender and gender-expansive youth. She states that she and the other task force members borrowed from this school district's policy, and from "resolution agreements" from cases where schools had failed to support transgender and gender expansive youth:

I will say that there was a third incarnation of that community group. When we had a change in administration, my supervisor and I had created what we called the LGBT advisory council, and it was made of a lot of people and a lot of community members. So it was a subcommittee of that. And we lifted a ton of it from the San Francisco model

program. So we took a ton out of it. It was basically San Francisco that operationalized [transgender affirming policy]. And we also took a lot from Office of Civil Rights (OCR), a couple of resolution agreements with different schools who weren't doing what they needed to do. And we just took a ton from their resolution agreements because we figured, obviously we couldn't be going wrong if we were taking it from OCR agreements. So, that's why it was so thorough.

Janet created policy by collaborating with other advocates, and referencing what other schools did well, and where other schools failed. Her approach emphasized the role of strategy in ensuring that the policies were "thorough" and could make it through the processes necessary to be implemented at the district level. Janet describes the importance of creating formal policy to protect transgender and gender-expansive youth, stating that policy "backs" the actions of supportive administrators and prevents unsupportive school personnel from "running out" affirming staff:

I think we have a lot of supportive administrators, but when there was no policy backing them that really left them very vulnerable, because then if you have communities of people who are not supportive or want to run you out, they can do that. And so really we need it not just for the trans kids and families but we also needed it for the protection of the administrators so that they can say I'm following procedures.

The Influence of Persons in Power. Janet references how the attitude of persons in power within the school impact her ability to implement new LGBTQ affirming policies and programming. She provides one clear cut example when describing how she and her committee were unable to successfully pass new LGBTQ affirming school policies for years because of an unsupportive superintendent:

So [the task force and council] met for about two and a half years, to come up with some policies and procedures. And we met with the superintendent at the time, that wasn't very supportive at all. So our hands were really tied, and we couldn't do all of the things we really wanted. But we came up with the [affirming policy], with what we needed to do, but the superintendent changed it at the last minute, and then took it in front of the board. And the way that he changed it was to have everything default to the birth certificate. Okay then, well there went all of that work!

The superintendent's power within the hierarchy of school administrators enabled him to prevent the implementation of policies and programs based upon his own personal beliefs. For Janet, understanding the superintendent's ability to influence the creation of policy lead her to utilize strategies such as timing and careful selection of language used in policy. She describes waiting for a supportive administration before submitting the current version of LGBTQ affirming policy:

Since then of course we've got a new administration who has for the most part been really really supportive. And so a couple of years ago we finally were able to put through our draft of the [transgender and gender-expansive affirming policies].

Janet also describes using language with a "broader context" to ensure that the policy is not perceived as only benefiting LGBTQ persons, but instead protects members of multiple protected groups:

You don't just go after sexual orientation or gender identity because you are going to have problems. That was the lesson, you can't go about it that way. It's got to be in a broader context. Whether it be disability, or race, or whatever.

Pursuing Change at the Individual-level

When asked about memorable instances of advocacy work (a specific question from the interview protocol), Janet described the first transgender youth she worked with as a district administrator. The child was in the fourth grade when she “starting to talk with her mom” about her female identity. Janet says that the girl was “starting to wear necklaces, and do her hair, and wear nail polish” when she and her mom approached the school administration about how to handle the girl’s gender transition in school.

Janet states that the mother was “super supportive” of the young girl’s gender identity and desire to socially transition and “wasn’t totally unreasonable and understood how schools are too. She walked a really fine line”. Janet describes working with the girl and her mother to determine when would be the best time for the girl to socially transition, and whether the girl wished to remain at the same school during the transition. Janet states that she assisted the girl and her mother when they elected to transfer to a middle school that was a better “fit” during the transition. Janet also acted as a consultant for the school’s administration, describing an occasion where the school called to ask about gender specific accommodations during “overnight trips”.

In the instance described above, Janet acted on an individual level to advocate for a young transgender girl. Janet’s advocacy for this child was essential, as the school system had not yet created policies to ensure she received the support she needed during social transition. In this instance, individual level advocacy consisted of validating the individual child and her affirming parent, ensuring that her learning environment was safe and supportive, and helping her transfer schools to meet this need, while also supporting school personnel who interacted with the child to enable them to provide appropriate care.

Resources within the School Environment for Transgender and Gender-Expansive Youth.

Educators are becoming increasingly aware of the diversity of gender identities, and of gender

identity development. Janet describes how she has witnessed teachers at the “elementary level” who cultivate curiosity in the classroom regarding gender, and promote acceptance and celebration of differences:

So I think that kids are maybe younger and younger, talking about pronouns at the elementary level. I think a lot of it is just really wonderful, particularly that we have teachers at the early elementary level already talking about it. That it's more about exploring gender and it's okay to be you and whatever differences make you you. That's our prerogative.

Teachers who cultivate curiosity about gender and enable children to explore this aspect of their identity act as an important resource for transgender and gender-expansive (and LGBTQ children in general) students. These adults enable safe conversation, and model acceptance of all identities. Teachers and other school personnel may also complete the Safe Zone training, created and implemented by Janet in her school district, and become a formally recognized “safe adult” in the school.

Other resources for transgender and gender-expansive students include the Genders and Sexualities Alliances (GSA, formerly known as Gay Straight Alliance), “safe place” lunch groups, PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), and local agencies that serve the transgender and gender-expansive community. Janet states that while the GSA and lunch groups are available on school campus, PFLAG and local agencies are often accessed through the help of a school counselor.

A lot of the schools have GSAs, Gay Straight Alliances. Now if you have a Gay Straight Alliance in the district then it falls under the schools clubs so they have to have a sponsor and they have to have bylaws. So not every year do we have a group of kids who is up to

do all of that, because sometimes they are not a true GSA sometimes they are more of a lunch group maybe if a teacher is wanting to do something then they will have a safe place for kids to come in and have lunch and do whatever activities they do.

Janet states that due to their status as minors, students' ability to access resources and support is limited based upon whether or not their parents consent to the student receiving such support. She describes how some parents have positive affirming responses to their child's involvement in school resources, while others demand that their child be refused such resources. Janet reflects on parent responses to their child's access of school resources for LGBTQ students and their allies in the excerpt below:

We have had counselors who have tried to access resources and help support parents who are trying to learn, but it's hard because there's that parent that might make you angry because they want nothing to do with it, but then you have that parent who comes in who says, "Oh my gosh this is not my world! I'm so new to this I don't know anything!", so we hook them up with a resource. It could be PFLAG, we've done a lot now with John [name changed for privacy] and we have a lot of people at [local non-profit agencies], so doing that. I've definitely had calls through the years – I remember at one of the high schools the mom called the GSA sponsor and said "I just really don't want my kid in that group", and I said "Well I'm not going to kick the kid out of the group", so what the administration said was "Well then we need to call her and let her know". And she ended up pulling the kid out of school.

Janet describes the high stakes for LGBTQ kids whose parents fail to accept their identity and/or revoke support upon learning of their child's identity. She describes how parents' ability to influence their child's access to resources due to their minor status makes things "really hard",

and how she gives parents “a lot of statistics” about the effects of family rejection on youth’s health. In the quote below, Janet references the Family Acceptance Project (Ryan, 2009) results which indicate that children whose caregivers are ambivalent or rejecting of their child’s gender identity have a significantly increased rate of suicide attempts, and substance use. She describes how parents and caregivers who reject their child’s identity and/or refuse them access to resources at school, place their child’s safety at risk:

So it’s really hard because the parents have the final say so, and so part of it is we really want to support these kids. I mean, kids die, I give a lot of statistics, because you may have your own beliefs or whatever and that’s fine but we’ve got to keep kids safe, because kids die and get hooked on drugs. What a difference it makes when your family supports you.

Sociopolitical Context

The Trump Administration

Parents’ attitudes towards their transgender or gender-expansive child directly impacts the health and wellbeing of that child. The social and political context in which children are imbedded also directly impacts their experience, both through their experiences of discrimination, and access to resources. Janet speaks to the influence of sociopolitical context on the needs of transgender and gender-expansive youth in the school environment in her school district:

Well it was really helpful and certainly we were pretty ready to go about what we wanted on the [affirming policy], but what helped was when Obama expanded Title IX it was the perfect time as it supported what we were doing. And then conversely when Trump rescinded that, everybody has been kind of waiting like “Well are the courts going to tell

us to stop following the [affirming policies]?", and I keep saying "They are not going to tell us to stop doing it, they are just going to say you can do what you want now". But I think in a lot of people's brains we might be told to stop doing it. I don't think that's going to happen, but people are concerned and worried that that is going to happen.

Janet explains how the Department of Justice Title IX interpretation for treatment of transgender and gender-expansive youth in education, created under President Obama, supported her district's transgender and gender-expansive affirming policies. She states that this guidance provided federal-level support for LGBTQ affirming policy and programming, so that when President Trump's administration rescinded this guidance, many allies and advocates were fearful that they would be required to discontinue their LGBTQ affirming practices. In the excerpt below, Janet describes how she too was "nervous after the election" as she was unsure about how the new administration's stance on LGBTQ rights would influence people's response to her:

Frankly while I was doing the school trainings this year I got really nervous after the election because I don't know how the groups are going to be now, and how I'm going to do the trainings if people are going to be more obstinate and more difficult, and really they weren't. I mean sure there were some of them that didn't agree with it, but for the most part they were polite and kept quiet.

Summary of Inductively Derived Categories & Related Themes

Three major categories were evident in Janet's data, including "personal journey and development as an advocate", "acts of advocacy", and "sociopolitical context". Each of these categories contained a multitude of school specific themes, such as "learning to strategize",

“pursuing system’s level and individual level change”, and “resources in the school environment”.

Advocacy Artifacts

Janet appears to define advocacy artifacts as those resources that are useful to transgender and gender-expansive youth, their families, and their allies. She recommends local resources available to both the students and staff she works with. Table 13 outlines the advocacy artifacts recommended by Janet, to include the title, type, and a summary description of item from the source.

Table 13
Advocacy Artifacts - Janet

Artifact Title	Artifact Type	Summary Description from Source
Common Bond	Resource for support groups for LGBTQ community members	“Here at the Common Bond New Mexico Foundation, our mission is to strengthen the LGBTQ community of New Mexico through programs and partnerships that serve at-risk sectors of the LGBTQ population” (Common Bond New Mexico, 2019).
Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)	Resource for support groups for family, friends, and allies	“Uniting people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) with families, friends, and allies, PFLAG is committed to advancing equality through its mission of support, education, and advocacy” (PFLAG, 2019).
WelcomingSchools.org	Online source for educational resources for educating children about LGBTQ identities	“HRC [Human Rights Campaign] Foundation's Welcoming Schools is the nation's premier professional development program providing training and resources to elementary school educators to welcome diverse families, create LGBTQ and gender inclusive schools, prevent bias-based bullying, and support transgender and non-binary students” (WelcomingSchools.org, 2019).

Helen

Background Information

Helen is a white gay/lesbian cisgender female, whose pronouns are she/her. She was born in the 1950s, and has a masters degree in education. Helen reports working for the U.S. government in the 1970s and early 1980s, before beginning her career as a public school teacher in 1982. Working in the public schools, Helen states that she “didn’t announce” her identity as lesbian, but that “I sure couldn’t deny it”. Helen describes how she valued being authentic and open with her students and co-workers, stating “when I took my teaching job, I said to myself that I would never deny who I was to a kid who didn’t know the truth”. Her visibility as a gay/lesbian woman played a pivotal role in her development as an advocate, and the types of advocacy efforts she pursued as an educator and community member.

Helen recently retired from her career as a public school teacher, and now maintains a leadership role in the non-profit industry. She describes her current annual income as between \$50,000 and \$74,999, and resides in New Mexico with her partner. In addition to her leadership role, Helen also collaborates with other transgender and gender-expansive affirming non-profit agencies and schools, and the local school district’s LGBT and transgender task forces.

Helen and I became acquainted after a participant recommended I reach out to Helen for support during my own advocacy work for my transgender daughter. I met with Helen in February of 2017 regarding my advocacy efforts as a parent, and kept in touch until I began my dissertation study. Once I received IRB approval, I contacted Helen to ask if she would be willing to engage in an audio recorded interview regarding her advocacy for transgender youth, and she readily agreed.

Interview Context

Helen and I completed the interview at a Starbucks coffee shop in a residential area near her home. We met during the month of June, in the early afternoon on a weekday. Business at

the coffee shop seemed slow, and Helen and I found a table in a corner away from the entrance/exits, and bathroom. Helen indicated that she felt the space was adequately private for the interview, and she appeared to speak openly (without speaking in hushed tones or seeming to censor her statements) about her experience. She completed the demographic survey and referenced several advocacy artifacts, with the interview lasting a total of 58 minutes.

Inductively Derived Categories & Related Themes

Over the course of the interview, Helen spoke to a variety of broad-based themes, from a macro-level discussion of sociopolitical context to sharing about her experience as a lesbian teacher who was “out” about her identity in a less-than-affirming school environment. Identifying themes and categories required the piecing together of points of discussion that spoke to similar concepts, while ensuring that quotes maintained their original context. The coding process resulted in the identification of three major categories, to include: 1) Helen’s development as an advocate, 2) her description of the sociopolitical context within the school environment, and macro-level sociopolitical variables that impacted LGBTQ students in the school setting, and 3) specific acts of advocacy.

Development as an Advocate

Visibility as an LGBTQ Community Member

When Helen decided to become a school teacher, she says that she wanted to be honest and authentic with her students about who she is as a person – to include her identity as a lesbian. She describes multiple memorable instances during her early career, in the 1980s-1990s, where she experienced overt harassment from students and discrimination from school administration because of her LGBTQ identity. One particularly impactful experience occurred when Helen’s

students began discussing the AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) crisis after watching a news clip about the issue in class:

We had Channel 1 news in the classroom, and Anderson Cooper was the first correspondent for Channel 1. He did a story about the AIDS crisis, and I had a student who was kind of a provocateur, so when it was over he said, "Well, what do you think about AIDS?". I said, "Well, I think it's unfortunate", a very text book answer. He then said, "So what do you think about gay people?", and I'm sure there was a long pause. I had never actually come out as gay. People kind of knew. I was the math teacher. So, I didn't have a lot of opportunity to discuss that.

But anyway, I said, "Well I am a gay person and I think it's ok", then I said, "does anybody want to ask any questions?", because I'm not just going to say that and then go onto the next thing. We spent about 30 minutes, maybe not even that long and I did have parents call to complain.

Although Helen describes the experience in class as mostly positive, she says that the response of some student's parents was negative. When the parents called to complain about Helen disclosing that she was gay, Helen describes a lack of support from her school's administration:

Our assistant principal, I told her the very same day that the conversation happened in the class, and she said, "That's really great. Good for you." Then after she got calls from parents, she wrote me up on my end-of-year evaluation saying that I shared too much personal information with my students.

Helen reports meeting with the principal and utilizing the support of the teacher's union to self-advocate for her right to be authentic about her identity and her life experience, and to

have the write-up removed from her end-of-year evaluation. She says that in her meeting with the principal, she framed her decision to be authentic with her students as a “teachable moment”:

The principal was Hispanic, and I said, “So if something came up in class about being an old New Mexico family or something like that, and students wanted to talk more about it, you don’t think it would be appropriate to have a conversation? Or, I’m Jewish, so what if someone said, ‘What does that mean?’ and I spent a little bit of time talking about who the Jews were, wouldn’t you think that would be me adding to a teachable moment? A teachable moment and helping my students understand the larger world?”

Helen states that the write-up was removed from her record, but that the administration never formally admitted any wrongdoing or outright discrimination. Despite these adverse experiences, Helen remained steadfast in her resolution to be authentic with her students and be visible as a member of the LGBTQ community. She describes meeting an LGBTQ person and understanding their experience as essential to helping students accept LGBTQ identities. Helen designates her visibility as an LGBTQ person as a form of advocacy that cultivates understanding in her students, and aligns with her values as an educator and advocate:

I think it all started with me as a young lesbian high school teacher, wanting to be supportive of the LGBTQ kids that were in school. In terms of specifically advocating for trans and gender conforming students, like so many things, when you know somebody it just changes your perspective and your ability to really understand.

Motivation & Inspiration to Advocate

Helen began her career as an educator with the belief that she must model authenticity and openness for all of her students, but particularly for those students who may have LGBTQ identities. She says that her choice to be visible is in and of itself an act of advocacy. That she is

advocating for movement away from heteronormative curriculum and social mores by allowing these students to see her as a successful happy LGBTQ person:

We all just want to be ourselves, and see ourselves in the world around us, and a teacher is a profound way to see yourself – to have yourself reflected in a positive way.

Helen describes witnessing non-binary youth live their truth as “powerful” and inspiring. She seems to find motivation for her advocacy work in these young people’s ability to challenge the culturally prescribed gender binary:

I think this idea of being non-binary and totally rejecting the gender binary is so powerful. That’s one of the things I want to say to the young people that are doing that - how much I love what they are doing. I see those young people as being at the forefront of the idea that gender has become a different thing in our culture. I mean it is an important thing, I don’t think we can get rid of it, and maybe we don’t want to get rid of it because it’s part of some other meaning that happens for humans. I love that some of them are so brave in saying. “I’m not buying into any of that. I don’t want to have anything to do with any of that. Don’t even make me choose a gender. Why are you making me?”. That is something that gives me a lot of joy and hope. It’s just seeing them being and really changing things. Being a part of changing that part of our culture.

Becoming an Advocate: “That galvanized me in a certain way”

As she explored the intersection between her identity as an advocate, LGBTQ community member, and educator, Helen attended the national “Creating Change” conference. She says that it was at this “LGBTQ conference” that she experienced “one of those moments in your life that changes you”:

[The Creating Change conference] is pretty much on the radical end of the LGBT rights. They have different tracks and there was a trans track, and the trans people at the conference just totally took over and disrupted the keynote in a really profound expression of their need to be heard and seen and supported. This was really a profound moment for me, because this was not in my wheel house. I would say that probably galvanized me in a certain way.

The conference task force is pretty much on the left edge of the movement, and I have to hand it to the conference organizers, because they let it go. Nobody tried to harass people or say "you can't do that". It was kind of like "OK!" and they took the stage, they took the stage and nobody stopped them. In fact, the audience actually cheered. It was just one of those moments.

The transgender community's act of taking the stage at the Creating Change conference seemed to demonstrate this portion of the LGBTQ community's lack of voice, and need to be heard. Helen experienced this demonstration as life changing in that it showed her a division within her community of which she was previously unaware. She also describes this experience as evidence of the need for people to step up and be visible, to make their voices heard, and demand change.

Transgender is the New Gay

In providing the historical background that preceded her experience at the Creating Change conference, Helen describes how the transgender community has historically been dismissed by the gay and lesbian communities. She then makes the case that today's transgender community is mistreated and oppressed in a way that parallels the treatment of the gay

community in previous decades. Helen seems driven by her empathy for the experience of the transgender community today in the quote below:

I mean one of my arguments, especially for somebody my age who's a lesbian or an older gay man, is "Do you remember what they said about us? Do you remember how they said that we were sick, and that we didn't know what we wanted? That we were mentally ill? Do you remember all that? It's the same thing, it's just 30 years later, and the transgender community is a new group of people. They're oppressed because they're not acting exactly the way the culture says they should. Now they're being targeted. It's the same as when we wanted to love who we loved and not have anybody tell us that there's something wrong with it". We knew, I knew in my core that there was nothing wrong with it, and they do too.

Sociopolitical Context & the School Environment

Heteronormativity in the School Environment

The parallels drawn between the treatment of the gay and lesbian community during the past few decades, and the treatment of transgender persons today highlights the importance of understanding the sociopolitical context of LGBTQ issues. Helen describes the school environment as steeped in "heteronormative" social and political norms. From prom to sports, the public education system is heavily gendered and acknowledges only the male/female gender binary. Per Helen, schools need to show young people that "there is another way to be in the world":

School is so heteronormative. Of course, I didn't even know what that word was in 1982, but from the git go I was super shocked every day at how prom and everything that happened in the school environment was so gender-based. I have always been looking for

ways for kids to get the message that there is another way to be in the world and that there's nothing wrong with it.

Helen describes her advocacy work within the schools as aiming to show students that there is another way of being, one that does not prescribe to the male-female gender binary. She views herself as a “troublemaker”, as she consistently challenges the school administration's reinforcement of black and white gender roles through the support of activities such as “powderpuff” football.

LGBTQ Discrimination

Helen reports that school administration often fail to hold both students and staff accountable for discriminatory acts and statements made towards LGBTQ community members. She describes instances where she was called a “faggot” and other offensive slurs during class sessions by students. Regarding one specific instance, Helen says, “In the middle of class he screamed it out. And he received zero punishment. He got moved to another teacher's class. That was it”.

During the interview, Helen seemed to use humor to deflect her emotional experience related to these overt experiences of hate and discrimination. When describing another instance, Helen stated:

One of the funniest things that ever happened was during the second or third year I taught. A kid wrote on one of the desks, in really angry scroll, “[Helen] is a lesbian”. And in that angry scroll “Bitch doesn't shave her legs.” It was like, I don't care if she is lesbian, but if she doesn't shave her legs that's what's really buggin' me.

As an advocate who values visibility as a means of showing her students that LGBTQ identities are valid and valued, Helen seems to have paid a high price for her efforts. She

describes experiences where she was subjected to public hate speech, and even evaluated negatively on a professional level for allowing discussion of LGBTQ identities in class. The school context appears to present a unique challenge to advocates like Helen, as the environment remains entrenched in heteronormative expectations, with administrators and staff frequently working to censor any deviations from the heterosexual “norm” and male/female gender binary.

Affirming LGBTQ Identity in the School Environment

Helen points out that students typically spend more time at school than they do with their families, thus experiencing school as a safe and affirming learning environment is critical to their growth and development. She states that school personnel ought to be required to cultivate this safe and affirming environment, which includes honoring the identities of their students.

Teachers who fail to acknowledge a child’s gender pronouns and stated name should “not be able to keep their job”. Similar to helping professionals, school personnel should leave their personal beliefs and preferences at the door when they enter the school. School administrators must model affirming respectful behavior, and consistently require this of their staff:

There has to be a consistent message of, “You can think whatever you want about people who are not of the same religion you are, or who don’t believe, or don’t have the same values as you. You can think whatever you want, but the minute you enter school grounds you have to put all of that aside”. And I think a lot of people don’t get that or are not willing to take that position, or to set the boundary so clearly that if this isn’t for you then maybe you shouldn’t be a teacher.

Helen provides an example of a school known for its affirming progressive culture, and outlines their positive policies and practices. Helen states that the school provides a non-heteronormative space, as diversity of sexual and affectual orientation and gender identity are

met with “joyous support”. In the excerpt below, Helen describes how teachers and staff perpetuate the school’s diversity affirming culture, and how students experience it:

[A local school] is just this incredible place where the school culture is such that students call teachers out if they’re not using the right pronouns and if they’re being inappropriate. [At this school] everybody’s about everybody, and almost everybody is onboard. Most of them are onboard with supporting LGBT students and each other. And what does that feel like for the students? They had a panel of their students and they were talking about how incredible it was for them. One particular thing a student talked about was how they thought that it’s really obvious that teachers considered their own sexual orientation and identity in a much more open way, and that allowed folks to think things that they would have never thought about in a different environment. Just because it was so ok to do that.

National Level Political Context: Influence on Transgender and Gender-Expansive Youth

Although the majority of Helen’s statements focused upon the experience of transgender and gender-expansive youth in the school environment, she also spoke to the influence of national and state level politics. Helen describes how “that national noise is not unimportant, it does damage”. She says that New Mexico is an “oasis” compared to some states, as the state has “some really vocal advocates”. She also described how some “older” LGBTQ community members have had the life experience necessary to see the cyclical nature of politics, but that LGBTQ youth may experience discriminatory policy or political statements as more disheartening:

Some of us who are older may have the resiliency to say, “Well that’s their problem” but when you’re sixteen I think that’s harder. The Trump administration is not supporting the transgender student rights guidance that Obama had originally supported, and is taking

the LGBT question off of the Older American survey, which is part of the way that money is allocated.

Acts of Advocacy

Collaborating with Other Advocates

No matter the influence of political events or attitudes, advocates such as Helen have the ability to pursue change through collaboration with other advocates. Helen describes working with an advocate from a school district and non-profit agencies that serve the transgender and gender-expansive community to help create a best practices to support students who are transgender or gender-expansive. These “best practices” evolved into the affirming school policies and gender support plan, and establishment of the Safe Zone program within the local school district. Helen describes how this collaboration in advocacy resulted in the development of policy:

I have always been connected to [an advocate] at [a local school district], and there was this effort to try to work with [the school district] to make a recommendation of best practices. So I was working with [the advocate from the school district] and [the director of a local non-profit agency] and we were all trying to learn how to move that forward. So, advocating on a policy level, all of that was kind of happening in some ways at the same time. I don't remember what year Safe Zone started, but we gave this idea a little bit of structure, this idea that we need a program at school for LGBT kids to identify as safe and supportive, and get the word out to them and decide how we would support them. So, I worked on that from the get go and I had a job after a while where I was not a classroom teacher anymore, I had a lot of freedom at that time, and [the advocate from

the school district] was my boss. She would happen to let me, as long as I was getting my job done, do things on behalf of the LGBT students.

Strategy: Talking Points for School Personnel

While collaborating with the advocate from the local school district and the director of a local non-profit agency, Helen identified an unmet need for training with school administration. Helen stated that she realized that school principals were being caught off guard when they received calls from parents asking about transgender or gender-expansive students. She then discussed this area of need with the advocates, and co-created a training concerning “talking points” for school principals. These talking points provided principals with informed responses for parents or community members who contacted the school with questions or comments about transgender and gender-expansive students. Per Helen:

One of the things that [the advocate from the school district] and I were talking about was if we give principals the right talk, they do much better at ensuring teachers do the right thing because they don't get caught off guard by a parent calling and asking questions when they don't know what to say.

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) (2016) *Schools in Transition: A Guide for Supporting Transgender Students in K-12 Schools* provides one example of “talking points” for school personnel and administration regarding transgender and gender-expansive issues in the school environment. These talking points provide pre-scripted responses to numerous possible questions or negative comments. The approach taken in these talking points enables the school to “serve as a buffer to protect [transgender and gender-expansive] students and their families” (p. 17), and are accessible, as they are available to the public free of charge through the HRC website.

Visibility as an LGBTQ Community Member

In the beginning of her career as an educator, Helen says that she was not “out” about her identity as lesbian. She describes being open to discussing her LGBTQ identity, but that she had not yet been confronted with a situation or individual student that allowed her to speak about the topic of sexual orientation. She says that her first experience meeting an LGBTQ student was when she attended a guest presentation where—during the speaker’s question and answer portion—a young man disclosed to the guest presenter that he was gay, and that there was no one at his high school who was gay:

I went to hear this person speak, and when she was taking questions, a young man stood up in the back of the room and said, “I go to ___ high school and there isn’t anybody gay there.” Which is the school where I taught, so I stood up and said excitedly, “I teach at ___ high school!”. So he was the first LGBTQ student I knew of. I didn’t have to have a LGBTQ kid in my school in order for me to be out [as a lesbian], but after I had this kid expressing to me clearly...I especially felt like I needed to be open about it. So we started a group and called it a support group, where we met once a week at lunch. I remember I went to my principal—who I knew would not be supportive—and I didn’t ask for permission. I just said, “I thought you should know that I am doing this support group”. I knew what he could or couldn’t let me do.

Helen describes hearing this young student’s statement and feeling compelled to inform the student that she, an educator at his school, was in fact gay. She states that she felt a sense of obligation to “be open” about this aspect of her identity. Helen says that being visible as gay to her students is essential, as it provides LGBTQ students with the opportunity to see how a person who is LGBTQ can be have a career, a partner, a family, that they can be successful. Helen uses

the analogy of the “window and the mirror” to illustrate the role of the teacher providing one model of lived experience for students, and the need for curriculum that speaks to the experience of all students:

I know one of the little things I have come to value over my years, an analogy that I just love, is the idea of the window and the mirror. Every young person needs two things to help develop a positive self-awareness, the first is that you want to see yourself in the curriculum. You need to see people like you doing things and being effective and important. The second is that you want to look out of the window and see all of the differences, that there's all this other great stuff that isn't you, but it's just as good and as interesting. I think if we are ever going to get to a point where education eliminates some of these barriers for students who aren't white or heteronormative, then it's going to be by helping students see as much of the universe, of their peers who might be different from them, as they can through the curriculum.

The concept of the “window and the mirror” described by Helen was originally described by Style (1988) in her critical analysis of the culturally one-sided curriculum taught in schools. Style (1988) utilized the analogy of the window and mirror to illustrate how curriculum ought to reflect the experiences of all students, rather than only the white middle-class heterosexual “norm”.

Summary of Inductively Derived Categories & Related Themes

The coding of Helen's interview transcripts resulted in the identification of three primary categories. These categories described Helen's development as an advocate, her experience and perspective regarding the impact of sociopolitical context within the school environment, and specific acts of advocacy she engaged in. A variety of themes emerged in relation to these

categories, to include her visibility as an LGBTQ community member, her motivation and inspiration to advocate for LGBTQ students, the role of sociopolitical context in the experience of LGBTQ students in the school environment, and how Helen utilized collaboration with other advocates to produce positive changes within the school environment for LGBTQ students.

Advocacy Artifacts

Helen seemed to define advocacy artifacts as those resources that provide information about the LGBTQ rights movement, or provide access to school specific resources (e.g. information for infusing school curriculum with LGBTQ information). Table 14 outlines the advocacy artifacts recommended by Helen, to include the title, type, and a summary description of item from the source.

Table 14
Advocacy Artifacts - Helen

Artifact Title	Artifact Type	Summary Description from Source
Facebook, Twitter	A tool for disseminating information, and for announcing events to only LGBTQ community members	None available. Helen listed Facebook and Twitter as social media platforms that she has found particularly helpful for disseminating information about events for members of the LGBTQ community. She states that social media enables her to share information privately with LGBTQ organizations, and their members, and prevents event information from becoming publicly available.

Lana

Background Information

Lana is a White nonbinary, bisexual, pansexual, primarily queer identifying individual. Lana's pronouns are they and them, and in addition to their marginalized sexual orientation and gender identity, they report experiences of oppression related to their disability. They have a

bachelors degree, and currently live below the poverty threshold making less than \$20,000 per year. Lana currently lives in New Mexico and works in a K-12 school setting.

Lana's experience as an advocate began when they were in high school, when at the age of 15 they helped to co-found a support group for LGBTQ youth. They describe the youth group as being held at a church "so that kids could tell their parents that they were going to a church group" and not "out" themselves to their parents or caregivers. Lana describes continuing to work with LGBTQ youth while a senior in high school, when they became a board member of an LGBTQ advocacy organization. Upon graduating from high school and starting their undergraduate education, Lana became involved with the university's LGBTQ organizations, and began volunteering as a panelist as a member of the speakers' bureau for a local non-profit agency. While an advocate and activist working with these organizations, Lana says that their advocacy efforts were focused on promoting the health and wellbeing of all LGBTQ youth.

Lana describes deriving their motivation for advocacy work from their experience growing up in a household where their caregivers were affirming of their queer and non-binary identity. Growing up in the late 1980s and 1990s, Lana's refusal to conform to the gender binary was embraced by their caregivers, and this affirming experience motivated them to "help make spaces safer for other [LGBTQ] people". It was through their involvement with a non-profit entity that Lana and I became acquainted. During the recruiting phase of this study, I reached out to Lana and their partner, and both agreed to participate.

Interview Context

The interview occurred at a small coffee shop in a residential area, near the participant's residence. We met later in the day, after Lana had gotten off of work. Lana seemed comfortable in the space and spoke openly about all aspects of their experience and their identity. Although

Lana and I were seated out of the way, with our table against a wall, there were other patrons in the coffee shop who may have been able to hear some portions of the interview. Lana stated that they felt comfortable, and that despite the close quarters they felt that the space provided adequate privacy.

Throughout the interview Lana often shifted in their chair, and readjusted their arm, which was immobilized in a sling and cast. Lana explained that they had experienced a “flare up” related to their disability and also injured their wrist and elbow. They stated that it was this injury and other disabling symptoms related to their disability that lead them to reschedule their initial interview with me. I experienced a deep sense of gratitude for Lana’s willingness to participate in the interview – which lasted a total of 102 minutes – despite the pain and discomfort they were experiencing at that time.

Inductively Derived Categories & Related Themes

Through the coding process, three primary categories were identified: “Development as an advocate”, “acts of advocacy”, and “sociopolitical context”. Lana’s unique experience as a queer, non-binary, pansexual, bisexual individual existing in an “in-between space” influenced the themes that emerged from the interview data. The themes that emerged from Lana’s data attended to their experience as a diverse person growing up in a progressive household that was accepting of their identities, and their current experience living in a larger sociopolitical context that is characterized by discrimination and hostile acts towards the LGBTQ community. The most prevalent theme that arose in multiple categories was that of “visibility” as an advocate and activist. These categories and themes are further explored in the text that follows.

Development as an Advocate

Inspiration and Motivation to Advocate

Activism and Diversity within the Family. Lana describes growing up in a “pretty political” family, and “making my first picket sign when I was eight”. They state that their family “definitely exists on the left”, and so were affirming of their non-binary non-heterosexual presentation as a youth. Regarding their upbringing, Lana states:

My dad's a little less left than my mom, but conversations about politics and social inequality and things like that have always been part of my life. My stepdad is a sociology professor and he came in as a refugee from Afghanistan as a kiddo. So those conversations exist in the household. My mom's a musician and grew up pretty poor. Those realities have always been part of the conversation.

They describe their family's openness to discuss topics such as social inequality and political climate as contributing to their motivation to advocate for disenfranchised populations. Lana's family's open attitude towards gender also enabled them to express their gender in non-heteronormative ways. Lana describes coming out to their family as queer when they were “9 or 10”, and that “getting into queer activism work was sort of just a very fluid segue” from their experience as a child.

Own Identity and Experience as a Queer/Trans Youth. Having grown up as a non-binary youth, Lana reports seeing a trend in the ages of young people coming out as transgender or gender-expansive. They state that the “age is getting lower for a lot of people and not changing for other people depending on their reality”. Lana seems to attribute younger children's ability to come out about their transgender or gender-expansive identity to whether their “reality” or environment is conducive to the expression of such identities. They describe children who live in households where they are introduced to the diversity of LGBTQ identities and where

differences are celebrated as having the “reality” necessary to explore and embrace their identities.

Lana states that as a non-binary queer youth, they did not experience gender dysphoria as relates to their bodily presentation. Instead, Lana says that their “transness...played a huge part in my experience of the world and how other people understand and interpret me”. Their socialization and childhood seemed to cultivate a sense of comfortability in their body and their identities, a comfortability that was challenged by society as they aged and became more autonomous. Lana describes how their identities contributed to their desire to help others, and early involvement in advocacy efforts for LGBTQ youth.

Coming Out and Becoming an Activist. Coming out as queer and non-binary was an “easy” experience for Lana because of the affirming environment in which they grew up. Lana says that having such a positive coming out experience has left them feeling that it’s their responsibility to “make the environment safer” for others:

In the grand scheme of things, I had such an easy coming out experience that I’ve always felt like it’s my responsibility to make the environment safer for people who it isn’t safe for, because I have this privilege and I’m not unsafe because of my queerness. I guess that’s part of what led me to activism as a youth, because I had kids in the youth group that met at the church, that the reason they met in the church was so kids could tell their parents that they were going to a church group and not be outed.

Lana describes their coming out experience as “privileged” and says that interacting with kids who were in less safe environments, who could not be open about their LGBTQ identity, motivated them to pursue change for LGBTQ youth. Despite this privilege, Lana says that they still experience hardship related to the “larger social climate”, but that their positive “home life”

and “friends” and “life at school” continues to inspire them to make life better for others in the LGBTQ community:

There are things about being queer that are hard, obviously, especially related to the larger social climate. But my own personal social climate and my home life and friends and my life at school, it never felt unsafe to be who I was. And I am privileged in that. So I feel like because of that privilege, it's important to support my community.

Intersections of Oppression: Visibility as Queer, Non-Binary, and Disabled. Experiencing disability alongside their non-binary and queer identities, Lana says that the less visible their disability and non-binary and queer identities, the greater their experience of privilege. They state that as they have started taking testosterone as a medical intervention to treat their disability and are open to developing the secondary sex characteristics of the male gender. They state that as they've become more visibly “trans” they've experienced more frequent experiences of oppression:

I exist in so many privileged spaces that allow my queerness and transness to not actually be that large of a marginalizing factor. As I've become more visibly Trans, that's become less true, and that's been an interesting experience. As my disability has gotten worse, that too has changed that experience.

Acts of Advocacy

Visibility in the School Environment

Working within the school system, an environment steeped in heteronormativity, Lana says that they choose to be visible to provide “kiddos who need those role models” with an adult who shares their identity. Lana says that at this time, their visibility as a “trans” and queer adult is their primary form of advocacy. They state that since they've been out in a visible way about

their identity, more students have come to them asking questions about their appearance and identity:

I've been making more of an effort to find concise ways of answering. The question normally is, "are you a boy or girl?". My answer has been, "no, I'm not either".

Sometimes that elicits further questions, in which case I say, "When we're not in the middle of class" or "Later on if you want to ask me some things about that you can, but right now it's not an appropriate time to have that conversation".

Students' desire to learn more about Lana's identity leads them to ask questions and engage Lana in conversation. Lana's willingness to present with secondary sex characteristics of both male and female genders, to be visibly trans/non-binary/queer, causes students to question their socially conditioned beliefs about the dichotomous nature of gender:

I'm fine with the way that I look...It causes students to question what they know about gender. With the kids it generally just comes from a place of not understanding. It's just a place of ignorance or discomfort with something new and I think that that's a really beautiful space to have people in because it's a space where they can learn.

Allowing children the room to question how they've come to understand gender gives them the space necessary to learn, and be open to new ways of understanding:

Being Trans around kids is important because I think kids see people more easily than adults do. So being a non-normative person for them to see is important because then they get that idea in their brain, it's there and they have it to call on. It opens their understanding of everything.

Lana notes that working in the school system provides them with a unique opportunity allow their "transness" to be visible to children, in an environment where they can learn about

these identities safely. They describe how enabling children to see their authentic queer, non-binary self helps to open their minds to a new realm of understanding.

Sociopolitical Context

Heteronormativity in the School Environment

Most educational environments for young children reinforce the male/female gender binary, as evidenced by gender segregated restrooms, locker rooms, extracurricular activities, and even separating children for class exercises based upon their identities as either boys or girls. Lana initially hoped to work in the school environment as a teacher, but altered their vocational goal when they recognized how “our educational system in the U.S. functions”, particularly in regards to reinforcing heterosexual and cisgender norms:

I thought about becoming a teacher for a long time. I thought about becoming a teacher before I started college and decided against it because I don't support the educational system and I didn't want to spend four plus years in school learning how to function in that system. I still struggle with figuring out how to make an impact and still be an activist in this space.

Lana now works as an educational assistant with children with special needs, in a school that values diversity and whose staff and administration celebrate diversity. They state that this space is unique as the openness to differences promotes acceptance of identities outside of the social “norm”:

One of the highest values in our school is that we support each other and we don't discriminate or bully folks that are different than us because our school is the school for people that are different. There are still things that are hard. But I like to think that we exist in a space where the kids can understand trans folks better than in other spaces.

Visibility & Political Context

Lana describes the current political climate as characterized by “bigoted, harmful and invalidating mentalities” about LGBTQ identities and persons with disabilities. They state that they are willing to be visible in hopes that their existence may challenge the harmful mentalities associated with the current political climate. Like many of the other participants, Lana makes indirect references to recent political events, condemning the behavior of U.S. politicians and those who would support them:

Being more open and out and vocal feels more important now because of the political climate. Me being visible is challenging bigoted, harmful and invalidating mentalities and notions around queerness or transness or disability or other things that don't affect me personally. Speaking up against that feels a lot more imperative now because of the political climate,

Traversing the Binary and “In-between Spaces”

As a queer person, Lana states that they experience discrimination not only for failing to adhere to heteronormative standards, but also for their failure to align with “homonormative” expectations. Lana defines homonormative standards as social expectations that LGT persons will still align their identities with some aspect of the binary. In other words, if a person is gay, then they are only attracted to members of the same sex, and if a person is transgender then they align with either male or female binary. Queer and non-binary identities violate the homonormative standard:

The differentiation of gay versus queer. Gay is a more homonormative in that the only thing that's different about us is that we like people of the same gender, and still sort of striving for a heteronormative façade. I think that that's prevalent in white spaces

especially. I think anybody who falls outside of those very homonormative or faint heteronormative categories is prone to discrimination within the community. That's true for Trans folks. That's true for bi and pansexual people, asexual people. I feel like the same exists for nonbinary people in the Trans World, so not just trans folks with other LGB people, but nonbinary gender queer, agender people within the trans community because they don't fall into that binary experience. It is a similar to the kind of discrimination and exclusion we experience from the community at large.

Lana describes their non-binary and queer identities as causing them to fall into an “in-between space”, between the male/female gender binary and hetero or homosexual binaries. They say that this in-between space is not reflected in mainstream media, and seems excluded by society:

Everything in western society, in U.S. society, is thought about as having to be one or the other. Existing in between spaces is tough. There's definitely no, no media representation. Mere representation of gender non-normativity is still very gendered. It's still very, well, that trans man is still a woman. It's still talked about in such a black and white way. Very much that pink or blue. It's a conversation that happens often in the non-binary community, especially that just existing and having a normal life is a radical act because that's such a hard thing to do.

Summary of Inductively Derived Categories & Related Themes

Within the categories of “development as an advocate”, themes emerged regarding Lana’s motivation and inspiration for advocacy efforts, to include: “Activism and diversity within the family”, “individual experience as a queer/transgender youth”, and “coming out and become an activist”. The primary theme within the category of “acts of advocacy” was “visibility

within the school environment”. The final category “sociopolitical context” contained themes regarding heteronormativity, homonormativity, “visibility and the political context”, and “traversing the binary and in-between spaces”. These themes reflect Lana’s experience as an individual who fails to align with any of society’s prescribed binary systems, and whose experience within an accepting family system and school/workplace environment have inspired them to advocate for LGBTQ youth.

Advocacy Artifacts

When asked about advocacy artifacts they would recommend, Lana spoke primarily of memoirs of transgender and queer individuals. They seemed to define advocacy artifacts as those text-based resources that provide one with an intimate understanding of an individual’s lived experience as a transgender or queer person. Lana recommended a variety of memoirs as advocacy artifacts. Table 15 outlines the advocacy artifacts recommended by Lana, to include the title, type, and a summary description of item from the source.

*Table 15
Advocacy Artifacts - Lana*

Artifact Title	Artifact Type	Summary Description from Source
Megan Speciale PhD	Author of scholarly works regarding LGBTQ issues	See Dr. Speciale’s publications for more information.
<i>Born Both: An Intersex Life</i> by Hida Viloría	Memoir	“ <i>Born Both: An Intersex Life</i> (Hachette Books, March, 2017), is a candid, provocative, and eye-opening memoir of life, love, and gender identity as an intact intersex person, as well as a call to action for justice for intersex people” (Hida Viloría, 2019).

Gavin

Background Information

Gavin is a white, queer, “transgender/non-binary/gender fluid” individual in their early 20s whose pronouns are they and them. They completed high school and vocational school, and report an annual income of less than \$20,000. Gavin resides in New Mexico, and currently engages in advocacy efforts with a non-profit agency serving transgender and gender-expansive individuals. They report moving often as a child, as their mother was a serviceperson in the military. When Gavin was 16, their mother passed away and they were forced to learn how to support themselves.

As a teenager, Gavin became involved with the speakers bureau through a national LGBTQ organization, where they participated in outreach and educational efforts aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of LGBTQ issues. Gavin moved to New Mexico two years ago, and immediately became involved with a non-profit agency. At this agency, Gavin has helped to facilitate transgender and gender-expansive youth support groups, and assisted with presentations and panel discussions regarding gender identity. I became acquainted with Gavin through a support group, as I attend this group with my daughter. Shortly after the start of this study, I participated in a panel discussion with Gavin, and asked after the panel whether they would be willing to participate in an interview. Gavin readily agreed to participate.

Interview Context

The interview occurred at a small coffee shop near the participant’s residence. Gavin and I were able to locate a table in a room separated from the main seating area that was quiet, where no other patrons were sitting. Gavin indicated that the location adequately attended to their need for privacy, and seemed open to discussing all topics discussed in the interview questions. They completed the demographic survey, and provided the titles of a number of advocacy artifacts. Gavin and I completed the interview in 98 minutes.

Inductively Derived Categories & Related Themes

Through the coding process, a number of themes related to their experience as an advocate, and their awareness of the needs of the transgender and gender-expansive community emerged. The emergent themes seemed to fit the primary categories of “journey and professional development as an advocate”, “acts of advocacy”, and “sociopolitical climate”. The role of visibility of transgender and gender-expansive individuals in the media was pertinent within multiple categories, as Gavin viewed visibility as an essential element of their advocacy, and necessary to achieving change “at large”. The themes derived from Gavin’s data are described below.

Development as an Advocate

Coming Out

Gavin describes growing up in an environment that was supportive of their gender fluidity and did not enforce adherence to stereotypical gender norms. They speak to this experience as allowing them to express themselves uncensored:

I remember as a kiddo in elementary school, I chopped all my hair off before I even started school. I chopped it off at age 3 in the backyard. I had a younger brother and I started snagging all of his clothes. So my mom just bought me boys clothes, and kept my hair short.

Motivation and Inspiration to Advocate. Although Gavin came out as queer and gender-fluid/non-binary/transgender as a child, they state that it was not until high school that they transitioned out of the “safe little bubble” of self-preservation. Gavin describes becoming an agent of change while in high school, as they began leading a support group for LGBTQ youth and acting as a member of these youth’s support system:

I think that there's a tendency, especially when first coming out to dive into this little safe bubble where I can have my feelings and not have to deal with anyone else's. Then in my senior year when I was graduating high school, that's when I started to lead the support groups and providing that kind of support to the other youth, and I was starting to feel like I could do that role a little more.

As Gavin moved outside of the “bubble” of being out but inactive in supporting other LGBTQ persons, they became more involved with support efforts for LGBTQ youth in their school. It was around this time that they also became involved in tabling and fundraisers for an LGBTQ organization:

I started to participate in tabling and would help with fundraisers to make sure that the organization was there and doing that kind of outreach. I started to go to board meetings and figuring out the policies and what they need to make their work inclusive. Then I was hired as a member of their speaker's bureau. I think it's nice to have that safe little bubble, but at some point you realize change doesn't really happen from everyone staying in their safe little bubbles.

Gavin emphasizes how their experience coming out was a process, as they initially existed in a “safe little bubble”, then recognized that creating positive change required them engage in work outside of themselves. They seemed to find motivation to engage in advocacy efforts for LGBTQ youth in their desire to create safer spaces. This desire to see others benefit from their work is evident in their discussion of how they've witnessed the evolution in people's coming out narratives, from people who are now in their 50s, 30s, and 20s, and the experience of children like my daughter Zelda (age 9) or Amber, another transgender/gender-expansive support group member who is 5 years old:

I think about people who are in their 50s who attended support group meetings and heard about how change wasn't possible, but they're doing this work. As a youth myself, when I go places and to support groups and see 30 year old and 20 year old trans folks and hear their story, or hear about what Zelda's coming out looked like, or when I get to go to youth groups and see what they're going through – that's beautiful. Just to see little Amber transitioning, getting all of that already done at such a young age, it's beautiful. It's just, it's so amazing. And I think that's why you come out of that bubble and do that work because you realize that the only way that was as easy for you to do all of this was because other people came out of their bubble and did it for you.

Today's LGBTQ youth are able to come out and experience support and safe spaces because previous generations were willing to come out, to be visible as an LGBTQ person within society, and pursue positive change for proceeding generations. Gavin expresses their appreciation of previous generations willingness to make these sacrifices, and articulates their hope that today's LGBTQ youth will continue to advocate for change for future generations:

I'm going to go make those changes, so that people Zelda's age can make changes for everyone in the generations after them. That's really the beauty of youth advocating, it's that you can see relatively easily how quickly changes happen.

The Cost of “being out as a trans person”. Existing as an openly out transgender/non-binary/gender fluid individual has a cost. Gavin states that by being openly transgender, one must “justify their existence constantly”. This justification of one's existence includes “deal[ing] with” the “emotional stuff” of cisgender individuals who lack understanding of the spectrum of gender identities. Gavin says that they are often called upon by these individuals to answer their “random questions”, and listen to their “life story”, as though they are a “walking PBS special”:

I feel like everyone who's trans is expected to—is supposed to—justify their existence constantly. At any point in time, you're supposed to educate anyone who has any random question, and then you're supposed to deal with all of their emotional stuff. Like, “Oh, I can't handle this”, or “Oh, my niece is also going through this”. Let me tell you all about my other life story. I feel like “Okay, that's great. I'm glad that you have a cousin that's gay, but that doesn't really mean anything to me”. But I think that that's part of saying that you're trans and being out as trans. You automatically have to do all of that. It's important to have resources to send people to, so you don't have to do that constantly. It makes it a little easier to just be a resource center as opposed to a walking PBS [Public Broadcast System] special.

Gavin indicates that having resources they can refer these curious individuals to is of paramount importance, as it allows them to redirect these questions to another source. Having the ability to redirect these individuals to another source of information allows LGBTQ community members to avoid being coerced into the role of educator because of the LGBTQ identity. Gavin seems frustrated by the social expectation that LGBTQ individuals must fulfill the role of educator for all of society but describes being willing to be visibly “out” as transgender, and redirect curious individuals to the appropriate resources to learn more about the LGBTQ community.

Despite their current willingness to help educate the general public about transgender and gender-expansive identities, Gavin states that they did not always feel this way. After their mother passed away, Gavin states that they did not want and were not able to sacrifice the emotional energy necessary to humor the questions of strangers, and “justify their existence”:

I was going through a lot of emotional turmoil on my own. My mom had passed, and the grief of that and trying to figure out how to graduate high school...for the first couple of years I was very hardcore, like, “Nope, I don't want to educate anyone. I don't want to have to do this work. It's not my job. I'm just going to go do support groups all the time and talk to others”. My solution was that I was never going to hang out with straight cis-people ever again. That I would create a bubble where I wouldn't have to educate anyone because everyone who I'm hanging around knows what I'm going through.

The idea that being open about one's identity comes with a social obligation to educate others is one of many forms of oppression perpetrated by the cis-heteronormative patriarchal system that dominates American culture. So often the social dynamic that plays out when an LGBTQ person is called upon to act as educator for less knowledgeable others is one of social dominance. Per Hundleby (2013) the belief that persons should respond to “discursive hostility” and “aggressive emotionality” with “politeness” “reinforces gendered (and perhaps unjustified forms of) social dominance” (p. 239).

Hundleby (2013) describes situations in which an individual of minority status is asked to discuss a topic about which the other more privileged party is argumentative or has opposing views. They state that the power differential between the two, coupled with the social expectation that the person of minority status ought to respond with “politeness”, acts to reinforce the dominance of the more privileged party. Gavin's narrative provides an example of how the expectation that transgender/gender-expansive persons ought to politely answer all questions and listen to strangers stories of family members who may or may not be LGBTQ, is required unpaid emotional labor that reinforces the dominance of the cisgender heterosexual culture.

Activism: “Turning outness into your job”. Even LGBTQ community members who chose a career path in activism, a job that requires their “being out”, report exhaustion and emotional overwhelm. This exhaustion is attributed to traumatic experiences of discrimination and constant harassment by persons who behave in openly hateful towards LGBTQ persons. Being out about one’s identity can in and of itself be an act of act advocacy, but as Gavin points out “turning outness into your job” can come at a price:

Some people turn their outness into their job. I know a lot of nonbinary folks who professionally do that, but that means their entire career is being out and being an activist and constantly talking about how traumatic experiences of discrimination. I have friends who their job is their gender. I hear about how exhausting it is from them on their social media. Like “I got spit on again today and told I was a freak again”. But they say they’re going to keep doing advocacy because it makes a difference. At this point I think this is the biggest kind of trans youth advocacy work, especially in the current political climate that is trying to rollback so many protections around safety, jobs, bathrooms and safety in schools.

Per Gavin, being out as part of one’s career means being constantly visible as an LGBTQ community member, and thus more vulnerable to harassment from hateful groups/individuals. When one’s career includes being open about this aspect of their identity, it both increases one’s vulnerability and ensures no reprieve from questions and comments from others. Although this work is taxing, Gavin describes this advocacy work as impactful and important for transgender and gender-expansive youth. They state that being out as a transgender/gender-expansive activist challenges the current political climate.

Motivation and Inspiration to Advocate for Transgender and Gender-Expansive Youth

While attending a high school in the western U.S., Gavin participated in an LGBTQ high school support group. They describe this group as introducing them to the concept of pronouns and providing them a space to “unload” and “create a community”. Gavin reflects on the difference between their experience in high school, being introduced to the concept of gender identity and LGBTQ issues, and the experience of today’s elementary school age youth who are introduced to these ideas at a much earlier age. Per Gavin, it’s this shift, a shift that allows elementary age children to have the “conversation” about gender identity that inspires them to advocate:

There was an organization [in high school] that went into schools once a week and brought pizza. They had two folks from their organization and they just held space in one of the classrooms, a support group space that was led by the high schoolers. All of the gay or queer or trans high schoolers would go and hang out there once a week and talk about what's going on in life and get to unload and create this little community space. And they always opened their groups with name and pronouns. I remember the first time going in and having to have someone explain pronouns to me. I hadn't heard of pronouns before. To realize that that was not the conversation until I hit high school, when that is a conversation that elementary schoolers are already getting to have, it's incredible. That's really why I got into youth advocacy is because I want them to have that experience. You want them to get to be them as soon as possible.

Acts of Advocacy

Visibility of Transgender and Gender-Expansive Persons

When transgender and gender-expansive youth see transgender and gender-expansive adults living successful fulfilling lives, it assures them that “I can do that”. Gavin describes the importance of youth seeing adults who share their identity in their community and in the media:

I think as a Trans person when you see yourself represented, it's that like, “Oh cool. I can go do that. That opportunity exists for me, I can do that. There are other people like me”. And I feel like for cis people it also would be like, “Oh, these trans people do exist”, and having this way of relating to them through media.

Gavin speaks to the visibility of transgender and gender-expansive individuals as also influencing the perspectives of cisgender persons by showing that “these trans people do exist”. Referencing their own coming out experience, Gavin says that having LGBTQ media representation provide persons who are in the process of coming out with a third party to reference to educate family and friends. Using their own coming out as an example, Gavin says that they “put a documentary on the tv” about LGBTQ identity, then watched the reaction of family members. They reported using their family members reaction to the documentary to gauge whether or not they could safely come out to these individuals about their queer and gender fluid/non-binary-transgender identities:

That's what I did with a lot of my family as I was slowly coming out, because after my mom passed away I had a lot of family move in that were extended relatives who had only met me once or twice and were super Christian, super conservative. So I would put a documentary on the TV and they'd say, “Oh I guess this is what's on. I guess we're going to watch this”. And that gave me a third person to have that conversation with them, so I didn't have to. Being able to say like, “Oh, my experience is like this, go watch it”. It's

nice and it makes it a lot less work for me to explain my experience and I feel like there's distance between the viewer and movie.

Gavin says that providing their family members with media representations of LGBTQ persons' experiences gave them "the chance to step away from the personal and figure out their own feelings". They say that being able to view these experiences via the media provides people with the distance necessary to "figure out their own feelings" and "process that on their own time". Gavin describes the role of this process in family member's reaction towards their LGBTQ loved one as allowing them the space to explore their feelings, to learn more about LGBTQ identities without burdening their loved one with awkward questions and/or comments, and to help them support their loved one as they come out about their identity.

Facilitating Outreach & Education

As a teenager living in the western U.S., Gavin was afforded the opportunity to work with multiple LGBTQ youth advocacy groups. Their role was to help facilitate a support group for LGBTQ youth under the age of 21. They also participated in the speaker's bureau, going to community organizations and providing trainings regarding gender diverse identities. These trainings would last about 2 hours, and cover a variety of issues, from LGBTQ concerns to racism, and the intersection of oppressed identities. Per Gavin:

When I was in in the eastern U.S. I helped run a 21 and under support group and I was on their speaker's bureau. What I did was similar to how [other non-profits] go out and give [gender diversity] trainings to community places like churches or different organizations or schools that ask for someone to come do a training. The speaker's bureau and the organization I was with, they would have community members or organizations request a training. So we would put together presentations based on the needs of the group we were

educating and what was the subject matter they specifically asked us to talk about and how they intersect.

Mentoring Other Youth

Participating in support groups for transgender and gender-expansive youth, Gavin states that they often shared about their experience losing their mother at such a young age. They disclose how losing their parent left them in a position where they needed to work and obtain housing, and so were confronted with those laws and “boundaries” that—although originally created to protect youth—put them at a disadvantage when trying to meet their own needs:

One of the things I often shared was I lost my mom when I was really young. I talk about how that shaped my experience with housing and working. Just being so young and trying to face all those boundaries. I was lucky I was on the working end of 16 because otherwise I would not have been able to work. Laws and boundaries around the working age are there to help, but sometimes they make it complicated for youth. Laws around healthcare and consent are there to help, but sometimes they can make it complicated.

Gavin’s use of self-disclosure when interacting with LGBTQ youth enables them to build rapport, and to relate their experience of having “the system work against you” to the experience of other group members:

It was helpful for people to hear those actual examples of how the system works against you looks on a functional level, and connect with people so that it's not so mysterious.

Visibility as a Means of Humanizing the Transgender and Gender-Expansive Community

Gavin speaks of their visibility, and the visibility of all transgender and gender-expansive community members as an act of advocacy. They describe how the visibility of trans people in the community and the media helps on a macro-level by humanizing their existence. They state

that this leads to “dismantling harm at large”, as society recognizes the existence of the trans community and sees them as members of society:

How important it is for people to actually see trans actors existing and playing roles and how that helps to dismantle harm at large towards the community, and how it can bring the murder rates down, and help humanize us, because most people think they've never met a trans person. So when they get to see them represented in the media, it's such an important thing. That also gives opportunity and jobs to trans actors who don't have a lot of roles. That speaks to a lot of my experience in trying to educate. I often share that I am a person who's affected by this, this is a personal thing for me.

Gavin further describes how transgender and gender-expansive individuals' visibility is an act of advocacy, explaining how visibility shows that a person can be LGBTQ and be successful:

The biggest thing you can do as an activist is to use the bathroom that goes with your gender, get a job and be out as nonbinary, and actually exist in the world as a nonbinary person and prove that it can be done and that you can exist and you can make enough money and you can live this beautiful, happy life.

The visibility of transgender and gender-expansive persons also introduces children to gender identities outside of the male/female gender binary. Enabling children to see persons living outside the binary causes them to ask questions about gendered existence. Gavin shares that visibility is essential to encouraging children to question gender norms, and “have those conversations”:

Being visible and therefore getting asked those questions by kids and getting to have those conversations is essential. That way, by the time they're in elementary school, if

they see someone who looks different, they've already had that conversation, they already have that language.

Advocacy as Promoting Access to Resources

On an individual level, Gavin describes advocacy as providing transgender and gender-expansive people with the resources necessary to meet unmet needs. These resources include physical resources such as needle exchange and housing, as well as mental health and healthcare resources such as counseling, support groups, and information about affirming and safe medical practitioners:

Some advocacy is more through trying to either create nonprofits that can offer support services like the [local non-profit agency] that offers the needle exchange, counseling, legal help, support groups, and that offer a list of medical practitioners that are safe.

That's kind of where most of the advocacy is happening at this point for a lot of the trans community. It's in recognizing that our community struggles with suicide at a higher rate, with about 48 percent this year of trans folks attempting to commit suicide. Compared to like 14 percent of the general population, that's ridiculous. So creating support systems and support groups and trying to get support groups as accessible to folks as possible to meet the need for support. Like a fourth of the homeless youth population is LGBTQ children. We need to make sure that there are shelters and housing options that aren't gender restricting.

Gavin cites the suicide rate and number of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness as evidence supporting the need for increased resources for this population. Their description of the struggles of this population, and specific unmet needs, speaks to the need for advocacy efforts to increase access to resources.

Sociopolitical Context

Building a Life in an Oppressive Sociopolitical Climate

Throughout the interview, Gavin reflected on their personal experiences of discrimination and the stories of oppression shared by other transgender and gender-expansive community members. Gavin describes how having a gender identity that fails to align with the prescribed gender binary can impact every aspect of one's lived experience. They state that it is particularly difficult to come out as non-binary or gender non-conforming, as the social and political systems in the U.S. do not acknowledge this reality:

There are so many struggles in life, right? Like what career am I going to choose? Where do I want to live? How involved in politics do I want to be or not be? What do I want my regular life to look like? Imagine that after you figure all of that out, you figure out that your gender is different. It's like "Oh wait, this changes everything", "What I can do as a profession, because which professions are going to accept my gender?", "Is it real for me to think that I can go be a teacher if I'm not cisgender?", "Is it real for me to think that I can navigate any kind of system that I need to as part of my job as a lawyer?", "Would I be called miss or sir? But neither of those fit", "Is it realistic for me to want into this job?". You have those kinds of realizations at high school or college age when you're already mostly geared towards a path. You think, I can't actually do this because I'm not cis, because I am gender nonconforming, because I don't fit the binary.

The social and political system's lack of validation of gender identities outside of the gender binary not only alienates persons whose identity exists outside of the binary, but also contributes to a system of oppression. Gavin speaks to transgender and gender-expansive

individuals' struggle to find places to live and work that will allow them to exist safely, and be their authentic selves:

There aren't really job positions that exist where I can actually express who I am or do what I want to do. Your gender identity re-gears your entire life. It's like, "Oh, I'm Trans. Can I still live in my hometown? Is it still safe to live in my hometown? Do I have to move? And where am I supposed to be moving to then? Where is it actually safe?".

Acting as an advocate pursuing positive social change for transgender and gender-expansive youth, Gavin describes one of their goals as reorienting social norms so that children can live as their authentic selves as soon as possible. They state that the sooner a child can present as their authentic gender, then the less the likelihood that they will need to reinvent their lives. Gavin emphasizes how challenging it is to "reinvent your entire life" when, in late adulthood, a transgender or gender-expansive person transitions from a cisgender presentation to achieve congruence between their internal experience and external appearance:

A big piece that gets overlooked in talking about trans kids is realizing themselves as early as possible so that they're not reinventing their entire life later on as an adult. You hear about people married to straight partners, with kids, who in their forties and fifties had to come out and uproot their entire life. Doing that process at 20 is great, but to not have to do that process by being able to live authentically at like four or five would, that would be awesome.

Summary of Inductively Derived Categories & Related Themes

The themes derived from Gavin's data fell under the umbrella categories of "journey and development as an advocate", "acts of advocacy", and "sociopolitical climate". Themes were broad based, addressing Gavin's individual experiences and their impact on their motivation to

advocate for transgender and gender-expansive youth, to more macro-level variables such as the influence of transgender and gender-expansive community member's visibility on the prevalence of suicide attempts for this population. Gavin's interview provided incredible insight into the lived experience of an advocate who not only pursues change for young members of the LGBTQ community, but whose existence and visibility as a member of the LGBTQ community challenges the oppressive norms they seek to change.

Advocacy Artifacts

Gavin seemed to define advocacy artifacts as resources that provide a glimpse of the lived experience of transgender and gender-expansive community members. Table 16 outline the advocacy artifacts recommended by Gavin, to include the title, type, and a summary description of the item from the original source.

Table 16
Advocacy Artifacts - Gavin

Artifact Title	Artifact Type	Summary Description from Source
<i>The Argonauts</i> by Maggie Nelson	Memoir	"A brave, fascinating memoir about love, gender, gender theory, having children, death, writing, and the modern family" (Google Books, 2019).
<i>A Queer and Pleasant Danger</i> by Kate Bornstein	Memoir	"The true story of a nice Jewish boy who joins the Church of Scientology and leaves twelve years later to become the lovely lady she is today" (Bornstein, 2013).
<i>Living as a Non-Binary in a Binary World</i> by Graysen Hall, TEDx University of Kent	Film, TedTalk	"A talk addressing the hardships and obstacles facing the day-to-day life of those who identify outside of the gender binary. Graysen Hall, a 23 year-old non-binary individual, sets out to promote awareness and educate their audience on some of the trials that the transgender community faces" (Hall, 2017).
Travis Alabanza	Performance artist, activist, artist, writer	See http://travisalabanza.co.uk/ for more information

Background Information

Joel describes himself as a white, “FTM [female to male], male, genderqueer” pansexual individual in his late 20s, whose pronouns are his and him. After graduating with his bachelors degree, Joel began working for an LGBTQ youth advocacy organization. This organization provides youth across the spectrum with access to health and sex education, a safe space to share their experience and explore their identity, attend community events, and interact with professionals who aim to validate and support these young people. Joel reports a total income of \$35,000 to \$49,999 from his employment with the non-profit agency and other endeavors.

Growing up, Joel states that his family imparted in him the belief that gender was an unchangeable characteristic assigned at birth. Per Joel, his family and caregivers taught that:

You are your sex assigned at birth. That is permanent. That is a feature you can never change, like skin color; it's an undeniable fact.

Joel describes this aspect of his upbringing as preventing him from exploring his gender identity, even though he saw himself as “thinking like the boys do” and “having a boy brain”. His experience learning about transgender identity, and coming out as “male, genderqueer” greatly impacted his development as an advocate for LGBTQ youth. In his early 20s, while working as a youth coordinator for the non-profit agency, Joel states that he found himself reflecting on his lack of a safe space as a child and adolescent. He says that his personal experience informed his response to those transgender and gender-expansive youth who reached out to the organization, seeking support while continuing to live in a less than affirming environment:

I knew what it was like for me when I was coming out, when I really needed a safe space to be myself. I knew that from my own experience that some kids families aren't as

accepting. So we started to see it too, where we would have kids message us through Facebook and say, "I'm not out to my family, do they have to know for me to be able to go?". And we said, "no they don't. We're here to support you. We'll use a different name and pronouns with them, just let us know what we can do to keep you safe".

Joel's experience as a transgender gender-queer youth and background navigating his family and community while coming out as transgender/gender-queer informed his advocacy efforts. The inductively derived categories and themes will further speak to the elements of Joel's experience that impacted his decision to advocate for LGBTQ youth, and his approach to such efforts.

Interview Context

Joel and I completed the interview at a Starbucks near his work. The interview occurred midday, during Joel's lunch break. We sat at a table away from the main walk way, but near the bathroom, thus maintaining privacy required that we speak in somewhat hushed tones. Despite our location in the coffee shop, Joel stated that he felt that the space adequately attended to privacy. The interview lasted a total of 55 minutes.

Inductively Derived Categories & Related Themes

Through the coding process, three major categories emerged from Joel's data: 1) "Development as an advocate", 2) "acts of advocacy", and 3) "sociopolitical climate". Themes related to these umbrella concepts included: Joel's own coming out narrative as a gender queer person, experiences that inspired him to become an advocate for transgender and gender-expansive children, and specific resources and youth programs Joel helped to create. Emergent themes also included the use of outreach and education to "create new advocates" and "develop

better allies”, and an ode to the strength and resiliency of transgender and gender-expansive youth.

Development as an Advocate

Coming Out: A Foundation for Empathic Understanding

Joel’s experience coming out is inextricably intertwined with his development as an LGBTQ youth. Throughout the interview, Joel discloses instances where his personal experience coming out as transgender/gender-queer informed his understanding of the experience of the youth with which he works. Initially, Joel’s exploration of his gendered self was characterized by criticism – criticism of taken for granted gender norms, both as they apply to others and to himself. This critical lens enabled Joel to observe his own way of perceiving the gender of others and adjust his perspective from immediately labeling others based on perceived secondary sex characteristics, to having an open curiosity about how others define their gendered identity. Per Joel, his worldview started to shift after reading a Facebook post:

After I graduated college, I saw a post on Facebook from an LGBT page that said, “When you look at me and you're wondering what my gender is, instead of asking yourself what my gender is, ask yourself why it matters. I'm still human”. And I thought that's a really good point. I like that. And then I started thinking about it, and I look at people all the time. I've never looked at people and thought, I can't tell if you're a boy or a girl. I can just tell when I look at people if they're a boy or a girl. And then I started to actually pay attention to the people around me and thought, wait, there are people who are hard to tell. There are indications that they could go either way, so I thought, maybe it's not as obvious as I thought it was.

In reconsidering his assumptions about gender identity and presentation, Joel became critical of his conceptualization of his own gender. He describes the moment that he started to question how his own taken-for-granted beliefs about gender impacted his ability to understand and express his own gender identity:

It suddenly started to occur to me that maybe even the people that I think are obviously male or obviously female, maybe they aren't that obvious. Maybe I'm looking at them and making an assumption about them, but that's not an actual representation of who they are. I'm just assuming based on looking at them. Then I thought, when someone looks at me and assumes I'm a girl, but that doesn't mean I'm a girl. Then all of a sudden I just stopped and thought, "wait, am I a girl? How do I know I'm a girl? I don't even know what that means".

This viewing of self and other's gendered selves differently caused Joel to discard his previous black-or-white understanding of gender. His new-found ability to view the gender binary from a critical perspective acted as the foundation for his ability to see how transgender and gender-expansive youth navigate the world. Joel began to see the challenges these youth face and how he as an advocate can support them in their journey. Regarding his own experience considering coming out or keeping his transgender identity private, Joel states:

I knew what it was like for me when I was coming out, where I really needed a safe space to be myself. But I didn't know if I could keep my job at the time. I didn't know if I could keep it if I came out as Trans. I didn't know how they were gonna react. I really didn't want it out there that I was trans, and I knew that from my own experience.

Weighing his options, Joel considers issues of safety related to being visibly transgender, including whether coming out will mean losing his job or having to cope with other's negative

responses. Joel uses his own experience of fear and uncertainty as a foundation for empathic understanding of the experiences of transgender and gender-expansive youth. He explains how this empathy influences his work as a youth services coordinator and advocate:

Some kids' families aren't as accepting. We started to see it where we would have kids message us through like Facebook and say, "I'm not out to my family, do they have to know for me to be able to go to [the agency]?" We said, "No, they don't. We're here to support you. We'll use a different name and pronouns with them. Just let us know what we can do to keep you safe, so you can still have your safe space that you can come to".

Joel's personal experience helps him to empathize with the transgender and gender-expansive youth who seek services from the non-profit entity. He seems to recognize the parallel between his need for a safe space as a young transgender/gender-queer person, and the needs of the youth who come to the non-profit to also experience a safe space. Joel articulates concrete ways of generating safety for this group, to include using specific pronouns and name when the individual's parents, caregivers, or family members are present, and only using the youth's accurate pronouns and name when it is safe to do so and would not out the youth. Joel also describes how the non-profit includes "allies" in its title so that kids who come to the non-profit who are not out to their parents about their transgender or gender-expansive identity can justify their receiving services by telling their caregivers that they are simply supporting someone else:

Part of our maintaining safety at the [non-profit] is that it straight up says it's for LGBTQ teens and allies. It says allies so we can give the kids an out if their family is not as aware of their gender identity, then we can say, "Oh they're just here because their friend is here, and their friend needed a support person". We'll ask them, "Does your family use the same name and pronouns with you that we're using with you? Or is there another

name and pronouns we need to be aware of? That way if we interact with your parents, we don't out you on accident”.

Gender Presentation: Navigating Society’s Gender Binary. Joel explains his gender identity as “gender queer”, defined as a “blend” of both male and female as existing “somewhere in between”. He says that coming to understand his gendered-self meant recognizing that his identity is “some other thing by itself, and that exists outside of the gender binary. With society conceptualizing gender as solely male or female, Joel felt that he needed to align his gender presentation with either stereotypically male or female characteristics. He states that he chose to present as male because being labeled a female would be “a lot less accurate”:

If I could be seen, the rest of the world isn't at a point where they can recognize that I'm some other thing by itself, that my gender is its own thing. They're going to identify me as either male or female and there's going to be a whole bunch of assumptions that come with that depending on which one they pick. If they pick female, it's a lot less accurate than if they pick male. I want people to see me as male, so I was thought screw it, I'm going to transition.

Motivation & Inspiration to Advocate

As a child, Joel was unaware of what it meant to have a gender other than male or female, or to be assigned the incorrect gender at birth. His understanding of transgender identity was that “there were men who liked to wear dresses and we don't talk about that”. Joel expresses his frustration about being the “weird kid” growing up because he couldn’t understand why his experience with gender was so different from his peers. He says that if he had had the knowledge and understanding, he would have transitioned earlier in life, and could have avoided the “whole weird awkward period of hating myself and not knowing why”.

It was the adverse experience of growing up feeling like the only one, of having feelings that he did not understand, that motivated Joel to pursue advocacy work. He says that this process inspired him to want to educate others about the spectrum of gender identities, that he might help people who “don’t know about it”:

I was 24 when I transitioned, it was intense. They say you're always supposed to know from a young age, but I was this weird kid who didn't know anything about it. And that was really hard for me because I was like, my life would've been so much easier if I had any kind of knowledge about trans people when I was a kid. I probably would have transitioned then. That's probably me. When I was way younger rather than going through this whole weird awkward period of hating myself and not knowing why. I think that was what pushed me to advocate, because I didn't know anything about it and clearly this has been around for a long time. So if I didn't know about it, how many other people don't know about it? So I thought, let's take the time to teach people about what it means to be trans.

Acts of Advocacy

Community Programming

Prior to engaging in community-based advocacy, Joel worked a human services provider with children under age 12. After leaving this position, he became involved with a community program that provides a safe space, sense of community, and resources for LGBTQ youth. With this program, Joel coordinates the provision of services and runs a support for LGBTQ youth. Joel says that as part of this role, he also “slowly started going to conferences, educating people about LGBTQ issues”.

Origins. Joel explains that the non-profit entity he works with utilizes the “empowerment model”, which was originally created by the University of California San Francisco in the mid-1990s. He says that the empowerment model was intended for “community level intervention for HIV prevention” and was implemented in communities across the country in the form of pilot programs aimed at assessing the efficacy of the model. Joel describes the program in New Mexico as the “longest continually running [non-profit] project [of it’s kind] in the world”, as the program has managed to maintain funding through various organizations.

Education. The community program Joel works with aims to help members of the LGBTQ community “learn about healthier sex practices” and “learn how to do what they want to do, but in a safer manner”. Joel states that the organization also assists community members to “have healthy relationships, learn what consent looks like”. Overall, the organization is “motivated by the participants” thus activities and services change based upon the needs of the people being served.

Joel says that one of the primary interventions offered is education, which is “slipped into conversations”. He describes his approach to education as including health information in “casual conversations...so you don’t feel like you have to go sit in a class to learn”, and states that this approach applies to both his work with adolescents and children. Joel also describes engaging in structured education efforts:

Sometimes we have like really structured times where we sit down and learn about sexual health, but most of the time it happens when they're talking about the relationships they're having in school or conversations they have with their friends, or different misconceptions people have about them. Then we bring in these conversations so we can say, “let's change it”.

Looking at education from a big picture perspective, educational interventions aim to change “enough of the population’s way of thinking” so that the new view “becomes a norm within that group. And then they spread it to their friends”. Joel states that the purpose of educating the young community members who come to the program for services is to both assist the individual, and greater society, as the effect of educational interventions go beyond the person with whom you interact. Persons who receive services and educational interventions will go out into the community and share what they’ve learned, creating a ripple effect and increasing the impact.

Lavender Prom

One of the major events Joel helped coordinate with the assistance of the program and local LGBTQ advocacy groups was the Lavender Prom (an event offered in numerous places across the U.S.). Lavender Prom is an “LGBTQ prom” that is held once per year, for LGBTQ youth ages 13 to 20. Joel describes using social media and hashtags to inform community members about the event. He says that they utilized specific hashtags so that if a community member learned about the event, they could look up the hashtag to get information about the event. Joel says that the reason he chose to utilize online platforms in this way was to ensure that the general public did not become aware that a “gay prom” was being held, and to avoid “anti LGBTQ people showing up”. Joel describes the social media advertisement for Lavender Prom as stating:

“Come hang out with us and it's going to be a good time. You're going to be with your peers who are just like you, it's going to be great. You're in a safe space, come as yourself. Bring whoever you want, whoever that is. We're just here to have a good time”.

Safe Space

With many youth living in homes that are unsupportive of their LGBTQ identity, Joel says that his work focuses on providing youth with “a safe space where they can be themselves and have the room to explore wherever they're at and explore their identity and explore their sexual orientation.” He says that he and the staff at the program respect these youth as they “try on different names and pronouns”, providing them with non-judgement, and validation.

Even though LGBTQ youth's access to resources is limited by their parents/caregivers because of their status as minors, Joel says that the one resource he can always provide is a “safe space”:

I think the hard part is that we can't do much if they don't have their parents support, but we can provide them with a space where they can at least feel like themselves sometimes and feel validated in their identity when they're in that space. I know I can't give them much, but that's what I can give them.

Outreach & Education Efforts

The “Gay ocean” & Tapping into Personal Experience. Despite Joel's personal experience as a gender-queer person, he says that working with an LGBTQ advocacy organization was still like being “thrown into the gay ocean”. Joel describes seeking information, doing what he could to learn about the LGBTQ community. He says that this experience showed him the importance of making education about LGBTQ identities available to the public. It was at that time that Joel decided to become an educator, to use his own learning and personal experience to inform his efforts:

I had no idea when I got my job that it would be like getting thrown into the gay ocean and told to swim. I thought, I don't know how to swim but I'll find my way back to land. There was a steep learning curve. Not everybody has the advantage where they can get thrown into a community and learn from it. Maybe they don't have access to finding out

as many things, or they can't go look and find the information for themselves because they don't even know what they're looking for. So I thought somebody has got to go and teach. I'll teach people and I can use my own experience to help them learn.

When engaging in educational efforts as part of outreach, Joel says that he is usually teaching the staff and administration within the schools. Working with school staff, Joel provides information about “trans and gender nonconforming groups...and sexual orientation” and teaches “how to bring all of it into the classroom and be more inclusive”. He describes these education sessions as lasting anywhere from two hours to three days, and including exploration of the application of information in situations these educators might encounter. Examples of the application of information include:

This is how you make your classrooms more inclusive. This is the kind of language you should be using. Let's just spread it out for you so you can see this is the difference between sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex assigned at birth, so you can see that they aren't all the same thing and that these can be really fluid. Then we really hold their hands through this process by going through scenarios like “You're working in a classroom and something comes up”, or “You're in the hallway and this is what's happening”, or “This is what your administration and your school are doing, and how are you dealing with that?”, and “How can you be the most supportive you can be for your students” and “This doesn't just affect LGBT kids, but this increases the positive learning environment for all kids who are coming through your school just by being more inclusive of these identities”.

Outcomes of Education & Outreach. Joel categorizes individuals who attend his trainings and workshops as typically belonging to one of two categories, either 1) Individuals seeking to “be

better allies” and who are open to learning new concepts, or 2) “the people who want to push back” and may even become “combative” about the information Joel provides. Joel states that as an advocate, he aims to meet people where they are, and facilitate conversation around emerging issues. He seems to view this process as helping individuals to develop a more informed perspective, that hopefully enables them to see the value in providing inclusive and safe environments for transgender and gender-expansive children and youth. He defines success in these advocacy efforts as when someone at the training becomes “even one degree less against [these youth] than when I walked in”.

Sociopolitical Climate

For Joel, the theme of sociopolitical climate includes both positive and negative elements, as he notes both the strengths of transgender and gender-expansive youth, and the challenges and barriers they face within greater society.

Strengths of Transgender and Gender-Expansive Youth

Joel expresses his feelings of admiration towards transgender and gender-expansive youth, describing them as “resilient”, and “the strongest group of people I’ve ever met”. He seems to view these youth as having to fight for the right to exist, as the world may not “agree” with who they are. Joel’s words appear steeped in awe and appreciation, as he describes these youth’s belief that “it gets better”:

So resilient, so, so, so resilient. Trans people are probably the strongest group of people I've ever met, and Trans Youth in particular. When they're like solid in their identities and they say, “I know the rest of the world doesn't seem to agree with me on this, but this is who I am”. It isn't easy. Sometimes they have their moments where they're just like fuck,

everything sucks, and nobody is supporting me, but they keep fighting because they really do believe that it gets better.

Challenges Associated with Gender Segregated Facilities

While engaging in an educational workshop for school employees, Joel was confronted by an individual who stated their belief that transgender and gender-expansive youth must use the “nurse’s restroom” so they “don’t have to be in the restroom [or locker room] with all of the other kids”. During our interview, Joel seemed visibly distressed by this workshop participant’s statements, stating that “They’re literally there for the same reason everybody else is...they literally just want to change clothes!”. While expressing his frustration, he described how – as part of the training – he pointed out the inappropriate nature of “singling out” transgender and gender-expansive youth as though they are a safety risk to cisgender children. Joel says that the response of the person, and the entire group of attendees was characterized by the following:

At the end of the training, I think the person was like “I guess”, but it was still one of those situations where I knew even I'm not going to change your mind. But there might be other people around the room who are still thinking about it and they're like, “Huh, I never thought about it that way”. Maybe I changed their minds, in which case now I've got more advocates in the room, even if I didn't change that one person’s opinion.

Joel ultimately finds the silver lining in the attendee’s staunch stance against the right of transgender and gender-expansive youth to use the appropriate facilities. The silver lining is that other persons in the workshop who made have had similar views may now be re-evaluating their own beliefs. Joel indicates that the act of having critical dialogue about the sociopolitical controversy surrounding gender segregated facilities may have helped those who witnessed the conversation to come to a more inclusive, trans-affirming perspective.

Summary of Inductively Derived Categories & Related Themes

The themes that emerged from Joel's data spoke to the complexity of the social reality transgender and gender-expansive youth face. These youth may feel "solid" in their gender identity but have family members or caregivers who do not allow them to present as their authentic selves. To complicate matters even further, these children may also have a school environment that refuses to allow them to utilize the facilities that align with their gender, or whose school may not have facilities that are appropriate for their gender identity (e.g. non-binary children who may benefit from having the option of being able to use gender neutral facilities). The themes derived from Joel's data speak to the ways in which his efforts aim to offset the hostile environment created by persons and institutions who refuse to acknowledge or validate the identities of transgender and gender-expansive youth.

Advocacy Artifacts

Joel seemed to view advocacy artifacts as resources that might support someone's efforts to advocate for LGBTQ youth. His recommendations appear pragmatic for advocates and/or allies from a variety of backgrounds. Joel recommended two advocacy artifacts, specifically the Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico and GLSEN. Since these artifacts were already outlined in previous case portraits, their description is not included here.

Cross Case Analysis and Review

Following the comprehensive analysis of each participant, cases were compared to identify general categories that apply to multiple cases/participants. As noted by Yin (1984) generalizations often exist among participants' data, even though details are expected to be unique for each case. Evaluating categories and themes across cases "can establish the range of generality of a finding or explanation, and at the same time, pin down the conditions under which

that finding will occur” (Miles and Huberman, 1984, p. 151). A meta-matrix (see Table 18) was utilized to illustrate the results of the cross case analysis in terms of the overarching categories, and emergent themes (and related subthemes, when present) (Merriam, 1988). Mental maps were used to illustrate the interrelationships, similarities, and distinctions between participants’ themes (Ryan and Bernard, 2000).

Meta-Matrix & Mental Maps

Reviewing the meta-matrix, three categories emerged that were referenced by all participants. These categories included: 1) “Acts of advocacy”, 2) “development as an advocate”, and 3) “sociopolitical context”. Each category included a variety of themes, ranging from specific actions and processes, to experiences, and beliefs. These categories were utilized as the primary source for examining the differences and similarities between cases/participants.

Table 18

Categories and Themes by Case: Meta-matrix

Participant	Category	Theme	Subthemes (if present)	
<i>Valerie</i>	Development as an advocate	Inspiration and motivation for advocacy work		
		Privilege due to perceived identity		
	Micro-level advocacy	Advocacy through verbal interactions and discussion		1) Hearing another's perspective 2) Providing education 3) Engaging in discussion 4) Challenging "opinions"
	Acts of advocacy	Cultivating safety		
		Meeting basic needs		
		Collaboration, education, and outreach		
		Modeling affirming attitudes in educational settings		
		Supporting students in the school environment		
		"Galvanizing others" in a group setting		
		Addressing legal barriers		
	Discrimination and rejection	Maintaining list of resources		
		Collaborating with parent advocates		
		Contrasting perspectives between youths and adults		
		Influence of religion		
Affirmation of gender diversity	Rejection as the basis for discrimination within institutions			
	Family and/or caregiver rejection			
	Consequences of rejection and discrimination			
Sociopolitical context	Parent/caregiver acceptance			
<i>Craig</i>	Advocating as a helping professional	The Trump administration		
		Advocating for youth within the family/caregiving unit	1) Normalizing the parent's experience with the child	
			2) Navigating parent's expectations for counseling	
		3) Educating parents		

			4) Holding space for the transgender or gender-expansive child
	Sociopolitical context	The Trump administration "Transgender is the new gay" Political is personal: Effects of the Trump administration	
<i>Bobbie</i>	Development as an advocate	The influence of previous transgender female activists Coming out, and becoming an advocate Powerlessness	
	Acts of advocacy	Youth events	
	Sociopolitical context	The Trump administration Consequences of oppression Social pressure and in-group politics	
			Child self-advocacy Visible advocacy
<i>Suzanne</i>	Development as an advocate	Definition of advocacy	
	Acts of advocacy, motivations for advocacy, and the role of sociopolitical context	Catalyzing change for others "Giving bigots consequences" and the power of social and political context Current social and political context: Transgender rights are human rights	
	Consequences and costs: "The other side advocacy"		
<i>Amanda</i>	Development as an advocate	Personal Journey: Coming out and surviving conversion therapy	
	Identity as an advocate		
	Acts of advocacy	The role of trauma in advocacy: "Connecting the dots" Employing professional skills in advocacy and community work	Using testimony as an intervention Use of technology in advocacy efforts

		Pursuing systems-level change
	Sociopolitical context	In-group politics within LGBTQ advocacy organizations Community-based advocacy: "Uplifting what is already there" Policy work and advocating for systemic change vs. "changing the hearts and minds work"
<i>Hank</i>	Connection between individual advocacy efforts and macro-level variables	Non-profit industrial complex "Respectability politics" Adult treatment of transgender and gender-expansive children
	Development as an advocate	Coming out and experiencing transition Privilege
	Acts of advocacy	Founding a non-profit entity Education and Outreach Galvanizing members of the movable middle
	Working with ambivalent and rejecting adults	Rejection as protection Adult's unresolved "gender stuff"
<i>Chad</i>	Development as an advocate	Personal motivation to advocate Witnessing a shifting worldview Acting as an agent of change Perspective as rooted in personal experience
	Sociopolitical context	Cultural events
	Acts of advocacy	Trans Youth: Seeking "reflections of themselves" and a safe space Education and outreach
<i>Janet</i>	Personal journey and development as an advocate	Learning to strategize
	Acts of advocacy in the school environment	Pursuing systems-level change Pursuing change at the individual-level
		The influence of persons in power Resources within the school environment for transgender and gender-expansive youth

<i>Helen</i>	Sociopolitical context	The Trump administration	
	Development as an Advocate	Visibility as an LGBTQ community member	
		Motivation and inspiration to advocate	
		Becoming an advocate: "That galvanized me in a certain way"	
		Transgender is the new gay	
	Sociopolitical context and the school environment	Heteronormativity in the school environment	
		LGBTQ discrimination	
		Affirming LGBTQ identity in the school environment	
		National level political context: Influence on transgender and gender-expansive youth	
Acts of advocacy	Collaborating with other advocates		
	Strategy: Talking points for school personnel		
	Visibility as an LGBTQ community member		
<i>Lana</i>	Development as an advocate	Inspiration and motivation to advocate	Activism and diversity within the family
			Own identity and experience as a queer/trans youth
			Coming out and becoming an activist
		Intersections of oppression: Visibility as queer, non-binary, and disabled	
	Acts of advocacy	Visibility in the school environment	
	Sociopolitical context	Heteronormativity in the school environment	
Visibility and political context			
Traversing the binary and "In-between spaces"			
<i>Gavin</i>	Development as an advocate	Coming out	
		Motivation and inspiration to advocate	
		The cost of "being out as a trans person"	Activism: "Turning outness into your job"

		Motivation and inspiration to advocate for transgender and gender-expansive youth	
	Acts of advocacy	Visibility of transgender and gender-expansive persons	
		Facilitating outreach and education	
		Mentoring other youth	
		Visibility as a means of humanizing the transgender and gender-expansive community	
		Advocacy as promoting access to resources	
	Sociopolitical context	Building a life in an oppressive sociopolitical climate	
<i>Joel</i>	Development as an advocate	Coming out: A foundation for empathic understanding	Gender presentation: Navigating society's gender binary
		Motivation and inspiration to advocate	
	Acts of advocacy	Community programming: Lavender prom Safe space	
		Outreach and Education Efforts	Outcomes of education and outreach
	Sociopolitical climate	Strengths of transgender and gender-expansive youth Challenges associated with gender segregated facilities	

Mental maps were utilized to illustrate the relationship between themes within the aforementioned three primary categories. Circles containing categories that exist across cases, and related themes are utilized in the mental map ven diagram. The center circle, illustrated using a solid line, contains participant themes that generally relate to the category. Additional circles then overlap with the center circle, illustrated using dashed lines. These smaller circles represent groups of themes – or subcategories – that emerged upon the review of all themes from all participants. The overlap between circles containing subcategories, and the primary category, illustrate the shared similarities between category and subcategories.

Acts of Advocacy

Table 19
Mental Map for Acts of Advocacy
Key: — = Category; --- = Theme

Advocating as an Educator

Modeling affirming attitudes in educational settings
 Supporting students in the school environment
 Pursuing systems-level change: *The influence of persons in power*
 Pursuing change at the individual-level:
Resources within the school environment for transgender and gender-expansive youth
Collaborating with other advocates
Strategy: Talking points for school personnel
Visibility as an LGBTQ community member

The Role of Sociopolitical Context

The power of social and political context:
 "Giving bigots consequences"
 Current social and political context:
 Transgender rights are human rights

Acts of Advocacy

Cultivating safety
 Meeting basic needs
 Collaboration, education, and outreach
 "Galvanizing others" in a group setting
 Addressing legal barriers
 Maintaining list of resources
 Collaborating with parent advocates
 Youth events
 The role of trauma in advocacy:
 "Connecting the dots"
 Employing professional skills in advocacy and community work:
 - *Using testimony as an intervention*
 - *Use of technology in advocacy efforts*
 - *Pursuing systems-level change*
 Founding a center for the transgender and gender-expansive community
 Education and Outreach: Trans-101
 Galvanizing members of the movable middle
 Trans Youth: Seeking "reflections of themselves" and a safe space
 Education and outreach
 Mentoring other youth

Advocating as a Helping Professional

Advocating for youth within the family/caregiving unit:
 1) Normalizing the parent's experience with the child
 2) Navigating parent's expectations for counseling
 3) Educating parents
 4) Holding space for the transgender or gender-expansive child

Motivations for Advocacy

Catalyzing change for others

Reviewing the mental map (see table 19) associated with the umbrella category of “acts of advocacy”, participant’s themes seemed to share a number of commonalities. The first of these commonalities or subcategories was “advocating as an educator”. Multiple participants discussed their advocacy efforts as including educational component, with advocates engaging in these efforts both within, and outside of educational institutions and settings (i.e. schools, universities, training programs).

Acting as educators, advocates reported modeling affirming attitudes and supporting transgender and gender-expansive students in the school environment. On an individual level, they described collaborating with other advocates to create resources for this population within the school environment. Advocates also educated school personnel about the needs of transgender and gender-expansive youth and provided specific talking points for administrators to ensure that they have the information necessary to effectively address the questions of parents/caregivers regarding school policy. All transgender and gender-expansive participants reported being “visible” and “out” about their identities, utilizing their presence as a means of communicating to others that transgender and gender-expansive individuals can lead successful lives.

The subcategory “the role of sociopolitical context” includes those themes that speak to acts of advocacy that are directly associated with issues of power and political influence. Common themes among participants that reside under this categorical umbrella include “giving bigots consequences”. “Giving bigots consequences” refers to confronting individuals who make hateful statements about transgender and gender-expansive identities and, when safely able, holding them accountable for their statements. One example of this was provided by participant Suzanne, who reported ending her relationships with multiple family members when those

family members made hateful and rejecting statements about transgender and gender-expansive identities.

Another subcategory under the primary umbrella of “acts of advocacy” is “advocating as a helping professional”. The themes within this subcategory were referred to by participant Craig, who described his advocacy efforts as strongly influenced by his role as a human service provider. His efforts included advocating for transgender and gender-expansive youth within their family/caregiving unit by normalizing parent/caregiver’s experience with their transgender or gender-expansive child, navigating parent/caregiver expectations for counseling, educating parents about transgender and gender-expansive identities, and holding space for the child.

The final subcategory under “acts of advocacy” is “motivations for advocacy”. Within this subcategory, themes describe how/why advocates are motivated to pursue positive change for this population. Participants describe themselves as motivated to engage in acts of advocacy for this population in attempts to catalyze positive change that improve current oppressive conditions. As a theme, participants’ motivations for engaging in advocacy efforts also exists under the category of “development as an advocate”. Although these two subcategories share similarities, the themes are distinct as one emphasizes motivating factors for engaging in specific acts of advocacy, while the other focuses on participant’s sources of inspiration for assuming the role of advocate. The subcategories identified across cases lends support to the ACA endorsed advocacy model (Lewis, Arnold, House & Toporek, 2003), as these subcategories speak to advocates ability to navigate a variety of systems and engage in multiple roles to effect positive change for transgender and gender-expansive youth.

Development as an Advocate

Table 20
Mental Map for Development as an Advocate
Key: — = Category; --- = Theme

Coming Out

Personal Journey: Coming out and surviving conversion therapy
 Coming out and experiencing transition
 Coming out, and becoming an advocate
 Coming out: A foundation for empathic understanding:
 - *Gender presentation:*
Navigating society's gender binary

Development as an Advocate

Privilege due to perceived identity
 The influence of previous transgender female activists
 Powerlessness
 Definition of advocacy:
 - *Child self-advocacy*
 - *Visible advocacy*
 Privilege
 Personal motivation to advocate
 Witnessing a shifting worldview
 Acting as an agent of change
 Perspective as rooted in personal experience
 Learning to strategize
 The cost of "being out as a trans person":
 - *Activism: "Turning outness into your job"*

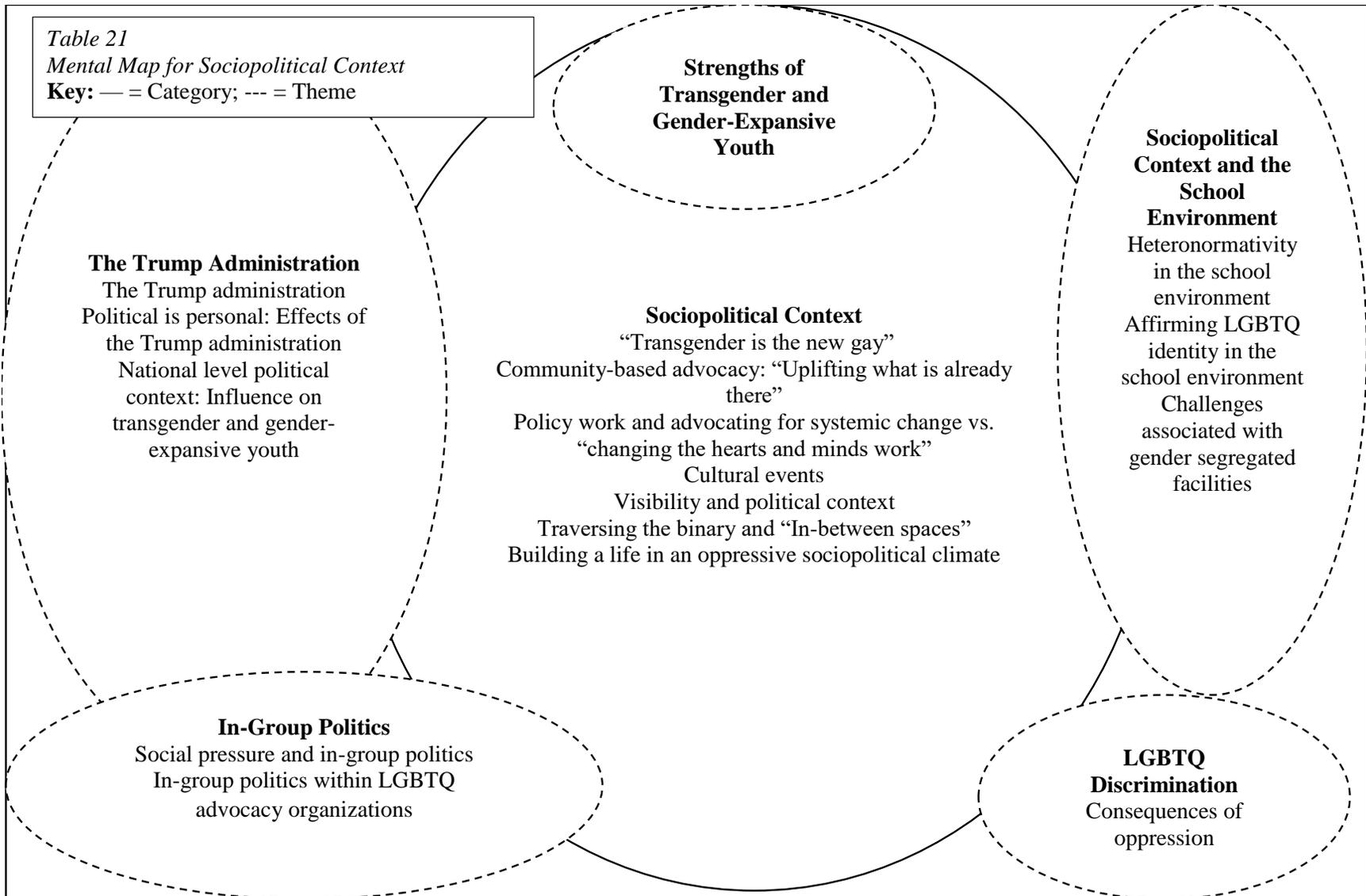
The category “development as an advocate” (see table 20 for mental map) contains a variety of themes speaking to participants’ lived experience, and how this experience impacted their decision to assume the role of advocate for transgender and gender-expansive youth. General themes under this primary category included participants’ privilege, particularly the privilege they maintained due to other’s perception of the participants gender identity, ethnicity, disability status, or sexual orientation. Participants also discussed how experiencing feelings of powerlessness, or being the target of discrimination or acts of hate impacted their decision to become an advocate.

Themes under the subcategory “coming out” spoke to the role of participants’ personal experience coming out as LGBTQ in their decision to assume the role of advocate. Multiple participants described being confronted with the withdrawal of support from family members and friends when coming out. One participant described coming out to her parents and being met with sore disappointment and told that the participant would experience spiritual damnation if they presented as and attempted to live as their authentic gender. Having adverse personal experiences when coming out as LGBTQ seems to be a common factor in participant’s decision to step into the role of advocate for transgender and gender-expansive youth. It seems that advocates engage in efforts in hopes of helping today’s youth have a more positive and affirming experience, and to allow themselves as an advocate to “self grieve”.

Another subcategory under “development as an advocate” is “inspiration and motivation to advocate”. Themes within this subcategory spoke to the role of each participants’ coming out process, and their personal experience as an LGBTQ youth, in inspiring them to advocate for positive change for transgender and gender-expansive youth. Several participants described themselves as motivated to assume the role of advocate after they realized that their visibility as

an LGBTQ person, as an individual who experiences oppression because of their identity yet persists, benefited youth. These participants described transgender and gender-expansive youth's need to see adults who are like them and who care about their wellbeing, as significantly contributing to their choice to embrace the role of advocate for this population. The subcategories that emerged under the umbrella of "development as an advocate" were distinct from the literature described in chapter 2 of this manuscript, as current research speaks primarily to the process of advocacy for this population, rather than the individual experience and development of advocates.

Sociopolitical Context



Participants' emphasized the importance of transgender and gender-expansive youth seeing adults who are "like them". Although this theme is most pertinent within the category "development as an advocate", it also present in the primary category "sociopolitical context" (see table 21 for mental map). This category describes those social and political factors occurring at both the systems (i.e. societal and political environments) and individual (e.g. how individuals in the community or family system interact with the youth) levels, that impact advocacy efforts for these youth. Under the umbrella category of "sociopolitical context", the challenges of maintaining visibility as an LGBTQ adult is referenced. Specifically, participants discuss how heteronormativity within institutions, particularly the school environment, has resulted in advocates being formally penalized for being open about their LGBTQ identities.

Under the primary categorical umbrella "sociopolitical context", themes also speak to historical patterns in society's treatment of transgender and gender-expansive youth. These patterns include society's treatment of transgender and gender-expansive identities as "the new gay". Multiple participants described how previous generations treated the gay, lesbian, bisexual and other non-heterosexual sexual orientations as devious and abnormal. They articulate how the LGB community was initially met with hostility, but that their existence within society seemed to normalize over time. These participants identified a parallel between the former adverse experience of the LGB community and current discriminatory treatment of the transgender and gender-expansive community.

Participants related the current treatment of the transgender and gender-expansive community to the current political administration. The prevalence of references to President Trump in the data lead to the development of "the Trump administration" as a subcategory under "sociopolitical context". Themes under this subcategory included "the political is personal"

which described how the national level political conversations, such as Trump's statements about persons with disabilities or the ban of transgender individuals from serving in the military, directly impacts the experience of individuals in the LGBTQ community. One specific example provided by multiple participants was the Trump administration's rescission of the Justice Department's Title IX interpretation that ensured protections for transgender and gender-expansive youth in the school environment. This change directly impacted the experience of these youth within the school environment, and advocates' ability to pursue positive change in school policy. Across cases, participants described the actions of the Trump administration as significantly impacting their advocacy efforts, lending support to the sensitizing concepts identified in the literature (outlined in chapter 3 of this manuscript).

“In-group politics” was another subcategory within the primary category of “sociopolitical context”. Politics within the LGBTQ community were described as contributing to challenges and difficulties in achieving positive change for transgender and gender-expansive youth. Participants described in-group politics as including individual community member's beliefs about how advocacy efforts should elevate the voices of ethnic minorities, or persons with disabilities, who are also along the LGBTQ spectrum. Within group politics were also described as the extension of patriarchal heteronormative beliefs in the LGBTQ community, with some LGBTQ individuals believing that transgender and gender-expansive identities ought to align with the male/female gender binary. These beliefs have negatively impacted advocates' efforts by distracting from the mission of generating positive change for transgender and gender-expansive youth.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Triangulation of Investigators

Over the course of the data analysis portion of this study, triangulation of investigators was utilized to verify the accuracy of the coding process. While the primary investigator read through and coded each data source 3-5 times, a secondary investigator (approved by the IRB to participate in data analysis) also read through the transcripts and independently coded each based on their intuitive process and experience as an academic and advocate for LGBTQ youth. The secondary investigator, Katie Brammer, and myself then met routinely to review both of our coded data and evolving conceptualization of the themes and categories emerging from the data. It was discovered that both Katie and my themes and categories paralleled one another, with only minor distinctions in the language used to label each code or category. The results of Katie's coding was distinct from my own identified themes and categories in that Katie identified additional portions of the data as fitting with specific themes. Katie's feedback and identified themes and categories were merged with my own results from the coding process to create a cohesive summarization and interpretation of the data.

Transgender and Gender-Expansive Youth v. Children

Over the course of the data collection and analysis portion of this study, it was determined that although children (age 12 and under) and youth (ages 12 to approximately 18-20) remain distinct populations, they share many of the same struggles related to their ability to thrive in today's United States. Originally I bounded advocacy, the phenomenon under study, as consisting of only those efforts to achieve positive social change for transgender and gender-expansive children. What I realized through my interactions with advocates is that their efforts

aim to promote the wellbeing of transgender and gender-expansive individuals across the lifespan. Therefore, they could speak to specific efforts aimed at supporting transgender and gender-expansive children, but most of their experience involves efforts that benefit multiple age groups. For the aforementioned reasons, the write-up of results for this study frequently reference both transgender and gender-expansive children and youth, rather than speak solely to advocacy for children.

Implications for Counselor Education & Clinical Practice

Counselors are called to advocate for populations who experience disenfranchisement, oppression, and discrimination (American Counseling Association, 2014). The ALGBTIC competencies (Association of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues in Counseling, 2009), ACA endorsed advocacy model (Lewis, Arnold, House & Toporek, 2003), Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler & McCullough, 2015), and CACREP standards (2016) also emphasize the importance of counselor educators' and counseling-practitioners' role in attending to the external factors that contribute to these populations' adverse experiences. Other sources speak to the specific application of advocacy to LGBTQ populations (Lewis & Lewis, 2000). Despite these many resources, there is room for an improved understanding of the lived experience of advocates for transgender and gender-expansive youth.

Within counselor education programs, the case portraits contained in chapter 4 of this manuscript may be used individually as examples of the real-world applications of advocacy strategies. Each case also provides insight regarding the many ways that oppression impacts the advocacy process, from the specific acts of advocacy, to the advocate's ability to affect change. Through the review of individual case portraits, counselors-in-training may increase the breadth

and depth of their understanding of the need for advocacy for transgender and gender-expansive youth, and the many contextual dimensions that may influence the advocacy process.

Professional counselors who are trained in CACREP accredited institutions must receive education regarding “advocacy processes needed to address institutional and social barriers that impede access, equity, and success for clients” (CACREP, 2016, p. 9). The detailed description of individual advocate’s approach to advocacy, and the contextual variables that impact the process of pursuing social change, may aid counselors-in-training to better understand those barriers that not only impact transgender and gender-expansive youth’s access to resources, but also challenge the advocacy process.

When engaging clients at the intersection of oppressed identities, practicing counselors are confronted with the realities of social inequality. Review of this text may provide clinicians with real-world examples of advocacy-in-action and offer insight regarding areas of need for transgender and gender-expansive youth. Advocacy for this population is particularly pertinent, as current legislation (i.e. bills pertaining to sex designation on birth certificates, “bathroom bills”) and the political climate (i.e. the actions taken by the Trump administration) have left members of this community feeling helpless. This sense of helplessness is evident in each participant’s interview data and is illustrated in those portions of the case study write up that discuss social and political context.

The case portraits provided in this manuscript, and descriptions of categories and themes that characterize advocacy as a phenomenon, may be utilized as a means of educating counselors-in-training and clinicians. The rich details provided in this descriptive case study give life to a topic that may otherwise seem cold and impersonal, and enable students and practicing

clinicians to gain insight about the challenges faced when pursuing positive change for transgender and gender-expansive youth.

Suggestions for Future Research

The results from this qualitative study may inform additional inquiry using a quantitative design. Possible approaches for translating results from this qualitative study into additional research designs include:

Utilizing categories and themes from this study to inform the creation of a survey regarding experiences of discrimination and/or stigmatization when interacting with helping professionals (i.e. professional counselors, social workers).

Examine the relationship between counselors-in-training awareness of privilege and oppression, and advocacy needs of transgender/gender-expansive/queer clients across the lifespan. This may be completed through the use of the Awareness of Privilege and Oppression Scale (Montress, 2003), and checklist of advocacy needs (created using categories and themes from this study).

Evaluate the relationship between counselors-in-training (in internship) advocacy competencies, and advocacy needs of transgender/gender-expansive/queer clients across the lifespan. This may be completed through the use of the Advocacy Competencies Self-Assessment (ASCA) Survey (Ratts & Ford, 2010), and checklist of advocacy needs (created using categories).

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol for Advocates (other than helping professionals)

*Prior to initiating audio-recording, does the participant consent to having this interview audio recorded? Does the interview setting attend to the participant's need for privacy?

1) How did you become an advocate for transgender and gender-expansive children?

→When did your work as an advocate begin?

→Where, or with what agency or organization or community, did you first advocate for young transgender and gender-expansive children?

2) What does advocacy for this group look like?

→What role do on-line interactions, through email or social media groups, play in how you advocate for transgender and gender-expansive youth?

3) In relation to your advocacy with this group, would you describe your work as personal, professional, both, or neither?

→Why or why not?

4) How would you describe your role with the child or children you advocate for?

5) What has aided you in your efforts to advocate for this group?

6) What barriers have you faced in your efforts to advocate for this group?

7) What resources are important for transgender and gender-expansive children?

→ ...at home?

→...in the schools?

→...in the community?

8) What needs do you believe are unmet for this group?

9) Is social change needed to better support these children?

→If so, in what areas would social change most benefit these children? (e.g. political, legal, spiritual, or community environments)

10) How do your advocacy efforts promote social change?

11) Why advocate now?

12) What role has political climate and/or policy played in your ability to advocate for this population?

→How has political climate influenced the needs of transgender and gender-expansive children?

13) Please describe a particularly memorable instance where you were called upon, or where circumstances permitted you to advocate for a transgender or gender-expansive child.

→What was the situation?

→Who was involved (please describe roles, rather than names)?

→How did those involved respond to your actions, or words?

→What was the outcome, for you, and for the child?

14) How would you describe the strengths, and elements of resiliency of children who are transgender or gender-expansive?

15) What experiences influence your decision to continue advocating for these kids?

16) Have you been confronted by someone who felt strongly about your advocacy efforts? Please describe your experience.

17) Are there any advocacy-related media, such as videos, documentaries, films, books, or articles, that you would recommend?

→Why do you recommend this item?

→What would you like me to notice about this item?

18) Is there anything we haven't covered, that you would like me to know?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol for Helping Professionals

*Prior to initiating audio-recording, does the participant consent to having this interview audio recorded? Does the interview setting attend to the participant's need for privacy?

Context of Advocacy Efforts (Who, what, where, when, why, how)

- 1) When did your work as an advocate for transgender and gender-expansive children begin?
 - a. How and when did you first incorporate advocacy for this population into your counseling practice?
 - b. With what agency or organization did you first advocate for young transgender and gender-expansive children?

Defining Advocacy for Transgender and Gender-expansive Children

- 2) How can counselors best advocate for transgender and gender-expansive children at the **client level**, specifically in regards to:
 - a. Utilizing strategies to empower the client in session
 - b. Identifying the client's strengths and resources
 - c. Laying the groundwork for self-advocacy, and/or training the client in self-advocacy skills or action plans
 - d. Addressing the impact of social, political, economic, and cultural factors on the individual (and help the client to explore their context in relation to these areas)
 - e. Recognize when an individual's behaviors and concerns are indicative of a response to systemic oppression, and/or internalized oppression
 - f. Help the client identify external barriers to their development (e.g. members of support system who are ambivalent or rejecting of the client's identity)

3) How can counselors best advocate for trans and gender-expansive children at a **systems level**, specifically in regards to helping clients gain access to or negotiate services with:

- a. Healthcare providers, and insurance companies
- b. The legal system (i.e. may include interactions with court officials regarding name changes, or law enforcement)
- c. The educational environment (i.e. elementary and middle school administration, school policy, extracurricular activities)
- d. Spiritual or faith communities or institutions
- e. Political arena, which may include the city, state, or national levels

4) Have you ever collaborated with a **community** member or organization to meet an unmet need for transgender or gender-expansive youth?

- a. If yes, what was the unmet need and how did you partner with an organization to attend to this need?

Case Example(s)

5) Please describe a particularly memorable instance where you were called upon, or where circumstances permitted you to advocate for a transgender or gender-expansive child.

- a. What was the situation?
- b. Who was involved (please describe roles, rather than names)?
- c. How did those involved respond to your actions, or words?
- d. What was the outcome, for you, and for the child?

Current Issues for Transgender and Gender-expansive Children

6) What are some of the most salient issues your young transgender and gender-expansive clients face?

- a. What role, if any, does advocacy play in addressing these issues?
- 7) How would you describe the strengths, and elements of resiliency of children who are transgender or gender-expansive?
- 8) Are there any advocacy-related media, such as videos, documentaries, films, books, or articles, that you would recommend?
→Why do you recommend this item?
→What would you like me to notice about this item?
- 9) Is there anything we haven't covered, that you would like me to know?

Appendix C: Nomination Recruiting Letter

Subject Line: Opportunity to Participate in Research: Exploring Advocacy Efforts for Transgender Children

Dear _____X,

I am conducting a research study exploring community-based advocates efforts to support transgender and gender-expansive elementary age children.

You are receiving this email because you were nominated by a community member for possible participation in this study.

The purpose of this research study is to enhance the understanding of how advocates pursue social change for transgender and gender-expansive youth .

If you agree to participate, this study will involve one interview, approximately 1 to 1.5 hours in duration. If after the first interview, you feel that you have more to share, you may elect to participate in a second interview. The interview(s) can occur in a public space, or a private space (such as your office, or home).

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may discontinue involvement at any time.

You will be provided the opportunity to provide feedback regarding your interview transcript. If you feel that there are items in the first interview transcript that you would like to address or clarify, you may elect to participate in second interview to provide additional feedback. Your participation in reviewing your interview transcript is also completely voluntary.

Your involvement with this study includes potential risks. Discussion during the interview process may bring up thoughts and feelings that you had not previously considered. Sharing your experience through discussion may make you more acutely aware of emotionally difficult experiences. Should you experience any distress or discomfort that is more than you expected, please contact Cortny at (505)452-7635. You may also wish to contact the New Mexico Crisis and Suicide Prevention Hotline, they can be reached at (855)-662-7474.

You will receive no monetary compensation for your participation.

Again, your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and should you elect to participate, you may discontinue at any time.

If you feel you understand the study and would like to participate, please respond to this email indicating your interest. The primary email contact for this study is starkc@unm.edu. Should you have any questions prior to participating, please utilize the aforementioned email address.

Thank you for your time and attention, and all you do for transgender and gender-expansive youth!

Student Investigator: Cortny Stark MA LMHC LADAC CRC

Principal Investigator: Jean Keim PhD ABPP

Study Title: Affecting Social Change for Transgender and Gender-Expansive Children:
Exploring Advocates' Perspectives

Appendix D: General Recruiting Letter

Subject Line: Opportunity to Participate in Research: Exploring Advocacy Efforts for Transgender Children

Greetings!

Do you identify as an advocate for transgender or gender-expansive children (ages 4-12 years)? Have you ever acted with or on behalf of a transgender or gender-expansive child to address a negative experience, or unmet need related to their gender identity or expression?

If you answered yes to either of the questions listed above and are at least 18 years or older, then you may be eligible to participate in a study exploring advocates' efforts to support transgender and gender-expansive elementary age children.

The purpose of this research study is to enhance the understanding of how advocates pursue social change for transgender and gender-expansive youth.

If you agree to participate, this study will involve one interview, approximately 1 to 1.5 hours in duration. If after the first interview, you feel that you have more to share, you may elect to participate in a second interview. The interview(s) can occur in a public space, or a private space (such as your office, or home).

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may discontinue involvement at any time.

You will be provided the opportunity to provide feedback regarding your interview transcript. If you feel that there are items in the first interview transcript that you would like to address or clarify, you may elect to participate in second interview to provide additional feedback. Your participation in reviewing your interview transcript is also completely voluntary.

Your involvement with this study includes potential risks. Discussion during the interview process may bring up thoughts and feelings that you had not previously considered. Sharing your experience through discussion may make you more acutely aware of emotionally difficult experiences. Should you experience any distress or discomfort that is more than you expected, please contact Cortny at (505)452-7635. You may also wish to contact the New Mexico Crisis and Suicide Prevention Hotline, they can be reached at (855)-662-7474.

You will receive no monetary compensation for your participation.

Again, your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and should you elect to participate, you may discontinue at any time.

If you feel you understand the study and would like to participate, please respond to this email indicating your interest. The primary email contact for this study is starkc@unm.edu. Should you have any questions prior to participating, please utilize the aforementioned email address.

Thank you for your time and attention, and all you do for transgender and gender-expansive youth!

Student Investigator: Cortny Stark MA LMHC LADAC CRC

Principal Investigator: Jean Keim PhD ABPP

Study Title: Affecting Social Change for Transgender and Gender-Expansive Children:
Exploring Advocates' Perspectives

Appendix E: Demographic Survey

Demographic Survey adapted from Goodrich, Crofts, and Stark (2016)

Ethnicity: Which category or categories best describe your identity (choose all that apply):

- White
- African American or Black
- Hispanic or Latino/a/x
- Asian
- Native American
- Pacific Islander
- Multiracial/ethnic
- Another: _____
- Prefer not to answer

Gender

What sex were you assigned at birth? _____

What is your gender? _____

Sexual and/or Affectual Identity: Please select the category/categories that best describe your sexual or affectual identity:

- Asexual
- Heterosexual/straight
- Gay/lesbian
- Bisexual
- Pansexual
- Queer
- Questioning/not sure
- Another: _____

Age: What is your age?

- 18-24 years old
- 25-34 years old
- 35-44 years old
- 45-54 years old
- 55+ years old

Location: In which U.S. state do you reside? _____

Education: What is your highest level of education?

- Did not graduate high school
- High school diploma or equivalent
- Some college
- Associates degree
- Bachelors degree
- Masters degree
- Doctoral degree
- Prefer not to answer

Socioeconomic Status: What is your current annual income?

- Less than \$20,000
- \$20,000 to \$34,999
- \$35,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- Over \$100,000
- Prefer not to answer

Appendix F: Informed Consent

Affecting Social Change for Transgender and Gender-Expansive Children: Exploring Advocates' Perspectives *Informed Consent for Interviews*

Dr. Jean Keim and Cortny Stark from the department of Individual, Family, and Community Education are conducting a research study. The purpose of the research is to enhance overall knowledge concerning how advocates promote the wellbeing of transgender and gender-expansive children. You are being asked to participate in this study because your advocacy efforts for transgender and gender-expansive youth have contributed to positive social change for this population.

Your participation in this study will involve 1, 1 to 2 hour interview. The interview includes questions such as, "How did you become an advocate for transgender and gender-expansive children?". During the interview, you will be asked whether there are any advocacy-related media (e.g. articles, books, videos, movies, documentaries, podcasts) that may contribute to the researchers understanding of advocacy for transgender and gender-expansive youth. You will be provided the opportunity to review your interview transcripts. Should you wish to engage in further discussion of items in the transcript, or questions or discussion points from the interview, you may elect to participate in a second 1 hour interview.

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate. You can refuse to answer any of the questions at any time. There are no names or identifying information associated with your responses. There are no known risks in this study, but some individuals may experience discomfort or sense of loss of privacy when answering questions. Data will be stored on the student investigator's password protected computer. Audio recorded interviews will be transferred to the student investigator's computer, then deleted from the audio recorder. Once transcribed, audio recordings will be destroyed.

The findings from this project will provide information on how community-based advocates pursue positive change for transgender and gender-expansive children, and what advocates identify as the needs of this group. If published, results will primarily be presented in summary form, although quotes identified through the use of pseudonyms may be used.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call Dr. Jean Keim at (505) 277-1353, or by email at jkeim@unm.edu. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, or about what you should do in case of any harm to you, or if you want to obtain information or offer input you may call the UNM Office of the IRB (OIRB) at (505) 277-2644 or irb.unm.edu.

By verbally stating that you have read, and understand the informed consent, you will be agreeing to participate in the above described research study.