Thriving:
Addressing the Programmatic Needs of Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Young People

Matthew Arthur-Gray

Melissa Updegraff Wyatt

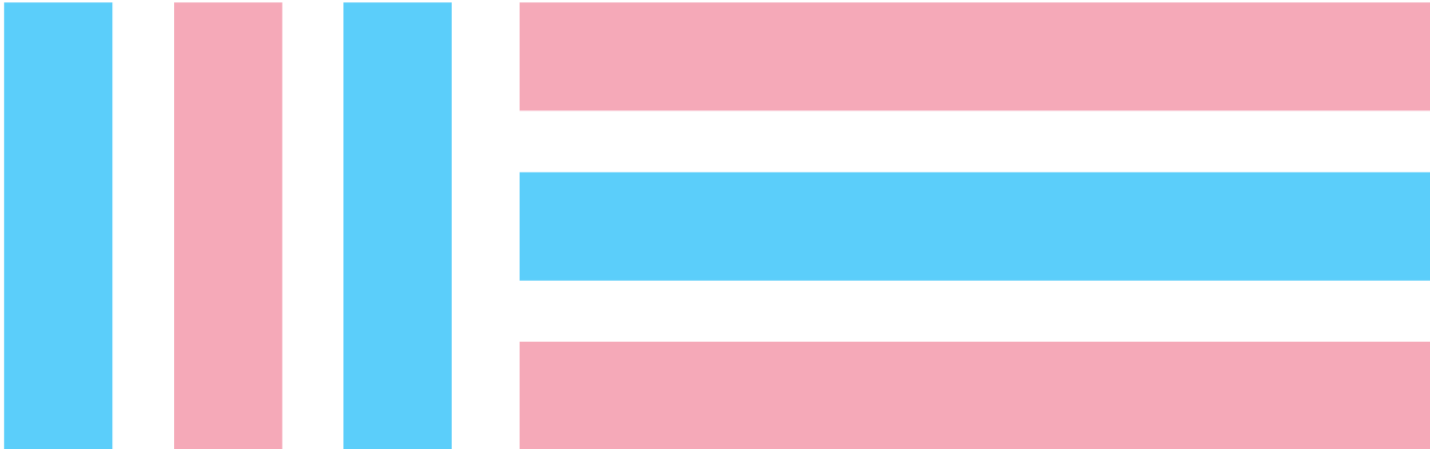VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

     This qualitative study examines the needs of transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals living in survival mode. For members of the trans community, survival mode is initiated by several potential factors, including housing instability, mental health disparities, bullying and discrimination, access to gender-affirming healthcare, educational experiences, and family support. Gathering evidence and first-hand stories from surveys and interviews of transgender and gender non-conforming individuals in the Kansas City area, this paper reveals needs from our participants' perspective. Interpreting these needs reveals gaps in existing programming and policies that positively impact the trans community. This research is to help Transformations, a trans advocacy organization, and other nonprofit organizations engage in developing policies and programming to support transgender and gender-nonconforming young people.

     Keywords: transgender, gender-nonconforming, survival mode, advocacy, policy, programming, non-profit, LGBTQIA+, LGBT.

Positionality of the Authors

Matthew Arthur-Gray's professional journey is marked by advocacy and dedication to creating equitable spaces. Matthew, a cisgender gay man, brings an authentic understanding of the LGBTQ+ experience to the research, appreciating the importance of allyship and intersectionality. As an individual committed to advocacy both within and outside the academic sphere, Matthew approaches this research with a genuine recognition of the need for humility and respect. His insights enrich the narrative, fostering a research environment that acknowledges the distinctions between his experiences and those of transgender individuals.

Melissa Updegraff Wyatt, a middle school principal with Trenton Public Schools in central New Jersey, is committed to creating safe and inclusive environments for students under her care. Rooted in her role as an educator, Melissa infuses her contribution to this research with a wealth of experience in fostering supportive spaces for diverse student populations. Melissa's commitment to inclusivity goes beyond the confines of her administrative role, extending into her academic pursuits as she seeks to understand and address the unique programming needs of transgender youth. Her positionality outside the transgender community is accompanied by a profound respect for the voices she aims to amplify.

Together, Melissa and Matthew weave research and narratives that transcend the boundaries of academia and resonate with the lived experiences of transgender young people in survival mode. Their collaborative effort is underpinned by an unwavering commitment to creating safe spaces, reflecting the ethos of inclusivity that both authors champion in their respective professional domains.

Note from the Authors:

Before moving into the following pages of academic nuance, we pause.

We pause to remember, cherish, and honor the lives that have been extinguished through hatred and anti-transgender violence. Each name written—and countless others not—embodies human stories of laughter, triumph, dreams, and love. These individuals were loved. They were children, parents, friends, and neighbors. They were artists, thinkers, dreamers, academics, and scientists. They had favorite songs, places to visit, memories, and future plans. The tapestry of their lives is not forgotten.

They desired to carve out a space of acceptance and understanding in a world that showed them neither.

Our collective work here extends beyond the academic pursuit. It's a call to empathy and understanding that we cannot afford to ignore. The cost of negligence is the immeasurable suffering of our fellow humans.

We remember you. We honor you. We say your names. We do so to strive for a world where everyone is free to be without fear.

Dana Martin, Ashanti Carmon, Claire Legato, Muhlaysia Booker, Michelle 'Tamika' Washington, Paris Cameron, Chynal Lindsey, Chanel Scurlock, Zoe Spears, Brooklyn Lindsey, Denali Berries Stuckey, Kiki Fantroy, Pebbles LaDime Doe, Bubba Walker, Tracy Single, Bailey Reeves, Bee Love Slater, Jamagio Jamar Berryman, Brianna "BB" Hill, Yahira Nesby, Monika Diamond, Lexi "Ebony" Sutton, Johanna Metzger, Serena Angelique Velazquez Ramos, Layla Pelaez Sánchez, Penélope Díaz Ramírez, Nina Pop, Helle Jae O'Regan, Tony McDade, Dominique "Rem'mie" Fells, Riah Milton, Merci Mack, Shaki Peters, Bree Black, Summer Taylor, Marilyn Cazares, Dior H Ova, Queasha D Hardy, Aja Raquell Rhone-Spears, Kee Sam, Aerrion Burnett, Mia Green, Michelle Michellyn Ramos Vargas, Felycya Harris, Brooklyn Deshuna, Sara Blackwood, Angel Unique, Skylar Heath, Yampi Méndez Arocho, Neulisa Luciano Ruiz, Yuni Carey, Asia Jynai Foster, Kimberly Susan Fial, Jaheem Harris, Dustin Parker, Neulisa Luciano Ruiz, Yampi Méndez Arocho, Monika Diamond, Lexi, Patsy Andrea Del Rey, Nina Pop, Helle Jae O'Regan, Tony McDade, Dominique Rem'mie Fells, Riah Milton, Jayne Thompson, Selena Reyes-Hernandez, Brian "Egypt' Powers, Brayla Stone, Merci Mack, Shaki Peters, Bree Black, Draya McCarty, Tatiana Hall, Brayla Stone, Merci Mack, Shaki Peters, Bree Black, Summer Taylor, Marilyn Cazares, Dior H Ova, Queasha D. Hardy, Tiffany Harris, Aja Raquell Rhone-Spears, Aerrion Burnett, Mia Green, Kee Sam, Aja Raquell Rhone-Spears, Scott/Scottlynn Devore, Celine Walker, Tonya Harvey, Zakaria Fry, Phylicia Mitchell, Amia Tyrae Berryman, Sasha Wall, Karla Patricia Flores-Pavón, Nino Fortson, Gigi Pierce, Antash'a

Thriving: Addressing the Programmatic Needs of Transgender and

Gender-Nonconforming Youth

Part I: Organizational Context

Transformations is an organization located in Kansas City, Missouri. In 2016, Executive Director Merrique Jensen responded to a series of violent acts against Black trans women in and around Kansas City. Through her activism, Transformations was formed. At its inception, Transformations was committed to supporting trans youth of color in survival mode. By offering this support and guidance to trans and nonbinary youth, Merrique felt the organization could prevent future acts of violence for those without traditional support systems. Through education, stabilization, and assistance through gender-affirming healthcare, Transformations empowered transgender and gender-nonconforming youth with tools that allowed them to move beyond survival mode and into a space where they could embrace and enjoy life experiences.

Transformations grew with the youth they served and adapted to their constituents' needs. Today, the organization is focused on boosting leadership possibilities for trans women of color and providing support for young trans people who are in survival mode. Recently, Transformations expanded its service area from local to regional, offering advocacy, support, and leadership capacity building in the Arkansas, Kansas, and Missouri tri-state areas. As the organization's sole full-time employee, Merrique marshalls the support of a loyal and connected volunteer base to provide services and programming.

As Transformations grows its services and advocacy throughout the tri-state area, the organization focuses on serving as a resource for young trans people in survival mode. The organization realizes the importance of its early work of supporting trans youth in survival mode and the need to bolster trans women of color in leadership roles throughout the region. Given the

two prongs of possible inquiry, we felt compelled to support Transformations in providing programming for trans youth in survival mode. From our research, we hope to lay the foundation for other organizations that work to improve the lives of trans people everywhere.

Understanding Survival Mode

Harvard Health (2020) defines survival mode as "booting the human brain in safe mode" where only essential functions exist, usually due to trauma. Living in survival mode often means basic needs go unmet as energy is focused on the short-term need to exist instead of a long-term comprehensive path to overall homeostasis (Matthews & Tye, 2019). As we worked with Transformations, Ms. Jensen repeatedly brought forth concerns related to trans young people being in crisis. Through our conversations and interviews with her, we came to refer to this condition as survival mode. Over a few weeks, we attempted to define survival mode further as it pertains to the transgender community, and six prevalent areas of concern emerged:

1. **Housing Stability:** Homelessness is a significant issue that disproportionately affects trans young people compared to their hetero counterparts (Cochran et al., 2002). Trans young people experience homelessness for various complex reasons, including family conflict, physical abuse, and desire for more freedom (Cochran et al., 2002). While research shows there are advantages to leaving a hostile living environment and finding/building a supportive community (Shelton, 2016), the instability of the transition period creates discomfort and leads to possible survival mode. Unfortunately, when a young person openly identifies as trans, it impacts their ability to find temporary or transitional housing. Furthermore, being a young trans person attempting to navigate complicated systems leaves one vulnerable to potentially living on the streets.

2. **Mental Health Disparities:** Gender-nonconforming and transgender young people often face higher mental health challenges than their cisgender peers. Studies have found elevated depression, anxiety, self-harm, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts among transgender young people (Trevor Report, 2022). Minority stress, including discrimination, stigma, and lack of social support, contributes to these disparities.

3. **Bullying and Discrimination:** Gender-nonconforming and transgender young people are at an increased risk of experiencing bullying, harassment, and discrimination in various settings, including schools and communities—negative experiences impact mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being (Trevor Report, 2022).

4. **Access to Gender-Affirming Healthcare:** Gender-affirming healthcare, including hormone therapy, puberty blockers, and gender-affirming surgeries, can be essential for the well-being of transgender young people. Access to healthcare services is often hindered due to financial barriers, a lack of knowledgeable healthcare providers, and restrictive legal and insurance policies.

5. **Educational Experiences:** Gender-nonconforming and transgender young people often encounter difficulties in educational settings. They may face hostility, discrimination, and a lack of inclusive policies and resources. Affirming school environments must include comprehensive anti-bullying policies, inclusive curricular experiences, and sensitivity training for staff.

6. **Family Support:** Positive family support plays a significant role in the well-being of gender-nonconforming and transgender young people. Studies have shown that young people who receive support from their families experience better mental health outcomes, higher self-esteem, and improved overall adjustment. However, some young people may

face rejection or lack of understanding from their families, leading to increased vulnerability.

These areas of concern direct us to understand what is needed to support transgender and gender-nonconforming (TGNC) youth effectively. By exploring the impact of these concerns, our project aims to answer these questions: What are the needs of transgender and gender-nonconforming young people living in survival mode? In what ways can Transformations provide programmatic support to improve the well-being of this group?

To fully understand the impact of the issues outlined above, a focused review of literature and research was conducted and shared with Transformations. Reviewing existing literature was necessary to understand how trans young people are supported by programming and services offered by other organizations. This assisted Transformations with defining the advocacy, services, and programs they will offer trans young people in survival mode throughout the tri-state area.

To triangulate the information gathered in the literature review and provide Transformations stakeholders with a relevance factor of trans youth needs in the Kansas City region, we worked with Transformations to conduct surveys and interviews of young trans adults (18-24) connected to Transformations. Answers to our specific research questions allowed us to assist Transformations in identifying possible growth areas to support trans young people. This capstone aimed to conduct a needs assessment of TGNC young people and provide Transformations with programming recommendations that fulfill its mission of supporting young people in survival mode.

Part II: Problem of Practice

According to data from The Trevor Project (2023), 41% of LGBTQ young people seriously considered suicide within the past year. For young people who identify as transgender, nonbinary, gender-nonconforming, and/or people of color, the rates of considering suicide were even higher (The Trevor Project, 2023). Research reveals several possible reasons for higher rates of mental health challenges that lead to suicidal ideation or death by suicide in the TGNC community. These reasons include bullying, discrimination, harassment, rejection by family, and lack of access to or banned gender-affirming healthcare. The question then becomes: How can one organization offer to affirm advocacy, services, and programming to support trans young people while stabilizing mental health? The issue we sought to help Transformations understand was two-fold: (1) What are the needs of transgender and gender-nonconforming young people living in survival mode?; and (2). In what ways can Transformations provide programmatic support to improve the well-being of this group?

Through interviews with groups of TGNC young adults (ages 18-24), the project sought to understand their diverse needs and how they could best be supported and served. The outcome of this project is recommendations for programming that improves access to housing stability, healthcare and mental health support, education, and family support while diminishing bullying and discrimination against TGNC youth.

During the first quarter of 2023, to promote its expansion of support into the tri-state area, Transformations conducted a listening tour. Transgender and gender-nonconforming participants and respondents shared personal stories and responded to Transformations's anonymous survey. Following the tour, Transformations was left wondering how to maintain its mission of supporting Black and Latina trans women while also returning to its roots of engaging

trans and nonbinary youth in the community. Our project sought to support Transformations in finding answers and possible solutions to its wonderings.

Since its inception in 2016, Transformations has been committed to serving young people in survival mode by providing grants and financial support to ease the transition into gender-affirming housing or healthcare. However, one organization cannot supply the financial resources to alleviate the needs of young trans people living in survival mode. As Transformations relies on this research to identify opportunities to enhance the lives of transgender and gender-nonconforming young people in their tri-state area, we know that other organizations may benefit from this information as well. We acknowledge that there is a gap in the research supporting the programming and policy needs of transgender and gender-nonconforming young people. If this research gap remains, we expect that trans young people will continue to experience living in survival mode.

Terminology and Definitions

This research was conducted in 2023. During the last few decades, terminology has rapidly expanded, and we expect it to continue to do so. We acknowledge that none of the feelings, identities, and expressions are new to the LGBTQIA+ community; they have existed throughout time. It is just now that social norms have expanded to begin embracing words and definitions that more adequately and specifically convey these feelings, identities, and expressions. To establish and apply a common understanding throughout this paper, we will use the following terminology and definitions from Brill and Kenney (2016) with a more comprehensive list in Appendix D.

- **Gender:** The complex interrelationship between the body (our experience of our bodies, as well as how society genders our bodies and interacts with us based on our bodies and

perceived sex); identity (internal sense of self as male, female, neither, a blend of both, or something else; who we privately know ourselves to be); and expression (how we present our gender to others, and how society, culture, community and family perceive, interact with, and try to shape our gender).

- **Gender identity:** A person's innermost core concept of self which can include male, female, a blend of both, neither, and many more. Gender identity is how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth. Gender identity can evolve and shift over time.

- **Gender-nonconforming:** Gender that does not comply with societal, cultural, communal, and/or familial expectations of gender.

- **Non-binary gender:** An umbrella term for gender identities and expressions that are not exclusively male or female. People who identify their gender as non-binary can feel that they are both male and female, neither male nor female, or something else altogether.

- **Sex:** Refers to a person's biological status (male, female, intersex). Indicators of sex include sex chromosomes, internal reproductive organs, and external genitalia.

- **Sexual orientation:** Part of one's identity that is romantically and/or sexually attracted to others. Sexual orientation and gender are separate, though related, parts of one's overall identity.

- **Transgender/trans:** These terms can be used as umbrella terms to describe an individual whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex at birth.

Part III: Review of Literature

Our literature review provides the foundation for understanding the needs of young trans people in survival mode. Through an in-depth examination of peer-reviewed scholarly articles accessible through Vanderbilt University's databases, we constructed a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted experiences of this marginalized group. More importantly, we focused on learning how living in survival mode impacts an individual's overall well-being. If located, we also explored what other non-profit organizations have done in this field.

Recent research shows that young adults who identify as transgender or gender-nonconforming negotiate complicated difficulties (Curry et al., 2023). These challenges can negatively influence their general well-being and ability to support themselves. Deeply ingrained social norms and biases frequently subject TGNC individuals to stigmatization, discrimination, and systemic obstacles that can cause them to go into survival mode (White et al., 2015). The term "survival mode" describes the coping methods and approaches people use to help them endure and persevere despite challenging situations when exposed to intense and ongoing stressors (Katz-Wise et al., 2018).

Developing an individual's gender identity is a complex and varied process. One's gender identity might not match one's assigned sex at birth (generally based on the visual examination of genitals). It is because of this discrepancy between assigned sex at birth and experienced gender that phrases like "gender-varied" and "gender-nonconforming" are used. The term "transgender" refers to people whose gender identification differs from their assigned sex at birth and who may identify as such while they explore and define their gender identity (Katz-Wise et al., 2018). Contrarily, people are referred to as cisgender if they identify with the sex and gender that was assigned to them at birth.

Simply put, gender-nonconforming includes individuals in a social construct who do not recognize themselves as a specific gender (Bhatt et al., 2022). Scholars explain that gender is an internal self-identity that may or may not correspond to a person's behavior (Bhatt et al., 2022). In other words, how a person behaves or styles themselves in public is categorized as gender expression. This means that a person's gender occasionally does not correlate with their gender identity.

Gender nonconformity may become apparent in confident children within the first few years of life, but a study into the natural history of this condition is still underway (Bhatt et al., 2022). Throughout infancy, adolescence, or later in life, some gender-nonconforming kids may maintain a gender identification that differs from the one given to them (Ehrensaft, 2017). Research on gender development in the general population indicates that gender-typed behavior tends to stabilize between three and eight years of age, particularly in kids demonstrating relatively high or low gender-typical behavior (Meyer, 2003). Due to societal views, discrimination, and prejudice, young adults within the TGNC group confront distinctive and interconnected obstacles. These difficulties could push a person into survival mode, marked by a constant drive to survive in a dangerous situation (Bhatt et al., 2022). Therefore, it was essential to comprehend the elements that contribute to the survival mode to design focused interventions and advocacy activities that support and uplift TGNC young adults. Due to the intersectional pressures they experience due to their gender identity and expression, survival mode for TGNC young adults in Kansas City, Missouri, generally develops into a coping strategy.

The urgent topic of survival mode among TGNC young adults in Kansas City, Missouri, is explored in this project through a thorough assessment of the literature. The latest events in Kansas City, Missouri, surrounding the plan to designate the city as a sanctuary for

gender-affirming care, present a critical chance to address the difficulties experienced by young transgender and gender-nonconforming adults in the area (Press, 2023). While Kansas City strives to provide a welcoming and accepting atmosphere for its LGBTQIA+ population, initiatives by state lawmakers to restrict gender-affirming care for some adults and outlaw it for children present significant challenges to the well-being and livelihoods of TGNC people (Hanna & Stafford, 2023). With a focus on the experiences of TGNC young adults in survival mode and the intersections of multiple social identities that shape their reality, this study's applicability to Kansas City became clear. The City Council's proposed resolution demonstrated the city's dedication to supporting gender-affirming care that supports a culture where TGNC people feel appreciated and safe.

Due to state-level limitations and potential clashes with law enforcement agencies, the news sources expressed concern about the potential difficulties with implementing the resolution(Hanna & Stafford, 2023). These problems highlighted the urgent need for all-inclusive treatments designed to meet the needs of TGNC young adults in Kansas City who are merely trying to survive. Therefore, the main goal of this study was to investigate the significance of transformative programming and policy advocacy as strategies for meeting the needs of this vulnerable population. This study intends to contribute to ongoing efforts to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for TGNC people in the area by identifying the fundamental reasons for survival mode and reviewing current programs and regulations.

Findings and Discussion of Literature

Twenty-nine articles (Appendix E) were included in the research after the literature review. The study's findings were grouped into the following questions:

1. How do we define survival response and survival mode?

2. What are the needs of TGNC young people living in survival mode?

3. In what ways are the life experiences of TGNC young people improved or enhanced through policy and programming?

Understanding Survival Mode as Coping Strategies

The study's findings shed light on how TGNC individuals develop their survival mechanisms and the underlying causes. Survival mode serves as a coping strategy for TGNC people to endure and persevere amidst ongoing challenges, such as being stigmatized and discriminated against due to gender identity. Bry et al. (2017) investigated how adolescent transgender and sexual minority women and men manage minority stress despite suffering stigma from their families. According to the findings, TGNC people use various coping mechanisms to prevent adverse outcomes, including depressive and anxious symptoms at both the individual and contextual levels. The three coping mechanisms found in the study include problem-solving, support-seeking, and accommodation techniques. Each coping mechanism has specific strategies to engage in an effort to lead a healthier lifestyle. Two problem-solving techniques are confronting stigmatizers and achieving financial independence to live apart from stigmatizing family members. Engaging the support-seeking coping mechanism could include strategies such as building a chosen family, using a mediator to deal with unsupportive family members, looking for social support, and participating in social activities. When considering the coping mechanism of accommodation, activities such as self-soothing, concentrating on one's moral compass, accepting and forgiving, and looking ahead are beneficial strategies. Reframing stigmatizing events cognitively makes it easier to apply various coping mechanisms, including relying on one's moral compass, confronting stigma offenders, and practicing acceptance and forgiveness.

According to Bry et al. (2017), young people who identify with a minoritized sexual group frequently use coping mechanisms, including proactive and preventative ones, to manage their stress. While some tactics concentrate on navigating a heterosexist culture, others deal directly with issues, such as addressing discriminators and enlisting helpful services. Some strategies aim to help people navigate these circumstances rather than try to change them because it has been proposed that some parts of minority stress may be inescapable.

Bry et al. (2017) also highlight the significance of self-efficacy and self-esteem for coping among TGNC people. Most individuals showed high levels of self-efficacy and self-esteem, consistent with resilience research in other populations. Devaluing societal acceptance has been highlighted as a coping mechanism, particularly in response to prejudice experienced outside of family and friends. The study also looks at how some young people deal with the stigmatizing beliefs of their parents' religion while maintaining their sexual orientation or gender identity. Participant tactics included highlighting religious principles that support their position, exercising critical thought, affiliating with affirming churches and reinterpreting religious texts, among others. The importance of seeking social support was also emphasized. For instance, acceptance from friends was said to help individuals feel more confident and comfortable with themselves.

Maladaptive and Adaptive Coping Strategies

The findings of this assessment are classified into adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies. These strategies are broader and also more informative and thus make it easier for assessment. This classification was borrowed from the study by Malpas et al. (2022). Adaptive coping strategies entail those with a higher chance of instituting more positive outcomes for an individual and their overall well-being and quality of life. They primarily include the sourcing of

social support and problem-seeking coping strategies. On the other hand, maladaptive strategies have poorer social outcomes. They include self-isolation and alienation from society as a coping strategy or simply ignoring the presence of the stressors of the social and cultural environments.

The findings proposed the efficacy of several factors as the primary influencing factors determining and affecting the use of either adaptive or maladaptive coping strategies. The different coping strategies identified have been associated generally with the perspective and temperament of an individual. A study by Oorthuys et al. (2022) associated positive emotions with the utilization of adaptive techniques both for cisgender and transgender individuals. On the other hand, the presence and prevalence of negative emotions in an individual are often associated with an increased propensity for using maladaptive strategies.

Adaptive strategies have been associated with better quality of life and outcomes than maladaptive coping strategies. This is because they enhance and help improve the chances of an individual doing better. Assessments by Lian et al. (2022) highlighted the resilience and optimism associated with individuals with adaptive coping strategies in society and life, often having the best quality of life (Weinhardt et al., 2017). A positive attitude and an optimistic view of life tend to drive an individual more toward problem-solving and social support seeking, which ultimately leads to positive psychosocial well-being (Wright et al., 2021).

On the downside, maladaptive coping strategies have been associated with individuals primarily with negative emotions. Negative emotions are associated with poor self-esteem and extreme environmental stress that institutes an imbalance in the emotional well-being of an individual. Maladaptive coping strategies tend to have worse outcomes compared to adaptive coping strategies. These strategies have been associated with poorer outcomes regarding an individual's quality of life and overall well-being.

Coping Strategies

This literature assessment revealed that one of the most common coping strategies employed by individuals of the transgender community was social acceptance strategies, which entailed support-seeking, problem-solving, and adaptive or accommodation strategies. The findings suggested that support seeking was most common among most participants and the least deleterious. Support seeking as a coping mechanism tended to drive a majority of the youth primarily towards negating their dissenting families as they became more independent and reliant on the outside community for acceptance and affirmation that was not coming from their immediate family.

Support-seeking as a coping strategy has its share of benefits and limitations. Social support is beneficial because it is an easy and straightforward approach to coping with the challenges TGNC people face (Freire et al., 2020). This is because it entails directly talking to a member of the family who is likely to be more receptive and understanding of the situation. Secondly, it does not require any costs. Numerous organizations in the United States offer services and help to gender minority individuals. These organizations are free, and when they ascertain a sterile environment, they can institute legal measures to help TGNC individuals. Thirdly, this approach allows an individual to source an environment that favors them rather than one that causes them to struggle or does not prefer them. This allows them easy access to resources and personnel that could help them counter their social traumas that possibly emanate from years of neglect and bullying due to their specific gender identities (Oorthuys et al., 2022).

On the other hand, several limitations come with social support seeking as a coping strategy for TGNC individuals. The first weakness concerns insufficient facilities and organizations for gender minority individuals (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010). Research from

Weinhardt et al. (2017) revealed numerous organizations for homeless individuals, individuals from minority races, and poor domestic workers. However, far fewer facilities and organizations cater to the needs of individuals of the TGNC community. Secondly, there is immense stigma from the cultural setting attached to talking on matters regarding gender identity that fall outside of the binary of hetero-normity. This tremendous stigma implies that most youth are unwilling to speak up and truthfully address their concerns regarding their true feelings. Religion, culture, and systemic measures have been instituted such that every individual is fixed into a specific category of gender identity, and anyone being out of these categories is considered abnormal and an outcast (Freire et al., 2020). Such stigmatizations at the social and cultural levels discourage and demotivate TGNC youth from seeking out organizations, according to Freire et al. (2020).

The second primary coping strategy employed as a survival mechanism by TGNC individuals is problem-solving. Individuals in the TGNC community face tremendous discrimination in various sectors of society and even the economy (Berger, 2022), a reality that has resulted in a series of workarounds being implemented within a system that is not structured to be inclusive of people in marginalized groups. Assessments by Combs et al. (2018) reveal that accessing job opportunities for TGNC people can be difficult because of employer discrimination. While facing potential employment discrimination, one of the most potent and critical problem-solving strategies for TGNC individuals is attaining financial stability. Financial stability is essential to the survival of TGNC individuals. According to Stampini et al. (2016), financial stability enhances the self-reliance of most TGNC youth. Reaching financial stability is a necessity when considering the cost of gender-affirming legal and medical services that TGNC people require throughout their lifetime. One drawback to the coping strategy of financial stability is the risks at which it places TGNC youth–leaving some youth to seek the unsafe

practice of sex work for monetary compensation. Financial stability, as such, is a potent coping strategy but only works for a small segment of TGNC youth.

The third primary strategy employed for coping entails the use of accommodating techniques. Accommodation describes practices of accepting oneself and one's perspectives regarding life (Wright et al., 2021). Engaging in accommodating techniques can look like self-soothing, developing goals for future lives, and developing a moral compass directed and channeled toward a specific perspective. Nonetheless, accommodating as a coping strategy has numerous advantages and disadvantages. Adaptive coping is a simple mechanism that entails downplaying the negative stressors. It helps decrease the impacts of the stressors and also entails avoiding situations that could lead to a stressor's increased prevalence and potency. However, accommodation techniques for coping mechanisms also have several disadvantages. The first is that these techniques only sometimes resolve conflicts. Furthermore, numerous unhealthy accommodating practices are harmful rather than advantageous to an individual. They include the countless maladaptive techniques individuals under stress tend to employ and utilize.

A fourth coping strategy found in the literature but not included in our list of reporting is the avoidance strategy. It is mentioned here to acknowledge it as a strategy; however, it could lead to other negative outcomes that require additional intervention. Avoidance strategy was common among the studies investigated, including Green et al. (2022). Avoidance was associated with self-isolation, marginalization, and sometimes the avoidance of finding solutions to challenges and seeking help. Lian et al. (2022) depict avoidance strategies as more protective and therefore directed towards minimizing the most harm from happening. However, avoidance strategies have been determined to be the least effective and to result in the poorest outcomes

among individuals involved. This is because the instituted shield surrounding the individual makes it difficult to realize self-actualization.

Factors Influencing Coping Strategy Dependency

The above coping strategies, whether adaptive or maladaptive, tend to have several influencing factors. The social, genetic, and environmental factors that determine the temperament of an individual influence the type of coping strategy they come up with. These choices can either be adaptive or maladaptive. A study by Carver and Connor-Smith (2010) identified anger and optimism as primary factors influencing an individual's preferred coping strategy. This is based on individuals' natural and typical tendency to respond according to their temperaments. Individuals with negative emotions are more likely to react negatively. Minor stressors, anxiety, and depression can lead them to choose deleterious coping strategies for themselves and society at large, and thus, they are likely to adopt accommodating techniques.

Individuals with a positive temperament are likely to source social support and seek help from relevant bodies and instruments for their protection. They are likely to source for accommodation but aim to rationalize or accept their position as individuals that "will never be understood" (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010). On the other hand, individuals with negative emotions are likely to self-isolate, move away from even the little social structure that they have, and sink into more anxiety and depression, a cascade that can negatively affect their mental and emotional well-being (Expósito-Campos et al., 2023).

Society has unveiled a rise in support groups for minorities and underserved populations. These groups, hosted by organizations and communities, provide an environment and ground through which the TGNC youth can source for support. However, sourcing for support specifically related to the needs of TGNC youth, the opportunities for this type of community are

limited. When the support community is connected to a school, it can come with a parental consent requirement, which can lead the TGNC youth to avoid or reject support. TGNC youth also seek to participate in social movements, organizations, activities, and protests aimed at enhancing inclusivity and, by being part of such groups, feel like they have a meaningful life and are supported in their quest to live comfortably. More and more TGNC and gender minority youth have turned towards the aforementioned coping strategies to survive.

The quest for freedom, belonging, and survival pushes most TGNC young people to function based on the different coping strategies. Numerous factors fuel the inception of the specific coping strategies expressed by TGNC people. These factors combine to form the concept of survival mode. Housing instability for a TGNC youth initiates the use of coping skills. Society is not yet fully accepting and welcoming of LGBTQ people and not fully understanding of TGNC youth. Wright et al. (2021) reveal that accessing housing is difficult for TGNC people and even more so for TGNC youth. Thus, they are forced into survival measures because there are no safe and secure assurances or provisions for housing. Moreover, the stress, trauma, and discrimination faced by individuals who are navigating housing instability generally lead to mental health complications (Hatchel & Marx, 2018). These can be forms of stress and anxiety that grow and become excessive, forcing TGNC individuals to devise measures of surviving. Bullying is another significant factor that leads one to develop coping strategies. Bullying stems from the inherent prejudices that most people hold against people of minoritized communities, especially around sexual identity. TGNC individuals endure bullying in schools and society, are met with discrimination, and are often forced to develop measures of coping with such circumstances. TGNC youth face inadequate access to healthcare, essentially denying an intrinsic right that ensures their well-being and quality of life. When they are denied

gender-affirming care they are forced to cope with society's disjointed modes of their self-identity. The lack of insurance coverage means they have to source healthcare solutions elsewhere as a means of coping. Negative experiences in their education lead most TGNC youth to develop coping measures in real life. This is because most of the bullying and discrimination often happens in their schools, where these youth spend most of their time. In addition to bullying and discrimination, some school districts force educators to out transgender and gender-nonconforming students to their families. From these educational experiences, intrinsic coping strategies are evolved and maintained even throughout adulthood. Insufficient family support makes most TGNC youth seek coping mechanisms (Malpas et al., 2022). The need for coping strategies comes from insufficient support for their self-identification and choice of living.

Bullying has been classified under psychosocial factors, a broader category encompassing more psychosocial factors that seem to be most potently and prominently associated with the need for coping strategies among TGNC people. Psychosocial factors primarily include those related to physical assault and discrimination, which emanate from stigma and feeling out of place. A study by Mulavu et al. (2023) revealed that psychosocial factors such as rejection heavily contributed to increased need and demand for coping strategies among Zambian social minorities. The level of social acceptance among African countries to racial minorities is the least positive, suggesting that their sexual minority survivors are the extreme reception of social neglect (Weinhardt et al., 2017). The major coping strategies associated with psychosocial factors include self-concealment, social support, listening to music, and substance abuse (Mulavu et al., 2023). Some factors, such as self-concealment and substance

abuse, impact the individual's quality of life and well-being. Most end up being impaired and unable to function appropriately in a society where they have been rejected.

A majority of these factors are social-based—based on the rigid structural framework on which society is based. Others, on the other hand, are personal. Society's rigid social structure necessitates only two types of gender and probably a third, all of which are only medically instituted. Strict social networks have impeded the need for and justification of perceptions and individual feelings. Research by Lian et al. (2021) reveals that it is very potent and possible for an individual to feel continually affiliated with a different gender than the one they were assigned. The term has been classified as gender dysphoria and describes the "deep sense of unease and distress that may occur when your biological sex does not match your gender identity" (Berger, 2022). This sentiment and notion in itself magnifies the immense discriminatory nature of current society towards individuals of gender minorities (Lian et al., 2021). Secondly, there is a lack of sufficient legal basis and social institutions and organizations to support TNGC individuals. There are numerous organizations and facilities for other minority affiliations but very few for gender minorities because of the inherent stigma associated with issues related to gender identity. These factors point out the void regarding efforts that have to be instituted to ensure and enhance inclusion and inclusivity, primarily for the group of individuals who identify as TGNC.

Understanding the Concerns that Lead to Survival Mode

The breakdown of the causes of survival mode identified six crucial risk factors: housing instability, mental health disparities, bullying and discrimination, access to gender-affirming healthcare, educational experiences, and family support.

Housing Instability. A significant contributing factor was housing instability, which forced TGNC people into survival mode. Lack of secure housing might make it harder to acquire resources, which makes going into survival mode as a coping method important (Wright et al., 2021). The provision of mental health services was also pointed out as a factor in TGNC people's use of survival mode. Increased stress and adverse mental health outcomes can be caused by discrimination and limited access to gender-affirming mental healthcare, necessitating survival mode to deal with these difficulties (Becerra et al., 2018). In other words, the results indicated that many intricately linked elements influence TGNC people's survival mode. Housing instability and access to mental healthcare are highlighted as key causes, while psychological affirmation and social affirmation are identified as critical coping mechanisms (Hatchel & Marx, 2018).

Mental Health Disparities. The results of this study offer significant new information about the mental health treatment requirements for young transgender and gender-nonconforming people. Becerra et al. (2018) discovered that diagnoses connected to hospitalizations show that mental health disorders, particularly anxiety and depression, are common and frequently severe among TGNC adolescents. Children who identify as gender-nonconforming between the ages of three and nine had more significant anxiety and attention deficit disorder rates than their cisgender peers (Becerra et al., 2018). These results align with earlier studies showing the greater frequency of mental health conditions among TGNC people.

Interestingly, Becerra et al. (2018) speculate that gender dysphoria and autistic spectrum disorders may be related. Becerra et al.'s (2018) study on transgender youth suggests they may be more likely than the general population to develop autism spectrum disorders. These findings

emphasize the significance of early identification and assistance for transgender children and adolescents' mental health needs. Additionally, Lian et al. 2022 asserted that the transgender stigma may cause gender identity to be concealed, harming the mental health and general well-being of transgender and gender-uncertain youth. As a result, the study promotes the adoption of laws that shield TGNC kids from harassment and prejudice. As a result, mental health professionals need to be aware of this population's growth and ready to give prompt and suitable medical and psychosocial services.

Bullying and Discrimination. One study (Lian et al., 2022) provided significant insights into the bullying and harassment transgender and gender-nonconforming (GNC) kids endure in US high schools. According to Lian et al. (2022), regulations safeguarding TGNC children from negative experiences are essential if bullying of transgender kids is to be reduced. The impact of gender-nonconformity varies based on assigned sex at birth (ASAB), according to Lian et al.'s (2022) study. According to the survey, GNC is seen as more acceptable by students assigned female at birth (AFAB) than by students designated male at birth (AMAB). This is because AMAB students are more tolerant of gender-nonconforming conduct, and society values masculinity more (Lian et al., 2022). In contrast to AFAB GNC students, AMAB GNC kids may experience worse treatment and discrimination.

Another intriguing finding revealed that male and female pupils who identify as transgender are at an increased risk of being the targets of bullying (Lian et al., 2022). This result is consistent with earlier studies that indicated transgender adolescents were more likely to be the victims of bullying and gender-based harassment. It is vital to remember that students who are unclear about their gender identity are more likely to be bullied. According to a different study, people who identify as members of gender-diverse groups are more likely to suffer bullying in

schools (Kwok, 2018). Bullying is also linked to poor mental health outcomes since it is a distal stressor. Adolescents who experienced maltreatment and peer bullying had higher odds of considering suicide and a higher risk of developing anxiety disorders.

Access to Gender-Affirming Healthcare. The results show that there are currently inequities in access to gender-affirming healthcare, with obstacles such as geographic differences in qualified providers, worry about prejudice from healthcare communities, and differences in health insurance coverage (Wright et al., 2021). Many TGNC youth cannot access the care they require due to these hurdles, which increases their risk of aggression, mental health problems, and suicidal thoughts. In a different study, gender-affirming healthcare received favorable and unfavorable responses (Wright et al., 2021).

The study's findings indicate that participants' interactions with their general practitioners (GPs) varied. However, some had pleasant interactions and supportive connections with their doctors; others felt their care was inadequate or unsupportive. Positive primary care patient experiences often center on the delivery of treatment that the patient feels is suitable for their experience and attentiveness, and treats them as a whole person (Wright et al., 2021). Being addressed as a "whole person" meant their experience, such as their trans identity, was not minimized. Negative encounters were frequently attributed to practitioners' ignorance of or inability to relate to trans patients. Some interviewees reported receiving primary medical care while having their trans status treated as a hindrance, cause, or distraction. The fact that GPs reacted negatively to gender disclosure was another indication of barriers to providing quality treatment.

Educational Experience. According to research on TGNC youth's educational experiences, there are alarmingly high rates of victimization and security threats in schools

(Hatchel & Marx, 2018). According to research, more than 70% of TGNC high school-age adolescents reported being victimized by peers the previous year (Hatchel & Marx, 2018). This finding emphasizes how ubiquitous bullying and harassment are for these students. Furthermore, 75% of transgender students who took part in a national study on school safety reported feeling unsafe because of their gender identity or gender presentation (Hatchel & Marx, 2018). This percentage is noticeably more significant than the figures provided by cisgender sexual minority students, which suggests that TGNC students in educational settings suffer particular and enhanced dangers.

The effects of these unpleasant events on TGNC kids are extensive. The same national study found that more than 85% of respondents had encountered transphobic remarks at school, resulting in a hostile environment for transgender pupils (Hatchel & Marx, 2018). More than half of transgender kids said they could not use their preferred names or pronouns in school, which added to their alienation and isolation. The well-being of TGNC youth is affected negatively by these upsetting school experiences over the long run. According to research, bullying at school negatively affects LGBTQ+ young people's mental and physical health as they enter young adulthood and is linked to a diminished sense of school belonging (Hatchel & Marx, 2018). This implies that bullying and prejudice in schools can negatively affect people well into adulthood, affecting many different elements of their lives.

The results addressing TGNC children's experiences at school emphasize the significant difficulties they have due to genderism, a worldwide issue. For TGNC students, going to school has been the most challenging part of growing up (Kwok, 2018). These traumatic events, primarily due to institutionalized genderism, where school policies and practices may marginalize TGNC students while elevating cisgender pupils, can significantly impact their

academic performance and mental health. The use of gendered uniform codes, the refusal to use the names and pronouns of TGNC students, the exclusion of TGNC problems from sexuality education curricula, and rules that separate facility use based on gender are a few examples of genderism in schools (Kwok, 2018). TGNC students experience higher rates of harassment and a sense of unease due to these practices, which foster an unwelcoming and unsafe environment (Trevor Report, 2022).

Another UK-based study found that healthcare professionals may experience confusion and bewilderment when dealing with patients who exhibit a variety of gender expressions and autism (Carlile, 2019). Consequently, this might prevent them from receiving the proper clinical and therapeutic assistance for their gender identity. The lack of collaboration between medical professionals who diagnose autism and those involved in gender identity evaluation was one crucial problem that was found. This issue was demonstrated by the case of an eight-year-old student who socially transitioned to female but still desired to use the restrooms provided by the teachers owing to noise-related anxiety brought on by her autism (Carlie, 2019). The school anticipated she would want to use the bathrooms for girls with a supportive attitude, but she declined because her nervousness was unconnected to her gender identification. The student experienced miscommunications and discomfort due to the lack of information about her autism diagnosis or lack of understanding about her gender identity.

Family Support. The research on family support for TGNC kids and teens revealed numerous crucial issues that must be addressed to protect the physical and mental health of TGNC people and their parents. Family support is essential for the acceptance, assistance, and companionship of TGNC youth. Still, the study reveals a few difficulties parents encounter when getting proper help and comprehension from medical professionals (Carlile, 2019). The tense

connection between parents and healthcare providers, notably CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) and GPs, is one key issue that has come to light (Carlile, 2019). Parents acknowledged their dissatisfaction with the insufficient support of these services, which caused mental and emotional hardship for the entire family. The difficulty in providing proper care for TGNC youngsters may be related to the scarcity of gender specialists in these healthcare services, and parents frequently felt they had to fight vehemently for their children's needs.

As many parents had extensive knowledge and comprehension of the problems experienced by their children, parental expertise played a significant role in aiding TGNC youngsters. However, during consultations, healthcare providers did not always acknowledge or use their experience, potentially resulting in gaps in care and comprehension (Carlile, 2019). It might be more effective for TGNC youth to receive general assistance if parents' opinions and knowledge are included in the therapy process. Parents were occasionally offered contradictory or improper advice on their children's gender identity and self-harming behaviors by clinicians, which proved to be troublesome in some circumstances. This resulted in the loss of parental support for the TGNC children and perplexity for the parents. To protect TGNC people from harm, these experiences emphasize the necessity for healthcare providers to be knowledgeable about and up to speed on best practices in this area.

Parents and young TGNC people expressed concern about the lack of adequate information. Many believed they had not received enough study and information about blockers and cross-gender hormones. TGNC youth may experience distress and worry due to a lack of clarity on crucial issues about medical interventions; hence, healthcare professionals need to be competent and open with their information sharing (Carlile, 2019). Additionally, misgendering and deadnaming were identified as critical problems TGNC people encounter when interacting

with healthcare professionals, particularly GPs. The mental health of TGNC youth can be seriously impacted by these experiences of invalidation, judgment, and frustration, so healthcare professionals must receive proper training on gender identity and expression-related topics. By preventing misgendering, deadnaming, and stereotyping, adequate training can make healthcare facilities more accepting and supportive of TGNC people.

The research's overall conclusions highlight the significance of enhancing family support for TGNC children and young adults by addressing obstacles and gaps in healthcare services. To protect the mental well-being and general health of TGNC youth, it is crucial to improve the understanding and sensitivity of healthcare providers, involve parents in the treatment process, and give families correct information. TGNC people can feel valued, heard, and respected in a more inclusive and supportive settings thanks to the work of healthcare professionals, parents, and the TGNC community.

Programming Supporting Trans Young People

The findings demonstrated that given the enormous influence that family support has on the psychosocial outcomes of transgender and gender-nonconforming youth, caregiver workshops and support groups are essential components of programming for TGNC youth. Studies have frequently found that lack of family support is a significant predictor of suicide attempts and mental health issues in TGNC young people (Ehrensaft, 2017). Families are frequently the first to support and help TGNC youth in the legal, educational, and mental health systems. Navigating these complex processes might raise distress and exacerbate psychosocial problems if there is no family assistance in these areas. A crucial element of TGNC kids' affirmation is family acceptance, which significantly impacts their mental health outcomes and lowers their risk of self-harm and risky behaviors. According to research, when TGNC kids are

socially accepted and encouraged by their relatives and peers, their rates of anxiety and sadness are comparable to those of cisgender kids, and their psychosocial problems do not progress to clinical levels (Hatchel & Marx, 2018). The acceptance and involvement of the family are protective factors for the mental health of TGNC youth.

The finding showed that family acceptance for good mental health in TGNC youth, including family-based support services, is crucial for providing this vulnerable demographic with psychological care that works. According to studies, TGNC youth who use family-based support programs have an 82% lower risk of suicide attempts than those who do not (Malpas et al., 2021). Family therapy reduces depression symptoms, suicidal thoughts, and suicide attempts in TGNC adolescents. Models of care for TGNC children and adolescents have changed in response to these findings to become more affirming, inclusive, and less cisnormative and pathologizing. Gender-affirmative treatment paradigms, which put the child's gender identity and expression first, are used more frequently. Although there has not been much research on these models, there is a growing movement toward their application.

When a kid or adolescent develops TGNC and their family is available for care, family-based treatment becomes a regular approach. Workshops for caregivers and support groups allow families to learn about and comprehend the needs and experiences of their TGNC children (Malpas et al., 2021). In addition to assisting in navigating systems and gaining access to resources, these programs can impart crucial knowledge on gender diversity and foster family acceptance and support. Workshops for caregivers can provide a secure setting where families can voice their worries, get answers to their questions, and get advice from facilitators with experience in mental health. Support groups unite families to share their experiences, difficulties, and accomplishments to build community and lessen loneliness (Malpas et al., 2021). These

workshops and support groups provide a more comprehensive and holistic approach to mental health and well-being by integrating families into the care and support of TGNC youth. Making close family ties and encouraging family acceptance can foster a loving atmosphere that favors TGNC youth's mental health outcomes.

These findings highlight the significance of efficient communication and information exchange between medical professionals and educational institutions to provide complete and supportive care for transgender or non-binary autistic people (Bry et al., 2017; Lian et al., 2022). Healthcare professionals can better grasp the individual needs of the student and execute effective support measures when they collaborate and communicate with one another and the school. Schools must take transgender and non-binary autistic kids' various identities and unique needs into account. In this instance, assuming the student's preference for using the restroom based only on her gender identity without considering her anxiety connected to her autism led to an error in judgment. A more comprehensive and inclusive strategy can be created by encouraging open communication and actively involving the student, her parents, and all pertinent healthcare and educational specialists, ensuring the student's requirements are satisfied.

Impacts of Transformational Programming on the Coping Capacity of TGNCs

Transformational programming in a society affects the type of coping strategy employed by the TGNCs, whether adaptive or maladaptive. A study by Weinhardt et al. (2017) revealed that numerous supportive systems and grounds were associated with better and more positive coping mechanisms and resulted in better outcomes with reduced depressive symptoms from the participants. The current transformational programming has been of significant help to TGNC individuals (Weinhardt et al., 2017). They have increased the level of family support for TGNC youths by clarifying that gender can also be determined personally. The programming has also

allowed one to understand the significant impact of social prejudices and culture on gender affirmation rather than reality. This has allowed more and more families to support their children who are TGNC and thus help prevent them from going into those specific coping modes. The programming has also allowed the development of policies and measures supporting the TGNC youths. The essence of using different programming has allowed for the development of policies and regulations in schools and in the states and local governments and organizations towards supporting individuals with non-conventional gender identification models and mechanisms.

Nonetheless, different coping strategies indicate society's constant friction and rigidity to change and be receptive to gender minorities. It indicates an underlying issue relating to difficulty coming to terms with the fact that there could be more than two genders. The extreme social institutionalizations and traditions foster an environment that is harsh towards gender minorities and usually makes it difficult for them to survive, making a majority of those affected source alternative mechanisms for coping with a society that is too rigid to accept them.

One of the more specific implications of these findings is the need and essence of social support groups in helping mitigate TGNCs toward the most appropriate coping strategies. The results indicate that there are different coping strategies for other individuals. However, the literature reveals that these differences are accounted for by temperament (Oorthuys et al., 2022). While this is true, it should be noted that seeking a social support group can only be made possible and a more accessible option even for individuals with opposing temperaments if they are present. Their absence directly implies that the other more harmful coping strategies, such as self-isolation, are likely to occur and might be deleterious. The presence of social support for ease of access and to help such individuals is paramount in enhancing and ensuring their well-being.

Coping strategies that were incepted from the results of the different studies, however, are not directly specific to the TGNCs. This is because there are general coping strategies found in society that people tend to opt for in case they encounter particular challenges and difficulties. These are often the run-to options and alternatives that anyone facing a stressor in life can opt for, as such might entail strategies utilized by even cisgender individuals. However, the differences between the coping methods must be made to fully comprehend the most preferable coping strategies for the TGNCs. Rationalization and adaptations are general coping strategies that people immediately run to when encountering difficulties and challenges in life (Freire et al., 2020). According to Freire et al. (2020), individuals who are sick and unwilling to visit a healthcare facility or consult a doctor are likely to opt for rationalizations to help account for specific symptoms they might be experiencing.

The coping strategies for transgender people or the TNGs can be divided into adaptive and maladaptive. Adaptive strategies are those that are more positive, including positive reappraisal and acceptance, while maladaptive cognition strategies are those that are deleterious, often involving the individuals disengaging from social situations or the task of attempting to make the situation better. Other factors, such as the level of stigmatization, victimization, and gendered norms, work towards the actual behavior and development of the specific coping strategies that different TGNCs are likely to adopt. This gendered stigma, apart from influencing the growth of maladaptive cognitive strategies, also works towards increasing the level of stress and anxiety that an individual faces. They worsen their mental status and well-being, affecting their overall well-being and quality of life. The specific coping strategies, therefore, can also function as alarm bells regarding the nature of their social well-being and the environmental influences faced by transgender personnel.

One of the most potent forms of maladaptive strategies for coping is the avoidance mechanism, according to Levine and Abbruzzese (2023). The avoidance strategy entails self-marginalization, isolation, and alienation from the cumulative society, seeking solace and individuality for personal encouragement and progress. This strategy was not popular based on the studies investigated but was potent. This coping strategy is harmful as it leads to increased anxiety and depression. Oorthuys et al. (2022) revealed that the avoidance strategy contributes immensely to suicidal behavior and thought and also promotes poor life quality. The more one alienates themselves from society, the more they feel detached and unappreciated and lose meaning and purpose. It is less confrontational and straightforward but the more harmful alternative to coping in the long run. The minority stress theory classifies this coping strategy as "protective." However, Malpas et al. (2022) propose that it is the most harmful one and that people should be encouraged and emboldened to work with adaptive strategies that are not only adventurous but also help make society more conducive for minorities and boost the individual's self-esteem as well as giving them a purpose and a sense of meaning in life. It leads to the development of sufficient self-esteem and emotional strength that a majority of the other social issues that might emanate and end up being viewed as insignificant with effects that can be easily handled.

Policies Supporting Trans Young People

Transgender youth confront considerable obstacles as more anti-transgender laws are being developed in different US states. A lower prevalence of bullying victimization has been associated with anti-bullying and nondiscrimination laws that mainly address gender identity and expression. According to the findings, these regulations should be implemented in schools to give TGNC pupils a safer environment (Becerra et al., 2018). Additionally, educating teachers

about gender identity and expression can be extremely helpful in reducing school-based victimization and promoting a more accepting and encouraging school climate. The study's conclusions highlight the importance of acknowledging AMAB GNC and transgender identity as risk factors for bullying victimization (Hatchel & Marx, 2018). Schools and authorities can prevent bullying and discrimination against TGNC pupils by monitoring these risk indicators and adopting focused interventions.

The research strongly emphasized the virtues of beneficence and nonmaleficence, which support providing gender-affirming care to lessen harm and advance well-being. However, judgments must be made with limited information because of the relative novelty of such care and the scarcity of long-term outcomes studies, posing questions concerning autonomy. For patient-centered care and decision-making in the future, it is essential to better track and understand the results among persons getting gender-affirming treatment.

Therefore, a thorough and multidimensional strategy is needed to overcome these obstacles. Regardless of a student's gender identity or expression, schools must develop policies and procedures that foster tolerance, respect, and acceptance for all children. To provide a secure and encouraging learning environment for TGNC students, measures must be implemented to stop and handle bullying and harassment. By honoring the names and pronouns that TGNC students choose, educational institutions can also contribute to validating the identities of these students. The emotional health and general academic success of TGNC adolescents can be significantly enhanced by creating a gender-affirming environment.

However, the literature also emphasizes the importance of school-based interventions in enhancing TGNC adolescents' schooling. For instance, implementing teacher education programs and starting peer support groups can improve TGNC students' feelings of safety and

belonging in the classroom. Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) and other peer support organizations are particularly good at fostering an accepting and inclusive environment for students who identify as sexual and gender minorities, which increases their involvement in school (Kwok, 2018). Additionally, educating instructors about issues related to sexual and gender diversity can improve their ability to stand up for and support children who identify as sexual or gender minorities. TGNC children's school experiences can be significantly enhanced when teachers have the knowledge and resources to establish inclusive classrooms, which also helps decrease discrimination and harassment based on gender.

Additionally, the difficulties TGNC kids face in schools reflect a larger pattern of marginalization and discrimination that TGNC experience throughout their life, including in the workplace and society (Kwok, 2018). Understanding how genderism affects TGNC young people throughout their formative years emphasizes how urgent it is to create encouraging and affirming environments in all spheres of life. The findings highlight the need for TGNC constructive programs and legislative advocacy that work to eliminate systemic prejudices and barriers and address the immediate problems encountered by TGNC adolescents. The study can more effectively guide advocacy campaigns and activities to empower and support TGNC young adults in Kansas City by using the lessons from these findings. To create a more inclusive and tolerant society for everyone, highlighting the value of peer support, teacher education, and inclusive school policies can be a model for implementing related tactics in other contexts, such as businesses and community organizations.

These findings highlight the significance of efficient communication and information exchange between medical professionals and educational institutions to provide complete and supportive care for transgender or non-binary autistic people (Bry et al., 2017; Lian et al., 2022).

Healthcare professionals can better grasp the individual needs of the student and execute effective support measures when they collaborate and communicate with one another and the school. Schools must take transgender and non-binary autistic kids' various identities and unique needs into account. In this instance, assuming the student's preference for using the restroom based only on her gender identity without considering her anxiety connected to her autism led to an error in judgment. A more comprehensive and inclusive strategy can be created by encouraging open communication and actively involving the student, her parents, and all pertinent healthcare and educational specialists, ensuring the student's requirements are satisfied.

Potential Interventions

Several interventions have been developed and proven effective in helping prevent maladaptive strategies among TGNC individuals. These strategies are those that are directed toward minimizing the stressors that serve as the motivation behind the absorption and utilization of these maladaptive strategies. The majority of the research that revealed maladaptive strategies as coping strategies revealed that there were stressors associated with those individuals. A study by Oorthuys et al. (2022) unveiled that the significant stressor entails challenges accessing gender-affirming treatments. Increasing the availability and ease of accessibility of gender-affirming care and treatment helps minimize the physical limitations and stress of transgender people (Levine & Abbruzzese, 2023). According to Green et al. (2022), this gender-affirming care should entail not only the surgery for gender transformation but also all other relevant yet scarce support that individuals who have undergone the transition would require. It entails adequate care and counseling to ensure the necessary care is acquired and made in mutual discussions with the relevant counselors. Green et al. (2022) insist that pre-treatment counseling for gender-affirming individuals is one of the most effective ways of helping

individuals of the TGNC community as it ensures that the decisions are made with the individual's best interest at heart.

Secondly, the government, societies, and groups supporting TGNC people should work to promote seeking care as a significant coping strategy. The fact that numerous other individuals are still utilizing maladaptive coping strategies suggests that awareness regarding sourcing for help is yet to permeate every society and area of the United States. Promoting self-acceptance, minimizing isolation, and encouraging seeking help would be of imminent help in enhancing the welfare of most persons. According to Oorthuys et al. (2022), awareness of the harmful impacts of using maladaptive coping strategies will help increase the popularity of the more adaptive strategies.

Thirdly, there is the imminent need for TGNC individuals to be educated on the necessity and need for social relations. According to Expósito-Campos et al. (2023), social relations were critical and potent in influencing the coping strategy an individual undergoing tremendous stress utilizes. This was especially true for the youth. The majority rely on others and those within their society for social support, structure, and validity to function fully. This could offer one of the very first sources of social support for the youth and TGNCs. Having help at a local level for the youth and young people is critical to their actions and how they function in the long run.

Another dimension of education that could be of tremendous help to TGNC people is psychoeducation, primarily for parents. Advocacy towards minimizing discrimination and enhancing acceptance of TGNCs in schools is an excellent way of ensuring that the TGNC individual's future is secured and their environments are positive towards their growth and development. Families with transgender children should be taken through a therapeutic lens to understand what is happening to their children and how they can cope with that, regardless of

their mental positions. Counseling is critical for those around the TGNC individuals because sometimes transition and self-discovery can be a strange occurrence. Secondly, it is a matter that goes beyond years of tradition, religion, and cultural beliefs, and thus, people require time and guidance to understand and cope with such occurrences. This psychoeducation should be extended to go beyond the parents and educational institutions. Instead, it should be directed towards healthcare facilities, employment facilities, companies, and religious institutions (Malpas et al., 2022). This is to ensure a wholesome and cumulative response to the children's challenges and promote their welfare and well-being in whatever social cycles and environments they may land.

Linking the Results to the Theory

Survival Mode and Response to Survival: The results of reviewed sources provide insight into how TGNC people create coping mechanisms to withstand and endure despite persistent problems, like stigma and prejudice, because of their gender identity. This is consistent with the Minority Stress Model since TGNC people experience additional distal stressors, including discrimination while seeking legal or medical care or not being accepted for their gender identity. Adaptive coping mechanisms were established in response to minority-related stressors, including the survival response and survival mode.

Young Adults from TGNC who Face Risks: The identified risk factors, which include housing instability, hurdles to receiving mental healthcare, bullying and discrimination, limited access to healthcare that promotes gender equality, difficult educational experiences, and problems with family support, are compatible with the idea of minority stress. According to Testa et al.'s (2015) research on the effects of proximal and distal stressors on the well-being of

TGNC individuals, these stressors can lead to greater prevalence of mental health problems like anxiety and depression.

Enhancing Life Experiences through Policy and Programming: The literature review emphasizes the significance of programs and policies for TGNC young people. For TGNC youth to thrive, family-based support programs and caregiver workshops are essential. This is consistent with the idea of social support advanced by Testa et al. (2015), which can bolster resilience by reducing the negative impacts of minority stress.

Policies to Support TGNC Youth: According to the research, anti-bullying and anti-discrimination policies that include gender identity and expression may help TGNC youth experience less victimization. The goals of the Minority Stress Model, which advocates for minimizing proximal and distal stressors to improve the well-being of sexual and gender minorities, are aligned with this legislation's goals, which seek to lessen prejudice and provide safer environments (Chan, 2018; Lloyd et al., 2019).

Gender-Affirming Care and Mental Health: The research emphasizes the significance of providing gender-affirming healthcare and the requirement for increased communication between healthcare providers and educational institutions. This aligns with the findings of Testa et al. (2015), who emphasize the importance of beneficence and nonmaleficence in providing gender-affirming treatment to improve well-being and lessen the damage.

Overall, the literature review results are consistent with and support the theoretical framework on the effects of minority stress on TGNC individuals put out by Testa et al. (2015). The study highlights how crucial it is to comprehend the particular pressures that TGNC people encounter and to put policies and programs in place that address these stresses to enhance their

well-being and quality of life. It also emphasizes how vital gender-affirming social support and care are in helping TGNC young adults build resilience and maintain good mental health.

Conclusion of Literature Review

This literature review clarifies the survival strategy and response among young transgender and gender-nonconforming adults. The results show that TGNC people use survival mode as a coping mechanism to deal with continuous difficulties, including stigmatization and discrimination connected to their gender identity. The study's coping mechanisms, which aid in reducing the detrimental effects of minority stress, include problem-solving, support-seeking, and accommodation techniques.

Housing instability, restricted access to mental health treatment, bullying, discrimination, lack of access to gender-affirming healthcare, educational experiences, and family support were all mentioned as reasons for survival mode. The mental health and general health of TGNC youth are significantly impacted by these variables, which also contribute to the development of survival mode. Studies showing the prevalence of mental health disorders, especially anxiety, and depression, among this demographic have made mental health one of the most critical factors influencing TGNC youth. Young TGNC adults can benefit significantly from prompt and appropriate support and care for their mental health needs—care that would dramatically impact their overall well-being. As key triggers of survival mode, bullying and discrimination were also found to be prevalent, with TGNC youth experiencing higher rates of victimization in educational settings.

For TGNC youth in schools, safer settings can be created by enacting anti-bullying and nondiscrimination regulations that address gender identity and expression. Gender-affirming access to healthcare also emerged as a significant determinant, with gaps in such access resulting

in tremendous stress and mental health issues for TGNC people. The outcomes for the mental health of TGNC youth can be improved by working to increase access to gender-affirming treatment and by educating medical professionals on gender identity and expression-related issues. Due to the high rates of victimization and insecurity that TGNC youth encounter in schools, educational experiences are also significant. The educational background of TGNC youth can be improved by establishing gender-affirming classrooms, offering teacher education programs, and promoting peer support groups. Most notably, family support was found to be a component in TGNC young adults' mental health protection. Programs encouraging family acceptance and support for TGNC youth must include family-based support programs, caregiver workshops, and support groups.

As with many literature reviews on topics of evolving understanding and interest, descriptors have changed over time. One example would be the use of the term "queer," which has transitioned from a derogatory term to one that is widely used and accepted by the community as an umbrella descriptor. Additionally, for much of the period that research is available, transgender individuals were believed to suffer from mental illness; today we understand this to be incorrect and, as such, the quality of the literature is tainted with these out-of-date perspectives.

Anti-bullying and anti-discrimination policies, for example, are essential in fostering inclusive and safe environments for TGNC youth. Fostering a gender-affirming climate in businesses and institutions can improve TGNC youth's general well-being and academic success. For TGNC people in survival mode, addressing these underlying issues is essential to building a welcoming and encouraging environment.

Part IV: Project Questions and Conceptual Framework

The two driving research questions of this qualitative study are:

1. What are the needs of transgender and gender-nonconforming young people living in survival mode*? *How do we define survival mode?

2. In what ways can Transformations provide programmatic support to improve the well-being of this group?

The first research question responds to hazards and difficulties that TGNC young people face as they try to survive. To answer this question, the term "survival mode" must be explored and its uses as states of being further defined. By categorizing survival mode and other hazards, we can identify the areas that require programmatic support and even policy changes that will best support TGNC youth. The second research question aims to comprehend the magnitude and significance of current policy and programming activities aimed at moving TGNC young adults out of a state of survival and into a state of well-being. We sought to find areas for development and successful tactics that can be duplicated or applied by Transformations and other similar organizations.

Quoted from interview:

Matthew: *When you experience a discrimination or you experience something that impacts you in a way that your cisgender peers don't experience, what are some of the feelings that you experience?*

Interviewee 1: *I think the biggest one is that I don't deserve to be alive, or I'm not as good, or I'm not a good person.*

The importance of this qualitative study rests in meeting the urgent requirements of young transgender and gender-nonconforming (TGNC) adults struggling to survive in the Kansas City, Missouri region. The results are also likely to inform other organizations and schools who create safe, supportive spaces for TGNC youth. Due to social preconceptions and discriminatory

behaviors, TGNC individuals suffer difficulties that disproportionately negatively affect their general well-being and means of subsistence (Chan, 2018). To create focused interventions and programming activities to support and uplift this marginalized demographic, it is essential to first comprehend the experiences and vulnerabilities of TGNC young people in survival mode.

The study first aims to shed light on survival mode and its expressions among TGNC young adults. TGNC individuals have a physiological reaction to adversity, demonstrating their capacity to survive in harsh conditions and adapt to challenging situations. Policymakers, practitioners, and advocacy organizations can create projects and programs that successfully meet the specific needs of TGNC young people by understanding the nature and depth of the survival mode that they experience. Second, the study looked for the root causes that influence the survival mode among TGNC young adults in the Kansas City, Missouri region. The well-being of TGNC young adults can be significantly impacted by elements including unstable housing, poor access to mental health treatment, bullying and discrimination, lack of access to gender-affirming healthcare, difficult educational experiences, and insufficient family support (Katz-Wise et al., 2018). It is possible to adjust actions and policies to address the problems this disadvantaged population faces by recognizing these core causes.

The project also aimed to examine how transformational programming aids TGNC young adults who are in survival mode. To overcome the systemic disadvantages and constraints TGNC individuals face, transformative programming emphasizes empowerment and resilience-building, going beyond conventional support services. This research offers insights into effective tactics that encourage and empower TGNC young adults in their quest for a more secure and satisfying existence by examining effective, transformative programs.

A welcoming and encouraging atmosphere for TGNC young people must also be fostered, which requires policy lobbying. Examining current laws and regulations that have been put in place to safeguard the rights and welfare of TGNC people in the Kansas City, Missouri region is a natural offshoot of this study. The research will help to inform future policy initiatives that support inclusivity and equity for TGNC young adults by providing valuable insights into the effectiveness of policy measures and areas for improvement through a critical evaluation of existing policies. To create transformative programming that works and promotes laws that support the rights and welfare of TGNC young adults, it is crucial to comprehend their experiences in the context of a sanctuary city like Kansas City. This study will add to current efforts to build a more equitable and supportive environment for TGNC young adults in Kansas City and beyond by recognizing the intersections of gender identity, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic position.

Conceptual Framework

Meyer's Minority Stress Model

A valuable framework for comprehending the difficulties and adversities faced by TGNC young adults living in survival mode is provided by the Minority Stress Model as applied to lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) people (Meyer, 2003). This concept suggests that because they are a minority in society, LGB people have added layers of stress levels (Meyer, 2003). Note that this model stops short of including trans people.

Figure 1: Meyer's Minority Stress Framework (2003)
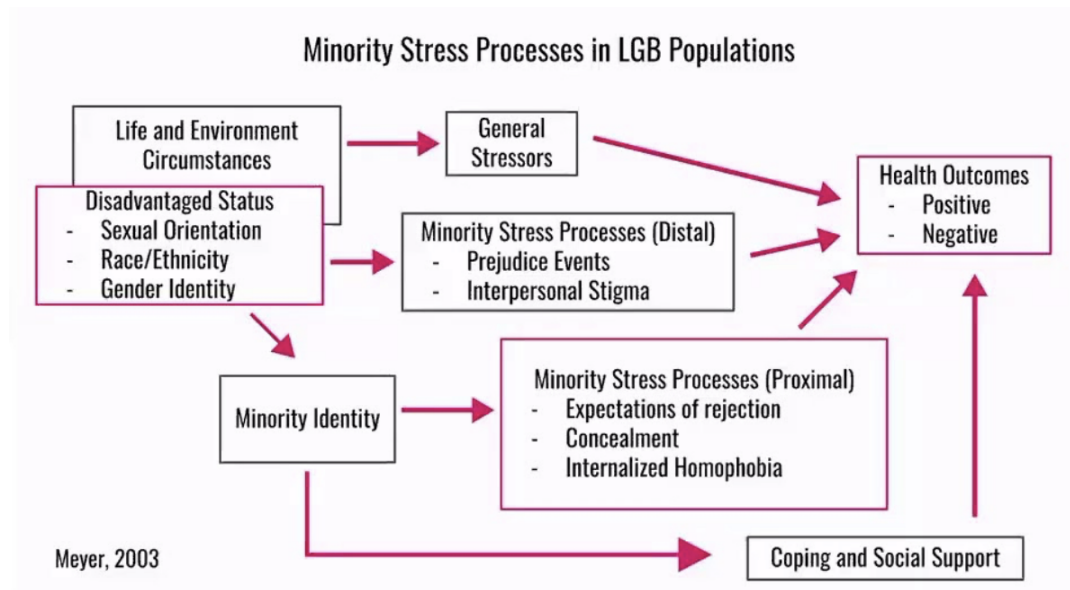
To understand these findings better, this project looks first at Meyer's Minority Stress Theory (MST) and then broadens our understanding by way of Testa's Gender Minority Stress Framework (GMSF). While the two frameworks share similar components like general, distal, and proximal stressors and common elements of resilience supports, it is important to note that Testa's framework intentionally expands on MST's LGB population to include transgender and gender-diverse individuals. He also highlights that the trans community experiences unique circumstances that lead to different needs and responses. Internal and external factors—including internalized transphobia—contribute to this stress, such as prejudice, stigma, and other forms of intolerance. As a result of the accumulation of these stressors, there are several unfavorable effects, such as inequities in mental health and restricted access to necessary resources.

Figure 2: Testa's Framework (2015)
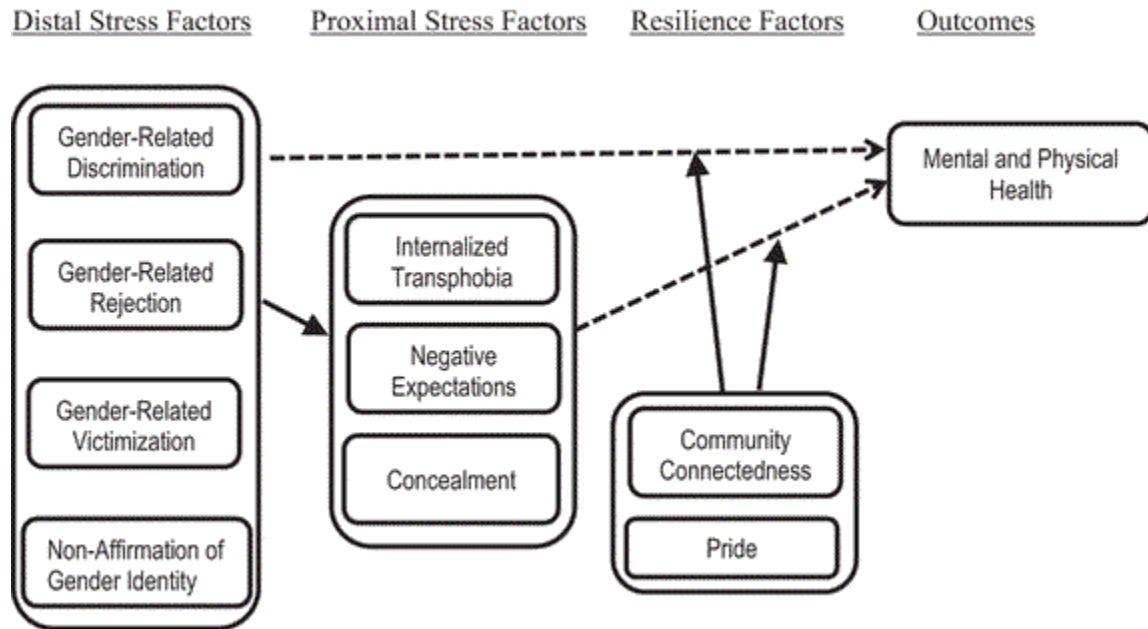
Using Meyer's theory and Testa's framework offers a comprehensive approach to processing information gathered from literature, interviews, and surveys. These concepts serve as a frame for emergent suggestions for programming and policy to benefit the trans community that Transformations and other nonprofit organizations serve.

The Minority Stress Model stresses the significance of proximal and distal stressors in the experiences of members of sexual and gender minorities (SGM), drawing on earlier research (Meyer, 2003). Unlike proximal stressors and internal processes like expectations of rejection, identity concealment, and internalized stigma, distal stressors include external variables like anti-SGM violence and prejudice. According to Meyer (2003), proximal stressors can develop when socially harmful attitudes are internalized due to distal stress. Because TGNC young adults struggle to embrace their gender identity on a personal level, this internalization process is fundamental to understanding their experiences as TGNC young adults in survival mode.

According to empirical investigations on SGM people, there is a link connecting proximal and distal stressors (Testa et al., 2015). For instance, studies have demonstrated that experiences of stigmatization among bisexual people can indirectly affect psychological distress (Chan, 2018). Comparably, internalized trans negativity among transgender adults has been proven to link anti-trans discrimination and suicide thoughts directly. These results demonstrate the interconnection of internal and external stressors, which may have significant consequences for TGNC young adults in survival mode.

The idea of "multiple minority stress" also becomes important when considering TGNC people with numerous minority identities, including racial or ethnic minority SGM people. According to research, anti-SGM discrimination and racism cause overall stress and poor health outcomes among SGM people who identify as multiple minorities (Katz-Wise et al., 2018). Exploring the intersectionality of identities and the compounding impact of different minority stresses on TGNC young adults in survival mode became vital in the setting of this study to comprehend the complexity of their experiences and adjust support systems appropriately.

Crenshaw's Theory of Intersectionality

As a theoretical framework for comprehending the complex nature of social identities and how they affect a person's experiences and difficulties, Kimberlé Crenshaw first developed intersectionality theory in 1989 (Bauer et al., 2021). Its main goal was to shed light on Black women's challenges in the United States, set within Black feminist philosophy. Its use, however, goes beyond this initial limit and encompasses a wide range of intersections, including those involving ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and other social identities or positions.

At its foundation, intersectionality acknowledges that social positions within a social power structure are not independent entities but inextricably intertwined. When several identities, such as gender identity, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status interact, it impacts the experiences of TGNC young adults (Testa et al., 2015). Their intertwined identities affect the obstacles they face and how their lived realities are shaped. According to the intersectionality model, more comprehensive oppressive systems like racism and sexism significantly impact these experiences, which are not just the product of personal attributes. The combined consequences of racism and sexism on TGNC young adults' interactions with other people and structural systems impact the individual level where race and gender meet.

Understanding intersectionality is essential in this study's background to fully appreciate the complexity of the problems TGNC young adults in the Kansas City, Missouri region experience to get by. We can obtain critical insights into this vulnerable community's particular difficulties and obstacles by appreciating the interconnectivity of multiple social identities, such as gender identity, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Given that no one solution suits all demands, intersectionality necessitates a complex strategy for meeting the needs of TGNC young adults. Interventions and policy initiatives must be designed to consider the many factors influencing TGNC people's experiences (Bauer et al., 2021). By failing to consider these intertwined identities, we risk providing both insufficient and inadequate solutions, thereby furthering marginalization.

Part VI: Project Design

Data Collection Plan

Transgender and gender-nonconforming people have an inherent distrust of those outside of their community. Knowing this, we formulated our trauma-informed approach with

transparency and sensitivity. As many members of this community have suffered violence and discrimination, we deliberately designed our process to ensure respectful and inclusive engagement with the lived realities of the community. We utilized a mixed-methods approach to collect data from both transgender and gender-nonconforming participants. We used qualitative instruments (surveys, interviews) to better understand the diverse lived experiences and viewpoints.

Our survey instrument consisted of open-ended questions. Respondents were sought from Transformation's programmatic participants and other trans organizations that were recommended by Transformations. In addition to providing anonymity to respondents, surveys provide greater honesty without external influence and uniformity in questions asked to each participant. Where biases from interviewers can impact interviews, surveys can be uniformly designed.

As our community was likely distrustful, we understand that some participants may find comfort in a more personalized approach to our inquiry. Interviews provide an opportunity for more in-depth exploration of topics that surveys would not allow. In formulating our approach, we committed to utilizing trauma-informed methods. Where surveys do not allow scale-back questioning on a participant level, interviews allow for observing non-verbal cues and modifications that may be made mid-sentence. Additionally, interviews allowed us to obtain varying responses from our participants' life experiences. An interview can be adapted to make the participant more comfortable and even shaped to meet them within their understanding or allow them to ask clarifying questions.

Our mixed-methods approach, combining surveys and interviews, allowed us to engage effectively with the transgender and gender-nonconforming community in a manner that

respected their unique experiences and concerns. With the advantage of anonymity and

uniformity, we employed surveys to ensure that we received honest responses. Interviews gave

us the flexibility and depth necessary for personalized and sensitive interactions. The duality of

this approach not only catered to the diverse preferences within the community but also ensured

comprehensive data collection. Our focus on a trauma-informed approach allowed us to build

rapport while obtaining details of the lived realities of transgender and gender non-conforming

individuals.

Table 1: Data Collection & Analysis Plan

Research Question	Data Source	Data Collection Method	Data Analysis
What are the needs of transgender and gender non-conforming young people living in survival mode*?	Transgender people (age 18-32)	Survey, Interview	Understand the needs to trans youth suggested by young trans people based on experience
How do we define survival mode?	Transformations	Interview	Understand how survival mode
	Literature Review	Obtain information from journal articles that help to define survival mode	Understand survival mode as a condition of living as well as
	Transgender people (age 18-32)	Survey, Interview	
In what ways can Transformations provide programmatic support to improve the well-being of this group?	Transformations	Interview	Understand the programming gaps that the organization feels exists for supporting trans youth
	Transgender people (age 18-30)	Survey, Interview	Understand the programming gaps

			that existed trans youth (under 18) from the perspective of trans people age 18-30

Data Collection Methods

In this study, a combination of surveys and interviews were employed sequentially to gather comprehensive and diverse data from participants. The utilization of these two aligned methods aimed to triangulate findings to extend the understanding of the information revealed by the literature review and to fully answer the research questions with a focus on human voice and specific trans youth needs. Informed by our conceptual framing, we sought to understand the impact of distal and proximal stressors on mental and physical health; additionally, we wanted to understand the ways that programmatic offerings could disrupt negative impacts on health.

1. Surveys:

1.1 Participants: Transformations and other trans organizations supported our efforts to identify participants for the survey component, allowing for a broader understanding of the needs of trans youth.

1.2 Instrument Design: The survey instrument contained 26 questions. In this qualitative study we used a series of open-ended questions to gather insights on the needs of trans young people.

1.3 Distribution: Participants were recruited through various channels, including social media, email, text blasts, and word of mouth. Connecting with trans individuals who may be in or have experienced survival mode required us to employ outreach efforts that were direct and connected to a trusted organization, community partner, or individual.

1.4 Ethical Considerations: Participants were provided with clear instructions, a brief overview

of the study, and assurances of anonymity and confidentiality.

Table 2: Survey Instrument

Questions	Response Type	Research Question Alignment
1. Enter the first and last letter of your preferred first name. For example, if your preferred first name is "Robert", enter "RT".	Informational/ Demographic	Question 1
2. Are you 18 years of age or older?	Informational/ Demographic	Question 1
3. In which state do you live?	Informational/ Demographic	Question 1
4. Do you think of yourself as transgender?	Informational/ Demographic	Question 1
5. Do you identify as more than one gender or as no gender (such as genderqueer or non-binary)?	Informational/ Demographic	Question 1
6. How old were you when you started to live full-time in a gender different from the one assigned to you at birth?	Informational/ Demographic	Question 1
7. What sex were you assigned at birth on your original birth certificate?	Informational/ Demographic	Question 1
8. Which of these terms do you identify with?	Informational/ Demographic	Question 1
9. If you do not disclose your gender identity, what are the main reasons that you don't tell people you identify as non-cisgender?	Open-ended	Question 1, Question 2
10. What gender pronouns do you ask people to use to refer to you?	Open-ended	Question 1

11. At about what age did you begin to feel that your gender was "different" from your assigned birth sex?	Open-ended	Question 1, Question 2
12. At about what age did you start to think you were transgender (even if you did not know the word for it)?	Open-ended	Question 1, Question 2
13. What kind of supportive programming would have been most helpful to you growing up?	Open-ended	Question 2
14. What kind of supportive programming would be most helpful to transgender youth today?	Open-ended	Question 2
15. What are the biggest barriers to accessing supportive programming for transgender youth?	Open-ended	Question 1, Question 2
16. What can non-profits do to make supportive programming more accessible to transgender youth?	Open-ended	Question 2
17. How can non-profit programming help transgender youth build resilience and empower them personally?	Open-ended	Question 2
18. In your opinion, what would be the most effective way for non-profit programs to reach and engage transgender youth?	Open-ended	Question 2
19. Have you ever faced discrimination or prejudice while accessing non-profit programs or resources? If yes, please share your experience.	Open-ended	Question 2
20. How do you think non-profit programming can contribute to the mental health and	Open-ended	Question 1, Question 2

well-being of transgender youth?		
21. What barriers or obstacles do you believe exist for transgender youth in accessing non-profit programming?	Open-ended	Question 1, Question 2
22. How important is it for non-profit programs to have transgender individuals involved in their planning and implementation?	Open-ended	Question 2
23. What are your thoughts on mentorship programs that pair transgender youth with adult mentors who have shared similar experiences?	Open-ended	Question 2
24. Do you believe non-profit programming can positively impact educational opportunities and outcomes for transgender youth? Why or why not?	Open-ended	Question 2
25. How can non-profit organizations better collaborate with schools and educational institutions to support transgender youth?	Open-ended	Question 2
26. We would welcome the opportunity to speak with you more in-depth about your experiences. If you are willing to participate in a one-on-one interview (conducted virtually), please provide your email address.	Informational/ Demographic	Question 1, Question 2

2. Interviews:

2.1 Participants: Participants for the interviews were identified through responses to the survey.

2.2 Procedure: Semi-structured interviews were conducted to allow for flexibility in exploring

participant responses while ensuring consistency in core themes. The interview protocol was

carefully designed with open-ended questions to encourage participants to express their thoughts, experiences, and opinions in depth. Participants were encouraged to share as much information as they were comfortable with and were allowed to strike information when requested.

2.3 Data Collection Instruments: Interviews were conducted through the Microsoft Teams video conferencing platform. Audio recordings were made with participants' consent, and detailed notes were taken during and after each interview to capture non-verbal cues and contextual information.

2.4 Ethical Considerations: Prior to each interview, participants were informed about the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. Informed consent was obtained, and ethical guidelines were strictly adhered to throughout the interview process.

Table 3: Interview Questions

Interview Questions	Research Question Alignment	Survival Mode
1. In your opinion, how does societal acceptance and support impact the well-being of transgender and gender-nonconforming young people?	Question 1	All
2. How does intersectionality, such as race, socioeconomic status, or disability, intersect with gender identity to compound the challenges faced by transgender and gender-nonconforming young people?	Question 1	All
3. Can you discuss any systemic or institutional factors that contribute to the struggles faced by transgender and gender-nonconforming young people?	Question 1	All

4. If you are comfortable, would you provide examples of bullying, discriminatory or exclusionary practices that you or other transgender and gender-nonconforming young people face?	Question 1	Bullying and discrimination, housing discrimination, educational experiences
5. Based on your personal experience or the experiences of friends, please talk about how family dynamics and support systems affect transgender and gender-nonconforming young people.	Question 1, Question 2	Familial support
6. In your experience, what resources or support systems have proven effective in helping transgender and gender-nonconforming young people overcome their struggles?	Question 1, Question 2	All
7. How do mental health concerns and stigma affect the well-being of transgender and gender-nonconforming young people, and what interventions or strategies can be helpful in addressing these issues?	Question 1	Mental healthcare
8. What steps can communities, schools, and healthcare providers take to create safer and more inclusive environments for transgender and gender-nonconforming young people?	Question 1, Question 2	Access to gender-affirming healthcare, educational experiences
9. Have you encountered any successful interventions, programs, or initiatives aimed at supporting transgender and gender-nonconforming young people and addressing their struggles? If so, what made them effective?	Question 1, Question 2	All

10. In what ways, during your youth, did you build community with other trans people from the ages of 13-18?	Question 1, Question 2	Bullying and discrimination, educational experiences
11. In what way does your family support or not support you as a trans individual?	Question 1, Question 2	Familial support
12. Prior to age 18, to what extent were you aware of the legal remedies available to adjust or change your name or gender on legal documents?	Question 1, Question 2	Bullying and discrimination
13. What are the misconceptions that cisgender people have about the challenges and issues faced by transgender youth?	Question 1, Question 2	All
14. Please tell us anything else that you would like to share about your experience as a trans person.	Question 1, Question 2	All

Timeline for Data Collection:

Week 1: Preparation and Pre-testing

- Finalize the interview protocol and survey questionnaire, ensuring clarity and alignment.

- Conduct a pilot test with a small sample to identify any potential issues or ambiguities.

- With Transformations, develop a participant recruitment plan, considering target demographics and ensuring diversity.

- Initiate contact with potential participants through various channels and community partners identified by Transformations.

Week 2: Initial Data Collection

- Launch the survey to the selected participant pool.

- Address any technical issues or participant inquiries promptly.

- Monitor survey responses for potential interview volunteers.

Week 3: Continued Data Collection and Mid-point Review

- Conduct the interviews, based on participant requests.

- Begin transcribing and organizing interview data for preliminary analysis.

- Continue monitoring survey responses, ensuring a representative sample.

- Send reminders to community partners, repost on social media.

Week 4: Final Data Collection and Analysis Kick-off

- Close the survey to new responses.

- Compile and organize survey data for analysis.

- Begin preliminary analysis of both survey and interview data.

- Identify emerging themes, patterns, and potential areas for further exploration.

- Prepare an interim report summarizing the progress of data collection, any challenges encountered, and initial insights from the data.

Data Trustworthiness and Analysis:

For this qualitative study, we focused on the trustworthiness of the survey and interview questions to collect information essential to answering the research questions while not being injurious to our participants. To ensure a trauma-informed approach, both survey and interview questions were:

1. Presented to Transformations for review. Transformations requested that its board of directors review the questions and adjustments were made based on recommendations.

2. Reviewed by three licensed mental health clinicians to ensure adherence to a trauma-informed process.

Themes and patterns identified through surveys were cross-referenced with interviews to enhance the validity and reliability of the overall findings. These methods aimed to provide a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of trans young people in survival mode. Where questions or uncertainty were raised in the results of one instrument, we were able to triangulate the findings with other available information. We first reviewed available literature to broaden and deepen our understanding of the topic. Our survey responses were then reviewed and where questions were raised or existed, modifications were undertaken. Finally, we reviewed findings after each interview to identify potential new lines of inquiry that were necessary to pursue in subsequent interactions. Where questions still remain after all data points have been reviewed, we will lean on the literature to provide peer-reviewed findings and highlight any unanswered questions in this text.

<center>**Part VII: Data Collection and Analysis Report**</center>

Summary Data Collection Table

The below data collection table shows evidence of our outreach efforts to engage young trans people through Transformations and identified community partners. Unfortunately, our reach did not meet our original goal. We attribute this to the distrust that the trans community holds for researchers who have not used research to advance the health and wellness of transgender people (Minalga et al., 2022).

Table 4: Data Collection Results

Data Source	Actual Response	Requested Response	Response Rate
Survey	12	Over 1000	Low
Interviews	5	6	83%

The survey goal was to reach between 100 and 200 people given the amount of contacts and publicizing undertaken in collaboration with Transformations and identified community partners. Given the broad reach of publicizing the survey through multiple organizations through direct contact and their social media, the exact number of requested responses cannot be identified. To allow for additional outreach and increased participation, the survey was left open well past the end date for data collection. This effort did not garner additional data.

Interview participants were identified from survey participants who volunteered to be interviewed. With 12 survey participants, six trans people (50%) agreed to engage in the interview process. In the end, only five interviews were conducted, giving us an 83% response rate for those who agreed to be interviewed. The final interview was never conducted due to the participant rescheduling twice and not attending the last scheduled interview session.

Data Analysis:

A two-pronged approach to data analysis was performed to understand the personal information shared during the surveys and interviews and how this information could support answers to the research question. We compiled all transcribed interview responses into one document to keep interview participants anonymous. The first round of deductive coding took place in reading the responses as a narrative, and elements of survival mode were applied to various quotes (Appendix D). Next, an inductive approach was used to identify prevailing themes during the subsequent readings of the interview responses. We could identify key words in context by reading the interview responses as a narrative and comparing and contrasting participants' answers. Inductive coding can be highly subjective and biased to the readers' lens and positionality during the coding process. We used assisted technology to create word analysis and compared our themes to balance potential bias. Interview responses were narrowed from 75

to nine themes. Each response was attributed one or multiple codes to match the survival mode category or emergent themes to which the quote was most aligned.

The analysis of survey responses adhered to the same protocol applied to the interview responses. Following the initial inductive coding process, a comparative examination of emergent themes across both interview and survey datasets was conducted. This comparative analysis aimed to identify commonalities and facilitate the consolidation of themes (now from 23 to 9), refining the focus on key outcomes and ensuring alignment in the subsequent reporting of findings.

Interview Results

Deductive analysis of interviews is a systematic approach to deriving meaningful insights from collected data points. This method was used by applying the predetermined survival mode categories derived from the literature, conceptual frameworks, and the definition of transformations. This deductive analysis aimed to test and refine the understanding of survival mode (question 1) and trans young peoples' needs (question 2). Using this methodological approach, we can identify patterns and relationships within the interview data that ultimately inform the recommendations on programming for trans young people that Transformations can explore as possible offerings to their constituents.

Out of 100 possible responses to the interview questions (5 interviewees x 14 questions), 89 partial quotations were identified as viable for analysis. When looking deductively at the responses through the lens of survival mode, the top three concerns that emerged as needing programmatic support, in order of most important to least, were school, healthcare and mental healthcare (Appendix L). When identifying the top three concerns from emergent themes, the

interviewees were most concerned with issues related to social justice/politics, community

support, and sense of self (Appendix M). Figure 3 is a graphic representation of the inductive and

deductive coding combined. From here, priority concerns emerge as social justice/politics,

community support, and sense of self. It is noted that from the interviews, survival mode topics

were not as prominent as we had expected.

Figure 3: Treemap of Deductive and Inductive Coding for Interviews
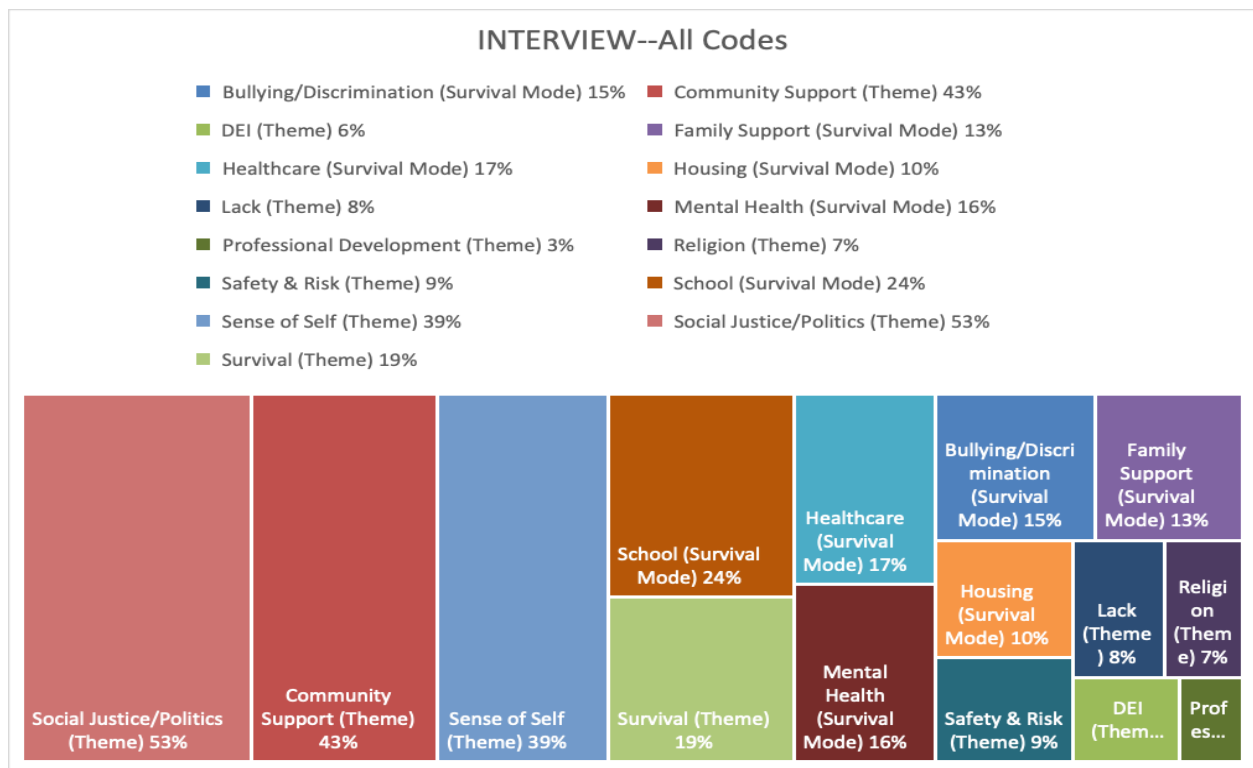
Survey Results

As stated, the same analysis protocol was applied to survey results. First all open-ended

responses were compiled into potential usable quotes (see Appendix)__). Then, each response

was assigned a code or codes related to survival mode or emergent themes. After completing the

coding process, priorities were identified based on deductive and inductive coding and the

combined responses. When isolating responses connected to survival mode, the three top

concerns emerged as school and family support with mental health and bullying and
discrimination tying. The prevailing three concerns when analyzing emergent themes were sense
of self, community support and social justice/politics. Combining the deductive and inductive
responses to find the most important issues, Figure 4 denotes sense of self, community support,
and school as areas of focus for programming support.

Figure 4: Treemap of Deductive and Inductive Coding for Surveys
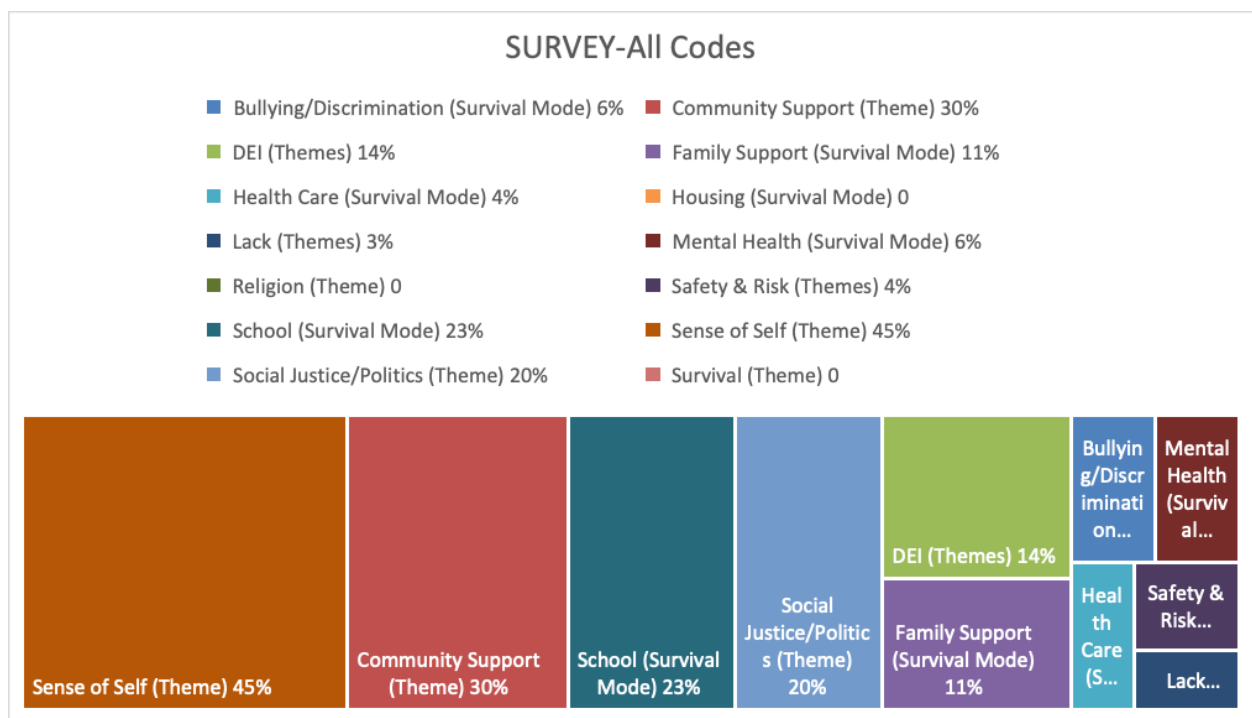
Understanding the Interviews and Surveys

      This qualitative study began with Transformations' understanding of survival mode and
the six conditions that may force a trans young person to live with anxiety, trauma, and lack of
resources. Through surveys and interviews, we deliberately aligned response to survival mode,
but also allowed for emergent themes to surface. The results of the interviews and surveys
produced the findings noted in Table 5. The recommendations for Transformations build

programmatic structures and supports will focus on opportunities that connect to sense of self, community and family support, school, social justice/politics, healthcare, mental healthcare and bullying and discrimination.

Table 5: Combined View of Inductive & Deductive Results

Interviews			Surveys		
Deductive	**Inductive**	**Combined**	**Deductive**	**Inductive**	**Combine**
School	Social Justice/Politics	Social Justice/Politics	School	Sense of Self	Sense of Self
Healthcare	Community Support	Community Support	Family Support	Community Support	Community Support
Mental Healthcare	Sense of Self	Sense of Self	Mental Healthcare Bullying & Discrimination	Social Justice/Politics	School

Part VIII: Findings and Recommendations

What are the needs of transgender and gender-nonconforming young people living in survival mode (Q1)?

From our in-depth review of available literature, survey responses, and interviews, we conclude that young transgender people living in survival mode have needs that are not unlike their cisgender contemporaries. Repeatedly, we uncovered the desire to feel part of a community, access to gender-affirming healthcare, enjoy full legal protections, and the ability to have an education experience that prioritizes safe learning over discrimination. For many of the participants that we interviewed, they want assurance that their journey is "normal" and that they will have the support of those around them if they should require it. There exists an awareness

that fights for social justice in arenas adjacent to the transgender community often are not fully inclusive, leaving the trans community without the requisite support.

In what ways can Transformations provide programmatic support to improve the well-being of this group (Q2)?

Our findings highlight the needs of the transgender and gender-nonconforming young people living in survival mode. Our participants spoke highly of the services and programmatic offerings that organizations such as Transformations provide. All of the needs identified by our participants could be addressed through the programmatic function of Transformations. Understanding that resource constraints likely prohibit Transformations from immediately implementing all of our recommendations, some require little effort from the organization but could significantly impact the community. We recommend fourteen specific areas of programmatic efforts for Transformations, which are detailed below.

Recommendations for Transformations

The scholarly literature unequivocally underscores the profound implications on individuals navigating survival modes. Transformations, functioning as a non-profit organization, occupies a distinctive niche in its capacity to assist transgender people, independent of their identification and placement within survival mode spectrums. Leveraging its substantive community affiliations and the esteemed leadership that is indigenous to its community base, the organization is poised to optimize its expansive outreach to effect positive shifts and changes. Historically, the predominant modus operandi for Transformations' programmatic endeavors entailed face-to-face interactions. However, in response to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a commendable pivot in their programmatic delivery

mechanisms. In its current operational framework, Transformations has embraced multi-modal platforms for delivery, signifying the potential for a national footprint.

Identity Formation and Recognition

As individuals navigate their journey of self-discovery, the importance of identity formation is front and center, especially within the transgender community. When trans young people cannot build a confident public identity that is safe, there is a chance of bullying or discrimination that could lead to the negative effects of living in survival mode. In addition, identity emerged as a significant theme. Transformations should consider implementing identity workshops as collaborative spaces where participants actively understand and affirm their evolving identities. Interview participants specifically discussed the importance and weight of shared experiences in self-discovery. Counseling or talk therapy can offer a more personalized approach to address challenges and experiences. A dynamic that offers both group and individualized sessions, Transformations has the potential to provide a comprehensive support network, ensuring all feel understood and valued. Given that the average age of transition for our respondents was 22 years (with the youngest at 13 years of age), early work by Transformations could have a profound impact on the formation of these lives.

Social Acceptance and Belonging

The road to self-acceptance is complicated by our desire to belong and the acceptance of our societal norms. Transformations should consider establishing peer support groups that can act as safe havens where individuals share experiences and cultivate camaraderie. To complement this, we encourage introducing counseling programs for the entire familial unit. By encouraging understanding through dialogue, families could utilize these counseling sessions to build solid support foundations. Nearly all interviewees discussed how their families did not

understand them or their journey. The familial unit can be strengthened by providing safe spaces to ask questions, learn about their family members, and be guided by a professional skilled in navigating difficult conversations.

Access to Healthcare

It is difficult to discuss well-being without mentioning healthcare. Unfortunately, healthcare is laden with obstacles for the transgender community. While providing trans-affirming healthcare is likely prohibitively expensive, Transformations could develop a comprehensive healthcare directory. This would serve as a resource for the community where professionals who are well-versed in the healthcare needs of trans patients can be readily available and avoid the painful process to which many people are subjected. Subsidized health services could mitigate the financial barriers associated with healthcare access; these subsidized services ensure that financial means do not stand in the way of safe and affirming healthcare.

Legal Challenges

Transgender individuals face significant challenges navigating an already confusing and complicated legal system. Transformations could identify supportive legal community members or lean on an established national network to create a legal aid desk. This service could provide resources and legal assistance that address the specific and unique needs of the community, such as legal name and gender changes. Interviewees spoke about what often seemed insurmountable challenges in addressing modifications to legal documents; some suggesting even maintaining their current legal name and simply using an alias instead of pursuing a change. In addition to these legal resources, the organization could position itself to proactively equip community members with know-your-rights workshops and training to empower people with confidence and

knowledge to self-advocate. Transformations could create a national model for other marginalized populations nationwide through this responsive and proactive approach.

Economic and Job Security

One of the best measures of equality in any community is economic independence and its members ability to secure gainful employment without fear of discrimination. This allows for personal growth that translates into societal recognition and integration. We would encourage Transformations to facilitate job fairs tailored for the transgender community, featuring employers who espouse comprehensive anti-discrimination policies and health benefits that support the transgender community. While protections for the transgender community can be described, at best, as a patchwork of varying degrees, this removes the onus from the community to find respectful employers. These events can act as a bridge, connecting individuals with inclusive employers who value diversity and respect. Skill-building workshops can be introduced to enhance this effort further, ensuring that program participants remain competitive in today's dynamic job market. To highlight employer efforts, the organization could identify community employers with a badge to recognize their community commitment. By marrying opportunity with capability, Transformations can orchestrate job security for their community.

Education

Education is a cornerstone in areas of empowerment and social progress. Transgender young adults face financial challenges that are different from their peers (Kwok, 2018). With this understanding, Transformations could modify its existing microgrant program and tailor it toward scholarships, encouraging the community to envision academic pursuits with a lessened financial barrier. Interviewees spoke unanimously about the difficulties experienced in their primary school years. Deadnaming, misgendering, and inappropriate/discriminatory questioning

were common themes raised by participants. Transformations could create programming around educational advocacy to champion the rights and needs of transgender students. By ensuring a supportive and inclusive environment, Transformations can make an indelible impact on the experiences of transgender students while paving the way for a brighter and more successful future.

Romantic and Sexual Relationships

Regardless of identity or expression, romantic and sexual relationships are a universal element of the human experience (Shelton, 2016). Extensive research has been conducted, concluding that the transgender community suffers intimate partner violence at levels that are five times higher than their cisgender peers (Hatchel & Marx, 2018). To combat this, Transformations could initiate programming around safe dating and healthy relationships. Providing information to individuals about establishing and maintaining healthy and safe boundaries could prove lifesaving. At the same time, identifying concerns and providing tools to navigate these challenges could help prevent situations from occurring. Hatchel & Marx (2018) highlight disproportionate rates of sexually transmitted infections, which likely are attributed to a lack of comprehensive, trans-affirming healthcare. Additionally, Transformations could seek to add sexual health screenings to their programming carousel.

Safety and Violence

As noted previously, violence disproportionately impacts the transgender community. While a system of transgender-centric emergency shelters would provide the best and highest levels of support, this will likely be cost-prohibitive. We would encourage Transformations to work with existing emergency resources to provide training so that intake procedures do not cause further harm. Safety and personal defense classes could build the necessary skills and

practical knowledge to mitigate risks and encourage methodical risk assessment. Several interviewees spoke about the violence they've experienced during sex work; ensuring that the community has the skills necessary to survive will place Transformations at the center of this preventive and responsive action.

Community and Support

Transformations is to be lauded for their work of building community connections. The most marginalized communities must be lifted and protected so that, in time, they can become fully participatory (Carlile, 2019). While Transformations has a wide programming carousel, it primarily focuses on transgender women of color. To create additional community connections, Transformations could endeavor to build alliances and connections with other trans-centric organizations that serve a wider breadth of the community. Further, programming geared toward the cisgender community could provide both educational opportunities and sources of revenue. The organization's founder is well-versed in community building, and the organization could benefit from a wider outreach, whether digital or in person.

Cultural and Religious Navigation

No terrain is more difficult to traverse than the intersectionality of culture and religion (Bauer et al., 2021). Uprooting what is often seen by family and community and beliefs and traditions can be complex and seem insurmountable. Our interviewees discussed how their families' religious beliefs or traditional views of gender directly impacted their journey. Understanding the journey towards self and "other" acceptance is a journey, Transformations could host multi-faith dialogues where conversations on acceptance, understanding, and collaboration are sought. To help facilitate these conversations, the organization could also provide community training to address cultural nuances that may be encountered during this

work. By providing tools, Transformations can encourage respectful dialogue and interactions through areas of discovery.

Internalized Transphobia

While external struggles are often easiest to identify, the internal struggles formed from societal prejudices can be challenging (Bauer et al., 2021). To address this area, which is often overlooked, Transformations could ensure that efforts to combat internalized transphobia are integrated into all programmatic efforts. Specific efforts that provide safe spaces to express and confront deep-rooted self-doubt could be added elements of their future programming camps. The addition of this internally focused effort, coupled with external focuses previously discussed, allows Transformations to build the self-esteem of their members.

Advocacy and Activism

For those in the throes of survival mode, it can be impossible to have optimism that inspires political activism. In our political landscape, where trans rights are weaponized tools of political actors, it has never been more important to begin building the next generation of civil rights activists. Because many members of the trans community operate out of the public eye to avoid condemnation, regular activism training sessions could be employed to harness the anger geared toward political overreach. These types of training could provide the community with knowledge on how the government operates (ensuring energy is properly focused) and the skills necessary to engage leaders on topics of dire urgency. While Transformations must avoid avert political activity to protect their tax-exempt status, they can provide training to their community, which would have an even greater impact as they advocate for many topics and interests. An engaged citizenry is the most effective tool in fighting discrimination (Bauer et al., 2021).

Navigating Binary Spaces

Our society has a deep-seated binary worldview. This rigid construct challenges those who do not neatly fit into "this or that" (Bauer et al., 2021). Transformations could partner with area organizations and businesses open to a facility audit. These audits could provide assessments on topics such as inclusivity and accessibility. Inclusion training would educate individuals and organizations about the varied nuances of gender identity to increase inclusivity. Transformations can break down binary barriers through assessments and educational programming to celebrate a more inclusive framework.

Limitations

The limiting factors of the literature review include a relatively small body of academic research on the gender-nonconforming, non-binary, and transgender communities. While academia has produced generalizable results with regard to some populations within the queer community, there are notable vacuums that exist covering minoritized populations. Longitudinal studies and more significant sample numbers are required to further understand the long-term effects of the survival mode and the efficacy of therapies.

In our efforts to secure participants amenable to participation via written survey modalities or in-person dialogues, we encountered substantial impediments. A recurrent sentiment among potential contributors was an intrinsic skepticism toward "outsiders," coupled with an inclination for compensatory recognition in exchange for their experiential narratives. Given the sensitivities associated with their experiences, we employed a trauma-informed approach, prioritizing elevated standards of safeguarding to avoid harm. Our inquiry protocols were structured to obtain foundational data, while concurrently offering avenues for deeper introspection for those predisposed to such disclosure. However, it is pertinent to note that in-situ

judgment was utilized to determine whether certain probative avenues could be pursued without

infringing upon the well-being of the respondent.

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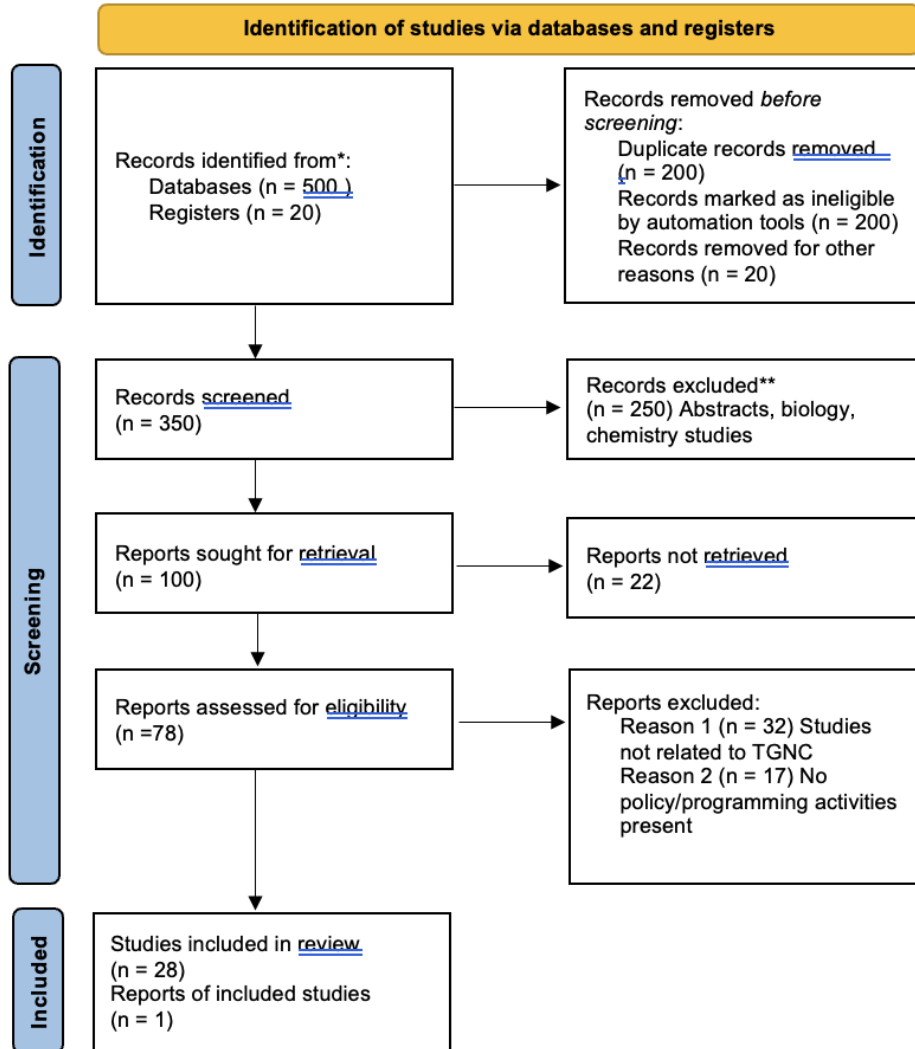
Appendix A

Glossary of Definitions

- **Assigned sex at birth:** The designation made by medical professionals of a person's sex based on a visual examination of a child's genitals at birth. If the genitals are ambiguous, further examinations and tests may be conducted. Sex designation is often incorrectly conflated with one's gender identity in our society.
- **Assumed gender**: Assumed gender is the gender identity we presume individuals have based on their sex assigned at birth. For example, a person who was assigned male at birth is likely to have the assumed gender of a boy/man. A person who was assigned female at birth is likely to have the assumed gender of a girl/woman.
- **Cisgender:** Refers to people whose gender identity aligns with their assigned sex at birth (cis- from Latin, meaning, "on the same side [as]" or "on this side [of]", in contrast to trans-, from the Latin root meaning "across", "beyond", or "on the opposite side [of]").
- **Gender:** The complex interrelationship between: the body (our experience of our bodies, as well as how society genders our bodies and interacts with us based on our bodies and perceived sex); identity (internal sense of self as male, female, neither, a blend of both, or something else; who we privately know ourselves to be); and expression (how we present our gender to others, and how society, culture, community and family perceive, interact with, and try to shape our gender). The interaction of these three elements comprises one's gender. Gender roles, expectations, and norms change and differ between cultures.
- **Gender affirmative practice:** Medical, mental health, legal, or other professional practice/practitioner who supports and accepts an individual's self-articulated gender identity and gender expression.
- **Gender expression:** This is our "public" gender. How we present our gender in the world through behavior, clothing, hairstyle, voice, mannerisms, and other forms of presentation, and how society, culture, community, and family perceive, interact with, and try to shape our gender. Expression is also related to gender roles and how society uses them to try to enforce conformity to current gender norms.
- **Gender identity:** A person's innermost core concept of self which can include male, female, a blend of both, neither, and many more. Gender identity is how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth. Gender identity can evolve and shift over time.
- **Gender non-conforming:** Gender that does not comply with societal, cultural, communal, and/or familial expectations of gender.
- **Internalized stigma/stigmatization:** Internal shame or self-hatred related to a culturally stigmatized aspect of one's self. Internalized transphobia: Internalized stigma about being trans*/ transgender.
- **Minority stress:** The stress and distress attributable to a person's minority status.
- **Non-binary gender:** An umbrella term for gender identities and expressions that are not exclusively male or female. People who identify their gender as non-binary can feel that they are both male and female, neither male nor female, or something else altogether. Non-binary identities are recognized in many non-Western cultures around the world. Although it is an imperfect umbrella term, for the purposes of this book we use non-binary to communicate the experience of people whose genders cannot be defined purely in terms of the binary system of exclusively female or male.

- **Sex:** Refers to a person's biological status (male, female, intersex). Indicators of sex include sex chromosomes, gonads, internal reproductive organs and external genitalia. Sexual orientation: Part of our identity that is romantically and/or sexually attracted to others. Our sexual orientation and our gender are separate, though related, parts of our overall identity.
- **Transgender/trans/trans*:** All three of these terms can be used as umbrella terms to describe an individual whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex at birth. The terms trans and transgender are sometimes used interchangeably to describe all gender identities that are not cisgender. The asterisk in trans* is used to signify the inclusion of all non-binary gender identities. Transgender can also be used to refer to people who experience deep feelings of incongruence with their assigned sex and associated sex characteristics, and feel alignment with what many often think of as the "opposite sex." Being trans or transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation.

Appendix B

Identification for Literature Review

PRISMA 2020 flow diagram

Identification of studies via databases and registers

Identification

Records identified from*:
Databases (n = 500)
Registers (n = 20)

→

Records removed *before screening*:
Duplicate records removed (n = 200)
Records marked as ineligible by automation tools (n = 200)
Records removed for other reasons (n = 20)

Screening

Records screened
(n = 350)

→

Records excluded**
(n = 250) Abstracts, biology, chemistry studies

Reports sought for retrieval
(n = 100)

→

Reports not retrieved
(n = 22)

Reports assessed for eligibility
(n =78)

→

Reports excluded:
Reason 1 (n = 32) Studies not related to TGNC
Reason 2 (n = 17) No policy/programming activities present

Included

Studies included in review
(n = 28)
Reports of included studies
(n = 1)

Appendix C

Survey Instrument

1. Enter the first and last letter of your preferred first name. For example, if your preferred first name is "Robert", enter "RT".
2. Are you 18 years of age or older?
3. In which state do you live?
4. Do you think of yourself as transgender?
5. Do you identify as more than one gender or as no gender (such as genderqueer or non-binary)?
6. How old were you when you started to live full-time in a gender different from the one assigned to you at birth?
7. What sex were you assigned at birth on your original birth certificate?
8. Which of these terms do you identify with?
9. If you do not disclose your gender identity, what are the main reasons that you don't tell people you identify as non-cisgender?
10. What gender pronouns do you ask people to use to refer to you?
11. At about what age did you begin to feel that your gender was "different" from your assigned birth sex?
12. At about what age did you start to think you were transgender (even if you did not know the word for it)?
13. What kind of supportive programming would have been most helpful to you growing up?
14. What kind of supportive programming would be most helpful to transgender youth today?
15. What are the biggest barriers to accessing supportive programming for transgender youth?
16. What can non-profits do to make supportive programming more accessible to transgender youth?
17. How can non-profit programming help transgender youth build resilience and empower them personally?
18. In your opinion, what would be the most effective way for non-profit programs to reach and engage transgender youth?
19. Have you ever faced discrimination or prejudice while accessing non-profit programs or resources? If yes, please share your experience.
20. How do you think non-profit programming can contribute to the mental health and well-being of transgender youth?
21. What barriers or obstacles do you believe exist for transgender youth in accessing non-profit programming?
22. How important is it for non-profit programs to have transgender individuals involved in their planning and implementation?
23. What are your thoughts on mentorship programs that pair transgender youth with adult mentors who have shared similar experiences?
24. Do you believe non-profit programming can positively impact educational opportunities and outcomes for transgender youth? Why or why not?

25. How can non-profit organizations better collaborate with schools and educational institutions to support transgender youth?
26. We would welcome the opportunity to speak with you more in-depth about your experiences. If you are willing to participate in a one-on-one interview (conducted virtually), please provide your email address.

Appendix D

Comprehensive Survey Response Quotations

To ensure anonymity, identifiers were removed. Codes include both theme and survival mode.

quotation	codes
My mom is really the only relative I speak to but she still misgenders my chihuahua because in her mind all chihuahuas are girls lol. Socially however it's because I don't want to make someone feel bad before I forgot to mention it when I introduced myself, or I know it's a limited interaction like asking for help to find something in a shop	Family Support (Survival Mode), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
The main reason I would not reveal that I am transgender is for my own safety and the safety of my family.	Safety & Risk (Themes), Sense of Self (Theme)
I do not go out of my way to disclose my identity. I only do so when necessary. My gender is my business so I do not feel it is anyone's business.	Sense of Self (Theme)
Just knowing a safe place to talk about what was going on for me. Meeting other people like me and hearing about their lives and experiences.	Sense of Self (Theme), Community Support (Theme)
Supportive groups that would engage in discussion and non gender specific activities would have helped me to feel validated. Helpful programming would have not focused on gender roles with regard to professions and societal norms.	DEI (Themes), Sense of Self (Theme)
I wish there had been the resources about transgender issues. When I was a kid there were no resources.	Lack (Themes), Sense of Self (Theme)
I think youth need more insight on differences between transgender and nonbinary. I sometimes wonder if I'm not just nonbinary. But it's too late now.	Sense of Self (Theme)
Guidance on transitioning, where to go for HRT, step by step guides for name change and medical transitions	Health Care (Survival Mode)

Trans kids are under attack. They need help! We need to stop these stupid laws and make it ok for people to be themselves. Make it ok for families to help their kids!	DEI (Themes), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
I think much of the same, but more law-passing. When I was a kid in the 90's/00's legal protection was still a radical idea but it's more of a human rights issue today	Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
Transgender youth could benefit greatly from and and all resources put in place within schools and places of learning. A diverse staff that includes LGBTQ+ people provides representation that is so important to the health mental and emotional development of trans youth. Affirming policies that allow trans youth access to the facilities (bathrooms, locker rooms, sports teams) with which they identify can greatly improve their overall wellness. Programs that educate teachers on trans youth and the challenges they face would be extremely helpful.	DEI (Themes), School (Survival Mode), Sense of Self (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
I believe stories from other trans people and their experiences. I also believe Q&A resources would be a great help.	Sense of Self (Theme)
Lack of awareness that these exist. But also fearing that loved ones might find out (Specially those who aren't out/ supported)	Family Support (Survival Mode)
Transportation, time, location (often programming is in white gayborhoods), general anti trans youth political climate	Social Justice/Politics (Theme), Community Support (Theme)
These new laws and the way people are making trans people villains. People need to know we aren't a threat. We just want to live our lives.	DEI (Themes), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
The current political and cultural climate have made the transgender community a scapegoat for many of society's current struggles. Because of this, putting lifesaving policies in place that protect and affirm transgender youth has been increasingly difficult. Education about the LGBTQ+ community, as a whole, is needed more than ever.	School (Survival Mode), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)

Today it is legislation and politicians who are trying to make it difficult. There is also the fear and lack of education people have in regards to lgbtq issues.	Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
Bring programming to youth. Ensure that it is what they want and need. Not just what oldheads want to provide.	Community Support (Theme)
You need to meet people where they are. With people so spread out, there is a need for some virtual programming. This also allows me to access it safely.	Safety & Risk (Themes), Sense of Self (Theme)
Reaching out through different Social platforms, making educational videos, checklists and contact information they may benefit from	School (Survival Mode), Community Support (Theme)
Offer digital programming, provide transportation and meals, showers, clothes, & stipends. Multilingual programming with diverse hours	DEI (Themes), Sense of Self (Theme), Community Support (Theme)
Make it easy to find information and help kids feel like they're not alone. That what they're going through is hard but normal and there is hope!!	Sense of Self (Theme)
My non-profit focuses on young adults 18-40 because it's honestly easier to reach out to adults on their own without having to fight with their parents to explain why they deserve to exist	Community Support (Theme)
Providing safe spaces for parents as much as youth. Sometimes, the ones that need more support in this process are them.	Family Support (Survival Mode), Community Support (Theme)
Non-profits can be serve trans youth by expanding their programs outside of urban areas and into rural communities. Often times non-profits will exist but their services are not reaching their intended populations. Having resources available in guidances offices in schools would help to reach trans youth.	School (Survival Mode), Community Support (Theme)
Have care things available online. Be prepared to go out and do training. Have scholarships available to those who need it.	School (Survival Mode), Health Care (Survival Mode), Sense of Self (Theme)

Teaching us how to interact with our community and getting along with those who don't agree wi the us	Bullying/Discrimination (Survival Mode), Sense of Self (Theme)
Mentorship! Community groups, art therapy programs, skill based work trade programs specifically for trans youth	Community Support (Theme)
Set them up with someone who has gone before them. Give them ways to think about all of this. Hey they need some therapy!	Sense of Self (Theme), Mental Health (Survival Mode)
I probably would have come out years before I did if I had a queer community in my hometown, like a club or something	Community Support (Theme)
Creating mentorship initiatives like Big Brother, Sister or allowing them to meet trans adults. Representation matters.	Sense of Self (Theme)
Include them in decision making, giving full support when times are difficult and giving them the voice rather than speaking for them	Sense of Self (Theme)
1.Exposing trans youth to the history of trans people in all walks of life is very empowering. Giving trans youth access to older trans people is also extremely important. Often times teams youth will say that they feel hopeless because they do not see elder teams people who are living healthy and fulfilled lives. This is largely because trans people have no been able to live openly and authentically in society.	School (Survival Mode), Family Support (Survival Mode), Sense of Self (Theme)
2. Programs showing trans youth that they have just as much to contribute to society as any other group are greatly needed. Highlighting the contributions that trans people have made to the arts, science, politics, engineering, etc help young people feel empowered and inspiration for the future.	School (Survival Mode), Community Support (Theme)
I like when I find videos online. Having links to credible videos will be helpful. Access to secure support groups is also beneficial to youth.	Sense of Self (Theme)

|	
Social media marketing, offering programming that interests them, through public advertising and through marketing through LGBTQIA student groups	Social Justice/Politics (Theme), Community Support (Theme)
Everyone's on tik tok.Start with where they're at sk they can find information that would be helpful.	Sense of Self (Theme)
Any outreach targeted at any group of young people must include an aggressive social media approach. Social media combined with print media in their every spaces would also increase engagement.	Community Support (Theme)
Yes, I have been denied access to women only spaces (nonprofit spas, eg) and political groups because I was assigned male at birth	DEI (Themes), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
Not really. I'be gone a few times to get tested and they've been helpful. I was nervous but the nurse was great.	Health Care (Survival Mode)
Yes and no. Nothing that's ever actually stopped me from doing stuff but there have been people to make things subtly more difficult	Bullying/Discrimination (Survival Mode), Family Support (Survival Mode)
As an adult living in a state (NJ) that has policies put in place at the state level to protect trans people, I have experienced very little prejudice in accessing resources for trans people.	Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
Before I had my legal name change and all my documents changes I was misgendered and refused service.	DEI (Themes), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
Giving people a safety net is very important. Providing information on queer identities can be very validating, as well as hearing the successful stories of other queer people with similar struggles can be very uplifting and encouraging. Having someone to listen without judgement is also key.	Sense of Self (Theme)

These kids need it bad. It's so hard growing up trans. Shit it's hard growing up at all and then you add being trans on top of it and people thinking you're this evil thing. It's depressing.	School (Survival Mode), Mental Health (Survival Mode)
By being an active and bold advocate, providing support groups in multiple forms(in person and on line), showing kids good examples of successful trans adults they can look up to	Community Support (Theme)
Any programming that supports and affirms trans youth will improve their mental health and wellbeing. The data shows that trans youth are healthier overall when supported and affirmed.	Sense of Self (Theme), Mental Health (Survival Mode)
The communities we live in and the ways that we survive. We need things that do not get communities up in arms and place us in danger.	Safety & Risk (Themes)
For underage people: Family/living environment. For all: stigma, fear of being outed and/or treated poorly. Not being aware of the resources and how to use them.	Bullying/Discrimination (Survival Mode), Family Support (Survival Mode), Community Support (Theme)
As stated in a previous question, the political and cultural climate have made it very difficult for trans people, especially young people, to access any type of gender care. Often times access to resources requires parental consent and it's, unfortunately, not uncommon for parents and guardians to be unsupportive or outright transphobic. Which limits the care and support someone under 18 can receive.	Lack (Themes), Bullying/Discrimination (Survival Mode), Family Support (Survival Mode), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
Often times they need parental approval and if their parents are not accepting/supportive then they may have a hard time getting the help they need.	Family Support (Survival Mode), Sense of Self (Theme)
Not entirely beneficial. To be honest, many of the trans people leading organizations aren't the best role models.	
Trans people can probably help a lot because we know what we've been through, so I would say important.	Community Support (Theme)

Our voices need to be heard when setting up our own organizations. Maybe there can be a series of structures of education for students to choose from when they're introduced to what they're going to learn	School (Survival Mode), Sense of Self (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
Have transgender individuals involved in programming is essential. The journey of coming out as trans and accessing gender affirming care can be extremely complicated and challenging. Having trans people in positions of planning, implementation and support brings authentic, real world experiences into program development.	DEI (Themes), Sense of Self (Theme)
I would have loved a mentor that could have helped me navigate society. They would not have even needed to be trans.	Community Support (Theme)
I would've liked this. It would have shown me that I would survive or even help me navigate early procedures	Sense of Self (Theme)
It is an amazing idea. As I mentioned, hearing the life stories of a similar individual can be very helpful	Sense of Self (Theme)
I have been a vocal advocate for mentorship programs for any trans youth who wants one. As a current mentor to a younger trans person, I cannot overstate how mutually beneficial the relationship is.	Community Support (Theme)
I like this idea. This can be a positive thing if done properly. As long as all mentors have been trained and pass a background check.	School (Survival Mode), Sense of Self (Theme)
1000%. By telling folks that this organization supports and sees them, it's already a gigantic step towards positive impact.	Sense of Self (Theme), Community Support (Theme)
Staying in school is paramount. So yes, working with each other would have been helpful to ensure we are all aligned.	School (Survival Mode)
Yes! It would have benefits in their confidence, mental health, and give them a sense of purpose and educational goals. They can build from what they learn.	School (Survival Mode), Mental Health (Survival Mode)

Yea, through offering scholarships, mentorship, leadership opportunities and affirming programming for gender expansive youth. Because youth need all these resources and aren't getting them elsewhere	School (Survival Mode), Sense of Self (Theme)
I think it can help them but also their peers. If we all have access to education and stats to show we're not crazy or alone, it'll help trans youth as well as their peers so they can learn the same lessons but also how to support them	DEI (Themes), School (Survival Mode), Sense of Self (Theme)
Yes if they are actively working to be positive voices in communities to show trans youth but also the community at large what transgender people can contribute	Community Support (Theme)
Yes. When trans youth feel seen, supported and affirmed, the natural progression is one of upward educational mobility. Any child who feels empowered, regardless of status, will have the room to improve academically and socially.	DEI (Themes), School (Survival Mode), Sense of Self (Theme), Community Support (Theme)
I believe the impetus is on the schools and educational institutions to be open and welcoming to non-profit organizations willing to come into their spaces and provide services. I would go as far as to say it is incumbent upon the educational institutions to actively seek out such groups as it can only prove beneficial to their student communities. There must be a commitment to collaboration on both parts in order for any benefits to be sustained.	School (Survival Mode)

Survey Responses Tree Maps
(a visual representation of survey responses)
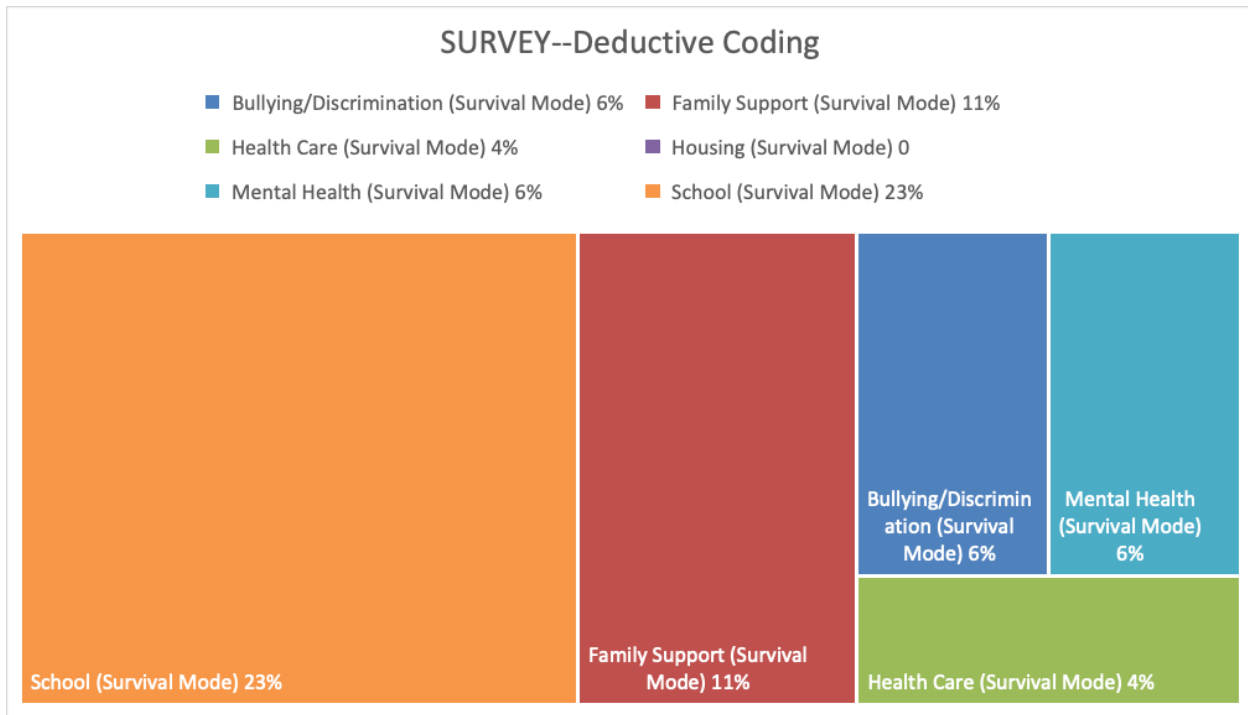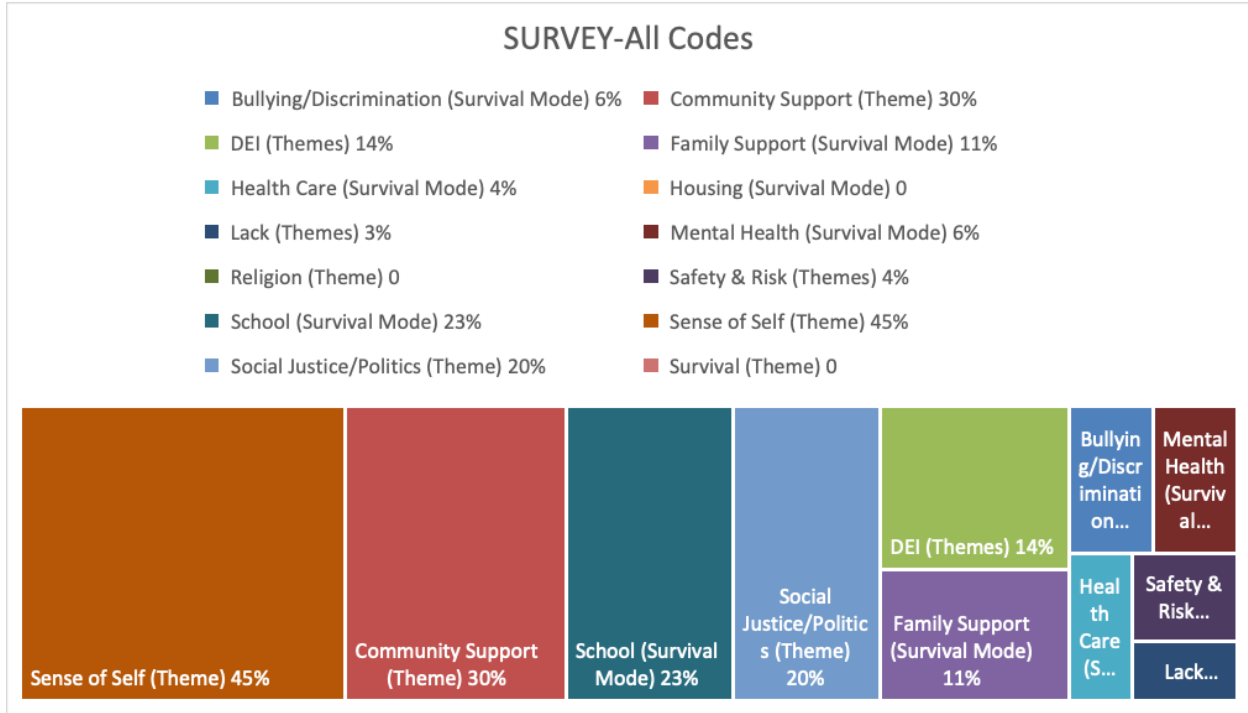
SURVEY--Inductive Coding

■ Community Support (Theme) 30%   ■ DEI (Themes) 14%   ■ Lack (Themes) 3%
■ Religion (Theme) 0   ■ Safety & Risk (Themes) 4%   ■ Sense of Self (Theme) 45%
■ Social Justice/Politics (Theme) 20%   ■ Survival (Theme) 0

Sense of Self (Theme) 45%

Community Support (Theme) 30%

Social Justice/Politics (Theme) 20%

DEI (Themes) 14%

Safety & Risk (Themes) 4%

Lack (Themes) 3%

Survey Deductive Coding Results

Survey Responses analyzed by connection to Survival Mode

Survival Mode	# of Responses	% of Responses
Bullying/Discrimination (Survival Mode)	4	5.80
Family Support (Survival Mode)	8	11.59
Health Care (Survival Mode)	3	4.35
Housing (Survival Mode)	0	0.00
Mental Health (Survival Mode)	4	5.80
School (Survival Mode)	16	23.19

Survey Inductive Coding Results

Survey Responses analyzed by connection to Emergent Themes
(themes identified through Interview Responses)

Emergent Themes	# of Responses	% of Responses
Community Support (Theme) 30%	21	30.43
DEI (Themes) 14%	10	14.49
Lack (Themes) 3%	2	2.90
Religion (Theme) 0	0	0.00
Safety & Risk (Themes) 4%	3	4.35
Sense of Self (Theme) 45%	31	44.93
Social Justice/Politics (Theme) 20%	14	20.29
Survival (Theme) 0	0	0.00

Appendix H

Interview Questions

1. In your opinion, how does societal acceptance and support impact the well-being of transgender and gender-nonconforming young people?
2. How does intersectionality, such as race, socioeconomic status, or disability, intersect with gender identity to compound the challenges faced by transgender and gender-nonconforming young people?
3. Can you discuss any systemic or institutional factors that contribute to the struggles faced by transgender and gender-nonconforming young people?
4. If you are comfortable, would you provide examples of bullying, discriminatory or exclusionary practices that you or other transgender and gender-nonconforming young people face?
5. Based on your personal experience or the experiences of friends, please talk about how family dynamics and support systems affect transgender and gender-nonconforming young people.
6. In your experience, what resources or support systems have proven effective in helping transgender and gender-nonconforming young people overcome their struggles?
7. How do mental health concerns and stigma affect the well-being of transgender and gender-nonconforming young people, and what interventions or strategies can be helpful in addressing these issues?
8. What steps can communities, schools, and healthcare providers take to create safer and more inclusive environments for transgender and gender-nonconforming young people?
9. Have you encountered any successful interventions, programs, or initiatives aimed at supporting transgender and gender-nonconforming young people and addressing their struggles? If so, what made them effective?
10. In what ways, during your youth, did you build community with other trans people from the ages of 13-18?
11. In what way does your family support or not support you as a trans individual?
12. Prior to age 18, to what extent were you aware of the legal remedies available to adjust or change your name or gender on legal documents?
13. What are the misconceptions that cisgender people have about the challenges and issues faced by transgender youth?
14. Please tell us anything else that you would like to share about your experience as a trans person.

Comprehensive Interview Response Quotations

To ensure anonymity, identifiers were removed. Codes include both theme and survival mode.

Quotation	Coding
Well, in my journey, I've definitely not felt supported. I come from a really religious family, and when I told them that I was trans, they kicked me out of the house. I've met other trans people who've had supportive families and I see the way their lives are and the choices that they've been able to make. They've been able to go to school and they have access to resources that it took me a really long time to be able to find, having to navigate just like life on my own and just kind of being homeless for a while. So I definitely would say that	Housing (Survival Mode), Lack (Theme), Religion (Theme), Family Support (Survival Mode), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
the way society thinks about trans people and trans issues matters. I wonder what my life would have been like if my family had more access or able to talk with people who were more affirming or had more positive attitudes towards trans people. But that sadly wasn't my experience.	Bullying/Discrimination (Survival Mode), DEI (Theme), Community Support (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme), Sense of Self (Theme)
I don't know. I can't imagine being surrounded by non supportive people could be positive in any way. All the girls I know who have parents like mine or were in environments like mine where people unsupportive, we all ended up on the streets. I started sex work when I was 17 and most of the girls on the street that I've met, no matter how long they've been on the streets,	Survival (Theme), Housing (Survival Mode), Safety & Risk (Theme), DEI (Theme)
they had unsupportive families, they were in unsupportive environments. Their schools don't know how to address trans issues either, so they had to drop out and that's where we ended up. I mean, I guess I imagine there could be some people who aren't supported and are able to make it, but I think those people are really rare and I haven't had the opportunity to run into them. Being trans is not a monolith, so it's not like one experience. But just in my experience and the girls that I've met and girls that I know and I just encounter through my journey, that's what it's been. They treated us like shit and so we had to figure it out on our own.	Bullying/Discrimination (Survival Mode), Family Support (Survival Mode), Community Support (Theme), Sense of Self (Theme)

Again, I can only speak from my experience, but as a black trans woman, absolutely. Black people, especially like religious black people, they treat trans women like shit. I guess every culture is different, but especially cultures that are already marginalized and you're already dealing with that shit. The added pressure of also just navigating life as a trans person is really difficult. Just having to growing up, I had to deal with people not liking me already because I was black and then when I realized that I was queer, in many ways, it felt liberating, like I had a reason and an excuse to just be myself because people already hated me. But being trans just made it even more complicated. Sometimes I just feel like people are afraid of me, and I don't know if it's like they don't afraid of me because I'm black or they're afraid of me because I'm trans. So it's definitely navigating a level of fear and safety when it comes to our various intersections, especially if you're not from a privileged group.	Religion (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme), Sense of Self (Theme)
Absolutely. I was bullied a lot in school, and they wouldn't let me access the woman's restroom. And this was like when I first started taking hormones. And I admit that I didn't pass as much as I do now, but they treated me like shit, and I got bullied a lot, and they forced me to go to the bathroom, so I would hold it all day. I can't tell you how many times I got bladder infections, and I would just run home after school. But it took me a really long time to figure out how to get my ID changed, and it was really hard. But I really thank my older sisters in the community. Those queens saved me. They gave me all the tips. They really helped me figure it out. But I will say, even before that, even while I was accessing or I was trying to access public services that are catered to my community, they still, and I say still misgendered me. So it goes to show that even places that are meant to protect you and are built to serve you still have the same problematic tendencies as some of these larger systems that we're forced to navigate, like the DMV.	Healthcare (Theme), Bullying/Discrimination (Survival Mode), School (Survival Mode), Community Support (Theme), Family Support (Survival Mode)

My whole entire high school experience was a nightmare, and that was why I had to drop out. And I still feel a lot of trauma from that time. They were just like, kids can already be mean, but what I experienced and the level of harassment, when I would just be in class and they would throw things at me, they would, like, piss in my book bag, and they would just do all kinds of shit. Like I couldn't even eat in the lunchroom. They would throw food at me, and they just treated me like I was a monster. And the teachers wouldn't do anything about it. They didn't do nothing, no matter how much I complained. And I couldn't go home and tell my mom. I couldn't tell any of my family because they wouldn't understand that they didn't care. I just had to stay out of the way. And so it was just I was holding all this stuff. That's what led me to leaving home, actually. Something happened at school, and the teachers contacted my parents and told them, and I would leave home dressed as a boy, and then when I would get to school, I'd be dressed as a girl. And I guess the principal or somebody called my family and told them what was going on because there was an incident. It was the incident where they peed in my book bag, and it was a big thing, and that's how my parents found out, and they kicked me out not too long after that.	Survival (Theme), Bullying/Discrimination (Survival Mode), School (Survival Mode), Housing (Survival Mode)
I don't know. I think about this sometimes, and it seems like nowadays I talk to some of the young girls because I volunteer at a center sometimes, and I see them they go to schools where there's support groups and there's all those alliance groups and stuff like that, and there's all kind of trainings, and they have no hate stuff. And I wish that my school had that. But in the hood, we don't have stuff like that, right? We barely have enough money for books and pencils and shit like that. So I don't know. I wish that there was just some type of awareness that trans people are people. We're not monsters, we're not defective in any way. Does that make sense? I feel like I'm just rambling.	Lack (Theme), School (Survival Mode), Community Support (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
Yeah, like black neighborhoods and that don't have any money. I don't know. Have you been to a black school before? Black schools don't have a lot of support in general. Everyone's just trying to hold on. So, yeah, there's just so much. I guess that goes back to intersectionality, right? Just like, what it's like being black and being trans and being in a black neighborhood and having to navigate all of that. Just the lack of resources, the lack of funding.	Lack (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)

If I had a supportive family, I wouldn't have ended up on the streets. I probably wouldn't be a sex worker. It started at home. If I had love, if they just would have supported me, my life probably wouldn't have been so difficult. And it was really hard for a bit because being on the streets it's not just being on the streets and worrying about how to get food and shit like that. It's like drugs and just like I was exposed to a lot at a really young age, and I wish that I wasn't now.	Survival (Theme), Housing (Survival Mode), Family Support (Survival Mode), Safety & Risk (Theme)
No, I felt like they were always trying to find a reason to get rid of me. My mom has four of the kids by different men, and I just feel like I was always the black sheep. I felt like I was just another mouth to feed in the moment that I fell out of line, and I just was myself. It was just like, well, you need to go. And that was it.	Family Support (Survival Mode), Housing (Survival Mode)
People drop in centers and youth groups in particular? Even the shelters can be problematic. Right when I was really desperate, I tried to go to the shelters, but even the shelters had issues. You had to watch out for yourself. I just feel like I'm always having to fight, having to fight off other people in the shelters. And depending on what type of shelter it is, if they group you with the guys, you got to watch out for that kind of shit that happens. And some of the girls, even the people who are running the shelters, they're like, oh, I'll give you a safe bed, but you got to turn a trick for me. So it's always like it's very transactional in that way. But there was a few youth groups that was specifically catered to queer, transgender, nonconforming people, and they had trans women that led the group. And that was really how I met some of my elders and some of girls that became my sisters. They were already on the streets and they helped me kind of navigate ways that I could make money and I could get my shots and I can have access to stuff. And I really learned that really, I found them through kind of those various youth groups.	Housing (Survival Mode), Safety & Risk (Theme), School (Survival Mode), Community Support (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)

I think having other trans people be the lead in outreach is really important because I'm not going to trust some white man coming at me being like, hey, can I talk to you? I'm going to be like, you're a john and I'm going to treat you like a john. But when it's other trans women coming to me in the community who look like me or I feel like have a similar experience, I'm more likely to believe and trust them. So I think that could be something. And mental health, we all crazy, right? We all have trauma. We've all experienced some level of trauma, whether it's like sexual violence or just like abuse at home and bullying. So I think just having an understanding that we're all dealing with shit and to be patient, because sometimes people just don't understand that and they just come with this really rigid kind of systematic approach. Like, you got to do this, and you can't do drugs and you can't talk back and you got to act a certain way. And it's like when you're always told to act a certain way, it just is really hard to then have to conform in order to get support. So having some understanding of our experiences and that it's hard. Sometimes we're using drugs to cope. I smoke weed because I have extreme anxiety and I don't know what else I can do. So if you're trying to drug test me or tell me that I stay here, but you can't do drugs or you can't do this, fuck that.	Survival (Theme), Healthcare (Theme), Mental Health (Survival Mode), Community Support (Theme), Family Support (Survival Mode), Bullying/Discrimination (Survival Mode), Sense of Self (Theme)
I'd rather just be on the street and make my own money and have my own place so that I can survive the way I want to and I need to.	Housing (Survival Mode), Survival (Theme), Safety & Risk (Theme), Sense of Self (Theme)
I don't know. Just stop with the fuckery this CIS hat fuckery where you have to conform to some standard of being. Just allow space for different identities to thrive. And exist and be really intentional, I guess, about not letting bullying and harassment happen, because as much as I blame the people that bullied me, I really blame the teachers for just, like, letting it happen. But it's probably because they also saw me as dirt, just like they did.	Bullying/Discrimination (Survival Mode), Sense of Self (Theme)
Not really. I had a couple friends, but they weren't really trans. I didn't really get a community of other trans people until I was out of the house and I was able to kind of do what I wanted to do. But until then, I lived a really sheltered life.	Lack (Theme), Bullying/Discrimination (Survival Mode), Sense of Self (Theme)

I mean, honestly, a pussy don't make you a woman. And I wish people would just understand that, just accept it, because it's really fucking exhausting to have to fight for your identity and for your gender everywhere you go. It's exhausting. Just let me live. Let me be. Stop trying to police me. You don't have to understand that I am a woman.	Sense of Self (Theme)
Stop trying to stop us from just living our lives. US? Honestly, the main ones, these men, these politicians who are, like, policing us and creating these laws that are stopping us from living our lives, they're the first ones that are calling us up for some pussy.	Safety & Risk (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
I don't think so. Like I said, we're just trying to survive. And it's fine being a survivor mode if that's all, you know. But I just feel like on the other side of survival, there has to be healing, right? And I feel like we can achieve that healing if it's like a collective effort and people just come together and stop the bullshit.	Survival (Theme), Community Support (Theme), Mental Health (Survival Mode)
I had a very supportive situation. Family was very supportive, but I also know others who didn't have that, and they struggled a lot. I actually lost one of my friends. They committed suicide because they didn't feel loved. And so I know how important support is.	Survival (Theme), Mental Health (Survival Mode), Family Support (Survival Mode), Community Support (Theme)
Sometimes society doesn't really accept us and it doesn't feel like it accepts us right now with how the whole nation is going.	Community Support (Theme), Sense of Self (Theme)
in a predominantly white area where a lot of the people were very rich. And I know that people friends of mine who are of color or lived in lower class would often talk about their struggles. Not that I ever understood because I know that my situation is so different, but I do know that they probably have a very different experience than what I do. I'm sorry. My dog is barking at people outside.	DEI (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
Well, I don't know many of my Cisgendered friends who get asked what their gender is all the time. So	DEI (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
I think just that idea that I go to work and I have to disclose if I'm going into the right bathroom or that kind of stuff,	Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
driver's license, is that what you're kind of like how I have to put a different gender, or people are talking about me having to put another gender?	Social Justice/Politics (Theme)

So I actually was able to change my driver's license. So I understand that not being thought that you're the right person or that your ID isn't real. So that's tough to have to continuously explain why it looks different or why my name is not my name, why it has the name I was born with. So that is really tough. I understand where that could be a big struggle. But I think when you go out and you have to not drink or not eat a lot because you're afraid you're going to have to go to the bathroom and you know that the bathrooms are only for men and for women, but there's none that I can identify with that's really hard.	Survival (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme), Sense of Self (Theme)
I think the biggest one is that I don't deserve to be alive, or I'm not as good, or I'm not a good person.	Survival (Theme), Mental Health (Survival Mode), Sense of Self (Theme)
I think also I struggle with just how I look. Now if I look like a woman, so people don't assume that I'm a man. I don't know if that makes any sense.	Healthcare (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme), Sense of Self (Theme)
I actually told my parents that I didn't want to be a boy anymore when I was about seven, and they didn't really know what to do, and so they found resources. We had resources available to us. But I know that I started school as a boy, and when I decided that I wanted to wear my dresses and things, a lot of the kids made fun of me and would laugh at me, and they wouldn't sit with me.	Survival (Theme), Bullying/Discrimination (Survival Mode), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
I came from a very religious family. And the pastor at the church would take me into his office and repeatedly tell me that I was a boy and that if I wouldn't dress like if I dressed like a boy and I acted like a boy and I played with things that boys play with, then I could go to heaven. But if I wanted to be a girl, then I wasn't welcomed there. I wasn't able to go to church, and I wasn't going to be able to go to heaven and all of that. And as a young kid, that was really terrifying to know that I wouldn't be able to have those experiences like all my other friends did. And I know other friends of mine now talk about that, and they, you know, I I know that they've had similar stories of, you know, churches being very strict and non accepting. I guess	Religion (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme), Sense of Self (Theme)
Well, I started to doubt whether or not I wanted to if I really was a boy then or if I really wanted like, I didn't understand who I was. And he always told me that my parents were the reason why.	Healthcare (Theme), Sense of Self (Theme)

And then because because I went to a Catholic school that was a part of where know went to church, teachers would often tell me that they couldn't call me by hazel. They had to call me by my other name. And I didn't like that because I was hazel. And so	Religion (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme), Sense of Self (Theme)
I didn't want that name anymore. And in middle school it was the same thing. And I had a few teachers in high school know wouldn't refer to my other name, my dead name, as me. They would actually call me Hazel. And that meant a lot because I actually, for the first time, felt that I was seen.	Professional Development (Theme), Sense of Self (Theme)
I was more engaging in those classes. In fact, even classes that I didn't like, the courses of, like science, I.	DEI (Theme), School (Survival Mode), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
I'm still not I mean, I hated science, but my teacher was super kind and always referred to me as Hazel. So I would get an A in that class. But classes that I liked, I would be failing or struggling because I didn't want to be there and I wasn't engaging.	Survival (Theme), School (Survival Mode)
So it was a very mixed like you could see on my report card that would come home, you know, where I felt that I was seen, where I felt that people could that knew me and let me be me then would let me I would just have just a better time in those classrooms. And I think I felt comfortable asking questions, asking for help after class where it didn't feel like a safe environment to do that with teachers who constantly refer to me as anything but Hazel.	Safety & Risk (Theme), School (Survival Mode), Community Support (Theme), Sense of Self (Theme)
I didn't experience that when I was in school. In fact, they wouldn't let me be a part of Girl Scouts when I wanted to be a part of Girl Scouts. And so that wasn't just available to me. I know that there are those types of organizations in different areas today, but I know that there are not enough of them. And so	Community Support (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
So I think that I always feared that if I went and had those spaces, that then school would kick me out or if people would come to my defense, that I would be in trouble for that.	School (Survival Mode)
as an adult, currently, I feel that it's really important to share my story, but also help create those spaces so that youth have that safety. They didn't have to struggle like I did.	Community Support (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)

No, I don't I'm not comfortable, I guess I just feel like I don't know, it just scares me to go and get that help. Okay. Yeah.	
I know one of my friends, when he transitioned, he had a supportive church. All of his teachers were very supportive. They went out of their way to make his experience amazing. So I know that that is not common at all. It's very out of the norm, especially what I know. But in terms of what other people have experienced, I know that they weren't around the different types of churches or organizations, or they didn't have the sports or the different school activities that they could turn to that helped them	School (Survival Mode), Community Support (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
have a situation that was good. And I know that a lot of them either became homeless as they grew up or they decided to tell their parents or they got caught because they were trying to hide it. And doing that only then creates a situation. One of my friends that I know ended up being a prostitute because of just being kicked out and needing to make money. And then she's also addicted to drugs and she struggles. And I know a few of us have tried to get her help, but I don't think that would ever work for her because she just thinks that everybody is not going to help her or they have ulterior motives. So, yes. Does that answer your question?	Housing (Survival Mode), Safety & Risk (Theme)
To deal with the feelings I was having or how to do basic things like how to change your name or that kind of stuff. And I wish I would have had that information readily available. I think that as an adult, I'm not as prepared as I could be if I had that support. So I have obviously bad coping styles that I struggle with today. And I'm sure if you have one, you know, that unlearning those suck a lot. So, like, I I struggle a lot with that, and unlearning those and unlearning the negative talk that I have with myself is incredibly difficult. But I also wish that	Survival (Theme), Healthcare (Theme), Lack (Theme), Bullying/Discrimination (Survival Mode), Community Support (Theme), Mental Health (Survival Mode)

somebody would have told me that it'll get better or that this fucking sucks today. You're not being heard. You're not being seen. And I think that having somebody tell me that and remind me that as a young person, as a teenager, even into my adulthood, hearing people say, like, yeah, today fucking sucks. Or when we watch the news and we see somebody like DeSantis giving his bullshit, saying the things that he says all the time about that parents are grooming their children, or all of that just fake bullshit. I wish that kids knew that. That's not how the majority of people feel. You know what I mean? And that there is support, that there is plenty of support out there, and that it's readily available. It's not something that they have to work to find or uncover or anything of that sort. But I guess the bottom line is that until there's support, that's the only way that we're going to start seeing anything better. And this probably is a little fucked up, but as an adult, I'm too broken. But if somebody that's young can have a better life, then more than ever, that's what needs to be done. And I can go through my fucked up life just struggling, I guess, as long as I know that youth has it better than what I did.	Survival (Theme), Community Support (Theme), Mental Health (Survival Mode), Social Justice/Politics (Theme), Sense of Self (Theme)
Yes. I'm just really glad that there are people like you out there that are doing something like this. It's really cool, and I appreciate that, and I would like to see your finished product if I could.	Community Support (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
I do not think without the people that I had around me and their support, I would not well, I a wouldn't be here at all. And	Community Support (Theme), Mental Health (Survival Mode)
I think I have largely been supported and also though in some environments that I had been in, I definitely have not.	Community Support (Theme)
I mean, this conversation immediately brings me back to my middle school days when I was first coming out and the school I was at, there were some not great people, but the adults that were there. I came out when I was 13 in 8th grade. So I had	Survival (Theme), School (Survival Mode), Community Support (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme), Sense of Self (Theme)
I had a teacher who was very welcoming and just wanted to make sure that I had everything I needed. And	School (Survival Mode), Community Support (Theme)

I had actually come out to him first way before my parents. He was the first adult that I came out to and he helped me actually came out maybe in the middle of the year. And he helped me set up a time during homeroom	Family Support (Survival Mode), Community Support (Theme), School (Survival Mode), Sense of Self (Theme)
to tell my homeroom class, like, you know, I am I'm trans? I would like you to call me this name and use he him. But he didn't pressure me to do it. I had actually been, quote unquote out for a couple of months by then, and he made it known that whenever I wanted to do it, he was here. And I wasn't ready to be out publicly. But then finally I was able to go to him and say, I'm ready to do this. And it was done the next day and without him. And then the other support systems I had along the way, it just saved me so much.	School (Survival Mode), Community Support (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme), Sense of Self (Theme)
were willing to be there for me every step of the way, especially because in America currently, things aren't going so well for populations.	Community Support (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
Yeah, he was just always really nice, and I had been struggling a lot that year in terms of mental health, and he was always okay to listen and just sit with me in a way that I really needed at that time. I was feeling very alone and just lost, and he was just like a person that I can go to, which I did not really have before then.	Community Support (Theme), Mental Health (Survival Mode)
If I can remember correctly, it wasn't necessarily advertised, but the way he conducted his classes and what he taught about that was a big thing. He taught humanities, which consisted of English and history, which I had never had before. So I was like, that's really weird that they're combined. But	School (Survival Mode), Mental Health (Survival Mode)
every week we watched this hour news show and he wasn't afraid to talk about LGBT history and racism. And that time was the year that Trump was elected. And so it was like the elections and then Trump and then shit that happened after that, and he wasn't afraid to talk about it. That was something that I really admired and that honestly probably gave me that idea that he was someone to go to.	Community Support (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)

And for this question, thinking about coming out to my extended family, I was pretty relatively comfortable coming out to my parents because I have two moms and they are already a part of that community. But obviously being trans is a little different and something that wasn't exactly thought about before. However, my extended family was kind of a different story, kind of like yours. They were very Christian and when my mom had come out to them, some of them didn't take it so well and they had kind of calmed down since then. But it was, I think, kind of always in the back of some of their minds like she's the gay one and we don't really like that.	Religion (Theme), Family Support (Survival Mode), Social Justice/Politics (Theme), Sense of Self (Theme)
would have been a little bit more of a conversation for my extended family than it would have been already coming from an LGBT friendly household. It also was helpful for me though,	Social Justice/Politics (Theme), Sense of Self (Theme)
living in New York City, which is extremely diverse and I actually didn't know any trans people personally, like, I never met one in real life. But LGBT topics were very talked about and I saw a lot of it and I saw a lot of different there's a lot of diversity in short. So I think that also helped my comfort coming out to adults and my other friends, because it wasn't a conversation yet. But it was definitely more okay to have that conversation, I think, than if I would have been grown up in a rural town, but sorry. That's okay. My extended family I think it was helpful to have that support of my mom to come out to my extended family because she had already had a conversation before and was able to help me talk to them in a way that made sense for them. But also, I think it	Family Support (Survival Mode), Community Support (Theme)
like my extended family may have also had the belief, like, oh, well, like, we were right. My mom indoctrinated her child to be an LGBT, which they kept quiet. I think it definitely did cross their minds, or continues, maybe. But	Family Support (Survival Mode), Social Justice/Politics (Theme), Sense of Self (Theme)
I don't know. I know my family. Some of my family looks down on my mom, and I also know that they look down on me in a way just because of who I am.	Family Support (Survival Mode)
Yeah, I don't know if this exactly is ID, but I remember, as in middle school and high school dreading if a substitute came and they had to read attendance when my name wasn't legally changed.	School (Survival Mode), Sense of Self (Theme)

I don't know, getting my name legally changed, became really important in a crucial level. When I was in a class and it was either the first day or substitute came and they read from the attendance sheet printed out, I would constantly have to	Community Support (Theme), School (Survival Mode), Sense of Self (Theme)
get there early to go up to the teacher before they took attendance and say, like, listen, I'm under this name. I am here. I don't go by that name. Please do not call that name. And then half the time they would. And just not having the option to replace that name, even just in attendance, just constantly was exhausting. To have to hear it and have other people hear it, have to say, like, here,	Survival (Theme), School (Survival Mode), Sense of Self (Theme)
Yeah. The biggest one that I can come up with is, as I had said, I have struggled with my mental health. And it was to the point where a couple of times I did have to be hospitalized. And when you go to the hospital, it's to get better. That's like, why you go to a hospital. And unfortunately, when I was 16, I went I had to be hospitalized for suicidality, and I went to a youth psychiatric unit in New York City that I had been to two other times. And it was very much a battle, especially that last time, to be called the right pronouns. And I am so thankful that I had my name legally changed at that point, because if I hadn't, I know for a fact that they wouldn't have referred to me correctly as much as they did. It was a constant fight	Survival (Theme), Healthcare (Theme), Mental Health (Survival Mode), Community Support (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
to be referred to by the correct pronouns. And there was and they they said and when I when I did correct them, they got defensive and just were like, no, I didn't. But there was one person at the psych ward where mental health is something that they're trying to lift up. That one time, she had misgendered me, and at that point in my life, I was just like, I was done with it.	Healthcare (Theme), Bullying/Discrimination (Survival Mode), Social Justice/Politics (Theme), Sense of Self (Theme)

I was done. I got frustrated, and she took me into a private room for a half an hour with her, and for half an hour, just kept going on and on to me about how I looked and sounded like a girl. So therefore, I was one. She wasn't going to call me otherwise. It was dumb that I thought that she should do that. God made me the way I did for a reason. That was a big one that she kept telling me and telling this to a very suicidal 16 year old who is just there to get better. Not exactly the, you know, treatment that is helpful. And the problem with that, too, is that she didn't get in any trouble. And my family was very much in touch with the hospital complained staff, because it just kept fucking happening with a whole bunch of staff, and not exactly to that extent, but just misgendered constantly and then would say no, and then also basically make fun of me was just, of course, yeah, sorry.	Healthcare (Theme), Bullying/Discrimination (Survival Mode), Mental Health (Survival Mode), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
I think what could have prevented happening was, like, I know this this hospital that I had gone to is a very well known hospital, and it had I don't I don't know what organization it was from, but it was, like, recognized for amazing LGBT health care. But very much, I guess, not looking at the psych department, it it was and, like, I knew that they had to go to, like, mandatory LGBT, like, you know, safety knowledge workshops. Yet, like, this it just didn't seem like they cared at all. I think really well, this is a very niche topic, but for psych hospitals, very much trying to find people that actually care and have qualifications, because also it's very clear that these people did not. But just people that care, I think is a gigantic one and one that would have saved me so much trauma.	Survival (Theme), Healthcare (Theme), Lack (Theme), Professional Development (Theme), Mental Health (Survival Mode), Safety & Risk (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme), Sense of Self (Theme)
Yeah. I don't know. I also think thinking back to that time and where I was at or even now, if that happened to me now, what would really have been the most helpful is hearing is her getting in trouble for that, as opposed to just letting it slide. And it hearing not just that she got into trouble, but what went in place, just like, I don't know, not in detail, but what repercussions did she face instead of just telling me she got in trouble?	School (Survival Mode), Bullying/Discrimination (Survival Mode), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
The problem is with that there are people that definitely should be educated. And I think that just like, they have to go to trainings anyway, they just don't care to learn it. And I think at a certain point for me personally, in my	Lack (Theme), Community Support (Theme)
the people I've seen who maybe have very strong beliefs on the conservative side or are very strongly	Social Justice/Politics (Theme)

into a religion in which advocates for no LGBT people, no, it doesn't seem like if they're not willing to learn, they're not going to learn.	Religion (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
I think honestly, for that person and for people who may be similar, getting in trouble may open their eyes a little bit more than just like watching an hour and a half zoom lecture about transgender people because they don't care. I also think just like, I guess to really just quickly back up my point. What would have worked for me personally at that time, hearing not only that they were reprimanded, but how they were like, what kind of repercussions went in place for them. I think this came from we hear that people get in trouble for making remarks like this all the time, but then it truly just feels like nothing is ever done. So being able to hear what happened would have helped me, I guess, believe that something did happen because especially in politics right now, it just feels like nothing is changing.	Bullying/Discrimination (Survival Mode), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
Yeah, I did participate in a few of those, for sure. Mainly in New York City. There is a great LGBT center that specifically had a program for youth.	Community Support (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
they held groups, but it was also a space to just hang out. And that was really important to me, at least in my middle school days. Just having a place where I knew for a fact that I wouldn't be judged and that I was not alone. Having people in real life that I can talk to, that I know shared my experiences, was so helpful for me. It was the first place that I actually met another trans person in real life. And I remember it was for my interview to get in. I don't know. And I was giddy about it. I'm like, oh, my God, because I had never met another person. And it was stuff like that where I could just be myself with the security of not getting hurt, not having people there that wouldn't understand or call me by the right name or pronouns.	School (Survival Mode), Community Support (Theme), Sense of Self (Theme)
That was the most important thing for me. And I think, honestly, for the people who I talked to, just having a sense of community.	Community Support (Theme)

Yeah, I definitely did. Just to kind of clarify, I had been out limited lee for like, a couple of months before coming out publicly. So the experience with my teacher helping me come out to my class started it all, and I was finally able to have other people know instead of, like, my close friends and my family and my teachers. So I was out, but the center was my first source of meeting other people in real life. Social media was gigantic, such an insane resource. It helped me understand that this was a thing that I was and having people online talk about their experiences and share, I don't know, before and now photos and just talk about the problems that they've faced, so helped me, especially in my earlier years, figuring it all out and exploring it for the first time. That was gigantic. Social media and YouTube were the first tastes that I got and then it was the center. And then trying to find others in my school, which I am so grateful that I live in New York City and went to a large high school because there was a large in terms of trans members community.	School (Survival Mode), Community Support (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme), Sense of Self (Theme)
which actually was for a mental illness, but it was like a group where we all came together, I think two times a week or maybe once a week. And we just had a space where we all knew what was happening with like we all knew that	Mental Health (Survival Mode), Community Support (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
we shared many demographics. So just trying to surround myself with people that actually understood and having spaces where that was possible so I didn't have to go searching on my own was, you know, that was how I got through life, but also how I became more comfortable with myself and had someone to ask questions to. And in college, when I was looking for schools, I was very much looking for places where LGBT people were welcomed and valued and that ultimately shaped where I was going to go. And the school I go to has like an insane trans community. It's like so many people where are.	Healthcare (Theme), School (Survival Mode), Community Support (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme), Sense of Self (Theme)
I go to Hampshire College. It's very small. It's in Massachusetts. Not a lot of people know about it. But genuinely, it is so insane how many trans people there are.	Social Justice/Politics (Theme), Sense of Self (Theme)

Yeah, I would definitely say just create a community where they could interact. I would prefer it to be in person, but having just a space online, even where I don't know. I personally found groups very helpful because it gave me a sense of, like, other people will not discriminate against me or I know for a fact that I'll be called the right name and pronouns and other people share my identity, which is so crazy.	Community Support (Theme), Sense of Self (Theme)
That would probably be a very big, large percentage of what I would do. And also addressing mental health needs because of course, as research shows, such a large population of LGBT, especially trans people, go through mental health issues, and	Mental Health (Survival Mode), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
a lot of it comes from society and not feeling heard and feeling alone, that is something that if I was to have a nonprofit, that was something that I would have.	Community Support (Theme)
I am very thankful that I haven't. I think though, something that does come to mind for me, which isn't exactly housing necessarily, but it kind of is when I was hospitalized, there are two parts to that specific. One is first you go to the emergency unit so they can look after you for a couple of days, stabilize you, and if that's all you need, you can go back home. But if it's not and you need to stay for a little bit more, they would bring you upstairs to the main unit. But the problem was, because I was trans,	Healthcare (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
CIS, like boy or girl, I would either have to have my own room or room with another trans person. And they didn't have room for me to have my own room or another trans person to come in for a very long time. So I had to stay in the emergency unit, which was not giving me the help I needed, even though the main unit also didn't, which significantly delayed health care. And this also happened with residential facility that I needed to go to after the last time at the main unit because there were some people that were not good. And	Healthcare (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)

|	
the beds crisis for psych units and residential facilities is insane. And on top of that, I once again would need either my own room or to room with another trans person. And we were trying to get me into a place for a very long time and they just didn't have room, which meant that I had to stay at this facility that was not giving me the health care that I needed and was very much discriminatory for much longer because I wouldn't have been safe to go home. So, I mean, in terms of that, that's what I experience. But I am also very thankful that in terms of the outside world, I have not experienced housing instability, especially because of my identity.	Healthcare (Theme), Housing (Survival Mode), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
Yeah, I definitely wouldn't be here today without even just one person that saw me and treated me as a person and normal without, you know,	Healthcare (Theme), Professional Development (Theme), Sense of Self (Theme)
the truth is, right now I'm so scared. The way American politics is going in regards to trans health care and I mean, trans rights in general,	Healthcare (Theme), Social Justice/Politics (Theme)
being not alone is very important for everyone, and especially including marginalized people. I very much, very much appreciate you guys doing this. So thank you. Truly,	Community Support (Theme)

Appendix J

Co-occurrence of Quotations

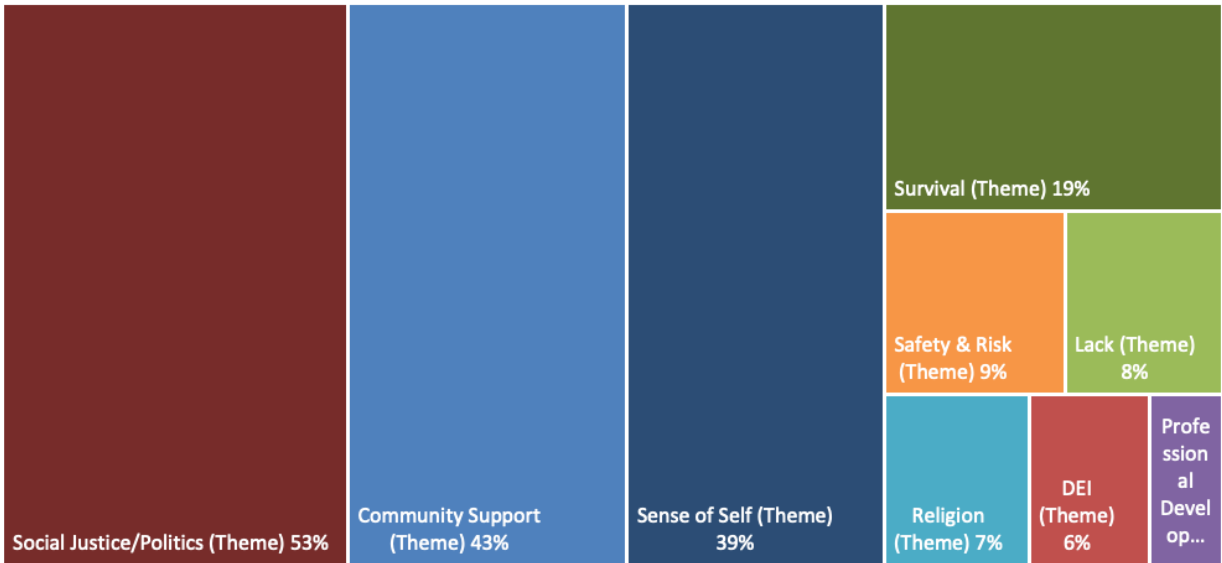|	Bullying/ Discrimination (Survival Mode)	Family Support (Survival Mode)	Healthcare (Theme)	Housing (Survival Mode)	Mental Health (Survival Mode)	School (Survival Mode)
Community Support (Theme)	5	6	5	1	9	13
DEI (Theme)	1	0	0	1	0	1
Lack (Theme)	2	1	2	1	2	1
Professional Development (Theme)	0	0	2	0	1	0
Religion (Theme)	0	2	0	1	0	0
Safety & Risk (Theme)	0	1	1	5	1	2
Sense of Self (Theme)	6	5	7	1	4	10
Social Justice/Politics (Theme)	6	3	10	3	6	9
Survival (Theme)	4	3	4	4	8	4

Appendix K

Interview Responses Tree Maps
(a visual representation of interview responses)
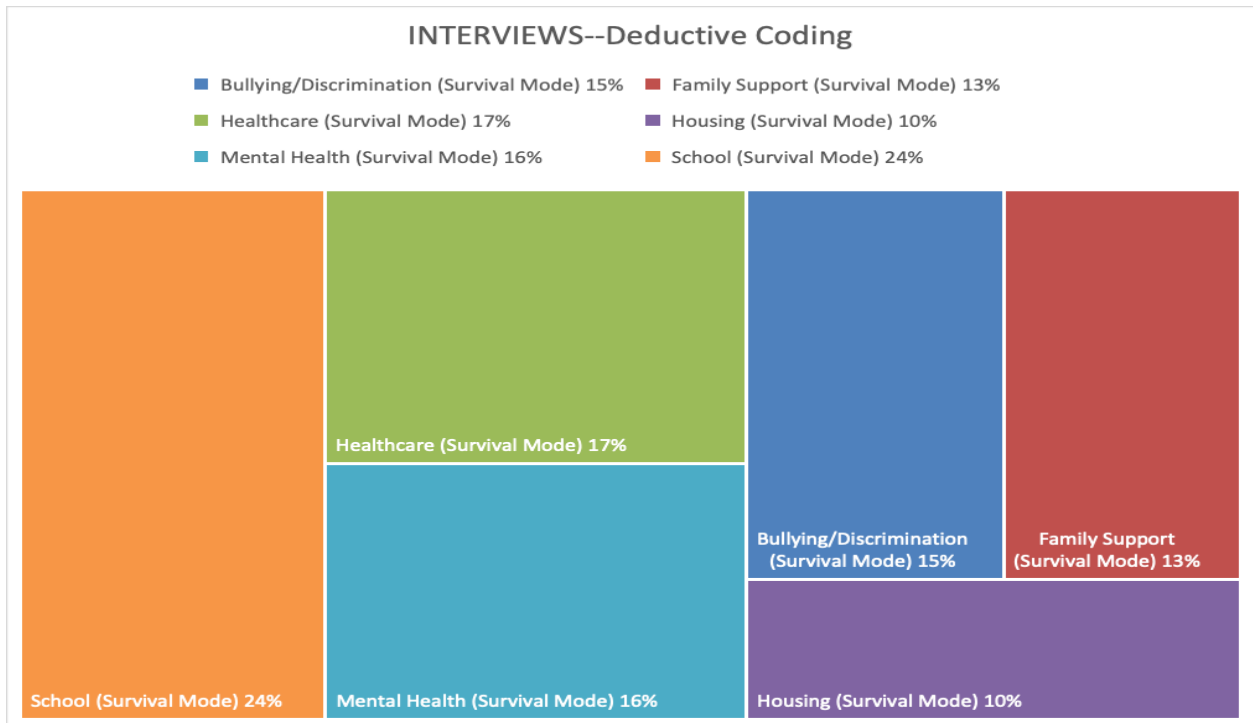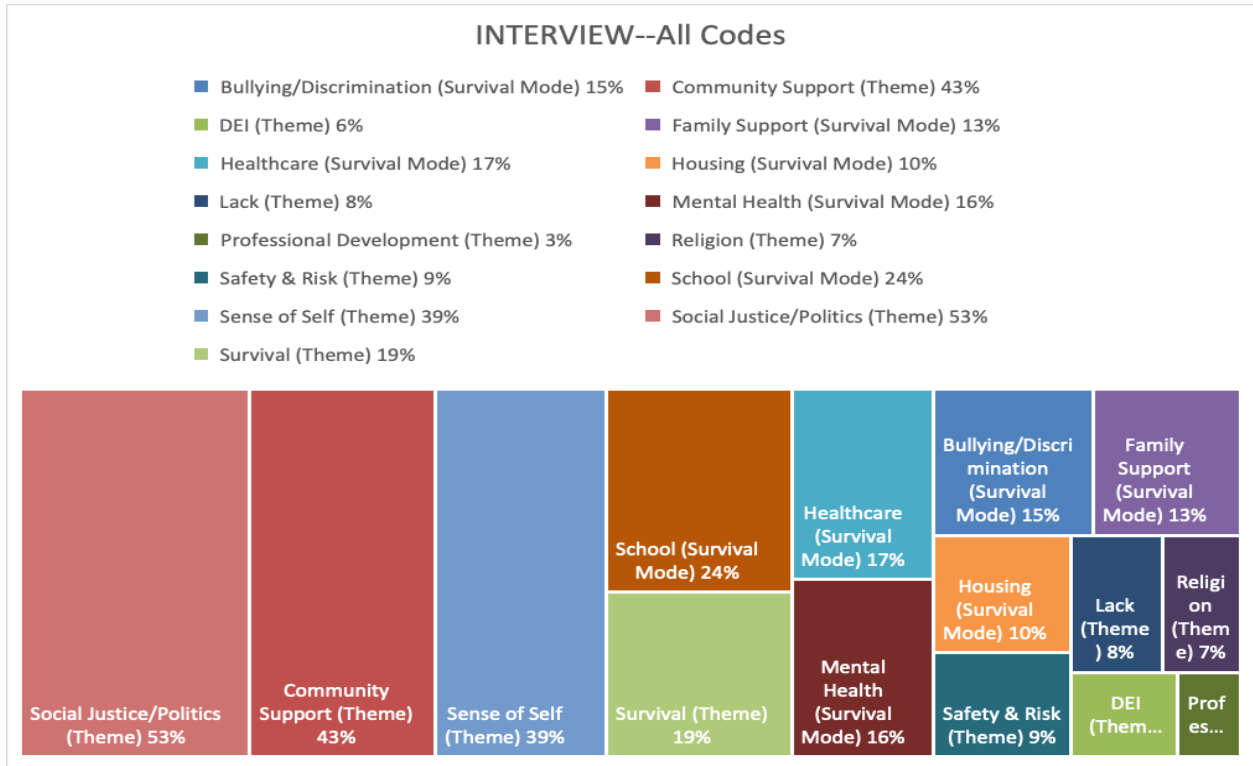
INTERVIEW--Inductive Coding

■ Community Support (Theme) 43%   ■ DEI (Theme) 6%

■ Lack (Theme) 8%   ■ Professional Development (Theme) 3%

■ Religion (Theme) 7%   ■ Safety & Risk (Theme) 9%

■ Sense of Self (Theme) 39%   ■ Social Justice/Politics (Theme) 53%

■ Survival (Theme) 19%

Survival (Theme) 19%

Safety & Risk (Theme) 9%

Lack (Theme) 8%

Social Justice/Politics (Theme) 53%

Community Support (Theme) 43%

Sense of Self (Theme) 39%

Religion (Theme) 7%

DEI (Theme) 6%

Professional Develop...

Appendix L

Interview Deductive Coding Results

Interview Responses analyzed by connection to Survival Mode

Category	# of Responses	% of Responses
Bullying/Discrimination (Survival Mode) 15%	13	14.61
Family Support (Survival Mode) 13%	12	13.48
Healthcare (Survival Mode) 17%	15	16.85
Housing (Survival Mode) 10%	9	10.11
Mental Health (Survival Mode) 16%	14	15.73
School (Survival Mode) 24%	21	23.60

Appendix M

Interview Deductive Coding Results

Interview Responses analyzed by connection to Emergent Themes

Emergent Themes	# of Responses	% of Responses
Community Support (Theme) 43%	38	42.70
DEI (Theme) 6%	5	5.62
Lack (Theme) 8%	7	7.87
Professional Development (Theme) 3%	3	3.37
Religion (Theme) 7%	6	6.74
Safety & Risk (Theme) 9%	8	8.99
Sense of Self (Theme) 39%	35	39.33
Social Justice/Politics (Theme) 53%	47	52.81
Survival (Theme) 19%	17	19.10

Appendix N

Melissa's Dedication

"Everyone who remembers his own education remembers teachers, not methods or techniques. The teacher is the heart of the education system."--Sidney Hook

Momma: I am the person I am because of you. You taught me love, curiosity, and compassion. You always remind me that I am capable of anything, and completing this degree is one more time that your words are true! I love you.

Mr. Bill: My one true love–this is my fourth (and final, I think) degree with you by my side. Your encouragement and assurance taught me to steady myself as I worked. During the last 30 years, your unconditional love and support allowed me to pursue my dreams and achieve my ambitions. You cheered me on when I was certain I could not write one more word, let alone one more paper. And now, because you are my number one, this work is coming to a close.

Bridget: My work in this program benefitted from every time you told me to breathe, pace myself, or take personal time. Your friendship and love make me want to be a better person. Thank you for pouring into me for all our lives. Without you, I would not be finishing!

To my children: Shadura, Roshonda, Youtee, Tanasia, and Shabazz–this is for YOU. Remember that each of you can do ANYTHING! I am honored to model lifelong learning for you. Being in college simultaneously, sharing homework woes, and challenging each other to stretch our thinking kept me going. I love each of you and am so proud of you. Thank you for creating a family that I never dreamed of.

To all of my teachers past, present, and future: This is entirely for you, because of you.

Dr. Robbins: Thank you for pushing us to be great! Your calm, steady guidance and understanding of all that we were capable of constantly elevated our work. I deeply appreciate how you poured into us so freely, creating a space for us to stumble, grow, and learn.

To our cohort: Beginning this journey with a group of peers peering through a Zoom lens on a January evening in 2021–after the world had changed–I had no idea the impact another foray into education would have. My life is forever changed by the connections we made. What incredible people you are! I am blessed to achieve this degree alongside you.

Matthew: We are fam now! There was no better partner for this adventure. Thank you for lifting me up, shoving me forward, quieting me down, egging me on, and being the most genuine friend a doctoral student could seek. On with our next epic venture: Raising Queer Voices.

Ultimately, I am proud to dedicate this work to every student–past, present, and future–that reminds me our world is hopeful, ever-changing, and full of eyes watching us model learning.

Matthew's Dedication

In the tapestry of this doctoral journey, each thread has been woven with the support, guidance, and love of extraordinary individuals to whom I dedicate this work with the deepest gratitude and affection.

Dr. Sherard Robbins, you have been more than an advisor; you've been a beacon of wisdom in the fog of academic and personal challenges. Your patience, which seemed to know no bounds, has been a comforting presence. Your words have often been a source of inspiration and reflection, guiding me not just as a scholar but as a person striving to make meaningful contributions to the world.

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To my family, you have nurtured me with values that have shaped my world view, with love that has given me the strength to pursue my dreams. The foundation you have laid has been my steady ground. You have celebrated my smallest victories and stood steadfastly by my side through challenges, embodying the true meaning of family.

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This work is not just a culmination of my academic pursuit but a mosaic of the love, guidance, and support I have received from each one of you. I am eternally grateful and hope to honor your contributions through these pages and beyond.