

Sexual and Spatial Relations: How Transgender and Nonbinary Individuals Navigate Sexuality and Sexual Satisfaction



THE UNIVERSITY
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at CHAPEL HILL

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Background

Sexual satisfaction (SS) has marked social impacts: life satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, lower levels of anxiety and depression.

Predominantly focused on cisgender-heterosexual (cishet) individuals.

Often thought of as solely shaped by individuals and their experiences, as something devoid of the social world.

- Disregards the role of social, political, and cultural forces.

Transgender and nonbinary SS

- Individualized view of satisfaction + transnormativity and medicalization

Concealing of Relations

Transnormativity: dominant ideology that stratifies transness by positioning the transness that goes through the medical model as the only "legitimate" form.

- Masks the amorphisms of gender, satisfaction, expectations, and assumptions.

Intimate Justice: a framework that looks at how sociopolitical inequities impacts sexual experiences.

- Actions
 - Evaluations
 - Expectations
- Leads to one type of limiting conclusion

Methodology + Research Questions

Does the sociopolitical world impact transgender and nonbinary (TNB) individuals' sexuality and satisfaction?

- View of yourself as a sexual being?

How do transgender and nonbinary individuals navigate sexuality?

- What does sexual satisfaction mean for TNB individuals.

What has being transgender brought to your life? What do you find joyful about being trans?

Recruited through Reddit, campus club emailing, UNC study database, and flyers.

10 in-depth interviews: 45-70 minutes each

81 Qualtrics responses

Findings

3 Main Findings

- Every interviewee was sexually satisfied.
- Autonomy and agency characterize interviewees' sexuality and desire for space, not body dissatisfaction or dysphoria,
- Building and finding a trans-positive space helped feelings of validation and autonomy.
- Sexual spatiality: a constant doing and process

Satisfaction

Very satisfied (n=4), Satisfied (n=5),

Slightly satisfied (n=1).

Not contingent on medicalization.

Orgasm does not mean satisfaction-> counters cishet sexual scripts and transnormative medicalized views of satisfaction.

Sasha, a White, queer nonbinary trans woman, shared

- If someone has a really narrow view of sexuality, they will probably ... look at this fact that ... you don't have much orgasms. And they would say, well, there's no way that could be effective as my sex life, but like, it completely is.

Ray, a Middle Eastern, queer, nonbinary, individual shared:

I was assumed to want to engage in specific sexual practices ... I think the projections of like how I'm expected to be just, they like work most perfectly when they come from cis men. Because they like think you're like, a cis woman who wants to do ... all the like straight things that people do in sex.

I'm experiencing other people act as if you can't be non-binary ... or you can't be trans if you're like from that background [Middle East], I think that's challenging.

Apollo, a Black, pansexual, nonbinary individual, shared:

My self-image as a trans person, like how I feel myself, my own body. That was like, mostly it's kind of tied to like how I view myself as a Black person in America.

Ray shared:

You're learning from that situation that your boundaries are valid... that your needs are reasonable and normal ... I think that just like fills your battery in a way as a human in terms of like, like self-acceptance and like feeling grounded in your boundaries in a way that I think is just helpful for for interactions more generally.

Adrienne, a White, queer, nonbinary, transmasculine individual shared:

It became a lot more like exploratory and a lot more intertwined with other facets of my life. Like not just content creation, but like sexual liberation ... it ended up becoming ... a wholly like consumed ... exploration that took me in a lot of different places that I didn't expect.

Autonomy and Agency

Autonomy to create sexual experiences true to themselves and autonomy from imposed normative sexual and gender experiences

How is autonomy created?

- Experiences within sexual & non-sexual domains + individual positionalities
- Framed their sexuality and informed them how to engage with sex and achieve satisfaction.

Sexuality, satisfaction, and sexual autonomy are very social!

No clear delineation between the sociopolitical world and sexuality and satisfaction.

Sexual Spatiality

Sociocultural ideals constitute the relations we have with our environment/space.

- Space is upheld through political processes; therefore, it is inherently gendered.

Sexuality and gender as a way of changing and interacting with space.

Being able to find and create a space separate from imposed cisheteronormativity-> greater satisfaction, self-determination, and confidence.

- Online sexual content creation, kink, social media & community validation

Interviewees' Demographics

	race	sexualo~n	genderidentity
1.	Hispanic	Bisexual	Trans man
2.	White	Queer	Nonbinary, transfeminine
3.	White	Lesbian	Trans woman
4.	White	Queer	Transmasculine, genderqueer
5.	Middle Eastern	Queer	Nonbinary
6.	Black	Pansexual	Nonbinary
7.	White	Queer	Trans man, transmasculine
8.	White	Queer	Trans man
9.	Indigenous, Latine	Pansexual	Trans man
10.	White	Queer	Nonbinary, transmasculine

Conclusions & Implications

Sexual satisfaction is something not solely created from bodies or social hierarchies but rather interviewees' sexual ontologies reflect an accumulation of their relations and experiences.

- Sexual spatiality as a new way to look at sexuality and satisfaction.

Trans joy is prevalent and all encompassing.

- Trans joy and sexual joy are inseparable.
- Joy in introspectiveness