Sexuality Research and Social Policy
https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-024-00997-2

Trans Rights and Safety, Political Self-efficacy, and Well-Being

Beatrice Rothbaum[1] · **Chana Etengoff**[1] · **Emily Luong**[1]

Accepted: 13 June 2024

Abstract

Introduction This mixed-methods study contributes to a growing body of research on trans political engagement by examining the interaction between trans political self-efficacy, political fatigue, and mental health. A total of 141 trans individuals completed an online mixed-methods survey assessing trans rights and safety concerns, political self-efficacy, and well-being.

Methods Participants were asked to describe the reasons for their level of political engagement. Data was collected between June 2019 and August 2021, with a brief pause for COVID-19.

Results Narrative analyses indicate that participants engaged with the political system due to concern for their trans rights and safety (35%), their sense of the personal (55%), communal relevance (26%), their mistrust of the political system (26%), and their political self-efficacy beliefs (26%). Though quantitative analyses indicate that participants' well-being was significantly, positively correlated with both political security and political self-efficacy, some participants described their political engagement as being related to political fatigue (21%). Moreover, participants who reported political fatigue demonstrated significantly lower political self-efficacy than participants who did not report political fatigue.

Conclusions These results suggest that trans political engagement can provide important benefits for well-being, via political self-efficacy, as well as risk factors for psychological harm, via political fatigue.

Policy Implications Thus, it is recommended that social policy makers promote safe pathways for trans individuals to engage with the political system and reduce activists' exposure to anti-trans stigma.

Keywords Transgender · Self-efficacy · Political fatigue · Trans activism · Communal empowerment · Gender minorities

Since the 2016 US presidential election, trans[1] individuals have increasingly encountered discriminatory gender identity legislation (Janssen & Voss, 2021; Price et al., 2021; Veldhuis et al., 2018). Trans discriminatory legislation has been proposed across numerous settings including education, housing, employment, criminal justice, family, public accommodations, and health care (Dubin et al., 2021; Hatzenbuehler, 2016; Hughto et al., 2015; Nadal et al., 2012). Recently proposed legislation includes laws that prohibit or criminalize the use of public facilities consistent with one's gender identity, enable religiously motivated trans discrimination, allow trans discrimination in healthcare settings, and obstruct access to ID documents consistent with one's gender identity (American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), 2021). Following the Supreme Court's 2023 ruling in *303 Creative LLC v Elenis*, businesses now have a legal right to deny services and goods to LGBTQ + individuals (Eschliman et al., 2023). Scholars have noted that this ruling is particularly alarming for trans individuals, who now have less legal protection against discrimination based on gender identity (McClain, 2023). Concurrently, trans Americans have reported increased stress due to the *anticipation* of discrimination, stigma, and heightened concerns about physical safety (Fredrick et al., 2021; Price et al., 2021; Veldhuis et al., 2018). For example, in a national sample of trans individuals conducted in the six months following the 2016 election, 82% of participants reported high levels of concern about others' safety, 79% reported high levels of concern about LGBTQ + rights, 77% reported high levels of concern about discrimination, and 66% reported high levels of concern about their own safety (Veldhuis et al., 2018).

✉ Beatrice Rothbaum
beatricerothbaum@mail.adelphi.edu

[1] Derner School of Psychology, Adelphi University, One South Avenue, P.O. Box 701, Garden City, NY 11530, USA

[1] *Trans* is an umbrella term referring to individuals whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned to them at birth (APA, 2015). The term trans (vs. transgender) captures a broad myriad of genders within the trans community including those who have not taken steps to outwardly transition as well as those who identify outside of binary notions of gender (e.g., genderqueer or nonbinary; APA, 2015).

Published online: 02 July 2024

Anti-trans stigma is often associated with chronic psychological distress for trans populations (Horne et al., 2021). For example, trans adults experience elevated rates of suicidality (Tebbe & Moradi, 2016), depression (Bockting et al., 2013), anxiety (Bockting et al., 2013), substance use (Reisner et al., 2014), disordered eating (Witcomb et al., 2015), and trauma (Grant et al., 2011) compared to cisgender[2] adults. The *minority stress model* posits that trans individuals experience higher rates of mental health issues due to the excess burden of both distal stressors (e.g., a discriminatory laws) and proximal stressors (e.g., expectations of rejection) related to anti-trans stigma (Frost & Meyer, 2023). However, group-level coping strategies such as community engagement and political activism may mitigate the relationship between anti-trans stigma and psychological distress (Bockting et al., 2020; Hatzenbuehler, 2009; Nemoto et al., 2011; Riggle et al., 2019). Specifically, trans individuals may cope with anti-trans stigma by engaging in activism and advocacy to improve the status of their marginalized community (Breslow et al., 2015; Broad, 2002). While there is a large body of work focused on the negative outcomes associated with trans stigma, there is a dearth of research exploring how trans individuals actively, agentively engage with the political system to mediate anti-trans stigma experiences and challenges. The present study therefore aims to address this gap in the literature by exploring the interrelationship between trans individuals' rights and safety, their political self-efficacy, and well-being. The present paper builds on the sociocultural stance that individual well-being is situated within the intersection of sociocultural context and individual agency (Stetsenko, 2017).

Despite the systemic barriers to trans political participation (e.g., voter identification laws and high rates of poverty; James et al., 2016), these very acts of suppression may serve to politically mobilize trans individuals to fight against the legalization of structural stigma (ACLU, 2021). For example, the *2015 U.S. Transgender Survey* of over 27,715 trans participants reported that trans individuals have higher rates of voter registration (76% compared to 65%) and voting (54% compared to 42%) as compared to cisgender populations (James et al., 2016). Similarly, Bowers and Whitley's (2020) analysis of over 5000 trans individuals from the *2011 National Transgender Discrimination Survey* found that trans study participants registered to vote at rates consistent or higher than the general population. Despite these findings, there is little psychological research exploring how trans individuals' political self-efficacy and political engagement impacts their well-being. To address this gap, the below literature review begins with an overview of trans political self-efficacy and continues with a critical synthesis of the literature regarding potential trans political engagement motivators (e.g., trans rights and safety concerns, political mistrust) and barriers (e.g., political fatigue, well-being impact).

Trans Political Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is an agentive, developmental construct encapsulating an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform in a given setting and exert influence over their own life (Bandura, 1977). A strong sense of self-efficacy facilitates an individual's ability to persist at challenging tasks, despite failures or setbacks (Bandura, 1977). Individuals with higher levels of self-efficacy experience less anxiety when facing stressful or threatening events (Bandura, 1988). Alternatively, lower levels of self-efficacy can lead an individual to avoid challenges and/or dwell on personal deficiencies when faced with difficult circumstances (Bandura, 1977).

Building on this work, theorists have explored political self-efficacy as a contributing factor to political engagement (Caprara et al., 2009; Vecchione & Caprara, 2009). As Vecchione and Caprara (2009) noted, "citizens who believe they can influence the political system are likely to take action in the pursuit of their goals, even at the cost of personal risk" (p. 497). Caprara et al. (2009) conceptualized political self-efficacy as individuals' beliefs in their ability to choose candidates, mobilize voters, campaign for parties, petition, fundraise, lobby, contact representatives, and negotiate within one's party or with other parties. As Caprara (2008) stated, "When people vote […] they express their individual autonomy, assert the equal dignity of their views, affirm their belongingness and inclusiveness, [and] attest to their trust in concerted action" (p. 642). Thus, political self-efficacy provides a framework for understanding how an individuals' sense of personal agency shapes how they interact with others and collaboratively work toward changing their sociocultural environment (Caprara et al., 2009).

To date, there is a dearth of research exploring political self-efficacy among trans individuals. For example, the *2015 U.S. Transgender Survey* used only one question (out of 324 questions) to explicitly examine participants' *beliefs* regarding their ability to influence government decisions, although additional items were included regarding political *actions* such as voting (James et al., 2016). While the extent of measurement is limited, the *2015 U.S. Transgender Survey* did report that 44% of the 27,715 participants believed that they could have some influence on government decisions compared to 32% who believed they could not influence government decisions (James et al., 2016). Utilizing the same data set from the *2015 U.S. Transgender Survey*,

[2] *Cisgender* refers to those identifying with their sex assigned at birth (APA, 2015).

Billard (2021) found that participants' beliefs in their ability to influence government decisions was a significant predictor of trans civic engagement and political campaign contribution. For example, researchers found that trans individuals were more likely (19%) than the general population (16%) to not vote, despite being registered to vote, because *they felt their vote would not make a difference* (James et al., 2016). Given the limited body of research on the subject, the present paper utilizes a mixed-methods approach to further explore the motivators and barriers to trans individuals' political self-efficacy and engagement.

Motivators for Trans Political Engagement

Traditionally, political activism has referred to direct, intentional, and organized efforts to bring about political or social change (e.g., voting, party membership, campaigning, contacting elected officials; Loader et al., 2014; Norris, 2003). However, recent research on social media use indicates that twenty-first century political behaviors also include less formalized actions such as participating in online discussion forums, subscribing to political status updates, advertising that one voted, and posting support for a candidate (Carlisle & Patton, 2013). In other words, traditional forms of political activism were understood to largely occur explicitly within the citizen-political system (Loader et al., 2014), whereas contemporary forms of political engagement now include individualized, online, and offline networks of sociorelational political action that are often informal (Bennett, 2007). For example, Etengoff's (2019) transvlog analysis identified diverse trans online political transformation pathways such as critiquing the status quo, explicating new possibilities, envisioning new activity and identity patterns (e.g., transdisruptive narratives), and committing to concrete actions aimed at change. Additionally, extant scholarship on trans activism has expanded the political action scope to include trans individuals' unique efforts to increase visibility by educating others about trans identities and dispelling trans stereotypes (Riggle et al., 2011). To encompass these diverse and varied forms of trans political action, we utilize the broader framework of political engagement versus the narrower traditional scope of political activism. For the purposes of this paper, we therefore define trans political engagement as the diverse and complex ways that trans individuals advocate for themselves and their community via both formal political action efforts (e.g., voting) as well as informal, grassroots social networking actions (e.g., online and offline political discussions). Moreover, we adopt Farthing's (2010) stance that political engagement is a continuum of action that cannot be reduced to a binary understanding of dis/engagement.

Mansbridge and Morris's (2001) theory of oppositional consciousness proposes that group marginalization and oppression can motivate high levels of political engagement. When socially excluded individuals find each other and create new communities that reaffirm their identities, they can begin to pool resources and amass collective power to address systemic oppression (Bowers & Whitley, 2020). Through this lens, trans individuals may engage in collective political action as a proactive form of coping with trans oppression (Breslow et al., 2015). Indeed, recent qualitative studies have found that in response to the rise of anti-trans stigma during the 2016 election, trans Americans adopted agentive resilience strategies such as connecting with their communities and empowering themselves via collective political action (Gonzalez et al., 2022; Riggle et al., 2019). Similarly, Hagen et al.'s (2018) qualitative study found that sexual minority women ($n = 13$), trans ($n = 4$), and gender queer ($n = 6$) individuals engage in activism and advocacy to support both themselves and other community members, which may increase their sense of agency to change their circumstances. On a larger scale, Goldberg et al.'s (2020) mixed-methods study of 491 trans college students' activism identified personal values, community responsibility, and desire for community as predictors for campus activism. Specifically, trans students linked their own experiences of oppression to their desire to give others the support and resources they lacked (Goldberg et al., 2020). Similarly, Billard's (2021) *2015 U.S. Transgender Survey* analysis found that trans community connectedness was a more significant predictor of civic engagement and political campaign contribution than any single demographic factor (i.e., gender, age, race, education, income). In sum, by challenging discriminatory practices to improve their own lives as well as the lives of others, marginalized individuals and communities can strengthen both their own voice and their sense of social connection (Quaye, 2007). As trans individuals connect with each other and collaboratively confront oppression and inequality, they can actively choose how to structure their own lives and communities (Etengoff, 2019). Building on this foundation, the present paper theorizes that while the harm of oppression is notably significant, some trans individuals may be agentively responding to this oppression with political resistance.

Barriers to Trans Political Engagement

Although much of the scholarship on trans political participation highlights the mental health benefits of political activism, several studies have found associations between trans activism and psychological stress. For example, Bockting et al.'s (2020) qualitative study of 19 trans individuals living in the USA found that trans activism may function as a source of both resilience and risk, as it increases both hope for the future and stress from exposure to anti-trans stigma. Similarly, Hagen et al.'s (2018)

qualitative study of sexual minority women ($n=13$), trans ($n=4$) and gender queer ($n=6$) individuals in the USA found that while activism increased empowerment and resilience, activism also increased the likelihood of experiencing oppression both within and outside of activist communities. Relatedly, Breslow et al.'s (2015) quantitative study of 552 trans individuals in the USA found that collective action strengthened the positive relation of internalized transphobia and psychological distress. Moreover, Valente et al.'s (2020) quantitative study of 330 trans individuals in the USA found that, contrary to expectations, trans activism was positively associated with psychological stress. These findings are consistent with the literature on the causes and symptoms of burnout among social justice activists in the general population (Gorski & Chen, 2015). Thus, trans individuals may have to make choices about when to engage in activism and when to step back to manage the related stress. Building on these contradictory findings regarding the associations between well-being and political activism, the current study explores the potential role of political fatigue as part of the complex relationship between trans political self-efficacy, engagement and well-being.

The Present Study

The present exploratory study applies a mixed-methods approach to meet data triangulation standards as well as provide both depth and breadth (Archibald, 2015; Wilson, 2014). The present study is part of a larger research project aimed at understanding the intersectional factors related to trans Americans' well-being (i.e., Rothbaum et al., 2021). This specific segment of the larger project focuses on the interaction between trans individuals' political self-efficacy, political in/security, and well-being by addressing the following questions:

1) What are trans individuals' concerns about their legal rights and safety in the USA? How do participants' individual and communal experiences intersect with their narratives of political in/security?
2) How confident do trans individuals feel about their ability to successfully and meaningfully impact political change (i.e., political self-efficacy)? What additional sociostructural factors impact trans political self-efficacy?
3) What is the relationship between trans well-being, trans political in/security, and trans political self-efficacy?

Method

Participants

One-hundred and forty-one participants (42% of the 336 that initiated the survey) completed all of the required measures and are included in the present study. Participants had an average age of 45 (range 18–86; $SD=17$ years). To promote inclusivity and validity for minoritized groups, participants were asked to self-identify their race and ethnicity and participants' original self-identification phrasing is therefore used throughout the manuscript (Woolverton & Marks, 2021). The majority (84%) of participants self-identified in some form as White (i.e., "Caucasian," "Italian-American"). Thirteen percent of participants self-identified with terms that are widely included in the "people of color" category in the literature (Jackson, 2006; i.e., "Black," "Afro American/East Indian," "Latinx"). While all participants self-identified broadly as trans, participants responded to an open-ended prompt regarding their gender identification with a wide range of gender identities. In some form, 30% identified as a trans woman (i.e., "transfeminine," "transgirl"), 18% identified as a trans man (i.e., "transmasculine," "transboy"), 18% identified as non-binary (i.e., "genderfluid," "agender"), 16% identified as female (i.e., "woman," "femme"), 10% identified as trans (i.e., "trans," "transgender") with no additional gender qualifier, and 8% identified as male (i.e., "boy," "man"). Participants' sexual orientation responses were similarly diverse: 19% identified as lesbian, 19% as bisexual, 17% as heterosexual, 13% as pansexual, 12% as queer, 10% as asexual, 6% as some other sexual orientation (i.e., "demisexual," "questioning"), and 4% as gay. In addition, participants reported a diverse range of political party affiliations: 39% of participants identified as Democrats, 19% as Independent, 13% as undeclared or undecided, and 7% as Republicans. Participants lived across the USA with 30% from the Northeast, 25% from the South, 25% from the West, and 20% from the Midwest. Participants were largely highly educated, with 54% of participants having obtained a college degree or higher. However, income status was more diverse, with 43% earning less than $25,000 a year, 15% earning between $25,000 and $34,999, 10% earning between $35,000 and $49,999, 13% earning between $50,000 and $74,999, and 16% earning $75,000 or more. In addition to the likelihood of trans workplace discrimination (Sawyer et al., 2016), participants' income variation may also be due to 21% of participants identifying as retired and 11% as unemployed.

Recruitment

After obtaining IRB approval, data was collected by the first author in two waves. Recruitment began in June 2019 and was paused in March 2020 due to the possible well-being effects of the COVID-19 lockdown. Recruitment resumed between May 2021 and August 2021. Participants were recruited via trans online public forums, blogs, and listservs (e.g., Facebook pages, Twitter, Reddit), flyers at trans and/or LGBTQ + Centers (e.g., college and local community centers), and snowball sampling via emails to individuals

and organizations. As per IRB guidelines, survey inclusion criteria required that participants: (a) identify as trans, (b) be above 18 years of age, and (c) currently reside in the USA. Participants were not compensated for participation, although they were thanked for their valuable contributions and offered access to data reports and publications.

Measures

To increase community validity, the first and second authors incorporated survey design feedback from two trans individuals (one current and one recently graduated college student) into the measurement construction as described below.

Demographics

Demographics were assessed with both closed and open-ended questions. Political affiliation, employment status, education, and income level were assessed with closed-ended prompts. In addition, participants were prompted with open-ended questions to self-identify their age, racial/ethnic identity, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Gender identity responses were then coded based on Fraser's (2018) coding scheme for qualitative gender data.

Trans Rights and Safety Concerns

Trans rights and safety concerns were assessed through both quantitative and qualitative measures. Quantitatively, trans rights and safety concerns were assessed with a list of trans-related sociopolitical issues adapted from the National Center for Transgender Equality's *2015 U.S. Transgender Survey* (James et al., 2016). Participants were asked to rate how secure they felt about their current legal protections as a trans-identifying person for 17 sociopolitical issues (e.g., "Insurance coverage for trans-related health care", "Police mistreatment of trans people") on a five-point Likert scale ranging from not at all important to extremely important (see the "Trans Rights and Safety Concerns" section; Table 1). Ratings were then summed to yield a final composite score of 17 to 85, with higher scores indicating greater political security. Reliability analyses indicate excellent consistency in participants' responses across items (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.92$; McDonald's $\omega = 0.92$). Participants were additionally asked to described their thought process with an open-ended narrative prompt (e.g., Why do you think that is?; see Table 2).

Political Self-Efficacy

Political self-efficacy was assessed through both quantitative and qualitative measures. Political self-efficacy was quantitatively assessed with the Perceived Political Self-Efficacy Scale (PPES, Caprara et al., 2009). The PPES prompts participants to rate how confident they are about their ability to execute 10 political actions or behaviors (e.g., "Actively promote the election of political candidates in which you trust") using a five-point Likert scale (1 = *Not at all capable* to 5 = *Completely capable*). Response ratings were summed to yield a final composite score of 10 to 50, with greater scores indicating higher levels of political self-efficacy. Caprara et al. (2009) reported a mean scaled score of 2.29 ($SD = 0.27$) for the original sample. Reliability analyses for the current study indicate excellent consistency in participants' responses across items (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.91$). Political self-efficacy (PSE) was also assessed with an analysis of participants' scaled and narrative responses to the mixed-methods questions on political affairs and trans policy engagement (see above and the "political self-efficacy" code in Table 2).

Well-Being

Well-being was quantitatively assessed with the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (SWEMWBS, Stewart-Brown et al., 2009). Participants rated their agreement with 7 positively-worded statements (e.g., "I've been optimistic about the future;" "I've been feeling closer to other people") using a five-point Likert scale (1 = *None of the time* to 5 = *All of the time*). Raw item scores are summed and converted to a metric total score using the SWEMWBS conversion table. SWEMWBS scores range from 7 to 35, with greater scores indicating higher levels of mental well-being. The published, general UK population mean for SWEMWBS is 23.6 (Fat et al., 2016). Reliability analyses for the current study indicate good consistency in participants' responses across items (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.86$). Well-being was also qualitatively assessed with participants' open-ended responses to questions assessing why they kept up to date or not with current political affairs and trans policy (see above and the "political fatigue" code in Table 2).

Procedure

The distributed survey was accessed online and hosted by *Qualtrics*, an online survey platform. Prior to beginning the survey, participants completed an IRB approved informed consent form noting that participation was voluntary and there would be no compensation for participation. The survey did not ask participants for their names or emails and IP addresses were not collected. The median time to completion was about a half hour, although some participants may have taken breaks and/or completed the survey over multiple sittings ($SD = 3.8$ h). Participants were thanked at

the conclusion of the survey. No debrief was required as no form of deception was utilized.

Qualitative Analysis Procedure

Qualitative analysis was chosen to assess trans political engagement experiences due to the potential for qualitative research to amplify historically marginalized populations and thereby promote justice, dignity, agency, and empowerment (Stutterheim & Ratcliffe, 2021). A transformative narrative framework of analysis was employed to center trans participants as active agents of their own collaborative development (Stetsenko, 2017). Within this framework, narrative analysis concerns not only individuals' lived experiences but also the social, cultural, and institutional context in which the individuals' experiences were constituted and enacted (Clandinin, 2013). Extant research indicates that this methodology is relevant to diverse transgender populations (i.e., Etengoff, 2019; Etengoff & Rodriguez, 2020; Rothbaum et al., 2021). Both qualitative and frequency analyses are reported to enhance the breadth and depth of the analysis (Wilkinson, 2000). Individual narratives that succinctly and comprehensively illustrate a thematic category are included in the results.

The authors applied a *between-methods* data triangulation approach to the analysis of trans political engagement, integrating quantitative and qualitative methods for the same research questions (Denzin, 2017). Each of the two questions asked participants to rank their answers on a five-point scale and then provide a narrative explanation for their ranking. After referencing participants' scaled and open-ended responses and taking observational notes, the first author began to identify recurring patterns and salient themes for participants' explanations of their degree of political engagement. These themes were then condensed by the first author into an initial list of nine codes, leading to the identification of four categories that had not been previously differentiated in the trans political experience literature (i.e., Trans Rights and Safety Concerns; Political Mistrust; Personal Relevance; Political Fatigue). The initial code list was then reviewed by the second author for thematic agreement and variation. The second author recommended augmenting the definitions of several codes to be more inclusive of the range of ideas expressed in the data, prompting another five first and second author meetings and additional readings of the complete dataset. Three of the initial nine codes were then collapsed into similar categories to better fit the data, resulting in six final codes that were then further reviewed with three additional first/second author coding cycles. To be included in the final list of six codes, a theme needed to be described by at least 10% of participants. After conducting member checks, author discussion, and narrative reference (Creswell & Poth, 2016), the first and second authors agreed on inclusion and exclusion criteria for the final six trans political engagement codes: political self-efficacy, trans communal responsibility, personal relevance, political mistrust, trans rights and safety concerns, and political fatigue (see Table 2: reasons for political engagement, frequencies, and sample narratives). Three subcategory evaluative codes were also included to identify whether participants' political engagement served as (1) barriers for political activism, or/and (2) motivators for political activism, or were (3) neutral (i.e., described as neither a barrier or motivator; see Table 2 for narrative examples).

Inter-rater reliability was then assessed between the first and third author (a third-year clinical psychology doctoral student) utilizing codebooks developed by the first author and reviewed by the second author. The codebooks included code definitions, inclusion and exclusion criteria, fictional narrative examples, and subcode criteria. The first author developed four separate codebooks for sequential training and coding given both the large number of participants as well as codes. Each codebook contained two codes which were grouped based on conceptual similarities: (1) political self-efficacy and low/no political self-efficacy, (2) trans communal responsibility and personal relevance, (3) trans rights and safety concerns and political mistrust, and (4) general political fatigue and trans political fatigue. For any training narrative disagreements, the first and third author reviewed the criteria in the codebook and checked-in with the second author to establish consensus. A 90% rate of agreement with the first author on the training narratives was required before the third author coded participants' narrative responses. Inter-coder reliability was 93% for the final data set. Any remaining coding disputes between the first and third authors were resolved with the second author.

Results

Why are Trans Politics Important?

Trans Rights and Safety Concerns, Political Mistrust, and Personal and Communal Relevance/Safety

Trans Rights and Safety Concerns Participants' total average political security score was 1.86 ($SD = 0.68$), representing the average summed score of all 17 items. Participants reported the lowest political security scores for mistreatment in prisons/jails ($M = 1.28$, $SD = 0.61$), immigration reform ($M = 1.36$, $SD = 0.84$), and violence against trans people

($M = 1.47$, $SD = 0.75$), and the highest political security scores for federally regulated gender identity documents ($M = 2.51$, $SD = 1.24$), HIV/AIDS healthcare ($M = 2.48$, $SD = 1.24$), and marriage recognition ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 1.14$). See Table 2 for a complete listing of the individual political security items and mean scores.

Qualitative analysis indicated similarly low levels of trans political security, with 35% ($n = 49$) of participants referencing trans rights and safety concerns as they explained their degree of political engagement. For example, a 27-year-old, Halfrican American (half black and half white), transgender male from the South reported that following trans policy and legislation decisions is "very important" "in case I need to leave the country to avoid going to jail or being killed." From this participant's standpoint, the trans political insecurity in the USA has reached the degree of basic human rights violations—with the participant fearing both false imprisonment as well as murder due to their trans identity. Similarly, a 20-year-old, mixed race, transgender male from the Western region of the USA reported that keeping up to date with current political events in the USA is "very important" because,

> I am often very scared of the direction this country is taking under the current administration, particularly with how things have been going for trans people and other protected minorities.

In the above quote, the participant highlighted the intensity of their insecurity by emphasizing both the frequency of these feelings ("often") as well as the experiential degree ("very"). In sum, participants shared that there were motivated to remain politically engaged due to their pervasive sense of concern for the safety and security consequences of trans legislation.

Political Mistrust In addition to trans rights and safety concerns, 26% ($n = 36$) of participants described their overall mistrust with the American political system. For example, a 72-year-old, white, female from the West reported that keeping up to date with current political events in the USA is "very important" because,

> The current [Trump] administration is an abomination, a cancer, on our constitutional form of government, and that includes many congressional representatives and senators who are willing to go along with what is happening.

This participant's quote expresses doubt about the general legitimacy (e.g., "abomination, a cancer, on our constitutional form of government") and trustworthiness of the US political system and politicians that extends beyond trans policies (e.g., "who are willing to go along with what is happening"). The participant's use of multiple descriptive terms (e.g., (e.g., "abomination, a cancer") as well as multiple political stakeholders ("congressional representatives and senators") underscores both the degree and scope of their political mistrust.

Personal and Communal Relevance/Safety Participants explained that their trans political engagement was related to their sense of both personal ($n = 77$, 55%) and communal ($n = 37$, 26%) relevance/ safety. For example, a 31-year-old, black/mixed, nonbinary boy from the Midwest discussed the personal impact of trans legislation as they explained that keeping up to date with current political events in the USA is "very important" because, "Politics can directly threaten my ability to transition." In this quote, the participant explains that they are motivated to stay politically informed because their own gender identity and transition access is at stake (i.e., political insecurity and personal relevance). Alternatively, a 19-year-old, white, transgender man from the West emphasized his sense of trans communal responsibility when he explained that following trans policy and legislations decisions is "very important" because, "I worry about the continued safety of my community, and want to spread the word about things that affect us." This narrative illustrates the participant's feelings of political insecurity (i.e., "I worry about the continued safety of my community), as well as his sense of trans communal responsibility (i.e., "want to spread the word about things that affect us"). In sum, participants shared narratives in which they described their motivation for political engagement in terms of trans rights and safety concerns, political mistrust, and the personal and communal impact of these factors.

Trans Political Self-Efficacy and Engagement

Participants' average perceived political self-efficacy (Caprara et al., 2009) score was 2.69 ($SD = 0.96$), which is significantly higher than Caprara et al.'s (2009) initial sample of cisgender male and female adults ($M = 2.29$, $SD = 0.84$), $t(139) = 4.93$, $p < 0.001$; $d = 0.84$. Similarly, 26% ($n = 37$) of participants shared narratives in which they voiced confidence in their ability to influence the political system. For example, a 26-year-old, Black, Nonbinary participant from the West reported that keeping up to date with current political events in the USA is "very important" because,

> It's important to know what rules are being made about your existence [...] We can't fight for each other's rights if we don't know anything about each other and the threats to people's rights.

This quote illustrates how marginalized individuals' lived experiences of oppression can motivate political awareness (e.g., "know what rules are being made about your existence"), leading to collective action and empowerment (e.g.,

"fight for each other's rights"). Furthermore, the participant's use of the term "fight" positions trans political advocacy as a challenging and oppositional road to address a threatening political landscape.

Alternatively, only 9% of participants ($n = 12$) explicitly shared low political self-efficacy narratives (65% did not reference political self-efficacy at all). For example, a 32-year-old, White, non-binary participant from the Midwest stated that following trans policy and legislations decisions is only "somewhat important" because "it often doesn't feel like there's anything I can do." In addition to discussing their commitment and attitude towards future political action, participants also spoke of having already engaged in the following political activities: contacting political representatives (e.g., "writing to politicians/signing petitions"), community advocacy (e.g., "work as a program manager for trans services for a non-profit"), local activism (e.g., "get involved in protests and campaigns locally"), raising awareness (e.g., "I was part of an organization that documented LGBT history in rural areas"), and political representation ("I am on the board of the NC [North Carolina] transgender state caucus").

What's the Harm?

Exploring Political Fatigue

Alternatively, 29 participants (21%) shared that they wanted to reduce their political engagement because it negatively impacted their mental health and/or well-being (i.e., political fatigue). Some participants described how keeping up to date with general political events ($n = 17$, 59%) elicited symptoms of "stress," "depression," or took "an emotional toll." For example, a 30-year-old, Latinx, nonbinary participant from the Northeast explained that although keeping up to date with current political events in the USA is "somewhat important," "[following current political events] too much stresses me out because I feel unsafe." In this quote, the participant identified an inverse relation between engaging politically and feelings of safety—noting the larger relation to increased levels of stress.

Participants also reported that following trans-specific policies and legislation decisions ($n = 18$, 62%) produced feelings such as "trepidation" or "terror." For example, a 48-year-old Caucasian, transgender woman from the West emphasized her sense of trans-specific political fatigue when she explained that she follows trans policy and legislation decisions "somewhat closely" because, "I need to know [about trans policies] but focusing on it [trans policies] too much will panic me." Most of the participants who described political fatigue exhibited a moderate level of distress ($n = 16$, 55%) (e.g., "it makes it hard to get anything done," "tired of hearing all the bad bullshit"). However, for some participants, the level of distress was described by the participants as being severe ($n = 13$, 45%) enough to meet clinical criteria for significant impairment of functioning (e.g., "[I] worry or fear more acutely on a daily basis," "[I] think…about suicide").

Participants' qualitative accounts of how political fatigue impacted their political self-efficacy was further supported by quantitative analyses. For example, participants who reported political fatigue ($n = 29$, $M = 20.9$, $SD = 6.85$) demonstrated significantly lower political self-efficacy as compared to the participants who did not report political fatigue ($n = 110$, $M = 28.53$, $SD = 9.65$), $t(137) = 4.00$, $p < 0.001$; $d = 0.68$. Similarly, participants' well-being was significantly related to both their degree of political security and political self-efficacy, with higher degrees of well-being positively correlated with political security, $r(138) = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$ and political self-efficacy scores, $r(138) = 0.30$, $p < 0.001$.

Discussion

This mixed-method study contributes to previous work on how trans individuals interact with the political system (Billard, 2021; Breslow et al., 2015; Hagen et al., 2018) by exploring 141 trans individuals' motivators and barriers for their trans political engagement. Twenty-six percent of participants in this study expressed confidence in their ability to influence the political system, while nine percent of participants doubted their abilities. Quantitative analyses indicate that participants in this study reported significantly higher perceived political self-efficacy than Caprara's (2008) original sample of cisgender male and female adults, suggesting that belief in their ability to influence the political system may be especially meaningful for trans adults.

Additionally, this study supports prior findings that trans political insecurity can motivate political engagement (Bockting et al., 2020; Breslow et al., 2015). Participants in this study were especially concerned about mistreatment in prisons/jails, immigration reform, and violence against trans people. Thirty-two percent of participants cited trans rights and safety concerns as a motivator for their political engagement, while two percent of participants indicated that these concerns prevented them from engaging in the political system. Thus, many participants utilized their feelings of political insecurity as a driving force to change the political system. For these participants, political engagement functioned as a proactive form of coping. The current study therefore supports Bockting et al.'s (2020) finding that political engagement

can serve as an important coping strategy for trans individuals managing stigma and safety concerns. Furthermore, 55% of participants in this study were motivated to engage with the political system due to a sense of personal relevance, and 26% of participants were motivated by a sense of responsibility to their trans community.

While highlighting trans participants' agentive activism, the present study additionally supports prior research on the potentially negative effects of trans activism on mental health (Bockting et al., 2020; Hagen et al., 2018). In the present study, 21% of participants communicated that they wanted to reduce their political engagement due to how it was negatively impacting their mental health or well-being. The results of this study echo the findings of Goldberg et al.'s (2020) mixed methods study that trans graduate and undergraduate students choose to engage in political activism due to a sense of personal and community responsibility and choose to disengage due to burnout, mental health issues, and visibility concerns. Future clinical research would benefit from considering trans activism from a client-centered perspective that assesses how political engagement might function differently for each individual and at different points in time. In sum, the results of this study move beyond a binary conceptualization of political engagement as either a risk or resilience factor and toward a more complex understanding of how trans individuals engage or disengage with the political system to maximize their mental health. Findings from the present study can be used to inform clinical work with trans clients, as well as directions for future research on trans political engagement.

Limitations

Findings from this study should be interpreted in light of several limitations. As with most sexual and gender minority research, the current sample represents only those participants who were interested and willing to participate (Gonsiorek & Weinrich, 1991). In addition, the lack of compensation for this study potentially limited the sample to particularly vocal sub-populations who were willing to participate for free (Vincent, 2018). Online surveys that offer compensation may attract more participants from the 18- to 35-year-old age group as well as more participants of color (Kost & Correa da Rosa, 2018), two demographic groups that were underrepresented in our sample. As with all online surveys, there was also a potential for false responses in the form of automated bots or humans intentionally misrepresenting themselves (i.e., social desirability responses, Levi et al., 2021). However, the lack of compensation and inclusion of open-ended questions that were subsequently evaluated for coherence likely reduced the incentive for fraudulent behavior (Storozuk et al., 2020; Teitcher et al., 2015). To eliminate careless responding, we adopted Etengoff et al.'s (2023) method of requiring participants to logically respond to open-ended prompts embedded in Likert-scale measures. An additional factor to consider is that data collection occurred across two different presidential administrations due to the COVID-19 recruitment pause (Trump, $n = 108$; Biden, $n = 33$). However, numerous bills targeting trans individuals have continued to be introduced at the state level and trans Americans' rights continue to remain insecure during the Biden administration (Walch et al., 2021). Future research may benefit from including administration comparisons in the initial study design as well as ensuring a more even sampling across administrations, as emerging research suggests the impact of presidential administrations may be significant (Price et al., 2021).

Clinical Implications

Research on trans affirmative therapy increasingly recognizes the importance of helping clients navigate and explore social justice issues during therapy (Hope et al., 2022; McGeorge et al., 2021). The present study contributes to this literature by considering the complexity of integrating such issues into therapy and including both the mental health benefits and risks of trans political engagement as data points. Participants in the present study utilized the political system as a tool for empowerment by activating concern for their rights and safety as trans individuals (35%), their sense of the personal (55%) and communal relevance (26%), their mistrust of the political system (26%), and their political self-efficacy beliefs (26%). Other participants engaged with the political system in a way that took a toll on their mental health and generated negative experiences such as political fatigue (21%). Therapists should therefore be aware that each trans client may respond to anti-trans discrimination differently and assess how political engagement impacts the mental health of each client individually. Therapists can screen clients for potential symptoms of burnout with Maslach's Burnout Inventory, which has scales to assess for emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment (Maslach et al., 1997).

Therapists working with trans clients who feel empowered by their political engagement may utilize Raj's (2007) "transactivist therapy-in-action" model. Raj (2007) encourages therapists to help transform trans clients' "righteous rage" (i.e., the psychological

symptoms caused by anti-trans discrimination) into self- and community empowerment (p. 83). Within Raj's (2007) model, therapeutic work involves acknowledging, processing, and rechanneling discrimination-induced rage while simultaneously building self-esteem and developing community advocacy skills. Alternatively, therapists working with clients who are negatively impacted by political engagement may refer to Danquah et al.'s (2021) guide for therapists working with women of color who are racial justice activists experiencing burnout (to date, there is no comparable model for trans activists). Importantly, Danquah et al. (2021) observe that practicing mindfulness and relaxation techniques may be a more effective way for clients to cope with difficult emotions (i.e., anger, frustration) that accompany activism rather than using those emotions as "fuel" for further activism that may lead to political fatigue or burnout (p. 527). For therapists seeking a more holistic approach, including both the positive and negative emotional outcomes of trans activism, we recommend Austin and Craig's (2015) model of transgender affirmative cognitive behavioral therapy. Austin and Craig's (2015) model includes a psychoeducational component to encourage trans clients to recognize the relationship between trans discrimination and feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression as well as behavioral activation plans to promote clients' agency, self-advocacy, and community connectedness. Given that trans community connectedness is associated with political engagement (Billard, 2021) and well-being (Barr et al., 2016), therapists should consider that individual therapy may be augmented with community-based trans advocacy groups. However, when creating behavioral activation plans, therapists must be sensitive to each individual's potential emotional barriers, (i.e., the fear of being "outed" as a barrier to connecting with a trans community; Austin & Craig, 2015). Therapists may draw from Lazarus and Beutler's (1993) model of technical eclecticism that matches clients to different theoretical approaches based on diagnostic entities, problem clusters, and interpersonal characteristics. Within the technical eclectic model, theoretical approaches are not mutually exclusive and should be adapted to fit the new situations or problems of clients over time (Lazarus & Beutler, 1993).

Future Directions

Future clinical research examining the complexities of integrating political engagement into therapy is important given the high rates of anti-trans stigma and its associated psychological distress (Horne et al., 2021). We encourage researchers to continue a nuanced investigation of trans political engagement that considers the myriad methods of challenging political oppression beyond direct political activism and organizational politics. Recent research has illustrated the problematic nature of empty visibility strategies (e.g., social media amplification of a limited view of trans experiences) that obscure the work needed to advance structural and institutional change (Ciszek et al., 2021). More research is therefore needed to explore the efficacy of informal trans political engagement activities (e.g., following current events, discussing politics with others, participating in online political forums). Furthermore, since existing conceptualizations of politics and political engagement have focused on cisgender populations (Broad, 2002), qualitative research must adopt an intersectional lens to consider how diverse trans individuals understand, categorize, and define their own political behaviors.

We recommend that future research increase sampling diversity by utilizing stratified sampling approaches (e.g., community-based organizations), multiple survey modalities (e.g., in-person and online data collection methods), and incorporating recruitment materials that reflect the lived experiences of trans people of color (Page et al., 2022; Reisner et al., 2014). Gender minority research that predominantly focuses on White participants may not be generalizable to people of color, given that the meaning of gender roles and gender presentation varies across racial and ethnic groups (Everett et al., 2019). More work is needed to examine political engagement from an intersectional framework that highlights the unique challenges and resilience strategies of trans people of color (Sostre et al., 2023). For example, Abreu et al. (2021) found that immigrant Latinx trans individuals resist the oppressive political climate by utilizing coping skills consistent with Latinx collective values such as engaging in religious/spiritual practices and reaching out to family and community. Furthermore, Fish et al.'s (2021) research on sociopolitical engagement and allyship among cisgender indigenous people and people of color demonstrated that shared ethnic/racial oppression serves as a catalyst to defend and advocate for one another through social media, actions, and protests. Moreover, the APA's Multicultural Guidelines implore clinicians to draw from intersectional developmental models of identity to provide multiculturally competent services for their clients (Clauss-Ehlers et al., 2019).

Social Policy Implications

Social policy makers should reduce barriers to trans political engagement by establishing public spaces that are absent of anti-trans discrimination (Aversa et al., 2021; Clary et al., 2022). Political organizations may signal support and inclusivity for trans individuals by displaying affirmative flags and signage, instituting public all-gender restrooms, and offering participants ways to display their pronouns (Clary et al., 2022). Moreover, lawmakers and advocates should work with trans communities to develop policies that ensure equal protections for trans individuals under state and federal law (Hughto et al., 2021). Together, these efforts may promote a sense of safety for trans engagement with the political system while reducing activists' exposure to anti-trans stigma (Fredrick et al., 2021).

Conclusion

The present mixed-methods study contributes to a growing body of research on trans political engagement by examining the influences of trans political self-efficacy and political fatigue on trans mental health. The strengths of the current study included the following: (a) using one of the largest mixed-methods samples investigating trans individuals' political engagement to date; (b) addressing trans-specific motivators and barriers to political engagement — something that is remarkably rare in the extant literature; and (c) applying a strength-based perspective to explore the ways in which trans individuals respond to anti-trans discrimination with trans activism or with stress management strategies. This study outlines how trans political engagement can provide important benefits for well-being, via political self-efficacy, as well as risk factors for psychological harm, via political fatigue. Findings indicate that trans individuals' decisions to engage or disengage from the political system are motivated by a confluence of factors, including trans rights and safety concerns, political mistrust, personal relevance, and communal responsibility. Furthermore, the results demonstrate how particular factors, such as trans rights and safety concerns and political mistrust, can function as *both* motivators and barriers for political engagement. Given these findings, we encourage therapists to collaborate with trans clients to identify how their political engagement can at some points serve as a tool for empowerment, while at other times, act as an impediment for mental health. Moreover, during an age in which the basic civil rights of trans individuals are at stake (ACLU, 2021), researchers must ensure that their models of political engagement account for the unique intersection of well-being, sociostructural factors, and individual agency for the trans community.

Appendix

Table 1 Trans rights and safety concerns

Sociopolitical issue	*M*	*SD*
Identity documents (ID) (updating names and gender)	2.51	1.24
Bullying/discrimination in schools	1.89	1.08
Police mistreatment of trans people	1.7	0.92
Mistreatment in prisons/jails	1.28	0.61
Immigration reform	1.36	0.84
Military (ability to be openly trans and serve)	1.51	0.83
Training health care providers about trans health	2.26	1.06
Insurance coverage for trans-related health care	1.91	1.0
HIV/AIDS	2.48	1.24
Employment discrimination	1.94	1.07
Housing and homelessness	1.87	1.08
Violence against trans people	1.47	0.75
Parenting and adoption rights	1.74	0.87
Marriage recognition	2.41	1.14
Conversion therapy	1.89	1.2
Racism	1.89	1.25
Poverty	1.61	1.01

$N = 141$. Data represent participants' average scores for the question: How secure do you feel about your current legal protections as a trans-identifying person for each issue below? (using a five-point Likert scale; 1 = *Not at all secure* to 5 = *Extremely secure*).

Table 2 Reasons for political engagement, frequencies, and sample narratives

Political dis/engagement domain	Frequency[a]	Sample narrative
Political self-efficacy	$n=12$ (*Low, barrier*)	"[Keeping up to date with current political events in the U.S. is not at all important because I] can't do anything about it even if I tried." (54 years, White, MTF crossdresser)
	$n=37$ (*Present, motivator*)	"[Keeping up to date with current political events in the U.S. is very important to me because] being informed and aware helps you to be armed with the knowledge to take measures to protect your rights and the rights of others." (52 years, White, female on the inside)
Trans rights and safety concerns	$n=3$ (*Barrier*)	"[I follow trans policy and legislation decisions only a little closely because it is] disheartening to remember that plenty of people in power think I [shouldn't] be allowed to exist as myself." (22 years, White, Transgender man)
	$n=45$ (*Motivator*)	"[I follow trans policy and legislation decisions very closely because] I don't want the rights of me or others like me jeopardized by legislation." (31 years, Mixed White/Native American, Female)
Political mistrust	$n=7$ (*Barrier*)	"[Keeping up to date with current political events in the U.S. is only a little important to me because] political cycles… I'm pretty disgusted with all of it." (69 years, White, transgender)
	$n=27$ (*Motivator*)	"[Keeping up to date with current political events in the U.S. is extremely important to me because] for the first time in my life, I think it possible that we might lose the republic. As the country becomes less and less religious, the Bill of Rights, becomes a document written by men, which can be taken away by men." (65 years, Caucasian, Trans woman)
Personal relevance	$n=74$ (*Motivator*)	"[I follow trans policy and legislation decisions very closely because] it can affect me becoming who I truly am." (68 years, white, MTF transgendered)
Trans communal responsibility	$n=35$ (*Motivator*)	"[Keeping up to date with current political events in the U.S. is very important to me because] as a DACA recipient and immigrant, knowing about changes in the political environment [enables me to] help others in my situation, especially in a time when the current [Trump] administration is against the LGBTQ+community (30 years, hispanic/latina, transgender woman)
Political fatigue	$n=29$ (*Barrier*)	"[I follow trans policy and legislation decisions only somewhat closely because] it's depressing and I don't want to drown in bad news." (34 years, white hispanic, genderqueer/androgyne)

$N=141$. Narrative data were drawn from the open-ended portions of two questions: (1) How important is it to keep up with current political events in the USA? Why do you think that is? (2) How closely do you follow trans policy and legislation decisions? Why do you think that is?

[a]Neutral narratives (i.e., described as neither a motivator or barrier) account for the percentage gap between motivators and barriers

Acknowledgements We would like to thank the participants, without whom this research would not be possible. This study was conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Clinical Psychology by the first author. The authors would like to thank Michael Moore, PhD, Michael O'Loughlin, PhD, and Beth Counselman-Carpenter, PhD for helpful comments on the manuscript. We additionally thank the members of the Intersectional Development Lab at Adelphi University for supporting this work.

Author Contribution The first two authors contributed to the study conception and design. Material preparation, data collection, and analysis were performed by Beatrice Rothbaum. The first draft of the manuscript was written by Beatrice Rothbaum. All versions of the manuscript were commented on by Chana Etengoff, PhD. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding The authors declare that no funds, grants, or other support were received during the preparation of this manuscript.

Availability of Data and Material Not applicable.

Code Availability Not applicable.

Declarations

Ethics Approval This study was performed in line with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. Approval was granted by the institutional review board of Adelphi University (May 2019, #050219).

Consent to Participate Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Competing Interests The authors declare no competing interests.

References

Abreu, R. L., Gonzalez, K. A., Capielo Rosario, C., Lindley, L., & Lockett, G. M. (2021). "What American dream is this?": The effect of Trump's presidency on immigrant Latinx transgender people. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 68*(6), 657–669. https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000541

American Civil Liberties Union. (2021, December 17). *Legislation affecting LGBT rights across the country*. https://www.aclu.org/legislation-affecting-lgbt-rights-across-country

American Psychological Association. (2015). Guidelines for psychological practice with transgender and gender nonconforming people. *American Psychologist, 70*(9), 832–864. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0039906

Archibald, M. M. (2015). Investigator triangulation. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 10*(3), 228–250. https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689815570092

Austin, A., & Craig, S. L. (2015). Transgender affirmative cognitive behavioral therapy: Clinical considerations and applications. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 46*(1), 21–29. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038642

Aversa, I., Coleman, T., Travers, R., Coulombe, S., Wilson, C., Woodford, M. R., Davis, C., Burchell, D., & Schmid, E. (2021). "I'm always worried": Exploring perceptions of safety and community inclusion among transgender people. *International Journal of Community Well-Being, 5*(1), 37–54. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42413-021-00123-9

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review, 84*(2), 191–215. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295x.84.2.191

Bandura, A. (1988). *Self-Efficacy Conception of Anxiety. Anxiety Research, 1*(2), 77–98. https://doi.org/10.1080/10615808808248222

Barr, S. M., Budge, S. L., & Adelson, J. L. (2016). Transgender community belongingness as a mediator between strength of transgender identity and well-being. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 63*(1), 87–97. https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000127

Bennett, W. L. (2007). *Civic life online: Learning how digital media can engage youth*. The MIT Press.

Billard, T. J. (2021). Together we rise: The role of communication and community connectedness in transgender citizens' civic engagement in the United States. *Mass Communication and Society*. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2021.1954197

Bockting, W., Barucco, R., LeBlanc, A., Singh, A., Mellman, W., Dolezal, C., & Ehrhardt, A. (2020). Sociopolitical change and transgender people's perceptions of vulnerability and resilience. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy, 17*(1), 162–174. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-019-00381-5

Bockting, W., Miner, M., Swinburne Romine, R., Hamilton, A., & Coleman, E. (2013). Stigma, mental health, and resilience in an online sample of the US transgender population. *American Journal of Public Health, 103*(5), 943–951. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2013.301241

Bowers, M. M., & Whitley, C. T. (2020). Assessing voter registration among transgender and gender non-conforming individuals. *Political Behavior, 42*(1), 143–164. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-018-9489-x

Breslow, A. S., Brewster, M. E., Velez, B. L., Wong, S., Geiger, E., & Soderstrom, B. (2015). Resilience and collective action: Exploring buffers against minority stress for transgender individuals. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity, 2*(3), 253–265. https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000117

Broad, K. L. (2002). GLB+T? Gender/sexuality movements and transgender collective identity (de)constructions. *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies, 7*(4), 241–264. https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1020371328314

Caprara, G. V. (2008). Will democracy win? *Journal of Social Issues, 64*(3), 639–659. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2008.00581.x

Caprara, G. V., Vecchione, M., Capanna, C., & Mebane, M. (2009). Perceived political self-efficacy: Theory, assessment, and applications. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 39*(6), 1002–1020. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.604

Carlisle, J. E., & Patton, R. M. (2013). Is social media changing how we understand political engagement? An analysis of Facebook and the 2008 presidential election. *Political Research Quarterly, 66*(4), 883–895. https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912913482758

Ciszek, E., Haven, P., & Logan, N. (2021). Amplification and the limits of visibility: Complicating strategies of trans voice and representations on social media. *New Media & Society, 25*(7), 1605–1625. https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448211031031

Clandinin, D. J. (2013). *Engaging in narrative inquiry*. Left Coast Press.

Clary, K., Goffnett, J., King, M., Hubbard, T., & Kitchen, R. (2022). "It's the environment, not me": Experiences shared by transgender and gender diverse adults living in Texas. *Journal of Community Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22948

Clauss-Ehlers, C. S., Chiriboga, D. A., Hunter, S. J., Roysircar, G., & Tummala-Narra, P. (2019). APA Multicultural Guidelines executive summary: Ecological approach to context, identity, and intersectionality. *American Psychologist, 74*(2), 232–244. https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000382

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage Publications.

Danquah, R., Lopez, C., Wade, L., & Castillo, L. G. (2021). Racial justice activist burnout of women of color in the United States: Practical tools for counselor intervention. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling, 43*(4), 519–533. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10447-021-09449-7

Denzin, N. K. (2017). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods*. Routledge.

Dubin, S., Reisner, S., Schrimshaw, E. W., Radix, A., Khan, A., Harry-Hernandez, S., Zweig, S. A., Timmins, L., & Duncan, D. T. (2021). Public restrooms in neighborhoods and public spaces: A qualitative study of transgender and nonbinary adults in New York City. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy, 18*(4), 1002–1012. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-020-00504-3

Eschliman, E. L., Adames, C. N., & Rosen, J. D. (2023). Antidiscrimination laws as essential tools for achieving LGBTQ+ health equity. *JAMA*. https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2023.0944

Etengoff, C., Lefevor, G. T., Huynh, K. D., Rodriguez, E. M., & Luong, E. (2023). Development and validation of the sexual minority and religious identity integration (SMRII) scale. *Journal of Homosexuality*. https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2023.2201870

Etengoff, C. (2019). Transvlogs: Online communication tools for transformative agency and development. *Mind, Culture, and Activity, 26*(2), 138–155. https://doi.org/10.1080/10749039.2019.1612438

Etengoff, C., & Rodriguez, E. (2020). "At its core, Islam is about standing with the oppressed": Exploring transgender Muslims' religious resilience. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality, 14*(4), 480–492. https://doi.org/10.1037/rel0000325

Everett, B. G., Steele, S. M., Matthews, A. K., & Hughes, T. L. (2019). Gender, race, and minority stress among sexual minority women: An intersectional approach. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 48*(5), 1505–1517. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-019-1421-x

Farthing, R. (2010). The politics of youthful antipolitics: Representing the 'issue' of youth participation in politics. *Journal of Youth Studies, 13*(2), 181–195. https://doi.org/10.1080/13676260903233696

Fat, L., Scholes, S., Boniface, S., Mindell, J., & Stewart-Brown, S. (2016). Evaluating and establishing national norms for mental wellbeing using the short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWBS): Findings from the Health Survey for England. *Quality of Life Research, 26*(5), 1129–1144. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11136-016-1454-8

Fish, J., Aguilera, R., Ogbeide, I. E., Ruzzicone, D. J., & Syed, M. (2021). When the personal is political: Ethnic identity, ally identity, and political engagement among indigenous people and people of color. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 27*(1), 18–36. https://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000341

Fraser, G. (2018). Evaluating inclusive gender identity measures for use in quantitative psychological research. *Psychology & Sexuality, 9*(4), 343–357. https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2018.1497693

Fredrick, E. G., Mann, A. K., Brooks, B. D., & Hirsch, J. K. (2021). Anticipated to enacted: Structural stigma against sexual and gender minorities following the 2016 presidential election. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy, 19*(1), 345–354. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-021-00547-0

Frost, D. M., & Meyer, I. H. (2023). Minority stress theory: Application, critique, and continued relevance. *Current Opinion in Psychology, 51*, 101579. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2023.101579

Goldberg, A. E., Smith, J. A. Z., & Beemyn, G. (2020). Trans activism and advocacy among transgender students in higher education: A mixed methods study. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 13*(1), 66–84. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000125

Gonsiorek, J. C., & Weinrich, J. D. (1991). The definition and scope of sexual orientation. In J. C. Gonsiorek & J. D. Weinrich (Eds.), *Homosexuality: Research implications for public policy* (pp. 1–12). Sage Publications. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483325422.n1

Gonzalez, K. A., Pulice-Farrow, L., & Abreu, R. L. (2022). "In the voices of people like me": LGBTQ coping during Trump's administration. *The Counseling Psychologist, 50*(2), 212–240. https://doi.org/10.1177/00110000211057199

Gorski, P. C., & Chen, C. (2015). "Frayed all over:" The causes and consequences of activist burnout among social justice education activists. *Educational Studies, 51*(5), 385–405. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2015.1075989

Grant, J. M., Mottet, L. A., Tanis, J., Harrison, J., Herman, J. L., & Keisling, M. (2011). *Injustice at every turn: A report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*. Washington, DC: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

Hagen, W. B., Hoover, S. M., & Morrow, S. L. (2018). A grounded theory of sexual minority women and transgender individuals' social justice activism. *Journal of Homosexuality, 65*(7), 833–859. https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2017.1364562

Hatzenbuehler, M. L. (2009). How does sexual minority stigma "get under the skin"? *A Psychological Mediation Framework. Psychological Bulletin, 135*(5), 707–730. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016441

Hatzenbuehler, M. L. (2016). Structural stigma: Research evidence and implications for psychological science. *American Psychologist, 71*(8), 742–751. https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000068

Hope, D. A., Holt, N. R., Woodruff, N., Mocarski, R., Meyer, H. M., Puckett, J. A., Eyer, J., Craig, S., Feldman, J., Irwin, J., Pachankis, J., Rawson, K. J., Sevelius, J., & Butler, S. (2022). Bridging the gap between practice guidelines and the therapy room: Community-derived practice adaptations for psychological services with transgender and gender diverse adults in the central United States. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 53*(4), 351–361. https://doi.org/10.1037/pro0000448

Horne, S. G., McGinley, M., Yel, N., & Maroney, M. R. (2021). The stench of bathroom bills and anti-transgender legislation: Anxiety and depression among transgender, nonbinary, and cisgender LGBQ people during a state referendum. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 69*(1), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000558

Hughto, J. M., Meyers, D. J., Mimiaga, M. J., Reisner, S. L., & Cahill, S. (2021). Uncertainty and confusion regarding transgender nondiscrimination policies: Implications for the mental health of transgender Americans. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy., 19*(3), 1069–1079. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-021-00602-w

Hughto, J. M., Reisner, S. L., & Pachankis, J. E. (2015). Transgender stigma and health: A critical review of stigma determinants, mechanisms, and interventions. *Social Science & Medicine, 147*, 222–231. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2015.11.010

Jackson, Y. (2006). *Encyclopedia of multicultural psychology*. SAGE.

James, S. E., Herman, J. L., Rankin, S., Keisling, M., Mottet, L., & Anafi, M. (2016). *The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey*. National Center for Transgender Equality.

Janssen, A., & Voss, R. (2021). Policies sanctioning discrimination against transgender patients flout scientific evidence and threaten health and safety. *Transgender Health, 6*(2), 61–63. https://doi.org/10.1089/trgh.2020.0078

Kost, R. G., & Correa da Rosa, J. (2018). Impact of survey length and compensation on validity, reliability, and sample characteristics for ultrashort-, short-, and long-research participant perception surveys. *Journal of Clinical and Translational Science, 2*(1), 31–37. https://doi.org/10.1017/cts.2018.18

Lazarus, A. A., & Beutler, L. E. (1993). On technical eclecticism. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 71*(4), 381–385. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.1993.tb02652.x

Levi, R., Ridberg, R., Akers, M., & Seligman, H. (2021). Survey fraud and the integrity of web-based survey research. *American Journal of Health Promotion, 36*(1), 18–20. https://doi.org/10.1177/08901171211037531

Loader, B., Vromen, A., & Xenos, M. (2014). The networked young citizen: Social media, political participation and civic engagement. *Information, Communication & Society, 17*(2), 143–150. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2013.871571

Mansbridge, J. J., & Morris, A. D. (2001). *Oppositional consciousness: The subjective roots of social protest*. University of Chicago Press.

Maslach, C., Jackson, S. E., & Leiter, M. P. (1997). *Maslach burnout inventory*. Scarecrow Education.

McClain, L. C. (2023). "Do not ever refer to my lord Jesus Christ with pronouns": Considering controversies over religiously motivated discrimination on the basis of gender identity. *The Journal of Law and Religion, 38*(1), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1017/jlr.2023.1

McGeorge, C. R., Coburn, K. O., & Walsdorf, A. A. (2021). Deconstructing cissexism: The journey of becoming an affirmative family therapist for transgender and nonbinary clients. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 47*(3), 785–802. https://doi.org/10.1111/jmft.12481

Nadal, K. L., Skolnik, A., & Wong, Y. (2012). Interpersonal and systemic microaggressions toward transgender people: Implications for counseling. *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling, 6*(1), 55–82. https://doi.org/10.1080/15538605.2012.648583

Nemoto, T., Bödeker, B., & Iwamoto, M. (2011). Social support, exposure to violence and transphobia, and correlates of depression among male-to-female transgender women with a history of sex work. *American Journal of Public Health, 101*(10), 1980–1988. https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.2010.197285

Norris, P. (2003). Democratic phoenix: Reinventing political activism. *Choice Reviews Online, 41*(01), 41–0603. https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.41-0603

Page, K. V., Cerezo, A., & Ross, A. (2022). Creating space for ourselves: Black sexual minority women and gender diverse individuals countering anti-black racism and heterosexism. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity, 9*(2), 131–140. https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000470

Price, S. F., Puckett, J., & Mocarski, R. (2021). The impact of the 2016 US presidential elections on transgender and gender diverse people. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy, 18*(4), 1094–1103. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-020-00513-2

Quaye, S. J. (2007). The outcomes of contemporary student activism. *About Campus: Enriching the Student Learning Experience, 12*(2), 2–9. https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.205

Raj, R. (2007). Transactivism as therapy: A client self-empowerment model linking personal and social agency. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Psychotherapy, 11*(3–4), 77–98. https://doi.org/10.1300/j236v11n03_05

Reisner, S. L., Greytak, E. A., Parsons, J. T., & Ybarra, M. L. (2014). Gender minority social stress in adolescence: Disparities in adolescent bullying and substance use by gender identity. *The Journal of Sex Research, 52*(3), 243–256. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2014.886321

Riggle, E. D., Rostosky, S. S., Drabble, L., Veldhuis, C. B., & Hughes, T. L. (2019). Sexual minority women's and gender-diverse individuals' hope and empowerment responses to the 2016 presidential election. *The 2016 U.S. Presidential Election and the LGBTQ Community*. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429058639-9

Riggle, E. D., Rostosky, S. S., McCants, L. R., & Pascale-Hague, D. (2011). The positive aspects of a transgender self-identification. *Psychology and Sexuality, 2*(2), 147–158. https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2010.534490

Rothbaum, B., Etengoff, C., & Uribe, E. (2021). Transgender community resilience on YouTube: Constructing an informational, emotional, and sociorelational support exchange. *Journal of Community Psychology, 50*(5), 2366–2384. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22781

Sawyer, K., Thoroughgood, C., & Webster, J. (2016). Queering the gender binary: Understanding transgender workplace experiences. *Sexual Orientation and Transgender Issues in Organizations*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-29623-4_2

Sostre, J. P., Abreu, R. L., Vincent, D., Lockett, G. M., & Mosley, D. V. (2023). Young Black trans and gender-diverse activists' well-being among anti-Black racism and cissexism during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*. https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000627

Stetsenko, A. (2017). *The transformative mind: Expanding Vygotsky's approach to development and education*. Cambridge University Press.

Stewart-Brown, S., Tennant, A., Tennant, R., Platt, S., Parkinson, J., & Weich, S. (2009). Internal construct validity of the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS): A Rasch analysis using data from the Scottish Health Education Population Survey. *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*. https://doi.org/10.1186/1477-7525-7-15

Storozuk, A., Ashley, M., Delage, V., & Maloney, E. A. (2020). Got bots? Practical recommendations to protect online survey data from BOT attacks. *The Quantitative Methods for Psychology, 16*(5), 472–481. https://doi.org/10.20982/tqmp.16.5.p472

Stutterheim, S. E., & Ratcliffe, S. E. (2021). Understanding and addressing stigma through qualitative research: Four reasons why we need qualitative studies. *Stigma and Health, 6*(1), 8–19. https://doi.org/10.1037/sah0000283

Tebbe, E. A., & Moradi, B. (2016). Suicide risk in trans populations: An application of minority stress theory. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 63*(5), 520–533. https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000152

Teitcher, J. E., Bockting, W. O., Bauermeister, J. A., Hoefer, C. J., Miner, M. H., & Klitzman, R. L. (2015). Detecting, preventing, and responding to "fraudsters" in internet research: Ethics and tradeoffs. *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics, 43*(1), 116–133. https://doi.org/10.1111/jlme.12200

Valente, P. K., Schrimshaw, E. W., Dolezal, C., LeBlanc, A. J., Singh, A. A., & Bockting, W. O. (2020). Stigmatization, resilience, and mental health among a diverse community sample of transgender and gender nonbinary individuals in the U.S. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 49*(7), 2649–2660. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-020-01761-4

Vecchione, M., & Caprara, G. V. (2009). Personality determinants of political participation: The contribution of traits and self-efficacy beliefs. *Personality and Individual Differences, 46*(4), 487–492. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2008.11.021

Veldhuis, C. B., Drabble, L., Riggle, E. D. B., Wootton, A. R., & Hughes, T. L. (2018). "I fear for my safety, but want to show bravery for others": Violence and discrimination concerns among transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals after the 2016 presidential election. *Violence and Gender, 5*(1), 26–36. https://doi.org/10.1089/vio.2017.0032

Vincent, B. W. (2018). Studying trans: Recommendations for ethical recruitment and collaboration with transgender participants in academic research. *Psychology & Sexuality, 9*(2), 102–116. https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2018.1434558

Walch, A., Davidge-Pitts, C., Safer, J. D., Lopez, X., Tangpricha, V., & Iwamoto, S. J. (2021). Proper care of transgender and gender diverse persons in the setting of proposed discrimination: A policy perspective. *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism, 106*(2), 305–308. https://doi.org/10.1210/clinem/dgaa816

Wilkinson, S. (2000). Women with breast cancer talking causes: Comparing content, biographical and discursive analyses. *Feminism & Psychology, 10*(4), 431–460. https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353500010004003

Wilson, V. (2014). Research methods: Triangulation. *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*, *9*(1), 74–75. https://doi.org/10.18438/b8ww3x

Witcomb, G. L., Bouman, W. P., Brewin, N., Richards, C., Fernandez-Aranda, F., & Arcelus, J. (2015). Body image dissatisfaction and eating-related psychopathology in trans individuals: A matched control study. *European Eating Disorders Review, 23*(4), 287–293. https://doi.org/10.1002/erv.2362

Woolverton, G. A., & Marks, A. K. (2021). "I just check 'other'": Evidence to support expanding the measurement inclusivity and equity of ethnicity/race and cultural identifications of U.S. adolescents. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 29*(1), 64–73. https://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000360