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# SUMMER 2022 NEWSLETTER

LGBTQ+ IN TEXAS

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# TAMFT PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: MY JOURNEY TO UNDERSTANDING THE TRUE IMPORTANCE OF TAMFT

JASON MARTIN, PH.D., LMFT-S, LPC-S

As a student in ACU's Marriage and Family Therapy program many years ago, I remember becoming marginally involved in TAMFT. I attended the annual conference, and I even served as a student officer in the student association, but I soon saw what I thought was the writing on the wall: professional associations may become a thing of the past. As far as I could tell at the time, professional associations, such as TAMFT, were primarily about networking with other professionals in the field and providing CEU opportunities. In-person conferences may be fun, but as the internet became more ubiquitous and functional, would such conferences remain practical? As recently as 15 years ago, I thought not. I believed that as the internet caused the world to shrink, the need for professional associations, especially regional associations like TAMFT, would become obsolete.

## **Three events demonstrated exactly how wrong I was.**

First, the Texas Medical Association (TMA) sued the Texas Board of Examiners of Marriage and Family Therapy (TSBEMFT) in 2008 and challenged our right as LMFTs to diagnose using the DSM.

This showed me exactly how vulnerable our professional rights and scope of practice might be. Thankfully, LMFTs in Texas prevailed in the defining 2017 ruling by the Texas Supreme Court, but only because of the actions and hard work of professional associations like TAMFT and our lobbyist. (Most people are not aware that the TSBEMFT is legally prohibited from officially lobbying or advocating for legislation on behalf of the license. Who does that leave to do so? Professional associations, such as TAMFT. That's who.)

Second, AAMFT voted in 2016 to change their bylaws, either relegating regional divisions to "interest networks" or eliminating them altogether. This change was controversial, and there were pros and cons to doing so, but in Texas, we realized that if TAMFT went away or became merely an interest network under AAMFT's umbrella, we would have to eliminate some or all of the benefits we provide to members in Texas. Moreover, the priorities and actions of the association would be guided primarily by what the national association deemed most important and willing to support.

MFTs in Texas would not be able to decide exactly what we need in our region, needs that may not necessarily align with national needs.

Third and most significantly, the COVID-19 pandemic shifted almost everything online, and we got to see exactly what such a shift looked like. Therapy, supervision, conferences, and other continuing education that was not previously online suddenly shifted online. Therapists were spending more and more of their professional time online, both in session and in networking and education. While there are many benefits to this growth, many therapists found that was not the experience they were looking for. Many experienced online fatigue, eager to return in person whenever it would be safe to do so. The 2022 TAMFT Annual Conference this past April in Fort Worth safely returned to an in-person conference, and attendees clearly indicated how much of a breath of fresh air it was. No matter how beneficial and convenient online conferences may be (see the TAMFT Student Conference as an example), there is no substitute for the in-person experience, and there likely never will be.

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***"Each of these events helped show me the importance of professional associations, such as TAMFT."***

No organization will advocate for your license in Texas like TAMFT. No organization will prioritize the needs of MFTs in Texas like TAMFT. And no organization will be able to facilitate networking and educational events for MFTs in Texas like TAMFT. Professional associations matter a great deal and will continue to matter even with the increasing benefits and convenience of online services and opportunities. TAMFT is the professional association in Texas best positioned to fulfill that role for MFTs in Texas. If you are already a member, THANK YOU! I appreciate you, and I encourage you to volunteer to serve TAMFT in whatever way you are able. If you are not a member, I strongly encourage you to become a member and help us continue to build this important association. In any case, thank you for the work you do for the clients and the MFT profession in Texas.

Sincerely,

Jason Martin, Ph.D., LMFT-S, LPC-S

TAMFT President



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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

### LUKE O'STEEN, CHAIR, COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

About a year ago, the TAMFT Board of Directors came to the conclusion that it would be a good idea to ask me to chair a brand new committee — whether or not that was indeed a good idea, I will leave to you to decide. Like Dr. Martin has done, I feel it's important to illustrate the rising action that led to the climax that is this reboot of the TAMFT newsletter.



My story begins with the 2016 TAMFT conference, back when Lubbock Christian University brought undergraduate students to volunteer at the event. As a true freshman in college, I somehow made the list to go. What I'll never forget is this: sitting in the very back row of the main ballroom for the keynote session, watching a videotape of the speaker's work with a couple. So moved by the magic displayed in that tape, I looked around to find that this was only a novel experience for me. As I noticed a few attendees answering emails during the presentation, I thought to myself, "You mean this is what these people get to do on a regular basis?" I was hooked.

After that, I made sure to get myself on the list to go to the conference for the next three years. With each year, I began to feel less and less like an imposter. I finally realized that pretty much everybody there feels that way to some extent at some point. Put another way, even as a student, I could tell I had something to contribute. As I've reflected on what I wanted to say about TAMFT and this newsletter, I think it's exactly this: We all have something to contribute.

For me, that belief is the essence of a community, and I think these past two years have only begun to show us all just how much our communities rely on us. This is also the essence of what led the committee to choose its theme of "LGBTQ+ in Texas" for this quarter. Right now, the Queer community in Texas needs us, as you'll see in the articles from our members. It is our hope as a committee that our contributions help move the Queer community in Texas at least one step closer to their preferred futures.



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# WHEN THE PLACE YOU LOVE DOESN'T LOVE BACK:

On Being Black and Queer in Texas

By Joyce Miles Jacquote,  
M. S., LMFT-Supervisor, LCDC,  
TAMFT Professional Member

Black-identifying individuals make up roughly 12% of the Texas population, or 3.55 million individuals (Texas, 2020). It is estimated that 12% of the Queer population in Texas identify as Black (Mallory et al., 2017). Queer Black Texans are a minority within a minority. It is this double minority status, in a state that historically hasn't looked favorably on either of these marginalized groups, that can make Texas a difficult place in which to reside. Being a Queer Black individual in Texas often means not having a place where one can be fully oneself (Nash, 2019).

## ECONOMICS

Overall, Queer Texans face worse economic outcomes than non-Queer Texans (Mallory et al., 2017). Eight percent of Queer individuals in Texas are unemployed and twenty-six percent of Queer individuals in Texas are food insecure (Mallory et al., 2017). When examining the experiences of Queer Black people in the state, we find they fare much worse. In fact, Choi et al. (2019) found that Queer people of color have higher rates of economic insecurity than Queer White people. Where does one go when unemployment is high, and food is difficult to come by?

What is the role of MFTs in addressing economic disparities for Queer Black individuals? MFTs need to be sensitive to the fact that therapy may not be high on the list of priorities for Queer Black Texans due to other priorities taking precedence. MFTs should meet Queer Black Texans who present to therapy where they are, rather than where they think their client should be. For instance, MFTs should strive to support and keep an up-to-date list of community resources (or borrow such a list from a social worker) such as food banks and solidarity fridges (like these in Fort Worth, Austin, and Dallas), that could be provided to their Queer Black clients if needed. Many of these organizations maintain a social media presence informing followers on important policy issues affecting their community —and thus that of one's client(s).

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“Where does one go when unemployment is high, and food is difficult to come by?”

## HEALTHCARE

When it comes to healthcare, the disparities are similar. For instance, 16% of Black individuals residing in Texas are without health insurance (Texas, 2020), while 26% percent of Queer individuals in Texas are without insurance (Mallory et al., 2017). What does this mean for Queer Black individuals? It may mean that Queer Black individuals residing in Texas are at a higher risk of being without health insurance.

It is a well-known fact that lack of access to health insurance leads to greater health disparities. One result of not having access to health insurance means that Black trans individuals are unable to access healthcare such as hormones and gender-affirming surgeries. Even if a Black trans individual can access state-funded Medicaid that doesn't mean they will be able to access gender-affirming care. In fact, Texas Medicaid policy outright excludes gender-affirming health care (Healthcare laws and policies, 2022). Where does one go when affirming healthcare is denied?

What are the possible roles of MFTs in healthcare? MFTs can work to create an environment free of bias, prejudice, and stigma for their Queer Black clients as this is a noted barrier to healthcare (Choi et al., 2021). In addition, MFTs can lobby to be able to accept Medicaid as a form of payment (as TAMFT's legislative committee has been working toward for some time) as it would allow more Queer Black individuals to access mental healthcare as well as physical healthcare (Choi et al., 2021). Lastly, MFTs can also spread awareness about the importance of gender-affirming care for the health and wellbeing of Black trans individuals.

## EDUCATION

When it comes to education, Mallory et al. (2021), found slightly more queer individuals (45%) in Texas attained their high school diploma than non-queer individuals (42%). This trend does not continue when examining higher education statistics (Mallory et al., 2017).

As educational level increases, Queer Texans are less and less represented with only 10% acquiring a post-graduate compared to the 12% of non-Queer individuals (Mallory et al., 2017).

These percentages are even more disheartening for Queer Black individuals in Texas. They face discrimination due to both their blackness and their queerness within the public school system.

Queer Black youth have been found to frequently experience biased remarks regarding both their ethnicity and sexuality/gender expression (Truong et al., 2020). They often do not have a supportive school environment that is essential for their achievement (Truong et al., 2020). Where does one go when seeking education is fraught?

What is the possible role of MFTs within the education system? MFTs within the education system can provide professional development for school staff on Queer Black student concerns, which can facilitate better awareness and understanding. In addition, MFTs within the education system can strive to be supporting individuals for Queer Black students. The presence of such a supportive individual can help to create better educational environments for Queer Black youth (Truong et al., 2020) (see "Hope at Every Level" in this issue for additional ways MFTs can affect change in the school system).

## CONCLUSION

Where do you go? Where do you go when faced with any of the above questions? If you were to ask Queer Black individuals in Texas, the answer would be, "You stay, and you work for a better tomorrow." MFTs in Texas can work with their Queer Black clients to help shape that better tomorrow. Queer Black Texans and MFTs in Texas can work to address the discriminations and hardships that are levied against the Queer Black community by supporting an advocacy organization. They can work together to raise awareness and bring understanding to the larger population in Texas. In solidarity, Queer Black individuals and MFTs in Texas can work together to create a better Texas for the Queer Black youth to come.

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# COMPASSION CORNER

**CARLOS PEREZ, TAMFT MEMBER-AT-LARGE**

One of the biggest and most recent challenges I've faced as a therapist is cis men - those whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.

It's recent because, in my experience, the narrative of being a man is a large player in our society: toxic masculinity, male privilege, even chauvinism. And it often shows itself in therapy.

I grew up in a very traditional Hispanic family setting where machismo was everywhere. It's very much a part of me. Even so, I've learned to deconstruct machismo and think critically about it for myself.

It's difficult for me to witness issues in people's lives and marriages that stem from "toxic masculinity," or any other dysfunctional form of masculinity. It's hard for me to watch cis men suffer because of their "traditional" views of what it is to be a man.

Even though I respect everyone's truth, my challenge lies in how I do that in therapy when I disagree with someone's masculine lifestyle. I won't push my beliefs onto someone's life...even though I sometimes want to.

There are times when I want to tell someone, "your idea of being a man is wrong, and you shouldn't think/act/behave that way." But I don't. There are times when I am triggered by a cis man because of their demeaning and belittling behavior towards their partners - I know, that is triggering and difficult to watch anyway.

**My struggle:** I want to jump into my macho part and out "man" them.

It's almost as if I react in a way where I tell myself, "you think you're macho, well, let me show you..." But I've been growing in this for as long as I've been a therapist, and I will continue to grow in it, I'm sure.

**My growth:** I lead by example.

Instead of calling out someone for being a "toxic" man (and there's a place for that, don't get me wrong), I show what a gentle, caring, and strong man looks like. I want my way of being with people of all genders to show we don't need to be toxic to be a man.



# COMMITTEE UPDATES

## LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE UPDATE

**Members:** Diana Reinhart, *Committee Chair*, Carlos Perez, *Board Liaison*, Marion Vickerman, *Board Liaison*, Sommer Greer, Gabrielle Dean, Tim White, Beth Andrea Jackson, Tara Roper

Over the last couple of months, the Legislative Committee has been busy staying on top of political issues affecting our license. From elections to redistricting to the next legislative session, we're keeping watch on important matters and will be keeping you updated.



First of all: BHEC updates. BHEC (Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council) is thriving and supporting our licenses. It's fully funded to the point of being able to hire multiple full-time employees. This is good news! This will lead to faster turnaround times on our license renewals and applications—processes that are now done completely online! In fact, we're all feeling rather appreciative to have already begun to see such speedy results.



A key victory in the recent legislative session was House Bill 4. This bill expanded the mode of health care services in Texas, which included telemedicine and telehealth services or other uses of telecommunication. This applies to LMFTs, allowing for expansion into the technology areas of our practices and to bill for such services.



Another victory for our license came through House Bill 3626. This bill allowed out-of-state LMFTs and LMFTAs to streamline their process of becoming licensed in Texas. With the quicker process of transferring hours, the goal was to allow new Texas residents to begin practicing as quickly as possible. Even though this bill was not officially passed, it was widely accepted and will be brought again in the next legislative session by one of our strongest supporters, Representative Ramon Romero, Jr.

In the coming months, the committee will be looking closely at bills that did not make the docket but were largely supported within our political arena. We will also be keeping a close watch on elections and redistricting, as those outcomes will heavily influence the next legislative session.

***Stay tuned, there's more to come!***

## MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE UPDATE

**Members:** Katie Keith, *Committee Chair*, Layla Scott, *Board Liaison*, Anna Thomison, Sara Walker, Erik Salwen, Heather Austin-Robillard, Patricia Adams, JoAnn Travis-Evans, Heather Lucero



The Membership Committee establishes new recruitment strategies for members, communicates with universities to engage potential new members, communicates with lapsed/expired members to encourage renewals, helps with member marketing campaigns, and administers yearly member surveys. The Membership Committee meets once a month in an effort to efficiently meet member needs and move committee goals forward.

Most recently, the Membership Committee has been focused on welcoming its newest committee members: JoAnn Travis-Evans, Heather Lucero, and Board Liaison, Layla Z. Scott. The committee has also made it a priority to establish goals for 2022 based on previous work the committee has done as well as feedback from current TAMFT members. These goals include growing membership to 1200+ members by 2023, re-establishing relationships with local and regional groups to engage mutual support for membership growth, and increasing student membership by planning a fall student member drive. The committee has also been discussing the benefits of an option for members to use a TAMFT logo or badge to advertise their membership with TAMFT and hopes to have a final action plan in the coming months.

The Membership Committee is very proud to share that we recently received news that we had hit a new membership high of 1025! This is above the membership goal set in 2021. For reference, the committee began its 2020 year with around 792 members, which rose to 923 in 2021. Our hope is that these numbers are indicative of member needs being met and reflect the committee's commitment to serving TAMFT membership!

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## GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE UPDATE

**Members:** Angela Hayes, *Committee Chair*, Linda Metcalf, *Board Liaison*, Jason Martin, *Board Liaison*, Layla Scott, Joanna Mendez-Pounds

We have had a flush of new volunteers this year to bring our committee projects to life! TAMFT still has a few volunteer spots available on various committees. If you have an interest in giving back to TAMFT, networking, learning, and supporting your fellow members please reach out to Angela Hayes, TAMFT Board of Directors Secretary and Governance Committee Chair, at [info@tamft.org](mailto:info@tamft.org).

## CONFERENCE COMMITTEE UPDATE

**Members:** Kelsey Austin, *Committee Co-Chair*, Emily Esail, *Committee Co-Chair*, Samantha Boubel, Sofia Georgiadou, Adam Jones, Regina Tate, Rebekah Torres

The Conference Committee enjoyed seeing their hard work pay off in April at the 2022 TAMFT Annual Conference! After taking a couple (well-deserved!) months off, the Conference Committee met for their first 2023 TAMFT Annual Conference planning meeting in June. The conference welcomed Emily Esail as the new committee co-chair. Kelsey Austin is returning for another year as co-chair. Regina Tate, Samantha Boubel, Sofia Georgiadou, and Adam Jones are also returning to serve on the Conference Committee, and the committee welcomed Rebekah Torres as a new member.

The committee was proud to review the 2022 Post Conference Report, which included overwhelmingly positive feedback from the 2022 conference attendees. The 2022 conference had 333 registrants! Out of the attendees that participated in the post-conference survey, 71.3% reported they are very likely to attend a future TAMFT event. Given such good feedback, the Conference Committee is inspired and motivated to plan a conference that will bring together the MFT community in the heart of the state capitol in 2023! In the new committee's first meeting, feedback was reviewed and strategies were discussed to target improvements in attendee experience for the upcoming year. Successes were celebrated and recommendations were discussed.

The committee is currently brainstorming themes for the 2023 annual conference. In the coming months, the team will come together monthly to delegate tasks and collaborate on conference plans. Once a theme is chosen, potential keynote speakers will be selected and contacted. Here's to another great conference in the making!



# STUDENT CORNER

## TSAMFT BOARD UPDATE

Members: Hannah McKinnies, *President*, Jaida Pryor, *President-Elect*, Kat Schultz, *Treasurer*, Becca Trujillo, *Secretary*, Sydney Jeffrey, *Social Media Manager*

The TAMFT Student Conference was held on Saturday, June 25, 2022. Students got to hear from an array of speakers that covered a multitude of topics ranging from learning your own personal therapy style to how to obtain your license. In downtimes, the students were able to interact with each other and the TSAMFT Board. For those who missed the conference, there are slides available. If you are interested, please email Sydney Jeffrey at [sjeffrey@twu.edu](mailto:sjeffrey@twu.edu). The TSAMFT Board thanks everyone who presented or attended and looks forward to seeing everyone next year! All students wanting to get involved with TSAMFT or attend a board meeting, email [sjeffrey@twu.edu](mailto:sjeffrey@twu.edu) for more details.



## Marriage and Family Therapy National Exam Prep

TAMFT has put together a suite of resources to help students prepare for the national licensure exam, including recordings of our Exam Prep Workshop, a Practice Exam & Answer Explanations, and an MFT Terms Glossary.



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### **EDUCATION COMMITTEE UPDATE**

**Members:** Nelliana Acuna, *Committee Chair*, Wen Mei Chou, *Board Liaison*, Kat (Mary) Schultz, Benita Madison, Skeetz Edinger, Susan Henderson, Hannah McKinnies

The Education Committee has been hard at work this year scheduling great educational content for all our members. We have a team of new volunteers bringing their expertise and fresh thinking to the task. Upcoming is our July monthly webinar to look forward to, AI, Metaverse, & Telehealth: Ethical Considerations (1 Ethics CEU) with Stephanie Zepeda. Remember the monthly webinar is free for members and provides you with CEUs!



# CALL FOR COMMITTEE SERVICE

TAMFT will be seeking applications for member volunteers for committee service.  
Committee members will serve 2-year terms.

- Governance Committee
- Finance Committee
- Education Committee
- Membership Committee
- Legislative Committee
- Conference Committee
- Communications Committee

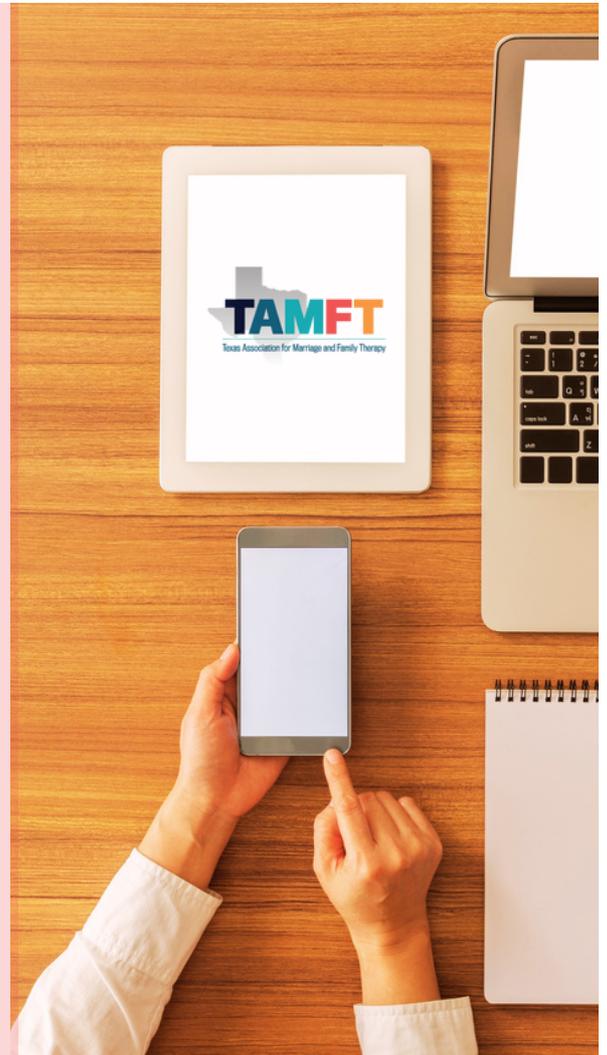
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## COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE UPDATE

**Members:** Luke O'Steen, *Committee Chair*, Felicia Holloway, *Board Liaison*, Sydney Jeffrey

It's been a busy few months with the Communications Committee! In addition to getting this newsletter off the ground, our small but mighty team has been working to streamline communications between TAMFT and our members.

Our committee was created last year to help ensure the timely and effective dissemination of information to TAMFT membership via social media, email, and the website. Since then, TAMFT has increased its social media presence with social media takeovers, board spotlights as well as posts highlighting upcoming events and important legislative updates. In addition, TAMFT has streamlined its event-related communication with a weekly events email, effectively improving our email open rates and increasing event registrations. Lastly, we are working our way through updating our website, implementing best web practices on web pages with the most traffic until the entire website has been reviewed.



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# HOPE AT EVERY LEVEL:

## *AN ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS NARRATIVE FOR ADVOCATING FOR QUEER YOUTH IN TEXAS*

By Federico Mendez,  
Contributions by Luke O'Steen,  
TAMFT Student Member



Many of you have likely heard about the recent political actions taken in our state to categorize gender-affirming care for minors (GACM) as child abuse — a change that, upon learning of attempts to seek such care, would demand from us a breach of confidentiality and report to Child Protective Services. What some of you may not know is that TAMFT has been involved in this conversation from the beginning, advocating for the ability of all mental health professionals in Texas to continue providing their services according to the standards set by experts in their respective disciplines. GACM has perhaps received the most spotlight, but it is far from the only issue currently being discussed among our state's policymakers. Given the extent to which they would affect MFTs' daily professional life, these legislative efforts have rekindled important conversations about our role in the systems we share with the Queer youth of Texas. Of these, which could be more vital than the school system?

First, it may be helpful to deconstruct the myriad of layers involved in said system, just as Fantus & Newman (2021) have done by using Bronfenbrenner's (1977) systemic approach to ecological environments of individuals:

(a) microsystem—individual students' immediate context through direct experiences and perceptions of the school (e.g., bullying, perceived teacher support); (b) nanosystem—systems within microsystems, such as classrooms, peer groups, and [gay-straight alliances] GSAs; and (c) mesosystem—interactions between two or more microsystems, such as school-community relations and parent-school partnerships, ... (d) exosystem— contexts that may not directly include youth but are experienced indirectly, such as community programs and school policies; (e) macrosystem— higher-level directives and the broader social environment, including the school system, state and federal policies, and school funding; and (f) chronosystem—time-based, reflective of different degrees of rights and equity for LGBT populations across different areas in North America. (p. 11)

**CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...**

At which level would you locate MFTs' work in this list of systems? That might depend on your methods. For example, in Solution Focused Narrative Therapy, Dr. Linda Metcalf (2017), our beloved Past President, illustrates how she "reintroduces" (p. 137) students to their teacher. While Dr. Metcalf's approach involves most of the aforementioned levels, these researchers offer additional system-focused angles from which to advocate for Queer youth in schools.

Fantus & Newman's (2021) research used 16 teachers, administrators, academics, and frontline workers, including behavioral health professionals, who have worked with LGBT youth inside and outside the school system for between 3 - 15 years and who have micro-level knowledge of their students' experiences. The researchers focused on curriculum development, policy creation and implementation, and how these factors intersect with the student's school climate. In addition to illustrating a need for bullying victimization interventions, Fantus and Newman (2021) conclude that a positive school climate of equity, diversity, and inclusivity are key components to a school's efforts toward long-lasting change. Such are the kinds of exo- and macro-level interventions that MFTs should consider advocating for in Texas schools, but it's the school-adjacent family system that's our bread and butter, isn't it?

In such politically tumultuous times, it can be energizing to remember Bronfenbrenner's (1977) proposition that microsystems also affect macrosystems — not just top-down, but bottom-up, too. Indeed, many MFTs toiling for the actualization of our clients' preferred future are often faced with certain pessimistic despair that clings like slime to the bodies of our clients, and to ourselves as it latches itself onto everything it touches. Those who've witnessed the Despair Slime know its stench all too well: gay children disowned by their families, grown adults physically assaulted for wearing makeup, or, if you're lucky, that eternal silence that tries to seal away your queerness in a tomb never to be acknowledged again.

In case you haven't yet discovered the antivenom for Pessimi-Slime, it's Hope! The recipe for Hope is pretty straightforward: one part Client, one part Therapist, mixed together in a therapy room once a week. There are different mixing methods, but as long as you have those two ingredients, you know that people in this world are committed to positive change — and maybe that's all we really need.

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# STAY TUNED FOR OUR NEXT ISSUE: "THE PRIVATE PRACTICE TOOLKIT", LAUNCHING IN THE FALL OF 2022!

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