



From Abstinence to Deviance: Sexual Stereotypes Associated With Transgender and Nonbinary Individuals

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Accepted: 22 June 2023 / Published online: 10 July 2023
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Abstract

Introduction Stereotypes around sex and gender have played an important role in shaping experiences of discrimination and social injustice for trans individuals. In addition, trans identities have been historically associated with sexual deviance and pathology in the psychomedical literature. In the present study, we investigated stereotypes associated with trans people’s sexuality.

Methods We recruited 297 transmasculine and nonbinary individuals for an online study. In an open-ended question, participants were asked to describe stereotypes they have encountered regarding the sex lives of trans people they felt were inaccurate.

Results Thematic analysis revealed four overarching themes: (1) deviance; (2) discomfort with trans sexuality as stigmatizing; (3) stereotypes based on gender; and (4) absence of stereotyping.

Conclusion Results highlight the ways trans sexuality is exoticized. Findings also underscore that sexual stereotyping of trans individuals is, at times, based on assigned sex and, at other times, based on gender identity.

Policy Implications Stereotypes, particularly those related to sexuality, may seem harmless, but they can have far-reaching consequences on interpersonal relationships and societal systems. Challenging stereotypes in policies and social environments is crucial for promoting inclusivity and community welfare.

Keywords Sexual stereotypes · Transmasculine · Nonbinary · Trans sexuality · Transgender stereotypes

Introduction

Since the 1950s, the sexuality of trans people (and that of their partners) has been used to pathologize trans identities and bodies (for a review, see Prunas, 2019). The dominant narratives, which have since characterized the clinical and academic literature, have been summarized by Fielding (2021) in four main points. First, is the “unimaginability” of trans bodies. According to this narrative, trans people are excluded from being objects of other people’s desire and are also not imaginable as being able to experience sexual desire themselves (Fielding, 2021; Lindley et al., 2020). This implies the erasure of trans bodies and, at the same time, their fetishization and objectification (Anzani et al., 2021a, b), which often translates to internalized transphobia and difficulties in finding a sexual partner (Bockting, 2015). Second, trans narratives are dominated by trauma and oppression, with an exclusive focus on disparities, morbidity, risk factors, stigma, and discrimination. This may carry over to the clinical relationship, by hindering the adoption of a sex-positive approach and by limiting the exploration of a

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positive and satisfying relationship with the client's sexual self (Fielding, 2021; Prunas, 2019). Third, the discourse has been centered on sexual losses and the assumption that being trans or starting a medical gender transition necessarily implies a sexual life that is less than cis sexualities. This is exemplified with the notion that gender-affirming hormone therapy determines a loss of sexual desire for trans women, as opposed to a change in erotic patterns (Fielding, 2021; Goldbach et al., 2022). And a fourth narrative centers a clinical focus on sexual function, which defines goal treatments in terms of restoring "standard" functioning, rather than setting pleasure as the main aim of clinical interventions (Fielding, 2021; Prunas, 2019). Although such a focus on functionality and performance is limiting for every individual, regardless of their gender identity, it is particularly detrimental when exploring the sexual lives of trans people.

More recent literature has attempted to overcome these limitations, seeking to shift the focus to pleasure (Anzani & Prunas, 2023; Bradford & Spencer, 2020). Narratives of trans sexuality from the clinical and academic perspectives have informed the mainstream narrative, and vice versa, creating a biased representation of how trans people experience their sexuality. In the present work, we asked trans and nonbinary individuals what they experience with regard to stereotyping of trans sexualities.

(Trans)gender Stereotypes?

Stereotypes are the cognitive component of prejudiced attitudes, thus the tendency to understand other individuals through knowledge of the particular groups to which individuals belong (Devine, 1989; Kanahara, 2006). Stereotyping can be understood as a type of generalization. Generalization is the idea that knowledge from one event can be used to describe a larger group of people. Stereotype has a narrower connotation than generalization, which also encompasses stereotype. This is because generalization refers to a broad collection of beliefs about things, people, or events, whereas stereotypes are specific beliefs about the attributes, traits, or qualities of a group of people or group members (Kanahara, 2006). Stereotypes are widely shared beliefs within a culture or society that provide expectations about individuals in a particular group, serving as a natural part of categorization and useful for navigating the social world. Although they communicate the content of group identities, they can also create harm, such as when they are used to justify prejudice (Crandall et al., 2011). In order to address trans sexual stereotypes, it is necessary to frame the discourse within the socio-cultural context in which they are embedded, particularly regarding gender binarism. Western society's predominant conception of gender sees it as a binary concept, beyond the arguments that would contradict its strictly dichotomous nature (e.g., Eagly et al., 2020; Joel et al., 2015). This binary conception of gender results in cisgenderism, which renders the representation of trans people atypical in comparison to

the cisgender majority group (Gallagher & Bodenhausen, 2021). Cisgenderism has been defined as a process that grants privileges to cisgender individuals and those whose appearance matches the gender roles assigned to them and can oppress anyone displaying non-cisgender behavior, identity, or experiences such as trans individuals (Barnett et al., 2021). Individuals considered atypical are less likely to be stereotyped than those considered typical of a social group (Gallagher & Bodenhausen, 2021). "Atypicals" may constitute subgroups of the majority group, and their atypicality is usually communicated with a linguistic marker. In everyday speech, it is unlikely to hear "cisgender men"; it is more likely to hear "trans (or transgender) men," where "trans" becomes the marker of the individual's atypicality. The history of pathologization coupled with the perception of trans people as atypical has resulted in them being seen as unusual or deviant (Gallagher & Bodenhausen, 2021).

The mechanisms of stereotyping of trans people have recently been studied by Gallagher and Bodenhausen (2021). The authors demonstrated through a series of studies how trans people are stereotyped according to a de-gendering mechanism. Essentially, cisgender people are reluctant to associate trans men and women with gendered characteristics typically associated with cisgender men and women. For example, participants could distinguish cisgender men and women on the traits of communality (stereotypically female) and agency (stereotypically male). These stereotypical gender traits were not extended to trans men and women. Instead, the de-gendering mechanism renders the latter two groups indistinguishable from each other.

Howansky et al. (2021) investigated cisgender individuals' personal and cultural stereotypes associated with trans people. At the individual level, participants produced stereotypes that were aligned with trans individuals' assigned sex at birth. In contrast, cultural stereotypes were based on the trans person's gender identity. When participants were asked to generate stereotypical characteristics of trans people, they associated trans identity with pathology, disgust, and deviance (Howansky et al., 2021). Again, the stereotypes associated with trans women and men did not differ in this work, emphasizing that the trans social category is more salient than an individual's actual gender identity. The most frequently generated stereotype for trans people was "deviant" followed closely by "sexual" (Howansky et al., 2021). This finding is unsurprising given the strong link between trans identity and sexual deviance established in the medical literature (Prunas, 2019). The studies presented so far involved cisgender participants. However, we believe it is crucial to draw attention to the dearth of studies on stereotyping that concentrate on the lived experiences of trans persons. In the study of stereotypes, social desirability in the eyes of an experimenter is frequently cited as a constraint (i.e., Chung & Monroe, 2003). As a result, it appears that

including marginalized people in the study and focusing on their experience is a crucial step in reflecting the complexity of social stereotyping and lowering the likelihood of biases and blind spots.

Recent Research on Trans Sex

Research on stereotypes has highlighted how perceived deviance and pathologization of sexuality are still relevant to contemporary understandings of trans individuals. This approach has led to a wide range of studies investigating long-term sexual outcomes in people who have undergone gender-affirming medical procedures. However, the clinical utility of such literature is quite limited in everyday psychological and sexological practice, as it systematically excludes trans people who do not pursue hormonal or surgical treatments (Goldbach et al., 2022) and people who identify outside of the binary (Galupo & Pulice-Farrow, 2020; Hastings et al., 2021). Also, it is often assumed that such treatments are a prerequisite for having a sexual life and therefore that no sexuality exists before or without them (Bauer & Hammond, 2015). In addition, the focus is often on functionality, understood as the ability to penetrate or be penetrated (Fielding, 2021).

In recent years, several studies have tried to shift away from the focus on discomfort and medicalization of the body to make room for pleasure (Anzani & Prunas, 2023; Bradford & Spencer, 2020). These studies highlight how the experience of body dysphoria in sex, particularly genital dysphoria, is not universal (Pulice-Farrow et al., 2020a, b); trans people can have an active sex life despite their dysphoria, and they can implement strategies to overcome body dysphoria in sex (Anzani et al., 2021a). Regarding sexual satisfaction, studies highlighted aspects of interpersonal and intrapersonal context (Lindley et al., 2020, 2021). On the one hand, partners were identified as critical determinants of sexual satisfaction for the participants. Participants discussed how partners who understood their gender identity provided positive sexual experiences. On the other hand, gender affirmation can result directly from the sexual behaviors enacted by the participants. Sex provides the opportunity for trans individuals to connect and find pleasure with their bodies, often by feeling desired and attractive. In some cases, a focus on pleasure during sex allowed participants to overcome gender dysphoria (Anzani et al., 2021a; Anzani & Prunas, 2023; Riggs & Bartholomaeus, 2018).

Current Study

Given the importance of stereotypes in shaping discrimination and social injustice and how trans identity has historically been associated with sexual deviance and pathology,

in the present study, we investigated stereotypes associated with trans people's sexuality. Importantly, this study focuses on transmasculine and nonbinary individuals' perspectives on the sexual stereotypes that exist related to the sex lives of trans people they feel are inaccurate. Group membership is likely critical for understanding these stereotypes. As emphasized by Fielding (2021), both body and sexuality are central to the construction of narratives about trans people. Thus, we concentrate specifically on sexual stereotypes. This is a novel aspect of the current study that fills a gap in the literature, as no research studies have yet examined this issue from the perspective of trans and nonbinary people. Additionally, it is important to note that we center understandings of transmasculine and nonbinary individuals to ensure that their perspectives are heard and valued.

Method

Participants and Recruitment

Participants included 297 transmasculine and nonbinary individuals. Recruitment flyers were posted on various online resources that served the trans community specifically as well as the LGBTQ community generally. Inclusion criteria for the study were as follows: (1) must be 18 years or older; (2) must identify as transmasculine or nonbinary. The recruitment flyer disclosed the purpose of the study (i.e., trans individuals' sexual well-being), inclusion criteria, and the contact information of the primary investigator. Text included with the flyer stated that trans individuals were included during survey design to improve trust with trans communities and utilize best practice techniques regarding recruitment (see Tebbe & Budge, 2016). All data were collected during the month of September 2019. This study was part of a larger project investigating the sexual health of trans individuals, in which participants were asked to complete several quantitative and qualitative measures that assessed sexual satisfaction, body satisfaction, gender dysphoria, experiences with fetishization, and transition steps are undertaken (Anzani et al., 2021b; Goldbach et al., 2022; Lindley et al., 2021, 2022).

Participants ranged in age from 18 and 74 years, with most participants being between the ages of 18 and 24 (49.8% of the sample). This sample included limited ethnic diversity with 77.1% identifying as White, followed by a 10.8% who identifies as Hispanic/Latin, 9.4% as biracial/multiracial, and 2.7% as Black/African American. The most frequently endorsed sexual identities were pansexual (21.5%), queer (20.9%), and bisexual (20.9%). See Table 1 for other sample demographics. The survey was carried out in English, and most participants were

Table 1 Sociodemographic characteristics of the sample

	Transmasculine (<i>N</i> = 153) <i>N</i> (%)	Nonbinary (<i>N</i> = 144) <i>N</i> (%)
Sex assigned at birth		
F	153 (100)	93 (64.6)
M	-	51 (35.4)
Intersex	4 (2.6)	4 (2.8)
Age		
18–24	79 (51.6)	69 (47.9)
25–34	49 (32)	58 (40.3)
35–44	29 (14.4)	13 (9)
45–54	2 (1.3)	2 (1.4)
55–64	1 (.7)	1 (0.7)
65–74	-	1 (0.7)
Level of education		
Less than high school	3 (2)	-
High school grad	70 (45.8)	48 (33.3)
2 year degree	18 (11.8)	22 (15.3)
4 year degree	41 (26.8)	41 (28.5)
Professional degree	19 (12.4)	25 (17.4)
Doctorate	2 (13.1)	8 (5.6)
Sexual identity		
Asexual	9 (5.9)	27 (18.8)
Bisexual	39 (24.2)	23 (16)
Fluid	-	3 (2.1)
Gay	22 (14.4)	3 (2.1)
Heterosexual	13 (8.5)	1 (0.7)
Lesbian	2 (1.3)	4 (2.8)
Pansexual	30 (19.6)	34 (23.6)
Queer	27 (17.6)	35 (24.3)
Others	11 (7.2)	14 (9.7)
Ethnicity		
American Indian/Alaska Native	1 (0.7)	1 (0.7)
Asian/Asian American	2 (1.3)	7 (5.6)
Black/African American	2 (1.3)	2 (1.4)
Hispanic/Latin	6 (3.9)	10 (6.9)
White	128 (83.7)	101 (70.1)
Biracial/multiracial	9 (5.9)	5 (3.5)
Others	2 (1.3)	11 (7.6)

located in North America and Western Europe when they completed the survey.

Measures

The current study focused on the ways in which transmasculine and nonbinary individuals describe the stereotypes attributed to their sexuality. Participants completed an online survey where they answered questions regarding their demographics and experiences with sexually related

activities. As part of the demographics, participants provided their gender and sexual identity as a write-in response as well as selected fixed, static, identity choices. Write-in responses allow for a more accurate understanding of participants' identities, which will be reported next to the quotations of the participants in the description of the results (Harrison et al., 2012). Participants were able to skip any item they did not wish to answer, including both quantitative measures as well as qualitative questions, and were not limited in the length of response. For the current study, the analysis focused on the qualitative question: "Are there any stereotypes around the lives of transgender people that you feel are inaccurate?"

Procedure

The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Towson University. Participants completed an online survey seeking to explore the sexual well-being of trans and nonbinary individuals, with no incentive provided for participation. Once participants completed the survey, they were given a prompt thanking them for their participation and provided an opportunity to leave suggestions to improve future studies.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness of Data

Participants' qualitative descriptions of their experiences of stereotyping were evaluated using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019), which is particularly useful for large data sets (Nowell et al., 2017). The data analysis was conducted using the raw data from participants' quotes and was conducted in 6 phases: (1) familiarization, (2) code generation, (3) theme generation, (4) theme revision, and (5) quotes selection. First, the research team composed of the first, second, and last authors independently read the answers given by the participants multiple times, familiarizing themselves with the data. The team generated codes based on their notes and observations. The team coded the data into a set of themes, highlighting common and recurring patterns and identifying relevant elements. The team members met to compare and review their thematic structures. The authors defined an initial set of 21 themes they all deemed relevant, internally coherent, and distinctive and reached an initial agreement. The thematic structure was progressively defined in more detail in a second group discussion. Some themes were merged due to similarities between them (e.g., having sex only if they underwent genital surgery was then merged into the theme "no sexual activity"), resulting in a final structure of 14 themes. The themes were re-labeled as sub-themes and were organized in 4 overarching themes. Quotes were selected for each of the sub-themes, to support their definition. The third and fourth authors supervised the

work as experts in qualitative analysis but also carrying their experience as a trans man and an agender person, respectively. This allowed for enriching analysis and providing feedback with respect to possible blind spots we might have encountered as a group of cisgender people. All themes were discussed as a group, and final results were unanimously agreed upon by all members of the research team.

Research Positionality

The research team included a post-doctoral researcher who identifies as a White Italian queer cisgender woman, a first-year M.A. student in clinical psychology who identifies as White Italian cisgender bi/pansexual woman, a second-year Ph.D. student in counseling psychology who identifies as a White American Queer trans man, a professor of psychology who identifies as a Biracial American, bi/queer, agender person, and a professor of psychology who identifies as White Italian cisgender gay men. The range of our collective experiences across gender identity, expression, sexuality, nationality, and race ensured that we came to these discussions with different perspectives. Our research team consisted of researchers with different racial/ethnic and sexual identities, which allowed us to bring diverse perspectives and experiences to the table. Our shared experiences as members of marginalized communities informed our choices in terms of research questions, methodology, and data collection. For example, the decision to investigate stereotypes related to trans individuals and their sexuality was of particular interest to us as members of the LGBTQ+ community, as we recognized the ways in which these stereotypes can contribute to discrimination and prejudice. In terms of analysis, our positionality allowed us to identify and explore themes related to the intersection of gender and sexual identity, but also race/ethnicity, which may have been overlooked by researchers who do not share our perspectives. At each coding meeting, we actively reflected on our reactions to the data, processed personal biases, and engaged in bracketing to increase the rigor of our process (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

Results and Discussion

Participants were asked whether they had encountered stereotypes about the lives of trans people. Although transmasculine and nonbinary individuals represented the sample, many also gave insights into the stereotypes associated with transfeminine people. Thematic analysis revealed four overarching themes related to sexual stereotypes for trans individuals: (1) deviant sexuality stereotyping; (2) discomfort with trans sexuality as stigmatizing; (3) stereotypes based on gender; and (4) absence of stereotyping. The first two themes, “[deviant sexuality stereotyping](#)” and “discomfort

with trans sexuality as stigmatizing,” are two extremes on a spectrum of sexual stereotype content. There would be “kink” and deviance on the one hand and reduced or absent sexual activity because of bodily discomfort and gender dysphoria on the other. As a result, trans persons are represented as either “extreme/kinky” or “inactive” in their sexuality and intimacy, which represents the extremes of a typical statistical distribution. The third overarching theme relates to the mode of stereotyping, which some people appear to base on the given gender at birth while others do so on the trans person’s gender identification. The final theme includes comments made by individuals who either deliberately reject stereotypes or do not acknowledge their existence. As is standard for qualitative research, an integrated result and discussion section is presented (Flick, 2013).

Deviant Sexuality Stereotyping

A dominant theme centered on the perception of trans people as deviant from cis-hetero normativity and the norm of *vanilla* sexuality and sexual morality. The overarching theme of deviant sexuality stereotyping encompasses six sub-themes (outlined in Table 2): (1) promiscuity, (2) kink sex, (3) sex work, (4) deception, (5) fetishization of transition, and (6) sexual pathology or deviance. We noted how these themes could be organized and read along a gradient of severity from behaviors somewhat outside the norm to explicitly assuming a condition of sexual pathology. The thematic organization of the deviant sexuality stereotyping theme, which places promiscuity, kinky sex, and sex work closer to the norm and sexual pathology further away, reflects the authors’ consideration of both the content expressed and the common societal perceptions of the severity of different forms of sexual behavior.

Promiscuity

Deviant sexuality was often expressed through the sub-theme of promiscuity. Participants described being judged as necessarily sexually active to the point of sexual promiscuity. However, these aspects often are not in line with participants’ diverse sexual desires, such as identifying as asexual or refraining from having active sexuality for reasons related to dysphoria.

That we are all sexually active... Many of us are asexual, but also some of us wish we could be more sexual but can't due to either dysphoria or being unable to find partners. (Participant 54, nonbinary, White, lesbian).

As noted in recent literature, body dysphoria is an element that emerges as relevant in the sexuality of trans people

Table 2 Overarching theme: deviant sexuality stereotyping

	Subthemes	Prevalence	Example quote
Sexual stereotypes which attribute progressively more deviance and pathology	Kink sex	2%	<i>I also often see people say that trans people are inherently kinky or whatever you want to call it. I'm pretty sure that's inaccurate. Trans-ness isn't a kink, or weird, or a fetish. Trans people are just people. "Sex while trans" is just as normal as "sex while cis"</i>
	Sex work	3%	<i>Cis people out of the loop all think trans folk are sex workers, I'd like to see that stereotype die</i>
	Promiscuity	9%	<i>I don't know of any, other than that they are sex crazed which is far from the truth because many trans people are sexual abuse survivors and sex can be traumatic</i>
	Deception	2%	<i>We just pretend to be trans so certain people will see us as the "best of both worlds" and see us more sexually attractive than they would if we were cis</i>
	Fetishization of transition	4%	<i>That [transition] it's something you "put on" for sexual pleasure and it's not really who you are</i>
	Sexual pathology or deviance	7%	<i>That we're hypersexual, or objectifying lesbians/gay men, or child predators</i>
Deviant sexuality stereotyping		= 27%	

(Anzani et al., 2021a; Goldbach et al., 2022). However, there are very different levels of body dysphoria in sex. It is worth keeping in mind that some people experience no dysphoria in intimate encounters with partners. Rather, the sexual act becomes a way to overcome dysphoria and fully experience their bodies (Anzani et al., 2021a). On the other hand, it is assumed that the sex life of trans people is (hyper)active. As with kink sexuality, it is possible that what drives this assumption of hypersexuality is a lack of contact with the trans community that causes imaginations to run wild. Another element that may fuel this stereotype is sexual objectification, which can even lead to fetishizing trans bodies and sexuality (Anzani et al., 2021b).

Transwomen aren't suddenly super horny all the time and transguys aren't suddenly less horny. Transguys seem to be seen as less sexually desirable and therefore less sexually active (and vice versa) which isn't true. (Participant 214, transmale, multiracial, bisexual).

Although a stereotype such as attributing sexual promiscuity may seem harmless, it has been shown how this belief can predict opposition to gay rights (Pinsof & Haselton, 2017). Similarly, we can hypothesize that perceiving trans individuals as hypersexual, closely linked to a social group's perception of morality (i.e., Brambilla & Butz, 2013), might similarly predict lower endorsement of LGBTQ+ civil rights.

In general, a difference emerges in the representation of trans men and trans women. As we will discuss more fully later in the section on stereotypes based on gender, trans women are more generally associated with sex work and hypersexuality, whereas trans men tend to be considered less

sexually active. In this dynamic, sexual objectification plays an overbearing role (Anzani et al., 2021b). Not only is the person sexualized for being trans, but they are also sexualized *more* for being a trans woman. This dynamic, described egregiously by Serano (2007), is based on the fundamental assumption (usually made by heterosexual, cisgender men) that trans women start a medical transition only to be sexually desired and penetrated by a cisgender man.

Kink Sex

Participants expressed deviance in the way trans sexuality was stereotyped through an association with kink. Included within this category were participant responses highlighting how trans people's sexuality is often viewed as strictly kinky, as in the example below.

I feel that trans people often get associated with having to be kinky, which between my partner and I is grossly inaccurate/not our cup of tea. (Participant 88, agender, multiracial, asexual).

A few participants mentioned that trans people are viewed as necessarily kinky, with responses similar to the example. We could hypothesize that the lack of mental representation of trans sexuality causes people to assume that their sexuality must necessarily be something other than the vanilla sex norm and therefore attribute kinky sexuality to trans individuals. *Vanilla sex* has been described as a way of experiencing sexuality as opposed to the one represented by the BDSM (bondage, dominance, discipline, submission, sado-masochism) community (Simula, 2019).

Sex Work

Participants also described ways trans individuals' sexuality is characterized as deviant through the stereotype that all trans people are sex workers. This is exemplified in the following quote.

I don't like the harmful stereotype of [...] people assume trans folks are all sex workers (nothing wrong with that as far as I care but it does impact how society treats a person) or sexual deviants or whatever. (Participant 210, nonbinary, White, demisexual).

In some cases, it is worth mentioning that the stereotype is also internalized by some members of the trans community itself, as in the quotation below.

I don't know many stereotypes around the sex lives of transgender people other than that of homeless sex workers and being frequently polyamorous and trans-bian [trans woman who is lesbian] and those seem reasonably accurate in my experience. (Participant 118, agender, White, queer).

In the participant's response, we can recognize an almost critical distancing of the social group of trans individuals. This mechanism of distancing oneself from a stigmatized social identity has been described extensively in the field of social psychology. Self-group distancing consists of social group members distancing or dissociating themselves from their stigmatized ingroup to avoid the negative consequences of being stigmatized and to be less associated with that social group and have a better fit with the majority social group (van Veelen et al., 2020). The example likely represents distancing oneself and judging the rest of the group as accurately described by stereotypes such as being homeless, sex workers, polyamorous, and lesbians who dress as men ensure the individual participant's distance from that negative judgment.

Deception

Another way trans sexuality was stereotyped as deviant was through the sub-theme of deception. Central to the discourse on deception is the notion of *passing* (Billard, 2019) which is often applied to individuals with concealable minority traits (as trans identity can be in some cases). For trans and nonbinary individuals, it is often expected that trans identity should become undetectable allowing a person to "pass" for a cisgender person (Billard, 2019).

[...] we're deliberately deceiving people by not immediately disclosing [our gender identity] always. (Participant 7, nonbinary, White, bisexual).

Investment in passing can be considered an outgrowth of cishnormativity (Boe et al., 2020). Trans identities are susceptible to discrimination and negative consequences when the trans identity is detectable (due to transgression of gender binarism). Yet, when trans individuals do not immediately disclose a trans identity, it is considered deception. The idea that a trans person may intend to deceive another when they "pass" as a cisgender person is due to the cis-hetero normative lenses that influence our social worldview. These lenses make us see the person in front of us as a cisgender, heterosexual person if their appearance is not particularly far from the "standard" (Worthen, 2016). Quite a few participants described the stereotype of trans people seen as deceivers. Participants often used the colloquial term "traps," which refers to trans people who use their "passing" to attract cisgender individuals and later reveal their identity.

Trans people are all traps and are not being honest upfront when going for sexual encounters. That we are forcing lesbians or gay men to have sex with us. Neither of those things are true. (Participant 163, male, White, bisexual).

The discourse about deception is also important because of its implications; in fact, it is also related to the so-called trans panic defense. In legal terms, the "trans panic defense" refers to a legal strategy where a male defendant charged with the murder of a trans woman victim claims that upon discovering the victim's biological "male" status, they became so disturbed that they panicked and lost control of themselves (Lee, 2020).

Fetishization of Transition

The deviance stereotype was also exemplified in the way transition experiences were fetishized. This sub-theme includes participant responses that reference the idea that trans people transition with sexual or paraphilic intentions rather than affirming their gender identity. This sub-theme takes a step beyond deceiving by hypothesizing sexual deviance as the basis of trans people's intentions.

[...] We aren't just women with beards or men in dresses, we're men or women or neither or both or something else entirely. I'm not sure it qualifies as a stereotype but there are quite a few people who believe that trans women and femmes transition because they're sexually aroused by it. They call it "autogynephilia" and say that transbians (trans lesbians) are just hetero men. Fucking bigots. I'm not trans femme but I know that's not why anyone transitions. (Participant 291, nonbinary boy, White, bisexual).

The participant in the quotation above names a stereotype based on many years of psychiatrization of trans identities.

Autogynephilia as a descriptor of the identity of trans people assigned male at birth had been described as a condition in which “the idea of being a woman was central to their erotic excitement, and that the specific objects they used to symbolize their femininity were secondary and interchangeable” (Blanchard, 1989, 2005). Although the autogynephilia theory that divided trans women into clinical subtypes is largely outdated (for a recent review and critique, see Serano, 2020) and does not resonate with trans individuals’ lived experience (Veale et al., 2012), this construct has had more than a decade of success in the scientific literature, and it has been passed into the popular representation of trans people as well, as in the quotation below.

Trans people transition socially and/or physically to better our overall lives – not for sexual gratification. Trans women deal with this stereotype the most. Their lives are assumed as inherently sexual or a kink/fetish gone too far. [...] Respect us as individuals. (Participant 172, transmasculine, White, pansexual).

Sexual Pathology or Deviance

The last subtheme in this category is also the most extreme on the continuum of deviance from the heteronormative standard and sexual “normalcy”; participants explicitly reference the stereotype of trans people as sexually deviant and pathological. In particular, a few participants mention a portrayal of trans people as violent or aggressive in sex.

That all transgender people are sex maniacs. That transwomen are incredibly promiscuous. That transmen are violent in the bedroom. That we all are fetishists of the most disturbing kind. (Participant 275, nonbinary, White, demisexual with heteroflexible preference).

Other participants even mention the belief that trans people are sexual predators or child abusers as in the two examples below.

That we’re hypersexual, or objectifying lesbians/gay men, or child predators. (Participant 232, male, White, queer).

People think trans women are predators, which is entirely untrue. I’m not a trans woman, but I will continue to defend them because they don’t deserve the hate they get. (Participant 209, nonbinary, White, heterosexual).

Those described in the examples given seem to be extreme drifts that start from a core set of beliefs that see trans individuals as deviant and pathological. To our knowledge, it has not yet been reported in the literature that trans people could be stereotyped as violent or as sex offenders.

Arguably, when social desirability comes into play in studies investigating explicit beliefs, it fails to capture this type of belief (Kwak et al., 2021). Although the academic literature has not yet reported this evidence, these stereotypes are often played out in the media or political context. For example, access to public restrooms according to gender identity has been debated up to the point that transgender people face embarrassment and expulsion from these spaces (Bagagli et al., 2021). In these cases, the argument that is used to oust trans people, most often women, from these public spaces is that they would actually be sex offenders or violent and therefore should not be allowed in (Bagagli et al., 2021).

Discomfort With Trans Sexuality as Stigmatizing

Participants described stereotypes of trans sexuality that emphasized the assumption that trans individuals necessarily experience uneasiness and discomfort surrounding their sexuality. In contrast to stereotypes of deviance which described trans individuals as hypersexual and kinky, participants described ways that they were stereotyped as sexually inactive and uncomfortable with their bodies. The overarching theme of discomfort with trans sexuality as stigmatizing was expressed in four sub-themes (outlined in Table 3): (1) being unlovable or undesirable, (2) no sexual activity, (3) body discomfort, (4) genital discomfort.

Being Unlovable or Undesirable

Participants noted the stereotype that trans individuals are not at ease with their sexuality and often encountered this in the way that they were believed to be unlovable or undesirable. Participant responses often described how trans people are viewed as undesirable sexually, romantically, and relationally.

[...]Any perception that partners of trans people are making a sacrifice of being together with us. That all trans people are bothersome or difficult to handle. Forgetting that attraction can be complex while being perceived as a different gender than a trans person is or ‘in between’. There can exist loving sexual relationships between someone not attracted to a person’s gender. (Participant 254, trans man, White, gay).

Some participants report misconceptions about their sexuality and that of their partners and about the sexual and romantic relationships that can be established, particularly between cisgender and trans partners. Trans individuals are often viewed as being so undesirable that they must accept any form of sexual attention from others, as described in the following quote. It also follows that the attention they

Table 3 Overarching theme: discomfort with trans sexuality as stigmatizing

Subthemes	Example quote
Body discomfort	9% <i>That we are always uncomfortable in our bodies during sex—some of us love our bodies a lot of the time, and sex is no exception to that</i>
Genital discomfort	12% <i>People assume that trans people (or “real” trans people, or dysphoric trans people) never use their natal genitals for sex and it’s a lot more complicated than that. Some do, some don’t, some it depends on the partner, there’s a lot of factors. You can’t assume that being trans means people adhere to heteronormative standards of sexual behavior for their gender</i>
No sexual activity	8% <i>[...]And trans people are not all so heavily impacted by dysphoria that we can’t remove our clothes or engage in sex- many of us have active sex lives and a lot of enjoyment in and pride in our bodies</i>
Being unlovable or undesirable	5% <i>I have a feeling people assume we are more miserable, and sex starved than is true</i>
Discomfort with trans sexuality as stigmatizing	= 34%

receive is stereotyped as being driven by sexual objectification, the lack of respect for the other, and fetishization.

That we all hate our bodies and are desperate for love and willing to put up with being disrespected for some affection. Or that we’re all “SJWs” [social justice warriors] who turn sex into a minefield of “don’t offend me.” Or that we’re slutty degenerates who love being fetishized. (Participant 7, male, White, bisexual).

Partners of trans individuals are also stereotyped given that attraction to a trans person is considered pathological. Indeed, while trans people are unlovable and undesirable objects of fetish, there would also be the fetishist, who has this “peculiar” sexual interest. This pathologizing of desire towards trans people has a long history within psychological literature (i.e., Rosenthal et al., 2017).

Most trans people think they can’t find love and acceptance because most people wouldn’t even consider dating them. That isn’t true. you can have a fulfilling sex life even if you’re trans. (Participant 84, male, Black/African American, demisexual).

While some trans and nonbinary people have internalized this notion of not being loved, others find that being affirmed by a romantic/sexual partner allows them to understand that they are, in fact, lovable (Galupo et al., 2019; Pulice-Farrow et al., 2019).

No Sexual Activity

Participants often understood the expectation that trans individuals are not at ease with their sexuality, through the common stereotype that they do not desire or engage in sexual activity. The third subtheme encompasses responses from those describing the belief that trans people do not have sexual activity. Some for the reasons made explicit by

the previous subthemes; in other cases, participants remain more general as in the following quote.

That we’re all gay in some way, or that transfemme folks are super sexual and transmasc folks are super “frigid.” (Participant 184, trans man, White, unknown).

A difference in stereotype content between transfeminine and transmasculine individuals is often reported. Typically, trans women or transfeminine people are attributed more stereotypes related to hypersexuality, and trans men or transmasculine people get more stereotypes about being sexually inactive. This different representation of transfeminine and transmasculine individuals will recur in the third macro-theme (see § *Stereotypes Based on Gender*) with greater clarity. The greater invisibility of transmasculine people undoubtedly plays a role in this difference in attribution, compared to transfeminine people, and a very well-established historical and systemic bias that associates trans women with sex work (Anzani et al., 2021a, b; Serano, 2007).

Very few stereotypes about nonbinary people are mentioned in the responses except in relation to their invisibility (see § *Stereotypes Based on Gender*). However, one participant refers to the perception of nonbinary people, in the same manner as the representation of transmasculine people, as asexual.

Feel that it depends on the identity, but really, it’s just people being weird and feeling like they are asexual more often for nonbinary people I have seen just feel like asexuality goes hand in hand with nonbinaryness. (Participant 81, agender, White, demisexual).

It is possible that the sexuality of nonbinary individuals, who are even less visible than transmasculine people, is considered missing because there is a lack of social representation of nonbinary people in general (Pulice-Farrow et al., 2020a, b).

Some participants describe the belief that either trans people do not have sex altogether or they only have sex when a person approaches to exploit them.

That trans people either don't have sex or they are only having sex with chasers for money. (Participant 245, transmasculine genderqueer, White, queer).

Access to sexuality is seen as something granted by (cisgender) people to trans people only through fetishization or sexual objectification. The stereotype that lies beneath the explicit message of this sentence is that trans people are not seen as “deserving” of romantic or sexual attraction but can only get that attention from “chasers” or fetishizers.

Body Discomfort

The stereotype that trans individuals are uneasy about their sexuality was expressed through the sub-theme of body discomfort. Body discomfort describes the belief that trans people must necessarily experience discomfort due to body dysphoria. Although this description may reflect the experience of some trans people, it is well-established in the literature that sexuality is not necessarily limited by gender dysphoria. Indeed, many trans people find enjoyment from bringing their entire bodies into play during sex (Anzani et al., 2021a, b).

[...] we are always uncomfortable in our bodies during sex—some of us love our bodies a lot of the time, and sex is no exception to that. (Participant 8, genderqueer, Australian aboriginal, bisexual).

The literature reveals how sexual partners can negotiate limits and boundaries with respect to what can and cannot be done and what is desired, or not, even if gender dysphoria is present. Trans individuals can also implement strategies to help them overcome gender dysphoria in order to have a more enjoyable sexual experience (Anzani et al., 2021a; Martin & Coolhart, 2019).

The following quote touches on several subtopics included in discomfort with trans sexuality as stigmatizing, starting with dismantling the idea that there is no possibility of access to sexuality for trans people.

I am living proof that the idea that no one will want to fuck a guy without a penis is completely false! I'm a chubby trans guy and have been having the most and best sex of my life since beginning transition. I have two cisgender male partners, and one AFAB nonbinary partner. My sex life is awesome, and my partners enjoy having sex with me very much. Also, I think it's important for people to know that not all trans people experience dysphoria around their genitalia. Some of

us love the parts we have. (Participant 37, transmasculine, White, pansexual).

Genital Discomfort

An extension of the subtheme of body discomfort and sexual stereotypes for trans individuals often assume a discomfort that is specific to genitals. Participants describe the common belief that trans people hate the genitalia of the sex assigned at birth.

Some people tend to think that we don't have sex at all or don't like sex with our vaginas because it is a 'female' organ. (Participant 157, male, Asian/Asian American, pansexual).

The association between having a particular genital set-up and identifying with one (of the two) genders is quite strong in Western society. This association between man-penis and woman-vagina is culturally ingrained and stems from essentialist beliefs. Body essentialism defines an identity on the basis of a pre-given body (Jansen, 2016). However, the gender identity of men represented solely by a “typical” male, cisgender body, thus having a penis, excludes all people who do not have or do not want one.

In the case of transmasculine individuals, only a fraction (i.e., 5–10%) of individuals assigned female at birth decide to undergo genital gender affirmation surgery. As for trans-feminine individuals, around 25 to 50% pursue such procedures (Nolan et al., 2019). Reasons for not pursuing genital affirmative surgery might vary from being comfortable with one's genital anatomy to not being satisfied with surgical options and potential results, being scared of surgery for fear of losing sensitivity or function, suffering from pre-existing health conditions that hinder surgery.

It is crucial to emphasize that the experience of genital dysphoria is not universal (Pulice-Farrow et al., 2020a, b). Even within the trans community itself, hierarchies of trans identities may emerge that are considered more acceptable than others. These have been identified in the literature within the phenomenon of transnormativity (Bradford & Syed, 2019; Johnson, 2016; Pulice-Farrow et al., 2020a, b). Transnormativity delegitimizes the experience of trans people who do not pursue medicalization, who have a gender expression that is outside of the binary (i.e., not feminine or masculine), who reject pressures to conform to a specific gender role, or who discover their trans identity in adulthood or later life. Thus, considering those who have nonbinary identities or choose not to take a medicalized path as “not trans enough.”

Table 4 Overarching theme: stereotypes based on gender categorization

Subthemes	Prevalence	Example quote
Stereotypes based on gender identity	17%	<i>Plenty. For example, that trans men are always dominant, and that they're dysphoric about using their vaginas. [...] That all trans people prefer people of the opposite gender</i>
Stereotypes based on sex assigned at birth	17%	<i>That trans women primarily top/trans men primarily bottom</i>
Stereotypes based on the transgender body	6%	<i>Predatory towards the cis, rigid gender roles, people with penises will always want to penetrate/use them, people with vaginas always want to be penetrated/use them</i>
Invisibility of non-binarism	2%	<i>That all transgender people have issues with or dislike their bodies. That all transgender people are striving to fit within the gender binary. That trans non-binary folx are watered down versions of gender norms (rather than rejecting them all together, existing beyond them)</i>
Stereotypes based on gender categorization = 42%		

That trans guys can't use their vaginas during sex or they aren't "trans enough." (Participant 182, Ftm, White, queer).

Often the assumption that all trans people are uncomfortable with their birth-assigned genitals and are therefore not sexually active is also associated with the thought that they must wait for gender affirmative genital intervention in order to have a sex life. When asked if there are inaccurate stereotypes about trans sexuality, one participant responded:

Plenty. For example [...] that all trans people need genital surgery in order to enjoy sex. (Participant 140, male, White, bisexual).

Stereotypes Based on Gender

Participants often described stereotypes based on notions of gendered sexuality. Stereotypes based on gendered sexuality were expressed across four sub-themes (see Table 4). These included (1) heteronormative stereotypes based on affirmed gender; (2) stereotypes based on sex assigned at birth; (3) stereotypes based on a trans body; and (4) invisibility of non-binarism.

(Heteronormative) Stereotypes Based on Affirmed Gender

Our participants described heterocisnormative stereotypes that were applied based on their affirmed gender. For example, trans women's sexual stereotypes aligned with stereotypes applied to (heterosexual, cisgender) women more generally.

This one is pretty basic, but I see a lot of people assuming that all trans men are attracted to women and all trans women are attracted to men. Also, not all trans men want to be the "top" and not all trans women want to be the "bottom." (Participant 98, male, White, homoflexible).

Underlying this form of sexual stereotyping is the assumption of heteronormativity, where heterosexual attraction is the celebrated ideal and sexual roles emphasize femininity for (trans) women and masculinity for (trans) men. Heterosexism is defined as the assumption and favoritism of gender conformity and heterosexuality compared to diverse forms of gender expression and sexuality (Pollitt et al., 2019). Indeed, even sexual scripts are driven by the heterosexist norm. Sexual encounters, like many other types of social interactions, are shaped upon social expectations and standards. Social scripting theory acknowledges that human sexual behavior follows specific sexual scripts (Simon & Gagnon, 2003; Wiederman, 2005). The sexual scripts influence the individual's sexual imagery, fantasies, and their sexual behaviors (Anzani & Prunas, 2020). In the case of gender identity-based stereotyping of trans targets, stereotypes applied to cis men and women seem to be replicated, as in the example below, where heteronormative bias causes one to imply a heterosexual attraction and identity of the trans person.

That we're mostly straight or interested in having sex like straight people. Our bodies are different, and in the same manner, so is the way we use them. (Participant 46, transmasculine, White, bisexual).

Stereotypes Based on Sex Assigned at Birth

Stereotyping based on gendered sexuality sometimes centered sex assigned at birth. Ultimately stereotyping based on assigned gender is invalidating as it prioritizes sex assignment over gender identity. Participants described ways that trans men are stereotyped as feminine in their sexual role or traits. Likewise, masculine features and sexual roles are emphasized for trans women.

A big one for trans men is of course that we're all lesbians, that we transition because we make ugly girls

and can't get laid [...]. (Participant 49, trans male, White, gay).

The following example explains this process of stereotyping concerning sexual roles, precisely, the willingness to be penetrated (if one has a vagina) or to penetrate (if one has a penis), regardless of the person's affirmed identity.

There is an assumption that all trans femmes want to penetrate people, while there is an assumption that all trans mascs [transmasculine people] want to be penetrated. Like, just the assumption that we all want our genitals touched is a big one. As someone who is okay with vaginally penetrating myself, I still cannot see myself having PIV [penis in vagina] sex with another person or even having them touch my bits. I think these assumptions or stereotypes or whatever come from a (perhaps subconscious) belief that we aren't the gender we say we are. (Participant 291, nonbinary boy, White, aegosexual).

Stereotypes Based on the Trans Body

Sexual stereotyping based on gendered sexuality was also seen where stereotypes focused on trans bodies. Participants often described references to genitalia as a guide to stereotyping. In some ways, this theme identifies the body as the compass that guides the stereotyping pattern.

That every trans person has had [top] surgery, and/or is on hormones, so, therefore, they're expecting a woman with boobs and a penis or a man with chest surgery, and a vagina, and that trans people still wanna have sex in accordance with their genitals. (Participant 149, nonbinary, Black/African American, pansexual).

Stereotyping based on the assigned sex and the person's body (or genitalia) is related to a strongly biologicistic and essentialist view of gender. Cisgenderism represents the systemic belief that invalidates or pathologizes gender identities that are different from those assigned at birth (Ansara & Hegarty, 2012). In this view, being born male, identifying as a man, and assuming masculine gender roles and expressions represent the norm. Having an experience that differs from this is seen as deviant or pathological. These stereotypes emphasize the ways that trans individuals are viewed, not for who they know themselves to be (man, woman, nonbinary, etc.), but rather for their assigned sex at birth or based on their genitalia.

Invisibility of Non-Binarism

Gendered sexuality was also seen in stereotypes that render non-binarism invisible. Notably, very few participants

named nonbinary people in their responses, and when they did, they name them in relation to their relative invisibility.

I feel like nonbinary people are invisible, so there aren't really stereotypes about our sex, except perhaps misconceptions around the wide array of who nonbinary people are attracted to. (Participant 12, nonbinary, White, scoliosexual).

In other instances, participants described how nonbinary people are represented in distorted way.

That trans nonbinary folx are watered-down versions of gender norms (rather than rejecting them altogether, existing beyond them). (Participant 162, agender, White, queer).

In comparison to other gender minorities, nonbinary individuals carry the unique experience of public invisibility (Pulice-Farrow et al., 2020a, b). Thus, the experiences of nonbinary people remain relatively unknown to the general public, including professional psychologists and sexologists (Barker, 2007). Just as the experience of bisexual people, nonbinary people's experience remains invisible or becomes a distortion of stereotypes applied to other social groups.

Absence of Stereotyping

The absence of sexual stereotyping for trans individuals was described by participants in two different ways: (1) avoidance of stereotyping; (2) not aware of any stereotypes. Some trans individuals report actively avoiding environments where they might be stereotyped or attending queer environments where stereotyping does not occur.

I'm only dating queer people, anyway, [...] I don't have to deal with straight people so it doesn't matter to me what they think we do in bed. (Participant 143, non-medically transitioned trans guy, pansexual, White).

Some participants also state that they were not aware of stereotypes regarding their sexuality.

I haven't heard any such stereotypes. (Participant 261, nonbinary, pansexual, multiracial).

There could be several reasons why some trans individuals may not report experiencing sexual stereotypes. One possibility is that they may not have encountered these stereotypes in their personal experiences or they may not perceive them as negative or harmful. Another possibility is that they may not feel comfortable disclosing their experiences with sexual stereotypes due to social stigma. It could also be that they have internalized these stereotypes to the extent that they may not be consciously aware of them or perceive them as a form of stereotyping. For instance, previous research has demonstrated that cis women may subscribe to the belief

that their gender is less capable in math-related tasks (i.e., Burkley et al., 2013), Black students may adhere to the notion that their ethnic group is less proficient academically compared to White students (i.e., Okeke et al., 2009), and gay men may acknowledge the idea that their group is more prone to certain mental health disorders (i.e., Boysen et al., 2011). Additionally, it should be noted that the literature on self-stereotyping within the trans community is currently absent. However, future studies may seek to investigate this phenomenon in greater detail.

Conclusions

The present study investigated sexual stereotypes attributed to the trans population for the first time in the literature. When discussing intergroup relations, discrimination, labeling, or stereotyping, it is crucial to keep in mind that these processes occur within power structures and dynamics (Link & Phelan, 2001). Therefore, any discussion on stereotypes should take into account the societal and institutional power structures that shape and maintain these beliefs. Failure to do so may result in an oversimplified or individualistic understanding of stereotypes, which does not capture the complexities and nuances of these phenomena in the real world. Thus, it is important to acknowledge the cultural context in which our study was conducted, which is within a predominantly Western societal context where trans and nonbinary individuals are subject to systemic discrimination and marginalization (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2020). Findings shed light on important themes that characterize the stereotyped sexual experiences of trans people. This study focused on sexual stereotypes directly experienced by transmasculine and nonbinary people. As Fielding (2021) points out, societal narration of trans people has centered on their experience with their bodies and sexuality. Thus, it becomes essential to understand what models have now become implicitly part of how we look at trans people's sexuality. Four central themes emerged regarding sexual stereotypes attributed to trans people. The first two themes (deviant sexuality stereotyping and absence of stereotyping) represent two macro-areas of sexual stereotype content that we might think of as opposites of a continuum. On the one hand, there would be deviant and "kink" sexuality and, on the other, the absence or reduced sexual activity due to body discomfort and gender dysphoria. Therefore, trans people are portrayed in their sexuality and intimacy as either "extreme/kinky" or "inactive," representing the extremes of a normal statistical distribution. Basically, by default or by excess, the sexuality of trans people seems to be represented as "exotic" compared to cisgender "normality" in a process of exoticization (Buggs, 2020). This idea revolves around the contrast between two opposing perspectives on trans individuals. On

one hand, the medical tradition, exemplified by figures like Harry Benjamin, asserts that "true transgender" individuals are asexual by definition (Benjamin, 1967). According to this view, transgender identity is primarily understood as a medical condition, detached from sexual desire or expression. On the other hand, there is the hypersexualization of transgender individuals prevalent in society. This refers to the tendency to overly focus on the sexual aspects of transgender people's lives, often reducing them to objects of fetishization or objectification. Transgender individuals are often portrayed through a sexual lens, perpetuating stereotypes and contributing to their marginalization and stigmatization (Anzani & Prunas, 2023).

The third important result concerns the modality of stereotyping, which some people seem to base on the sex assigned at birth, while others on the gender identity of the trans person. These two ways of stereotyping are different from those identified by Gallagher and Bodenhausen (2021), although they involve different stereotypes. In fact, their study focuses on stereotypes in terms of attributions of masculinity, femininity, traits of agency, and communality, whereas our work deals more specifically with sexuality-related stereotypes. The de-gendering mechanism of transgender groups is not observed in our research. However, the authors draw attention to the possibility that there are individual variations in the way we categorize and think about gender in regard to these categories. More specifically, research on gender stereotyping suggests that the content of stereotypes may be influenced by essentialist gender attitudes (Gallagher & Bodenhausen, 2021). In Western societies, gender groups are heavily essentialized (e.g., Swigger & Meyer, 2019), many people hold this view because it fits with the predominant cultural model, which holds that women and men are not fundamentally the same. The essentialization of gender frequently rests on nature-based assumptions about what gender is and how it develops, assumptions that highlight the supposedly unchanging, stable, and common traits of a certain group (Gallagher & Bodenhausen, 2021). The authors also discuss how the more gender is understood in an essentialist way, the more likely it is that trans people will be seen as atypical and deviant. This perspective suggests that individual characteristics, such as essentialist beliefs, may be one reason why the pattern of stereotyping of trans people in our sample is different. We can speculate that people who are stereotyped based on the gender allocated from birth may hold more opinions that gender is "natural" than people who did not. In the future, it may be useful to control the levels of endorsement of essentialist beliefs in relation to the ways in which transgender people are stereotyped. On the other hand, it is possible that some participants did not apply de-gendering stereotyping because they do not perceive it as inaccurate or problematic. Since the participants were specifically asked about inaccurate stereotypes, it is plausible

that they did not mention stereotypes that they consider to be harmless, accurate, or to which they have little reaction. For instance, the idea of “man up!” or having an active role in sexuality may be gender stereotypes that trans men find inherently problematic, therefore not having those stereotypes applied to them may be something they see favorably.

Limitations and Future Directions

The present study aimed to examine the presence of sexual stereotypes encountered by transmasculine and nonbinary individuals. However, it must be acknowledged that the sample was not representative of trans and nonbinary people in general in terms of racial diversity, age, and for the absence of representation of transfeminine individuals. Another limitation relates to sampling and concerns regarding online data recruitment, with extant literature suggesting that online recruitment leads to an overrepresentation of White, middle-class, and educated participants (Christian et al., 2008). The current study represented mainly young adults between 18 and 35 years, and results should be read considering this limitation. Specifically, the results likely best represent young, educated, White transmasculine and nonbinary individuals' experiences of sexual stereotyping. Moreover, the formulation of the question as asking participants to generate inaccurate stereotypes may have constrained the range of possible answers, and that asking participants to generate stereotypes without referring to accuracy might have produced different results. Ultimately, the investigation of stereotypes was done in the target population of stereotypes and not in the cisgender population, until now the only reference population for the study of stereotypes about trans people. However, this mode allowed us an initial exploration by reducing social desirability effects. Despite these limitations, the present findings contribute to a better understanding of sexual stereotypes associated with trans and nonbinary individuals. Finally, the results provide insights into how years of pathologizing trans identities, bodies, and sexualities have become internalized and perpetuated.

Policy Implication

Particularly when they relate to sexuality, stereotypes can seem harmless. However, they can have a significant cascade effect that ranges from issues with interpersonal relationships to more systemic ones. Consider the relationship between promiscuity and the men who have sex with men (MSM) community as an example. The perception of gay people's low morality and the opposition to gay rights are predicted by believing their propensity for promiscuity (Pinsof & Haselton, 2017). We can think that restrictions on MSM's ability to donate blood in several nations could

be rooted in sexual stereotypes of their promiscuity (Grace et al., 2020). Similarly, for trans people, sexual stereotypes can have consequences at the level of interpersonal relationships, for example, disgust or negative reactions related to the perception of deviance and immorality; paternalistic or pietistic reactions, in relation to the perception of a category afflicted only by pain and dysphoria; and sexualization and fetishization if they are perceived as sexual objects and promiscuous. However, this can also have policy implications, for example, on the use of dressing rooms or toilets in public places. If you hold the belief that trans women are sexual predators or abusers, you are more likely to support the ban on trans women using women's restrooms. From this standpoint, it is essential to investigate stereotypes since they must be disregarded in social policies that promote inclusiveness and the general welfare of the community. As a result, encouraging diversity in the social environment relies on professional research, training, and education, as well as broader knowledge and information dissemination.

Author Contribution The first, third, and fourth authors contributed to the study conception and design. Material preparation, data collection, and analysis were performed by Annalisa Anzani and Louis Lindley, with the collaboration of Laura Siboni. The first draft of the manuscript was written by Annalisa Anzani, and all authors commented on previous versions of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding Open access funding provided by Università degli Studi di Milano - Bicocca within the CRUI-CARE Agreement.

Availability of Data and Material The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author, Annalisa Anzani. The data are not publicly available due to the privacy of research participants.

Code Availability Not applicable.

Declarations

Ethics Approval The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Towson University.

Research Involving Human Participants All procedures were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and national research committees and with the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki.

Informed Consent All participants in this work provided informed consent.

Competing Interests The authors declare no competing interests.

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