FALL 2024

TEXAS SAIGE

Society for Sexual, Affectional, Intersex, and Gender Expansive Identities

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



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NAVIGATING THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF TRANS-INCLUDING COUPLES IN COUPLES THERAPY

by Heather Fry, LPC Associate, NCC, MS, RYT, supervised by Jessica Callahan LPC-S

Couples turn to therapy as a useful tool to address relationship challenges and build healthy foundations. As our society becomes more gender diverse, so do the couples seeking therapeutic intervention. When it comes to seeing couples that include one or more transgender individuals, therapists must be aware of the unique stressors and intersectional dynamics that may influence the couples' needs in therapy.

Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Individual Stressors

Testa, Habarth, Peta, Balsam, and Bockting (2015) used Meyer's minority stress model to create a gender minority stress and resilience measure that would include the experiences of transgender and gender-nonconforming (TGNC) individuals. The study found stressors specific to TGNC individuals, including difficulties accessing medical care due to discrepancies in sex and/or name on documentation, discrimination when

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NAVIGATING UNIQUE NEEDS, CONT.

accessing medical and mental health care, access to safe public restrooms, and nonaffirmation of gender identity (Testa et.al, 2015). Race and ethnicity can be a salient factor as well. According to a report from The Williams Institute, those of Latinx, American Indian or Alaska Native, and biracial/multiracial decent have a higher percentage of members identifying as transgender (Herman et. al, 2022).

Trans-including Couples Stressors

Gunby and Butler (2023) performed a systematic review and meta-ethnography of research geared towards identifying the unique challenges of transgender individuals and their partners. The study found nine themes which included constructs related to oppression, dissonance and dysphoria, loss, validation and expression of gender identity, language, paradoxes in hetero and cis frameworks, visibility and community support, caretaking, and growth (Grunby & Butler, 2023).

Ethical Standards in Counseling

A recent small, qualitative study conducted by Morris, Lindley, and Galupo (2020) found that transgender clients often face negative experiences in seeking therapeutic treatment related to microaggressions in the following four categories: "Lack of Respect for Client Identity, Lack of Competency, Saliency of Identity, and Gatekeeping". Morris et. al (2020) goes on to highlight the deficiencies in the ethical standards set by the APA in clearly defining what it means to receive proper training, consultation, and supervision when working with diverse populations.



They also show how the code of ethics fails to conceptualize microaggressions as ethical violations which then results in such violations being difficult to enforce.

Considerations for Creating Safe Therapeutic Environments for Trans Individuals and their Partners

Definition of Presenting Problems: It is important to first determine if the reason for seeking therapy is related directly to the trans identity of one or more partner.

Training: Therapists who wish to serve the TGNC population should participate in training to increase competency that specifically focuses on "recognizing, understanding, and correcting gender identity-based microaggressions" (Morris et. al, 2020, p. 906).

Language: Knowing and using gender inclusive and expansive language is critical in the treatment of TGNC individuals. The TGNC community is fluid, and it can be difficult to know all the terminology, particularly if you are not a member. Therapists must approach gender expansive language with curiosity and humility. While no one expects

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NAVIGATING UNIQUE NEEDS, CONT.

perfection, we also cannot expect our TGNC clients and their partners to provide the necessary education. Keep an open mind to learning.

Gender Identity and Sexuality: These concepts are separate but do intersect. Therapists should take care to never assume either based solely on appearance (Grunby & Butler, 2023)

Office Practices: Practices should update intake forms to include gender inclusive language. This may include removing pre-determined gender identity options and leaving space for the client to use their own words to describe their gender identity. In addition, the therapeutic space can be updated to include inclusive signage, pride flags, and reading material specific to the LGBTQIA+ population.

Trans-including couples deserve to be able to seek therapy that is not only inclusive but competent. Therapists play an essential role in creating these safe and affirming spaces. Embracing ongoing education to increase our cultural sensitivity and awareness allows therapist to better navigate the complexities of trans-including couples with confidence.

Selected References

Gunby, N., & Butler, C. (2023). What are the relationship experiences of in which one member identifies as transgender? A systematic review and meta-ethnography. Journal of Family Therapy, 45(2), 167–196. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6427.12409

Herman, J.L., Flores, A.R., O'Neill, K.K. (2022). How Many Adults and Youth Identify as Transgender in the United States? The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law

Lombardi, E. L., Wilchins, R. A., Priesing, D., & Malouf, D. (2001). Gender Violence: Transgender Experiences with Violence and Discrimination. Journal of Homosexuality, 42(1), 89–101. https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v42n01_05

Morris, E. R., Lindley, L., & Galupo, M. P. (2020). "Better issues to focus on": Transgender Microaggressions as Ethical Violations in Therapy. The Counseling Psychologist, 48(6), 883–915. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000020924391

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Peers,

Please allow me to introduce myself; my name is Dr. Tana Haven, Phd, LPC, NCC. My name is pronounced tan-uh hay-ven and my pronouns are she/her. I am proud to be the President of The Texas Society for Sexual, Affectional, Intersex, and Gender Expansive Identities (TxSAIGE). It is my honor to support the LGBTQIA+ community in clinical practice, research, the field of Academia, as well as advocacy and leadership. As a member of the community, I acknowledge I am biased. As someone who researched, and eventually completed a dissertation on the intersectionality of Queer individuals in rural mental health care in Texas, I feel supported in my hypothesis that healthcare is lacking, barriers are still very present, our communities' needs are going unmet, and there is much work to be done.

While TxSAIGE cannot meet all of these needs, we will do our best to try. So far in 2024, we have collaborated with other organizations, networked more than ever, and intentionally made our presence known around the state. We collaborated with the Capital of Texas Counseling Association (CTCA) to participate in Austin Pride, but hosting both a booth and marching in the parade this year. We've been in talks with Transgender Education Network of Texas (TENT) to support one another through this election year and be resources for each others' organizations. TxSAIGE even plans to have TENT host a seminar in November (stay tuned!). We are hosting monthly "Lunch and Learns," which are incredible learning opportunities, and we are just getting started.

I understand that any season can be challenging for the LGBTQIA+ community, but election years are historically some of the hardest times. We are here to support you individually and systemically. My agenda as president is 1) to focus on targeted advocacy, making advocacy seem possible and approachable; 2) increase awareness of not only our organization but others with similar values and causes; and 3) engage members! I want to hear from you! What would you like for us to be talking about? Working on? What would you volunteer for? What level of engagement works for you? I know when I used to hear about "Leadership," it sounded too "Big and Serious" for me. I want to break that stigma and welcome anyone and everyone interested. We can find a place for you no matter how big or small you would like to start.

As you may be able to tell, I am passionate about these topics and could go on forever. I will stop here though so you can read about some other amazing topics and events we have going on. If you ever have questions, thoughts, or ideas for me or anyone else on the board, please do not hesitate to reach out, you can contact us directly at our joint email: txsaige@gmail.com. We will also be present this year at TCA's Professional Growth Conference (PGC) and I would love to meet you all there! Just come up and say hi!

With Pride,
Tana

LIKE AND FOLLOW TEXAS SAIGE FOR UPDATES, TRAININGS, AND MORE!

@tcatxsaige

@txsaige

MEET THE BOARD (2024-2025)

TANA HAVEN
PRESIDENT



PhD, LPC, NCC
Hometown Counseling

I own a group practice based in Sulphur Springs, TX. I have experience teaching at the university level and would love to find a position in academia!

I describe myself as a Counselor, Educator, and Advocate.

For a long time, I thought I had to choose between the three and had that reinforced by people I interacted with. As I've strengthened my professional identity, I'm more and more convinced that my passion and the quality of the services I provide is better because of this intersectionality- not hurt by it.

I am a fierce supporter that counselors should be educated and advocating on an individual and systemic level. I also acknowledge the burdens and barriers they (we) face and why we likely do have that extra mile to give at times.

I hope as President of TxSAIGE I can help eliminate some of those barriers if even just a little and aid in the fields of counseling, education, and advocation for mental health in general but specifically with the LGBTQIA+ community in Texas.

MICHAEL LESHER
DIRECTOR



he/him

MeD, LPC
Authentovative Counseling Services

POPULATIONS:

SOGIE Issues, adjustment issues, anxiety, depression, and trauma

PASSIONS:

I am an artist and my ceramic studio is currently my office. Expressive arts is a part of my therapeutic tool box. I also enjoy being outside, cross stitching, and spending time with family and friends.

POSITION:

As TxSAIGE Director, I am the liaison and advocate between TxSAIGE and the Texas Counseling Association. My goal is to educate and advocate for the counseling community about LGBTQIA+ issues, support representation and affirm the community within the field of counseling, and explore and carry out ways to better serve the counseling needs of all Texas! I am happy to serve and to do this work!



ABI SMITH
PRESIDENT-ELECT



MS, LPC-Associate under the supervision of Beck Munsey, PhD, LPC-S
AltNarratives

POPULATIONS:

Neuroqueer adults, chronic shame, EMDR, and somatic processing

PASSIONS:

Reading (usually fantasy), singing (usually poorly), creating art, joyful movement, and spending time with my partner and our three cats.

POSITION:

In my role as President-Elect, I aim to bring my passion for advocacy and social justice work not only for our Division's advocacy plans for the 2025 legislative session, but also to community building, mutual support, and non-legislative advocacy. I hope to continue encouraging our field to be a safer, more equitable, and affirming space for all counselors and clients, and I am excited to do this work alongside all of you. We're in this together.



ELIZABETH OWENS
PAST-PRESIDENT



she/her

MA, LPC- NCC
Counseling Connections of
San Antonio

Elizabeth Owens is an LPC in private practice in San Antonio, with a focus on providing sex positive, gender affirming care, in a nonjudgmental environment, to the "gifted, geeky, and queer." She is especially passionate about her advocacy work in standing up for the rights of those facing adversity, particularly the transgender community, in the state of Texas. She lives in downtown San Antonio with her husband and three cats: Alexandre, Valjean, and Vesper. When she's not counseling or advocating for the queer community, you can find her puttering in her garden, experimenting with new recipes, watching Star Trek shows, or rocking out in the pit at 90's era pop-punk concerts.



BRIAN KENNEDY, SENATOR



MS, LPC
Room for Change

Brian Kennedy is a trauma-informed, LGBTQIA+ affirming Licensed Professional Counselor in Dallas, Texas. He serves as an LGBTQ Community Liaison with Room for Change. His current clinical work includes seeing queer populations recovering from trauma, exploring identity, and embracing queer joy.

His decades-long work as an educator and student media advisor in public high schools earned him the National Broadcast Teacher of the Year Award in 2017 and multiple scholastic Emmys. He is the author of an upcoming middle grade fantasy novel that focuses on adolescent grief.

Brian is the executive producer and host of Falling Out LGBTQ podcast focusing on LGBTQ mental health and resilience. He currently works with adolescents, adults, and couples in the Oak Lawn area of Dallas.

TXSAIGE PRESENTS: LGBTQIA+ EDUCATION, AFFIRMING PRACTICES, AND ADVOCACY EFFORTS, Y'ALL

Join US

Time: 12:00-3:30pm
Room: State Room 1
Topic: Counseling Theory/Practice and the Helping Relationship
Presenter(s): Tana Yager, Abi Smith, & Beth Owens

TxSAIGE is the go-to organization for LGBTQIA+ information. This year, we'd like to provide up-to-date terminology and practices, but also present participants with tangible short and long-term advocacy suggestions for Texas specifically. We are here to make your job easier! Come learn and ask us your questions.

MARLON JOHNSON
TRUSTEE #1

PhD, LPC (TX), LPC-MHSP (TN), NCC



Dr. Marlon Johnson serves as Dean of Community Life and Assistant Professor of Counselor Education at Seminary of the Southwest in Austin, Texas. He prepares individuals to become culturally-inclusive and spiritually-integrated mental health professionals. He also owns a private practice in which his clinical work centers Black mental wellness, queer and trans-inclusive mental healthcare, and community racial healing activities. As a researcher and advocate, he integrates an intersectional framework to help communities explore Black and Queer identity development, gay male relationship longevity, strategies for racial healing, and mental health access and equity.

Twitter: @DocJohnsonLPC
Instagram: @DocJohnsonLPC
LinkedIn: linkedin.com/in/marlonjlpc/
Website: www.mjohnsoncc.com and https://ssw.edu/profile/marlon-johnson/
Contact Info: Marlon@mjohnsoncc.com

MARA YACHIMSKI
TRUSTEE #2



MS, LPC-Associate under the supervision of Candace David, LPC-S, LCDC, CEDS-S, EMDR Trained

Mara is a dedicated Child, Adolescent, and Adult Counselor at Village Counseling in McKinney, Texas, where they address diverse concerns including trauma, LGBTQ+-centric issues, and emotional growth. They hold a Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from Southern Methodist University, with a specialization on the impacts of trauma on the brain.

With a background in Expressive Arts, Neuroscience, and Trauma, Mara is committed to fostering resilience in clients, guiding them through adversity to uncover their inner strength and capabilities.

In addition to their professional role, Mara actively contributes to TxSAIGE as the Emerging Leader for 2023-2024 and currently serves as Trustee #2. They take pride in crafting quarterly newsletters and connecting members statewide through advocacy and education.

Outside of work, Mara enjoys playing video games, riding their horse, and gardening with their partner and two cats.



ALLISON SMITH
TRUSTEE #3

M.Ed., LPC, RPT, NCC
Our Lives Counseling, LLC



Allison L. Smith, CEO and founder of Our Lives Counseling, LLC, is a nationally certified (NCC) Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), a Registered Play Therapist (RPT), a Texas certified school counselor, and a Texas certified Language Arts, Theater Arts, Fine Arts, and English as a Second Language teacher. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Texas Tech University in 1993 and her Master of Education in School Counseling from Lamar University in 2014. In 2017, she received a Certificate of Counseling and Development from the Clinical Mental Health department of Lamar University.
With a person-centered foundational approach, Allison inclusively affirms and supports within a genuine therapeutic relationship. She supports LGBTQIA+ community, disorder management, trauma recovery, executive functioning skills acquisition, as well as character development, healthy habit building, stress management, organizational planning, goal setting, and positive conflict resolution.

SUBMIT AN ARTICLE FOR OUR WINTER NEWSLETTER!

ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS DUE: DEC 27, 2024

EMAIL: MARA@VILLAGE-COUNSELINGTX.COM

HEATHER FRY
EMERGING LEADER



LPC-Associate under the supervision of Jessica Callahan, LPC-S

POPULATIONS:

Gender identity support, sexual identity support, LGBTQIA+ issues, life transitions, anxiety and depression, mindfulness

POSITION:

I am passionate about working to build a more equitable and affirming world for queer people, particularly those in the trans community. I am excited to serve as the Emerging Leader for TxSAIGE and to be able to continue to learn, advocate, and work with like-minded people to shape our field in positive ways and to be a voice for change.



JUSTIN BUSTAMENTE
TREASURER + SECRETARY



he/him

MA, NCC, LPC-Associate
under the supervision of Kyle Leisher, LPC-S
Montrose Center

Justin has worked at the Montrose Center as a Staff Therapist + IOP Admissions Specialist for three years.

He earned his M.A. in Mental Health Counseling from Sam Houston State University.
Justin currently serves as Secretary/ Treasurer for the TxSAIGE division. He also Co-founded and is the lead for an affirming non-profit gaming organization called Transcend Gaming (located in Houston, TX). He is very passionate about empowering the LGBTQIA+ community through his work, advocacy, volunteering, and philanthropy.



RESOURCES

STATEWIDE:

Transgender Education Network of Texas (TENT)

The largest statewide, BIPOC trans-led, trans-focused policy, education, and advocacy organization in the state of Texas.
transtexas.org

Parents of Trans Youth

Created by Mandy Giles, a Texas parent of two trans kids, this organization provides learning, support, and community to parents and caregivers of transgender, nonbinary, and gender diverse kids.
ParentsofTransYouth.com

Equality Texas

Equality Texas advocates and lobbies for the elimination of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. Equality Texas Foundation educates and engages the public about policies and their effect on Texans of all sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions.
EqualityTexas.org

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)

PFLAG promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons, their families and friends through: support, to cope with an adverse society; education, to enlighten an ill-informed public; and advocacy, to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights.
pflag.org; pflagaustin.org; pflagdallas.org; pflagfortworth.org; pflaghouston.org; pflagsanantonio.org

Kind Clinic

Kind Clinic offers sexual health services to anyone in Texas (with a specialty in LGBTQ+ health and gender-affirming care) via telehealth as well as in-person in Austin, Dallas, and San Antonio.
kindclinic.org

RESOURCES, CONT.

AUSTIN:

Out Youth

Out Youth offers programming youth of all sexual orientations and gender identities. This includes individual counseling, groups, a drop-in program, and the Texas GSA Network.
outyouth.org

DALLAS/FT WORTH:

Resource Center

The Resource Center provides primary, sexual, preventative, gender-affirming, HIV, and mental health care as well as support groups to the LGBTQIA+ community as well as anyone living with HIV/AIDS.
myresourcecenter.org

HOUSTON:

The Montrose Center

The Montrose Center serves Houston's LGBTQ+ community through case management, counseling, housing assistance, substance use recovery, and specialized programming for youth and seniors.
myresourcecenter.org

Trans Legal Aid Clinic

TLAC offers virtual and in-person legal clinics to assist transgender Texans who need a name and/or gender marker correction
translegalaidtx.com; facebook.com/translegalaidtx

SAN ANTONIO:

Pride Center San Antonio

Pride Center offers free services and programs to the LGBTQ+ community, including case management, group therapy, STI testing, training, and more.
pridecentersa.org