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Social work education has traditionally used frameworks, such as cultural competency, to guide implicit and explicit curricula that shape how we think about communities that live and thrive outside of white supremacist and cis/heteronormative norms and values. While the cultural competency framework intends to promote a level of consciousness and attention that is required to practice with diverse individuals, families, and communities whose identities differ from that of the social worker, it instead inadvertently creates a knowledge base that reinforces harmful power dynamics between social worker and client/community. The cultural competency framework is absent of historical and structural context and lacks critical examination of positionality. The use of such frameworks has positioned

social work educators and practitioners as the "experts" about culture, thus reinforcing the oppressive dynamic that allows for transgender and gender expansive (TGE) erasure, white supremacy, and transphobia to go unchecked. Without structural knowledge about the ways in which transphobic rhetoric and white supremacist ideology, for example, are reflected in policies and practices, social workers may be unable to develop the skills necessary to challenge these forms of injustice and ultimately hold themselves, their colleagues, policymakers and the profession accountable. We suggest a shift in positioning that encourages and practices accountability rooted in transformative justice (TJ) principles. Drawing on knowledge and practices which emerge from activist spaces, an accountability framework is built upon a systemic understanding that requires shifts in belief, thinking, and behavior at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, and societal levels. This paper will introduce a suggested framework for social work education to engage in accountability rather than competency-based education and practice, and discuss how it may be applied to guide a response to anti-transgender legislation across the U.S.

Keywords: Transgender, transformative justice, social work, anti-transgender policy, cultural humility, accountability, peacemaking.

Within the past three years, the United States has seen an alarming increase in state-level policies seeking to restrict access to gender-affirming healthcare among transgender and gender-expansive (TGE) individuals, primarily TGE transgender youth. In 2021, Arkansas became the first state to successfully pass a ban on gender-affirming care, including access to hormone therapy and puberty-blocking medication, in the state House of Representatives (H.B. 1570, 2021). Although the bill was eventually blocked by a federal judge following a lawsuit (Aguilar, 2022), the successful passage of the bill in Arkansas' state legislature set a dangerous precedent that other states could follow. Indeed, Alabama's Senate and House of Representatives successfully passed a similar bill that will charge healthcare professionals who provide gender-affirming care with a Class C felony charge, which could warrant a prison sentence of up to 10 years (Yurcaba, 2022). Currently, more than 21 states have introduced

policies in their state legislatures to restrict gender-affirming care to youth (Movement Advancement Project, 2023).

The child welfare system has consistently enacted harm through the policing of TGE adult caregivers and the interactions between caregivers and their TGE child(ren). In particular, the United States has seen an uptick in public discourse discussions about the ethics of providing gender-affirming care to TGE children. Political figures like Texas Governor Greg Abbott call for child welfare agencies to investigate any caregivers that allow their TGE child to receive gender-affirming health services or even engage in social transition. Governor Abbott issued a directive claiming that these actions are considered child abuse under state law and, therefore, should be enforced as such (Office of the Texas Governor, 2022; Yurcaba, 2022). Similarly, some states have introduced policies that would allow caregivers who affirm their child's gender through a social or medical transition to be charged with a felony (e.g., S.B. 184, 2022; S.B. 1138, 2022). Separating a child from a loving, supportive family is not only an act of violence targeting TGE children and their families, but it is also a tool that is being used to police how caregivers are allowed to parent their children. If parenting behaviors do not align with cisnormative and, generally, conservative Christian ideals of what is socially accepted, it will be labeled as a crime. These policies continue to link gender diversity with criminality and deviance, similar to historical policies that have marginalized TGE people. In this paper, we will consider the sociohistorical context of social work and the profession's relationship to TGE communities. This paper offers an application of a transformative justice (TJ) framework to reduce harm perpetrated against TGE people by social work educators and practitioners.

History of Pathologization and Social Work

"The root of oppression is loss of memory"—Paula Gunn Allen

Social work has played a role in the institutionalization and criminalization of TGE persons, formally gatekeeping, pathologizing, and marginalizing these individuals (Fitz, n.d.; Stanley & Smith, 2011). TGE people have been criminalized since at least the late 1800s when multiple city ordinances prohibited the

"lewd act" of dressing in clothing intended for the "opposite sex" (Sears, 2014; Stryker, 2008). For most of the 20th century in the U.S., "anti-cross-dressing" laws made TGE people subject to arrest, fines, and incarceration (Feinberg, 1996; Mogul et al., 2011; Sears, 2014; Stanley & Smith, 2011; Stryker, 2008). Criminalization and pathologization of TGE identities have increased anti-trans bias and perpetuated invalidation (Breaux & Thyer, 2021). Social workers have played a role in this process of criminalization and pathologization of TGE people, often not only by collaborating directly with law enforcement but also by policing TGE peoples' gender expression and perpetuating unconscious biases that associate TGE people with deviance (Breaux & Thyer, 2021; Stanley & Smith, 2011). A deep distrust of clinical social work practitioners may persist among TGE people due to this history. For example, until the late 20th century, it was common to deem those who believed they were "born in the wrong body" as "insane," and these individuals would be placed in asylums typically run by Christian religious institutions (Midence & Hargreaves, 1997).

Contemporary social workers may also perpetuate harm against TGE people. The current diagnosis associated with TGE identity (i.e., gender dysphoria) is defined as "clinically significant distress relating to gender incongruence" (American Psychiatric Association, 2020). As gender dysphoria remains present in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), the mental disorder is weaponized as both the gate and key to physical identity congruence (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Due to the utilization of the DSM model in clinical service delivery, achieving the diagnosis of gender dysphoria is now often the first step toward any gender identity-related service; generally, a mental health professional needs to write a letter of support for a TGE person to receive access to medical interventions like hormone replacement therapy or gender-affirming surgeries (Erickson-Schroth, 2014). This barrier enables medical and social work practitioners' bias and power over TGE bodies (Shelton et al., 2019). Given this history of pathologization, as well as copious research linking access to gender-affirming care and gender-affirming family environments to positive mental health outcomes among TGE young people (e.g., decreased depression, suicidal ideation, anxiety; de Vries et al., 2014; Green et al., 2022; Olson et al., 2016), there is an urgent need

for social work curriculum to educate on these facts and engage students to advocate against current anti-trans proposed policies.

History of Social Work Education and Cultural Competency

The history of social work, and particularly social work education in its pursuit to train and prepare the professional workforce, has taken a variety of approaches over time to addressing diversity and difference. These approaches have been rooted in assumptions about who social workers are and what role they play in dismantling systems of oppression and structural violence. Early in its history, social work took an Anglo-Western and Christian-centric approach which encouraged assimilation, positioning social workers as "friendly visitors" who had special knowledge about how people should live (Reisch & Andrews, 2002). Over the course of the 20th century, there was a recognition that social workers were missing key aspects of cultural knowledge that many client and community strengths were rooted in—particularly, this approach sought to address white social workers imposing dominant values on clients and communities of color (Kohli et al., 2010). A similar approach has been taken in social work education with other marginalized groups, such as people with disabilities, immigrants, and LGBTQ+ people, including TGE people.

This background led the way to a cultural competence approach based on assumptions that particular aspects of people's lives, communities, and cultures could be learned and thus understood (Williams, 2006). As a result, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) included educational competencies that reflected this expectation of social work students. Through ongoing professional dialogue and critique, CSWE has shifted to a framework rooted in cultural humility. This concept is based on the assumption that no one can fully understand the lives, cultures, and communities of those with whom they do not share identities—positioning social workers as lifelong learners (Lekas et al., 2020). However, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) continues to set standards using a cultural competence approach, creating a disconnect between social work education and practice (National Association

of Social Workers [NASW], 2015). These approaches have established clear practice expectations around three important underlying assumptions which still inform social work education and practice today.

First, the approaches that social work has taken are rooted in direct and indirect assumptions about who social workers are. With a largely white, cisgender workforce, education and practice approaches assume that social workers need to learn about others who are diverse or different. In a recent report to CSWE and NASW, Salsberg and colleagues (2020) surveyed over 3000 social workers. Researchers found the workforce is 66.2% white, 22.3% Black/African American, 5.1% Asian American/Pacific Islander, and 1.2% American Indian/Alaska Native; 5.3% identified as other or declined to answer. They also found that 9 out of 10 (89.9%) were "assigned female at birth" (Salsberg et al., 2020). Salsberg et al. (2020) asked about assigned sex at birth but failed to ask follow up items about current gender identity. This phrasing erases TGE and intersex identities and reflects a broader cisgenderist perspective dominant in social work research. While we recognize this as a limitation, Salsberg et al. (2020) provide basic workforce demographics that we find important to include. Courses taught about diversity rarely address whiteness and white people as a group that needs to be learned about or understood (Constance-Huggins, 2012). This curricular practice reflects the assumption that social workers are white and, therefore, already hold this knowledge, an assumption that further centers whiteness and white supremacy within social work curricula (Odera et al., 2021). This approach mirrors nearly absent content on cisgender people and cisnormativity (Acker, 2017; Austin et al., 2019; Martin et al., 2009). Cisgender people are rarely treated as a 'special' population to learn about in social work classrooms (Austin et al., 2016). The invisibility that results from these assumptions can limit our ability to name, analyze, and develop skills needed to dismantle cisnormativity.

The second assumption that these approaches reflect is that there is an expertise in "knowing" the "other" and that social workers hold the keys to that knowledge and understanding, further establishing social work as a professional gatekeeper of knowledges that are not theirs (Almeida, 2015; Havig & Byers, 2019). The third assumption underlying these approaches is that any knowledge that is gained

by social workers about people who are different from themselves is applied at an individual level—used to establish rapport and guide intervention planning—rather than informing a structural analysis that puts the experiences of clients and their communities in a sociohistorical context (Constance-Huggins, 2012; Lundy, 2004). This assumption may limit social workers' confidence in their abilities to engage in activism that is intended to create structural change for people and communities different from themselves. Calls to apply critical race theory in social work education and practice have raised this same critique (Wingfield & Adams, 2019). Together, these assumptions set up a binary around where change should and can occur and how social work knowledge and skills are applied. For example, social work students are implicitly encouraged to look outside themselves and the profession for the places where harm is happening. However, when entering practice, social work ethics call us to hold ourselves, our colleagues, and our organizations accountable. Without a practice framework and accompanying skills in accountability, educators may be setting social workers up to freeze in times and places when action is needed most.

In order for social work and social workers to mobilize for action in response to harmful policy movements, such as current trans exclusion, there is a need for social workers to look back at our history and inward at its impact on our complicity in causing harm to TGE people and communities. Transformative justice (TJ) provides a framework to work toward accountability to repair harm. Drawing from four key principles of TJ, we offer a framework for social work educators and practitioners to actively engage in reparative work and to inform action in response to structural violence against TGE people in the U.S.

Transformative Justice Is …

As an adaptation or extension of restorative justice (Davis, 2019), transformative justice is an approach to healing that is largely used as a practice to inform community responses to harm and interpersonal violence (Kaba & Hassan, 2019). An important underlying assumption of both restorative and transformative justice is that "hurt people hurt people," which recognizes that people who cause harm have often been harmed in their past without an opportunity

for healing and repair, complicating the dominant narrative that there are victims and perpetrators of harm that exist in a binary. Thus, the cycle of harm and violence can continue. With this understanding, it becomes clear that traditional responses to harm rooted in punishment (i.e., carceral responses) cause further harm rather than acknowledging and caring for the people involved in violent interaction as humans. TJ, as an extension of restorative justice, includes a systemic or structural lens, asking the question "What were the societal conditions that allowed this harm to happen and/ or continue?" (Piepzna-Samarasinha & Dixon, 2020). As noted by Kim (2020, p.227), "Transformation, as opposed to restoration, also explicitly recognizes that interpersonal forms of violence take place within the context of structural conditions including poverty, racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, and other systemic forms of violence." As such, TJ is deeply rooted in a belief that people can heal and grow and that there can be a world where we can support one another through incidents of harm and violence without state intervention (Piepzna-Samarasinha & Dixon, 2020). A belief that such a world is possible is inherent in the practices of TJ activists and community healers.

Origins of Transformative Justice

Before the confines of the Anglo-Western practice of self-perpetuating violence by its retributive justice system, groups across the globe had developed practices that sought to restore instances of disturbed peace. What we have come to call TJ was a practice that was not considered an alternative but, rather, an intentional tradition integrated into all aspects of Indigenous life (Dorward, 2005). The Indigenous practice of peacemaking, as unique and varied as the tribes who continue this custom, has greatly influenced the development of TJ and all its previous iterations. In detailing the practice of peacemaking and discussing the origins of TJ, we seek to illuminate the necessity of an intersectional, anti-carceral, survivor-led, and community-centered framework within social work to mobilize against the systemic violence against TGE people.

Despite various cultural differences in the practice of peacemaking, there are several characteristics that guide this approach to harm. Gathering peacemakers—selected members of the community

who are recognized for their understanding of human emotion and are often gifted in guiding others to heal—and voluntary members of the community, peacemaking involves the creation of a talking circle prior to beginning their discussion (Yazzie, 1994). Rather than focus on what we might define as a criminal act, the circle engages with the emotional impacts of what has brought them together (Wolf, 2014). This approach emphasizes the role of community involvement and healing when conflict occurs at both the individual and collective levels. There are little to no rules, time limits, or a definitive structure to how peacemaking sessions flow (Wolf, 2014). Participants maintain an understanding of the flexibility of this practice in providing additional peacemaking circles if needed. They are mindful of the importance of the survivor's experience of harm, allowing survivors to be present or represented by another member of the circle. As healing, flexibility, survivor-centered, and harmony are guiding principles to the practice of peacemaking, these circles seek to fulfill several goals: Mend the relationship; provide cultural knowledge; restore lost harmony; acknowledge future outcomes; and promote lifelong change (Wolf, 2014).

These goals are intended to be fulfilled without punitive, forceful, or coercive tactics. In reaffirming every individual's capability for change, space can be created to acknowledge the autonomy of a survivor and those who have done harm. Consensus may not always be achievable, but peacemaking acknowledges that it can be the birthplace of healing later down the line (Wolf, 2014). Unlike the ways in which our punitive approach freezes all parties to one moment in time, peacemaking asks the collective to look toward a harmonious future. This strategic divergence from our existing punitive state would only recently appeal to scholars in criminology, beginning its journey into the scope of the Anglo-Western criminal justice system. Criminologists Pepinsky and Quinney (1991) present peacemaking as an alternative to the U.S. criminal legal system. This proposed branch of critical criminology had several key elements. First, our knowledge and understanding of each other will forever be limited. Second, every person is on their individual spiritual journey. Third, suffering is an unchangeable aspect of human life. Fourth, nonviolent criminology rooted in empathy and love will be enough to end crime and criminal behaviors (Pepinsky & Quinney, 1991; Trombley, 2019).

Through the development of peacemaking criminology, Zehr and colleagues (2015) introduced the idea of restorative justice, a more collective perspective of understanding and responding to harm. Still, restorative justice remains hesitant to fully diverge away from state involvement. Continuously relying on systems such as law enforcement or child welfare, restorative justice has centralized our existing criminal legal system as a reformative effort, not a divesting one (Morris, 2000). As identified by Ruth Morris (2000), a quaker in Canada, restorative justice does not ask why our system exists, whom it benefits, and how it self-perpetuates (McAlinden, 2011). This would lead to the proposal of transformative justice as we understand it today. By detailing the formation of TJ, social workers can acknowledge the necessity of its practice in addressing harm against TGE people and communities.

Through detailing the formation of transformative justice, social workers may understand how our ties to the punitive system leave gaps in servicing our community. Efforts such as peacemaking criminology and restorative justice have confined the original practices of peacemaking into a reformative effort, which relies on carceral systems. Transformative justice offers social workers a wider lens to understand the socio-historical origins of TGE oppression while building creative, sustainable, and healing solutions that exist outside the realm of our punitive ideologies and practices. Frameworks that remain confined to and rely upon our retributive systems will always fail TGE people and undermine the origins to which they belong.

We must always be cognizant of how our role within social work must be driven towards the divestment of the criminal legal system and, through that divestment, acknowledge those that have provided the foundation of TJ. With an anti-punitive, survivor-centered, and community-based approach, social work education can empower us to resist the political, social, and structural oppression of TGE people.

Acknowledgments of Harm

We believe it is important to note here the complex contradictions of asking a highly professionalized and institutionalized discipline such as social work to consider and be guided in practice by

the TJ framework, which originates from community-based, mutual aid, and collective care spaces. This is based on an assumption that structural responses to harm only cause more harm. In fact, the very communities that have been and continue to be harmed by systems largely dominated by social workers are those who are building systems of care outside these institutions, including Black, Indigenous, immigrant, and TGE communities. A full exploration of this is beyond the scope of this manuscript, but we believe it is important to acknowledge that the application of TJ principles does not happen in a vacuum. TJ calls us to look at the structural conditions that have allowed harm to happen and identify solutions to harm that exist outside of the systems in which the social work profession is deeply embedded.

TJ calls us to question and resist the normalization of violence. As many social workers work in and are economically dependent upon system jobs where they witness harm on a daily basis, numbness and other symptoms of moral injury can occur. This is reinforced by a professionalization that requires social workers to compartmentalize the personal from the professional, thus reinforcing the practice of removing one's feelings from the work, further contributing to numbness. Leaning into the application of TJ would require the profession to examine this phenomenon closely and unpack the harm done by professionalized boundaries that are intended to protect the systems, organizations, and profession by maintaining power and disconnect rather than centering the care and well-being of staff, communities, and clients.

Foundations of a Transformative Justice Approach

At its foundation, TJ is based on an understanding and application of intersectionality and an intimate connection between history and the present. Before we introduce the application of the four selected principles of TJ to inform action in the face of trans injustice, we believe it is important to acknowledge that TGE people hold a multiplicity of identities that shape their experiences of being TGE in the U.S. Intersectionality, a framework first formally introduced by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) in a legal context, helps us to understand that people often live at the intersections of multiple identities that experience marginalization and discrimination.

Rather than thinking about these experiences as being additive, intersectionality highlights how living at the intersections creates a unique experience of marginalization that differs from those who hold one or the other of those two identities. In the case that Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) highlighted, a Black woman will experience racism in ways that differ from Black men, and she will experience sexism in ways that differ from white women. Her unique intersection of identity—Black and woman—creates a unique experience of both racism and sexism. As we think about the lives and experiences of TGE people, we must similarly think in an intersectional way—resisting the overgeneralization of the experience of white or non-disabled TGE people. Applying an intersectional approach to the TJ framework and its associated principles helps us to call attention to the potential for overgeneralization or erasure that can happen when we overlook the unique experiences of TGE people of color, for example. This is true as we seek to understand the impact of anti-transgender legislation as well as how best to take action without causing further harm.

To illustrate the application of an intersectional analysis, we can look at the executive directive in Texas that criminalizes parents and families who seek gender-affirming care for their children (Office of the Texas Governor, 2022; Yurcaba, 2022). An intersectional analysis of the impact of this law helps us to begin with an understanding of the disproportionate representation of Black, Latinx, and Indigenous families who are monitored and policed by the child welfare system, rooted in histories of forced family separation, detention of unaccompanied minors who crossed the U.S.-Mexico border, policies of forced assimilation and child removal among Indigenous communities, and the many ways that Black families have been surveilled and criminalized. To take this analysis further, we can examine the location of Texas and its relationship to the U.S.-Mexico border. Immigrant Latinx families in Texas may have good reason to fear the involvement of the child welfare system in their lives, which could result in family separation, deportation, and/or the detention and inhumane treatment of their children. Understanding the law through this lens helps us to recognize the unique experience of a Latinx TGE child and their family living in Texas. Recognizing the intersectional experiences of TGE people who hold other marginalized identities helps us to understand the importance of the application of principles such as survivor-led

through an intersectional lens. As a foundation of TJ, intersectionality should inform all of our analysis, reflection, and action.

The framework calls us to ask what social and structural conditions allowed and continue to allow harm to happen. Recognizing the history of structural harm, its impact, and the repeated patterns of harm can allow us, for example, to identify rhetoric or other uses of language that are repeated over time to generate fear and hatred, or the strategies and tactics used to scapegoat TGE people as a way of engaging citizens in the policing of each other to uphold the control of the state. When we explore the broader socio-historical context, we can learn from the historical forms of community aid, resistance, and survival that are often erased along with the histories of harm. Understanding both past and present is essential for social workers who want to engage with TJ principles to take action in the face of systemic harm and violence. We must name the history of white, cis-hetero, colonialist, and conservative Christian dominance within social work and recognize how entrenched we as individuals are in systems of oppression and simultaneously exist as both victims and perpetrators of violence (Kaba & Hassan, 2019; Lundy & Jennissen, 2022).

Principle 1: Accountability

Accountability, through the lens of TJ, calls us to rethink the ways that we approach responses to harm (Mingus, 2018), moving away from punishment as a consequence (Sultan, 2020) and moving toward generative opportunities for growth, healing and community strength. Approaching accountability in this way requires us to look at the potential perpetrator of harm, even in oneself, as a reflection of the community, to ask where the community failed or can be strengthened to support the person who has caused harm as well as the survivor of harm. In practicing accountability, we make our first proclamation in support of transformation (Barnard Center for Research on Women, 2020; Kaba, 2020). Accountability as a principle asks all of us to reflect on what responsibility we have in what has happened and to take responsibility for what will happen in the future.

Self-reflection is a key practice that promotes and fosters accountability. It is rooted in an expectation that each of us, as social

workers, is capable of causing harm and must commit to ongoing growth and reflection. Social work's emphasis on competence and personal responsibility can create spaces where social workers may be fearful to talk about where they feel incompetent and likely to cause harm. Social work can dismantle this by establishing practices of collective reflection and collective accountability. Imagine the opportunity to learn from the expertise of a colleague and then to be able to share your own expertise without judgment or expectation of perfection or competence as an end result.

Social work as a profession can also practice the principle of accountability by building the skills and capacity needed for allies and accomplices to actively engage in holding one another accountable. Rather than expecting TGE people and colleagues to carry the labor of accountability—which happens in many of our classrooms, practicum placements, and practice settings—educating and skilling up cisgender accomplices should be a universal practice skill taught across social work programs. This includes sharing knowledge of the socio-historical context for TGE people rather than expecting TGE people to maintain that memory.

Accountability, in its application through a TJ lens, requires us to examine the ways in which we have been complicit in harm rather than only examining the ways that we may have caused harm directly. As a member of a community, we are accountable for sharing our knowledge and skills to reduce the potential for harm. In light of recent anti-trans policies, social workers are called to be accountable to our values in service to those in our communities who are currently being harmed by these policies (Hsu, 2022). This includes divestment from systems and institutions that marginalize and "other" TGE people. Social workers should examine the ways in which we act as gatekeepers to trans-affirming care and services, as well as how we refer TGE people into systems that actively harm them (LaSala & Goldlatt 2019; Shelton et al., 2019). One way that social work educators and practitioners can practice accountability is to acknowledge the profession's role in harm to TGE communities and facilitate TGE peoples' ease of access to gender-affirming care. Other effective practices include affirming people's genders in group settings and on administrative intake paperwork, thus reducing barriers to access.

Applying a sociohistorical lens to the principle of accountability offers guidance for social work educators and programs. To transform from harm, we must first understand how violence previously took place and how it continues to impact us today, in social work and beyond. Social work educators and programs can incorporate the history of TGE communities into the curriculum not as a special population, but as integrated members of communities. In the spirit of accountability, social work educators can deeply reflect on their capacity to teach about TGE communities, asking themselves what work they have done to prepare to teach the content and facilitate discussions in the classroom that are rooted in respect and affirmation. Social work program administrators can identify accountability practices that support educators in this preparation proactively rather than reactively, providing resources for educators to become knowledgeable and appropriately skilled. Accountability requires us to heal both internal and external damage previously done. Accountability acknowledges that those who have caused harm have also been impacted. Accountability requires each of us to recognize our own potential for causing harm and to turn to community for guidance and growth. In this way, social work educators can model accountability for students.

Principle 2: Survivor-led

As previously discussed, TJ as a community practice is often used to facilitate healing related to interpersonal violence. In this context, survivor-led means that the person or persons to whom harm or violence has been perpetrated should be at the forefront of decisions about the direction and pace of a repair or healing process, which situates survivors in positions where they have a choice and control. Enactment of violence is often rooted in power and control. This principle is a commitment to shift power and for those who have typically held power to be led by those who have survived violence. As we consider the application of this principle to the capacity of social workers to activate around current anti-transgender legislation, we must begin by acknowledging the history described previously in this paper.

Being survivor-led or led by folks who have been most directly affected means that social workers need to be in a relationship with

the people and communities who have experienced harm. This is an important initial step to enacting this principle in social work education and practice. It is hard to take leadership from people or communities with whom you have no connection or relationship. And showing up looking for direction only when harm has occurred or when you are being called out for being complicit in harm due to inaction is replicating the transactional nature of engagement between institutions and communities. Social work educators and practitioners need to examine the decision-making bodies that guide their work. Are there TGE people who are represented on these bodies? Do they reflect a diversity of TGE experiences? Similarly, social work educators and practitioners should assess their consultation strategies. Are they only seeking consultation and guidance on how best to interrupt harm and structural violence against TGE people when there is an example of harm that becomes public or visible? Or are they seeking guidance and consultation - seeking to be led by TGE people - consistently and regularly based on a recognition that harm and violence are everyday occurrences for TGE people in the U.S.? This is rooted in an understanding of the socio-historical context. Structural violence is not suddenly occurring.

In order to enact the principle of being survivor-led in response to anti-transgender legislation, social work educators and practitioners must work to build gender-affirming spaces into which they are inviting TGE community voices to guide and direct their efforts. This leads us to the next principle of TJ that can inform the response of social work and social workers to anti-transgender legislation—transformation.

Principle 3: Transformation

While TJ as a framework implies, in its name, that its application will result in transformation, the principle of transformation is one that requires further exploration, as it calls us to imagine something that we may never have experienced, that may never have existed. It calls us to repair harm, ask what conditions allowed the harm, and actively seek to transform those conditions while simultaneously engaging in healing practices at the intra- and interpersonal levels. This is the second important assumption of the principle of transformation—that action must include structural

shifts and changes. Harm and violence do not happen in isolation. Thus, repair and prevention of future harm do not happen in isolation. Transformation requires a commitment to dismantle, build, and create. This is not incremental. Transformational change is not about tweaking existing structures and systems. It is about getting at the root.

The application of the principle of transformation for social workers seeking to take action in response to anti-transgender legislation happens at multiple levels. First, it is important for social work educators and practitioners to have a socio-historical analysis of the systems and institutions that are introducing, advocating for, and carrying out the legislation. This analysis is necessary in order to identify how these systems need to be transformed and the ways in which our society can transform its response to community issues, such as maintaining social order or protecting children from abuse. Social work programs should include historical knowledge in the curriculum and skill development in macro-level analysis of policies and practices. Second, social work programs need to support students in learning skills and strategies that can be drawn upon to instigate change that is transformational, rather than solely incremental change. One of these skills is the ability to radically imagine—to explore possibilities that have never been. Students might be asked to imagine what a world would look like without gender, or to imagine a community that does not need systems to meet the needs of the people who live there. What would they see, hear, smell, or feel? What would be happening in that community or world? This is a great activity to include arts-based methods that engage students creatively and with multiple senses. Students can also be encouraged to ask "what if?" and to challenge one another when they revert to thinking that is limited or constrained by what is.

Principle 4: Community Building and Resilience

The TJ framework emphasizes building a community that can work collectively to take action and sustain changes. At its core, the TJ framework is community-based; it is believed that there is more opportunity for transformation within the community than the state (Kaba & Hassan, 2019). Therefore, it is important that a

principle of this framework is focused on relationship building within social work programs and within the social work community broadly. The intentional building of safe, inclusive spaces to address harm can promote healing and a sense of agency among community members (Kaba & Hassan, 2019).

In order to intentionally build communities both broadly and within programs, we must first consider how community work is perceived within social work education. In particular, it is important for social work education to recognize the value and power of community and take community-based approaches. This means that institutions need to make space for collective spaces that center around relationship-building between members so that a sense of community can begin to emerge. Often, academia promotes the use of meetings that are goal-oriented and intended to efficiently produce outcomes; while conducting meetings in this manner promotes the completion of tasks, these meeting orientations can act as barriers to the community-building process (Kreitzer et al., 2019). Therefore, we call on social work institutions to prioritize creating intentional spaces that honor the process of building relationships between members without any expectation of completing goals or achieving any sort of outcome.

Once a sense of community is prioritized and begins to build within institutions, this community can and should be used to collectively advocate on behalf of and alongside TGE students, faculty, staff, and community members. Too often, advocating for change within social work education can be an individual pursuit - one or two faculty members advocate for a change in policy because they become aware of student concerns. We call on social work to make collective efforts to engage in TJ *with* their communities. This begins by creating a space that fosters relationships and trust-building among members. In social work education, administrators need to support and facilitate the creation of spaces in which transformative action can be taken. This may take the form of creating formal task groups that can promote TGE justice within respective social work programs. Regardless of whether harm occurs at the interpersonal or structural level, it is vital that programs make efforts to respond and take accountability collectively as a community. Centering action around community action also protects TGE educators from being required to take on the brunt of the transformative

work; labor should be shared across the community to create a system that can sustain transformative action long-term.

Thirdly, it is important to recognize that TGE individuals have created resilient communities amongst themselves that have already engaged in advocacy against current and future anti-trans legislation. Social workers have historically acted as "white saviors" by assuming that marginalized communities need their help to survive (Plummer et al., 2021). We urge social work education to rethink how we approach "at risk" populations and, instead, to shift towards taking a resilience perspective towards marginalized communities. This includes resisting the savior mentality by recognizing and uplifting the power and expertise that already exist in marginalized communities. Social work programs and the institutions that house them should prioritize relationship building between educators, practitioners, and community members so that all individuals can work together towards taking community action on TGE issues. Additionally, it is important to recognize that, while TGE communities have already engaged in important advocacy efforts and change work, the labor for these efforts should be shared by social workers and social work institutions, particularly those that identify as cisgender. Social work programs should be proactive and intentional in these efforts; for example, school administrators, faculty, staff, student representatives, and community members should work in tandem to develop a strategic plan that can and will be implemented to center TGE justice within the school. A strategic plan should attend to the role of intersectionality by being inclusive of, and collaborating with, TGE communities of color, disabled TGE communities, immigrant TGE communities, and other TGE communities that hold multiple marginalized identities. Further, social work programs should model the use of a TJ framework to support the implementation of this framework within other departments at the university at large.

Table 1. Applications of Transformative Justice Principles to Center TGE Individuals

Principles	Description	Action Steps
Accountability	A reflection of our own contributions and responsibility to harm that has previously taken place and ownership of the harm that may happen in the future.	• Personal and collaborative community reflection for personal and collective community ownership of harm. • Education of the socio-historical contexts of TGE people and the distribution of labor onto cis individuals in maintaining the memory of these experiences. • Examination of the ways in which we act as gatekeepers to TGE affirming care and services and in what ways we support systems that actively harm TGE people. • Transparent reflection on personal capacity to educate about or provide services to TGE people or connect them to affirming services.
Survivor-Led	The person or persons to whom the harm has been perpetrated should be at the forefront of decisions about the direction and pace of repair in the healing process.	• Develop relationships with individuals and communities to whom the harm has been perpetrated. • Seek guidance and consultation from TGE people; acknowledging the pervasiveness of harm that they experience. • Build gender affirming spaces in social work education among administration, faculty, and students and in practice among fellow social workers and TGE clients.
Transformation	Reimagination and rebuilding of the conditions that allowed for harm to take place including the participation in intra and interpersonal healing practices.	• Encourage students and practitioners to challenge one another when reverting to punitive beliefs and actions. • Strengthen socio-historical awareness of our systems, so social workers can identify the effectiveness of existing policies and practices relating to TGE identities at a macro-level analysis. • Foster radical imagination, such as; asking what a world would look like without gender? What would they see, hear, smell, or feel?
Community Building and Resilience	Intentional building with collaboration of community members to create safe, inclusive, and sustainable spaces and responses to harm.	• Create intentional space in academic and practice settings for relationship building among TGE community members. • Encourage and promote advocacy within the community, such as; develop task groups that address areas of harm with curriculum. • Shift away from ideas of "risky" communities towards a resilience perspective.

The Interconnectedness of TJ Principles

As we think about the opportunities that TJ principles offer to guide our efforts to acknowledge harm, engage in accountability, and work in community to transform the structures that allow harm to continue, it is vital to acknowledge how they work in tandem. As Figure 1 illustrates, the principles are connected in ways that do not lend themselves to a check-box approach or a linear, step-by-step process that will result in clear outcomes. Engaging these TJ principles calls us to recognize the ways in which activating one principle activates the others. They are interconnected. For example, as we work toward accountability, we may realize that our efforts are not guided by survivors or community members. This will require us to attend to our ability to be survivor-led as we strive for accountability. Similarly, social work programs may need to consider how policies and protocols require them to turn inward when harm has occurred and make unilateral decisions about accountability. Instead, the principles of being survivor-led and facilitating community-building would require programs to turn outward and invite others to inform the path to accountability. In an iterative way, we will lean into one principle more fully at times while holding the others as essential to the work of healing, repair, and transformation. Being open to the interconnected nature of applying the principles allows us to engage the principles more fully.
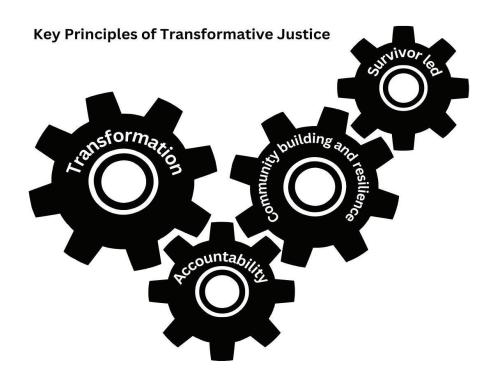
Figure 1. Key Principles of Transformative Justice

Note: An image of gears representing key principles of TJ is discussed in this paper: accountability, survivor-led, community building and resilience, and transformation

Transformation in/is Social Work

When we consider what we are called to as a profession, we know that our role as social workers is often to walk alongside people and communities as they strive to transform their lives. Transformation is something we believe in as social workers. It is rooted in our core values and we are called by our code of ethics to always be working to transform ourselves, our agencies, and our society. Transformation *is* social work. *And* we cannot engage in transformational work with others if we are not willing to work to transform ourselves. We believe that transformation *in* social work is possible. The principles and framework of transformative justice offer us a pathway to begin the work required to adequately stand against injustice against TGE people and communities. The work begins with us. We believe our profession can engage in accountability

practices to dismantle the results of our own harmful history and begin transforming the future of this profession through structural shifts in education and practice. Rooted in memory, TJ offers optimism and the opportunity to imagine a future without harm.

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