Factors Associated with Frequency of Gender Identity Nonaffirmation

Microaggressions among Transgender Persons

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Abstract

As many as 45% of transgender individuals experience gender-based victimisation (GBV), including physical and sexual violence; social, workplace, and housing discrimination; and family or social rejection. In addition to overt forms of GBV, transgender individuals experience gender identity-related microaggressions: subtle, frequently-occurring aversive events that convey nonaffirmation or rejection of an individual's gender identity. The degree to which a transgender individual is socially perceived as the gender with which they identify, sometimes referred to as *passing*, as well as sociodemographic factors such as annual income and race/ethnicity, have been previously linked with experiencing overt GBV. This study aimed to quantitatively assess whether self-rated degree of passing, age, annual income, and non-white race/ethnicity were associated with the frequency with which transgender individuals experience less overt identity-related victimisation in the form of gender nonaffirmation microaggressions. Among an age-diverse sample of U.S. adolescent and adult transgender persons ($n = 224$) who responded to 14 situational prompts of nonaffirmation microaggressions, adolescents experienced the highest average weekly frequency of nonaffirmation microaggressions ($M = 2.16$, $SD = 1.48$). Factors significantly associated with increased average weekly frequency of nonaffirmation microaggressions included lower degree of passing and lower income, while older age was associated with lower frequency of microaggressions.

Keywords: transgender, minority stress, microaggressions, sociodemographic, passing

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Microaggressions among Transgender Persons

Introduction

As many as 45% of transgender individuals experience gender-based victimisation (GBV), which can include physical and sexual violence; social, workplace, and housing discrimination; and rejection in family, social, and media (e.g., social or news media) contexts (Barboza, Dominguez, and Chance 2016; Bradford et al. 2013; Goldblum et al. 2012; McNeil, Ellis, and Eccles 2017). Experiencing GBV is associated with depression and anxiety symptoms, substance use, and suicidality among transgender persons, including with an up to fourfold increase in likelihood of attempting suicide (Clements-Nolle, Marx, and Katz 2006; Haas, Rodgers, and Herman 2014; Klein and Golub 2016; Tebbe and Moradi 2016; Testa et al. 2012; Wolford-Clevenger et al. 2018). In addition to overt GBV, transgender individuals experience victimisation in the form of gender identity-related microaggressions, which can be defined as subtle, frequently-occurring aversive events that convey nonaffirmation or rejection of an individual's gender identity (Nadal, Rivera, and Corpus 2010; Sue et al. 2007). Among transgender persons, experiencing increased frequency of identity nonaffirmation microaggressions is associated with 150–240% greater odds of past-year depression symptoms, past-year suicide ideation, and lifetime suicide ideation or attempt (Parr and Howe 2019).

Common identity nonaffirmation microaggressions include misuse of gendered pronouns or an individual's preferred name, being stared at in public, being asked invasive or objectifying questions about one's body or stage of transition, or being instructed to use a public facility of a different gender (Nadal, Rivera, and Corpus 2010; Parr and Howe 2019).

Nonaffirmation microaggressions can occur both interpersonally and via social or other forms

of media; examples of the latter include witnessing a transgender person being asked intrusive questions about their genitalia or gender confirmation procedures, or hearing public expressions or insinuations that to be transgender is associated with psychological or physiological pathologies or abnormalities (Nadal, Rivera, and Corpus 2010; Parr and Howe 2019). While the occurrence of both overt and subtle forms of victimisation related to gender identity have been linked to poor psychosocial outcomes among transgender individuals, victimisation in the form of microaggressions may pose a particularly acute risk to transgender individuals' socioemotional health because microaggressions frequently occur as a part of daily life and may lead to an ongoing state of perceived identity rejection or nonaffirmation (Galupo, Henise, and Davis 2014; Nadal et al. 2014; Parr and Howe 2019).

The development and impact of chronic states of socioemotional stress that are related to one or more minority identities has been examined using the minority stress model, among both cisgender sexual and racial minorities (Meyer 2003) and transgender individuals (Testa et al. 2015). As elaborated by the minority stress model, stressors related to minority identity are additive to more commonly experienced stressors (e.g., relationship or financial strain, academic stress, or concern over job performance) (Meyer 2003). Testa et al. (2015) define a type of gender minority-specific stressor, *nonaffirmation*, which describes experiences in which a gender minority person feels their gender identity is not positively recognised or affirmed by others, or is reduced, denied, or invalidated. As described above, nonaffirmation can be conveyed through microaggressions (Chang and Chung 2015; Parr and Howe 2019; Testa et al. 2015). Gender identity nonaffirmation microaggressions can be expressed in many forms: Nadal, Rivera, and Corpus (2010) developed a thematic taxonomy of nine types of sexual and gender identity nonaffirmation microaggressions, and additional research (e.g., Galupo, Henise,

and Davis 2014; Galupo and Resnick 2016; Parr and Howe 2019) has aimed to further identify transgender-specific nonaffirmation microaggressions, to elaborate contexts and conditions which enable nonaffirmation microaggressions, and to relate experiences of nonaffirmation microaggressions to the occurrence of mental health outcomes. Parr and Howe (2019), for instance, found increases in average weekly frequency of nonaffirmation microaggression events to be associated with substantially elevated risk of depression symptoms and suicidality among transgender persons.

As the impact of nonaffirmation microaggressions continues to be characterised, an important and parallel need is to investigate factors that may increase or decrease the frequency with which nonaffirmation microaggressions occur among transgender persons. Identifying such factors may help to further define and describe the minority stress environment occupied by transgender individuals, and to facilitate identification of modifiable risk and protective factors. Conceivably, these factors may be grouped into at least two domains: aspects of physiology or gender presentation that serve to disclose or conceal transgender identity, and resources (e.g., income) that may govern transgender individuals' access to identity-affirming healthcare or to environments that are more supportive or less aversive to their gender identity (e.g., more inclusive neighborhoods or cities). We next describe prior work to examine each of these domains and how they may relate to the occurrence of identity nonaffirmation microaggressions.

Concealment, Disclosure, and Passing

The degree to which a transgender individual is perceived as the gender with which they identify (e.g., as a woman if they have transitioned to a female gender identity), sometimes referred to as *passing*, has been proposed as a moderator of minority stress experiences

(Gamarel et al. 2014; Sun et al. 2016). Degree of passing is a function of numerous individual attributes, including physiological features and traits (such as body shape, facial features, and voice), clothing, and hairstyle. Physiological attributes that align with an individual's gender identity may only be accessible through medical procedures or may not be accessible at all depending on individual physiology; as a result, passing is not universally accessible (Testa et al. 2015). Further, such alignment is defined by social norms and expectations, and by consequence, individuals can have their transgender identity involuntarily disclosed when their body or other aspects of gendered expression are perceived to violate those norms and expectations. Such disclosures of transgender identity may elevate one's likelihood of experiencing gender identity-related victimisation. Indeed, transgender individuals report concern that not passing risks their personal safety (Rood et al. 2017), and link an inability to pass with social and workplace discrimination and conflicts (Bockting 2008; Xavier et al. 2013). Moreover, inability to pass may lead to more frequent experiences of identity nonaffirmation microaggressions, such as being stared at in public, or being subjected to unwanted and invasive questioning about one's body, transgender identity, or transition.

Importantly, passing represents a complex negotiation of personal and social identity, and is not always a desired aim of transgender persons (Sevelius 2013; Teich 2012). For some transgender individuals, passing can represent a final stage of transition marked by being perceived as a (cisgender) person of the gender with which they identify. At the same time, however, this perception of alignment with social norms of a male or female gender identity may produce concerns for transgender individuals, including anxiety related to controlling disclosure of their identity as a transgender person or feelings of disconnection from transgender cultures and communities; these ongoing concerns may, themselves, become a form

of minority stress for transgender persons (Sevelius 2013). Passing has also been recognised as problematically connoting the *appearance* of occupying the gender with which one identifies rather than the actual occupation of that gender, and as being reflective of inflexible and non-inclusive social gender norms rather than of a meaningful stage of a transgender person's transition to the gender with which they identify (Davidmann 2010). Nevertheless, transgender individuals have reported that not sufficiently appearing as a cis-typical gender identity, often operationalised as not passing, leads to experiencing some form of stigmatisation frequently or even daily (Sevelius 2013). Being perceived as non-cisgender may also precipitate both overt victimisation and discrimination and more subtle forms of stigmatisation and invalidation such as identity nonaffirmation microaggressions (Begun and Kattari 2016; Rundall and Vecchietti 2010).

Sociodemographic Factors

Access to passing, such as through resources for hormone therapy and gender confirmation surgery, is sometimes referred to as *passing privilege*, or an individual's ability to access concealment of their stigmatised identity (Sevelius 2013; Xavier 1999). As such, sociodemographic factors such as income, race/ethnicity, and age may relate to the frequency with which transgender individuals experience identity nonaffirmation microaggressions. For instance, these factors may serve as proxies for accessibility of passing, such that individuals with higher income or that experience less stigmatisation related to other minority identities may have greater resources for, and experience fewer systematic barriers to, knowledgeable and affirming healthcare (Sevelius 2013). Further, sociodemographic factors may have a role in facilitating (or limiting) a transgender person's ability to alter situational aspects of their daily experience that may be linked to risk of exposure to nonaffirmation microaggressions. Greater

financial resources or older age, for example, could enhance individuals' mobility to relocate to an environment less hostile toward their identity, while lower income or younger age could limit this mobility. Indeed, Reisner et al. (2016) found that transgender persons with higher income had fewer experiences of everyday discrimination (e.g., being treated with less respect than other people; Williams et al. 1997), while Bockting and colleagues (2013) and Bradford and colleagues (2013) found that among transgender individuals, having a non-white race/ethnicity and having lower income were associated with experiencing gender-related discrimination.

In summary, there is a growing body of research examining the impact of gender identity-related victimisation, discrimination, and stigmatisation experiences on transgender individuals' mental health and social wellbeing. Complementary to this research is study of factors that may place transgender individuals at greater risk of encountering victimisation experiences, including qualitative study to identify potential risk and protective factors and quantitative investigation to verify and assess the magnitude of relations between risk factors and the occurrence of gender-related victimisation. Existing qualitative literature has elucidated a number of potential predictors of victimisation experiences, including degree of passing and sociographic factors such as income and race/ethnicity, but there remains a need to further validate their relation with varying forms of gender identity-related victimisation. To address this gap, in the present study we investigate whether self-rated degree of passing is associated with frequency of minority stress experiences in the form of identity nonaffirmation microaggressions among both adult and adolescent transgender persons. We also examine whether sociodemographic factors, including age, annual income, and race/ethnicity, are associated with microaggression frequency. A priori hypotheses were that lower self-rated

degree of passing, lower income, and non-white race/ethnicity would be independently associated with a higher average weekly frequency of identity nonaffirmation microaggressions. A secondary hypothesis was that frequency of microaggressions would decrease with age, due to age serving as a potential proxy for accessibility of passing. All phases of research were approved by the University of Oregon Institutional Review Board.

Materials and Methods

As described in further detail in Parr and Howe (2019), a focus group study was conducted with 36 adolescent and adult gender and sexual minority individuals in three locations across the U.S.; from this study, 14 identity nonaffirmation microaggressions were identified as commonly occurring among transgender participants. Reported microaggression events were adapted into 14 situational prompts (see Appendix A) for a survey questionnaire developed for online administration. This questionnaire was disseminated via social media groups (e.g., Facebook groups), e-mail lists associated with U.S. national and regional organisations serving transgender individuals, and through online social accounts or platforms having a user base primarily composed of gender and sexual minority persons. An informed consent procedure was integrated into the online survey platform and inclusion criteria for participating in the survey were U.S. residence and being at least 14 years of age; there were no specific exclusion criteria. Among adolescent participants aged 14–17 years, we were conscious of the risk of unwanted disclosure of participants' gender and/or sexual identity should parental notification or consent be required, and consequently we sought and were granted an Institutional Review Board waiver of this requirement. During two rounds of dissemination over an approximately three-month period, 886 survey responses were initiated. An 80% completion threshold was implemented, after which 447 responses remained. As a result of the

recruitment approach described above, which was intended to maximise the number of transgender individuals recruited, and because several of the social media platforms used to disseminate the questionnaire were oriented toward sexual and gender minority persons generally, respondents made up a convenience sample of both transgender and non-transgender individuals (e.g., gender non-binary or cisgender sexual minority persons). The subsample of respondents who identified as transgender ($n = 224$) was used for this study; gender non-binary participants were not included in this subsample (see Limitations section for rationale). Complete demographic information for transgender respondents is provided in Table 1.

Measures

Each microaggression prompt was followed by three items assessing the weekly frequency and self-rated emotional intensity of the microaggression event, and the social and emotional responses elicited by the event. In the present study, the frequency item (“How often in a typical week do you feel something like this occurs to you?”) was used to calculate each participant’s mean number of identity nonaffirmation microaggression events experienced per week. Item internal consistency was assessed prior to calculating means and was found to be high ($\alpha = .88$). Participants’ average weekly frequency of nonaffirmation microaggressions served as the outcome variable in all analyses. Factors examined for their association with frequency of nonaffirmation microaggressions included an item assessing self-rated passing (“Do you believe you visually ‘pass’ as the gender with which you identify?”), as well as participant age category, annual income category, and race/ethnicity. To address imbalance in responses to the race/ethnicity item, the variable was dichotomised into white (non-Hispanic) and non-white categories. Additionally, a variable assessing the extent to which a participant was “out” as transgender within social and professional contexts (“How would you describe the

types and number of people who know about your status as a transgender person?”) was included as a control variable in all final models to adjust for differing levels of openness or concealment of transgender identity. Variable category levels are provided in Table 1.

Analytic Approach

Two sets of ordinary least squares multiple linear regression models were used to assess relations of interest. One set included independent and control variables related to passing (self-rated degree of passing, with age and outness as transgender as control variables), and the second contained sociodemographic variables (age, annual income, race/ethnicity) and highest education level and outness as transgender as control variables. Fitting the sociodemographic variables in a separate model was necessary because income was not assessed among adolescent participants (those aged 14-17 years), and as a result those models used a reduced data set with adolescent participants ($n = 16$) removed. Models were fitted in a hierarchical fashion: First, initial models were fitted with only the passing and sociodemographic variables of interest, followed by models with control variables added. Model multiple- R^2 was compared at each step, and tenability of linear regression assumptions were inspected using final models. Further, because data were available on respondents' region of residence, before single-level regression was carried out an unconditional multilevel linear model (including only the microaggression frequency outcome variable and the region variable at the cluster level) was fitted and intraclass correlation coefficient calculated to assess whether substantial variation was present at the higher regional level. The coefficient did not indicate regional variation in the outcome variable, and as a result single-level regression models were used for all analyses. Finally, data were inspected for missingness before analysis. Fewer than 1% of item responses were missing. Those minimal data that were missing were primarily on sociodemographic variables, in a

pattern suggesting a potential violation of the missing at random assumption for data imputation (e.g., all demographic items missing). Consequently, these data were not imputed and any deletions to analytic samples are noted in Tables 3 and 4. Statistical significance was evaluated at an $\alpha = .05$ using 95% confidence intervals (CIs). All analyses were conducted in R Version 3.6.0 (R Core Team 2018; RStudio Team 2018).

Results

Descriptive Findings

Average weekly frequencies of identity nonaffirmation microaggressions by age and status as a transgender woman or man are presented in Figure 1. The average frequency of microaggressions among all participants ($n = 224$) was 1.22 microaggression events per week ($SD = 1.04$, range = 0–5.57). Transgender women ($n = 136$) experienced an average of 1.12 microaggression events each week ($SD = 0.94$, range = 0–4.57), compared to 1.37 events ($SD = 1.16$, range = 0–5.57) among transgender men ($n = 88$). Transgender women and men did not significantly differ in microaggression frequency.¹ By age category, adolescents aged 14–17 ($n = 16$) experienced the highest average weekly frequency of nonaffirmation microaggressions ($M = 2.16$ events, $SD = 1.48$); seven respondents experienced no microaggressions. Participant response frequencies for passing-related variables and sociodemographic characteristics for the total transgender participant sample, as well as transgender women and transgender men subgroups, are provided in Table 1. For passing-related variables, the majority of participants (61.7%) endorsed passing most or all of the time, while 21.5% indicated they do not pass all or most of the time. A lower proportion of transgender women (54.4%) reported passing most or

¹ Group difference in mean weekly frequency of nonaffirmation microaggressions was assessed using a Welch's t -test for independent samples. The logarithm of frequency was used to adjust for nonnormality.

all of the time compared to transgender men (72.7%), while 43.0% of transgender women endorsed being “out” as transgender to most everyone in contrast to 15.9% of transgender men. Responses of transgender women and men were significantly different on both the passing item ($\chi^2 = 11.61, p = .032$)² and the outness item ($\chi^2 = 21.47, p = .002$). Among sociodemographic characteristics, transgender women and men significantly differed by age ($\chi^2 = 41.84, p = .002$), but they did not significantly differ by race/ethnicity, education level, or annual income.

Inferential Findings

Before interpretation of model results, model specification and fit were assessed. Correlation among independent variables for both sets of models was first inspected and was minimal, suggesting a lack of multicollinearity among predictor variables.³ Following model fitting, examination of diagnostic plots indicated that linear regression assumptions were tenable for final models reported in Tables 2 and 3. A sensitivity analysis (not shown) was conducted on all models with participant status as transgender woman or transgender man included as a predictor. Including gender status did not meaningfully alter model fit, explained variance, interpretation of other predictors, or provide additional substantive findings, so the variable was not included in final models.

Results of fitted models to assess the relation of passing and sociodemographic-related variables with average weekly frequency of identity nonaffirmation microaggressions are shown in Table 2 and 3. Final models explained a moderate amount of variance in the microaggression frequency outcome (multiple- $R^2 = .30$ – $.31$, adjusted multiple- $R^2 = .25$ – $.26$). Degree of passing was significantly associated with microaggression frequency, with lower degrees of passing

² For χ^2 -tests of differences between groups, p -values were derived using a Monte Carlo procedure (500 replications) for exact estimation. As a result, degrees of freedom are not reported.

³ For the passing model predictors, median $r = .12$ (range = $-.06$ – $.14$), and for the sociodemographic model predictors, median $r = .01$ (range = $-.21$ – $.48$).

associated with greater increases in microaggression frequency after adjusting for outness and age. Compared to passing all of the time, passing most of the time was associated with a 0.51-event increase in weekly microaggression frequency ($SE = 0.16$, 95% CI [0.19, 0.82]), while never passing was associated with a 1.23-event increase in weekly microaggression frequency ($SE = 0.28$, 95% CI [0.67, 1.79]). Among sociodemographic variables, earning a moderately low annual income (US\$20,000–34,999) was significantly associated with microaggression frequency. Compared to earning greater than US\$100,000 annually, a moderately-low income was associated with a 0.67-event increase in average weekly frequency of nonaffirmation microaggressions ($SE = 0.24$, 95% CI [0.21, 1.14]), adjusting for race/ethnicity, age, education level, and degree of outness. Additionally, participant age levels of 25 years or older were significantly associated with decreased average weekly frequency of microaggressions compared to the 18–24 age category, after adjusting for annual income, race/ethnicity, education, and degree of outness. Older age categories were found to have the most substantial reduction in microaggression frequency, with ages 50–64 being associated with a 0.94-event reduction in microaggression frequency ($SE = 0.23$, 95% CI [-1.39, -0.49]), and ages 65 or older associated with a 1.16-event reduction in microaggression frequency ($SE = 0.27$, 95% CI [-1.69, -0.62]). Having a non-white race/ethnicity was not found to be significantly associated with frequency of microaggressions.

Discussion

Increased frequency of gender identity nonaffirmation microaggressions is associated with substantially elevated odds of past-year suicide ideation and attempt, past-year withdrawal from regular activities, and with past-year sadness or hopelessness (Parr and Howe 2019). To extend this and other research that has linked degree of gender passing, income level, and

race/ethnicity to the occurrence of overt forms of gender-related victimisation among transgender persons (e.g., Begun and Kattari 2016; Bockting et al. 2013; Reisner et al. 2016), we examined whether the same factors influenced frequency of nonaffirmation microaggressions among a sample of transgender survey respondents. We also investigated the association of age with microaggression frequency, given the possibility that transgender individuals at older ages may have different experiences of microaggressions or have greater access to passing.

Study findings supported most hypotheses. We found that lower degrees of passing were significantly related to increased weekly frequency of identity nonaffirmation microaggressions after adjusting for the degree to which a transgender participant was “out” as transgender and for their age. Among sociodemographic variables, lower income was significantly associated with experiencing a higher weekly frequency of microaggressions when adjusting for other sociodemographic variables and outness. We also found that older age was associated with a reduced weekly frequency of microaggressions. Additionally, while there was not a significant association between non-white race/ethnicity and increased microaggression frequency in our sociodemographic model, similar effect sizes were seen across both models and indicated an increase in microaggression frequency among those with non-white race/ethnicity compared to those with non-Hispanic white race/ethnicity. Non-white race/ethnicity was associated with an increase of 0.14 events ($SE = 0.15$, 95% CI [-0.16, 0.44]) in average weekly frequency of microaggressions in the base model and an increase of 0.20 events ($SE = 0.15$, 95% CI [-0.09, 0.49]) in microaggression frequency in the final model after adjusting for annual income, age, education, and degree of outness. The directionality of this finding is in alignment with prior research relating race/ethnicity to experiencing gender-related victimisation (e.g., Bradford et al.

2013; Meyer 2003), and the non-significance of the coefficient here may be the result of the relatively small representation of those of non-white race/ethnicity in the study sample. Finally, in descriptive comparisons, transgender women and men were found to significantly differ in their reported level of passing and level of outness as transgender, with transgender women found to generally endorse lower degrees of passing and transgender men lower degrees of outness. Future studies should investigate why such differences may be present, including the possibilities that attainment of social or interpersonal expectations of “femaleness” may present unique barriers to passing, that social environments accessed by transgender men may be particularly aversive to being out as transgender, or that transgender men may feel less of a need to be out given their higher reported perception of passing.

Limitations and Implications

This study has several limitations. As a cross-sectional survey design, causal relations between degree of passing, sociodemographic factors, and the frequency of identity nonaffirmation microaggressions experienced by transgender individuals could not be ascertained. Moreover, the limited representation of racial and ethnic minorities in the study sample prevents inference on the additive (or multiplicative) associations that race may have with degree of passing, income, and other sociodemographic factors related to microaggression frequency (Balsam et al. 2011). Another important limitation of this sample is that it did not include respondents who identified as gender non-binary, gender non-conforming, or genderqueer. Inclusion of transgender respondents only was related to the focus of analyses being on passing as cisgender male or female, as operationalised in prior research (Gamarel et al. 2014; Sun et al. 2016). We recognise, however, that non-binary persons likely experience victimisation and related poorer health outcomes as a result of gender expressions not perceived

as cis-typical (Hart et al. 2019), and future studies in this line of research will assess passing in relation to perception as non-cisgender so as to be more inclusive of gender non-binary persons and experiences. Finally, while there was a disconcerting frequency of nonaffirmation microaggressions found among adolescents in this study, participants aged 14–17 made up a comparative minority of participants in the study sample. The findings of this study warrant future research that focuses on adolescents and has the dual aims of more fully examining the occurrence and experiences of nonaffirmation microaggressions and other gender identity-related minority stressors during this key developmental stage, and of identifying approaches to better facilitate access to gender-affirming healthcare and supportive school climates for transgender youth.

Despite these limitations, the primary finding of this study that among a moderate size, geographically- and age-diverse sample of transgender individuals, transgender persons' degree of passing was significantly and substantially associated with the frequency with which they experience gender identity nonaffirmation microaggressions sheds further light on how a complex aspect of many transgender individuals' lived experience – the degree to which they are recognised as a cisgender person of the gender with which they identify – relates to their exposure to adverse everyday stressors that serve to delegitimise their identity. Additionally, the finding that having a lower income is associated with experiencing a greater frequency of nonaffirmation microaggressions aligns with prior quantitative study (e.g., Bockting et al. 2013; Bradford et al. 2013) that has linked having a lower annual income with experiences of minority stressors in the form of gender-related discrimination and victimisation, and provides support to prior qualitative work (e.g., Sevelius 2013) in which transgender persons describe having greater income as a proxy for access to gender-affirming healthcare (and, potentially,

experiencing a greater degree of passing). Future study using longitudinal data should extend these findings by examining potential mediation relations (e.g., whether socioeconomic status partially or fully mediates the relation between degree of passing and microaggression frequency) in addition to the direct effects of these factors examined here. Lastly, with few exceptions (e.g., Gamarel et al. 2014; Scandurra et al. 2017), to our knowledge most prior studies that have assessed the occurrence of gender-related victimisation or discrimination have done so discretely (i.e., assessing whether victimisation happened or not). In this study, a continuous measure of victimisation intensity was utilised to provide finer-grained understanding of the range with which gender-related victimisation in the form of nonaffirmation microaggressions occurs among transgender individuals. Taken together, the findings of this study underline that while passing to achieve alignment with a social expectation of gender identity may not be obtainable or desirable for all transgender persons, transgender individuals should receive sufficient social and clinical support to achieve the expression of their gender identity with which they feel comfortable navigating their lived environment. Doing so will not eliminate experiences of gender-related victimisation in either overt or microaggressive forms, but such provisions may reduce the frequency with which they occur among transgender persons.

Declaration of Interest Statement

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Appendix A

Common Transgender Identity Nonaffirmation or Denial Microaggression Events Reported in Focus Groups

1. I have been stared at in public because of my identity.
2. I have been told that if I want to seem more like a “real” person of my identity, that I should change certain aspects of how I present my identity to be more like stereotypical versions of that identity.
3. It was suggested I use the changing room, restroom, or similar type of space of the gender clearly different from how I present my identity.
4. When I ask to be referred to by my chosen name, I am told my choice is not my “real” name.
5. I have been told to leave a restroom or other gender-identified facility or activity because I “do not belong there.”
6. I have been told to leave a restroom or other gender-identified facility or activity because my genitalia don’t match a stereotypical person of my identity.
7. I have heard people define my identity as an “it.”
8. I have had people see my identity as merely a process or series of procedures, not as a key component of who I am.
9. I have had people say loudly in public or even shout hurtful things at me in public that call me fake or seek to deny my identity.
10. I have been asked if I have tried “curing” my identity, as if it is a medical condition or mental illness.
11. Because of my identity, I have been labeled a predator, or been assumed to be a danger to others.

Media-Based Events

12. When I see my identity depicted in media, I feel like my identity is displayed as a curiosity or oddity.
13. I have heard people in the media define my identity as an “it.”
14. I have heard people in the media indicate they see my identity as merely a process or series of procedures, not as a key component of who I am.

Table 1

Sociodemographic and Passing-related Responses of Transgender Participants (n = 224)

	All Participants <i>N</i> = 224	Transgender Women <i>n</i> = 136	Transgender Men <i>n</i> = 88	<i>p</i>
	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	
Age				.002
14–17	16 (7.1)	5 (3.7)	11 (12.5)	
18–24	37 (16.5)	11 (8.1)	26 (29.5)	
25–34	47 (21.0)	24 (17.6)	23 (26.1)	
35–49	53 (23.7)	36 (26.5)	17 (19.3)	
50–64	51 (22.8)	41 (30.1)	10 (11.4)	
65+	20 (8.9)	19 (14.0)	1 (1.1)	
Race/ethnicity ^a				.335
African-American or Black	9 (4.0)	5 (3.7)	4 (4.5)	
American Indian	2 (0.9)	1 (0.7)	1 (1.1)	
Asian or Pacific Islander	4 (1.8)	0 (0)	4 (4.5)	
Hispanic or Latino	14 (6.3)	8 (5.9)	6 (6.8)	
White (non-Hispanic)	176 (78.9)	110 (81.5)	66 (75.0)	
Mixed race or ethnicity	15 (6.7)	9 (6.7)	6 (6.8)	
Other	3 (1.3)	2 (1.5)	1 (1.1)	
Education level				.054
Still attending high school	15 (6.8)	5 (3.7)	10 (11.5)	
High school graduate	19 (8.6)	11 (8.2)	8 (9.2)	
Some college	91 (41.2)	52 (38.8)	39 (44.8)	
Bachelor's degree	47 (21.3)	35 (26.1)	12 (13.8)	
Master's or doctoral degree	49 (22.2)	31 (23.1)	18 (20.7)	
Annual income (US\$)				.162
Less than 20,000	51 (25.0)	28 (21.9)	23 (30.3)	
20,000–34,999	34 (16.7)	17 (13.3)	17 (22.4)	
35,000–49,999	28 (13.7)	21 (16.4)	7 (9.2)	
50,000–74,999	42 (20.6)	26 (20.3)	16 (21.1)	
75,000–99,999	22 (10.8)	16 (12.5)	6 (7.9)	
Over 100,000	27 (13.2)	20 (15.6)	7 (9.2)	
U.S. region of residence ^b				.008

Pacific West	56 (25.6)	31 (23.7)	25 (28.4)	
Rocky Mountain West	49 (22.4)	24 (18.3)	25 (28.4)	
Midwest	20 (9.1)	11 (8.4)	9 (10.2)	
South	57 (26.0)	39 (29.8)	18 (20.5)	
Mid-Atlantic	25 (11.4)	22 (16.8)	3 (3.4)	
New England	12 (5.5)	4 (3.1)	8 (9.1)	
Degree of passing ^c				.032
No (always)	12 (5.4)	8 (5.9)	4 (4.5)	
No (most of the time)	36 (16.1)	26 (19.1)	10 (11.4)	
About half of the time	38 (17.0)	28 (20.6)	10 (11.4)	
Yes (most of the time)	55 (24.6)	35 (25.7)	20 (22.7)	
Yes (always)	83 (37.1)	39 (28.7)	44 (50.0)	
Types/number of people aware of transgender status ^c				.002
Very few, if any	5 (2.2)	2 (1.5)	3 (3.4)	
A few family and friends only	38 (17.0)	18 (13.3)	20 (22.7)	
Most family and friends	31 (13.9)	12 (8.9)	19 (21.6)	
Family, friends, and coworkers	77 (34.5)	45 (33.3)	32 (36.4)	
Most everyone	72 (32.3)	58 (43.0)	14 (15.9)	

Note. Counts and percentages reflect missingness ranging from 1–5 participants on each variable; respondents aged 14–17 years did not endorse the Annual Income item and are not included in income category counts/proportions. Differences in responses between self-identifying transgender women and men were evaluated for statistical significance using χ^2 -tests with *p*-values calculated using Monte Carlo simulation (500 replications) for exact estimation; as a result, degrees of freedom are not reported. Boldface indicated significance at an $\alpha = .05$ level. ^a To reduce imbalance, the Race/Ethnicity variable was dichotomised into white (non-Hispanic) and non-white for analyses. ^b U.S. states included in each region were provided on questionnaire. ^c Self-rated.

Table 2

Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analyses of the Association Between Passing and Frequency of Identity Nonaffirmation Microaggressions among Transgender Respondents (n = 223)^a

Variable	Model 1				Model 2			
	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>p</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>p</i>	95% CI
Intercept	0.73	0.11	< .001	[0.52, 0.93]	1.95	0.48	< .001	[1.01, 2.89]
Passing								
Yes (most of the time)	0.63	0.17	< .001	[0.29, 0.96]	0.51	0.16	.002	[0.19, 0.82]
About half of the time	0.79	0.19	< .001	[0.42, 1.16]	0.55	0.18	.003	[0.19, 0.92]
No (most of the time)	0.78	0.19	< .001	[0.40, 1.16]	0.53	0.19	.007	[0.14, 0.91]
No (always)	1.39	0.30	< .001	[0.81, 1.98]	1.23	0.28	< .001	[0.67, 1.79]
Outness								
Few family/friends					-0.27	0.43	.541	[-1.12, 0.59]
Most family/friends					-0.41	0.45	.361	[-1.29, 0.47]
Family, friends, and coworkers					-0.39	0.43	.364	[-1.23, 0.45]
Most everyone					-0.13	0.42	.749	[-0.96, 0.70]
Age								
18–24					-0.37	0.27	.170	[-0.91, 0.16]
25–34					-0.75	0.27	.006	[-1.28, -0.22]
35–49					-0.78	0.27	.004	[-1.32, -0.25]
50–64					-1.32	0.27	< .001	[-1.85, -0.80]
65+					-1.40	0.31	< .001	[-2.01, -0.78]
Multiple- <i>R</i> ² (Adj.)	.15 (.14)				.30 (.26)			
Model <i>F</i> test	<i>F</i> (4, 218) = 9.98, <i>p</i> < .001				<i>F</i> (13, 209) = 7.05, <i>p</i> < .001			

Note. For Passing variable, reference level is *Yes (always)*; for all other variables, reference level is the first level listed in Table 1. Boldface indicates statistical significance at $\alpha = .05$. SE = standard error. CI = confidence interval. ^a One observation deleted from analytic sample due to missingness.

Table 3

Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analyses of the Association Between Sociodemographic Variables and Frequency of Identity Nonaffirmation Microaggressions among Transgender Respondents (n = 203)^a

Variable	Model 1				Model 2			
	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>p</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>p</i>	95% CI
Intercept	1.19	0.30	< .001	[0.59, 1.78]	1.28	0.55	.020	[0.21, 2.36]
Annual income (US\$)								
75,000–99,999	-0.03	0.25	.899	[-0.53, 0.46]	-0.01	0.24	.976	[-0.48, 0.46]
50,000–74,999	-0.02	0.22	.919	[-0.46, 0.41]	-0.03	0.21	.871	[-0.45, 0.38]
35,000–49,999	0.03	0.24	.914	[-0.45, 0.50]	0.05	0.23	.836	[-0.41, 0.51]
20,000–34,999	0.67	0.24	.007	[0.19, 1.16]	0.67	0.24	.005	[0.21, 1.14]
Less than 20,000	0.13	0.23	.583	[-0.33, 0.59]	0.12	0.23	.596	[-0.33, 0.57]
Race/ethnicity								
Non-white	0.14	0.15	.348	[-0.16, 0.44]	0.20	0.15	.181	[-0.09, 0.49]
Age								
25–34	-0.28	0.20	.162	[-0.68, 0.11]	-0.53	0.20	.010	[-0.93, -0.13]
35–49	-0.27	0.21	.202	[-0.68, 0.14]	-0.52	0.21	.015	[-0.94, -0.10]
50–64	-0.70	0.22	.002	[-1.13, -0.26]	-0.94	0.23	< .001	[-1.39, -0.49]
65 +	-0.78	0.27	.005	[-1.31, -0.24]	-1.16	0.27	< .001	[-1.69, -0.62]
Education level								
Some college					0.00	0.22	.985	[-0.44, 0.43]
Bachelor's degree					0.61	0.25	.014	[0.12, 1.10]
Master's or doctoral degree					0.21	0.26	.433	[-0.31, 0.73]
Outness								
Few family/friends					-0.18	0.45	.693	[-1.07, 0.71]
Most family/friends					-0.25	0.46	.583	[-1.16, 0.66]
Family, friends, and coworkers					-0.36	0.44	.423	[-1.23, 0.52]
Most everyone					0.16	0.44	.715	[-0.71, 1.03]
Multiple- <i>R</i> ² (Adj.)	.20 (.16)				.31 (.25)			
Model <i>F</i> test	<i>F</i> (10, 192) = 4.81, <i>p</i> < .001				<i>F</i> (17, 185) = 4.98, <i>p</i> < .001			

Note. Participants aged 14–17 years excluded (minor participants did not endorse annual income item). Reference level for the Age variable is the 18–24 category, for the Education level variable is *high school graduate*, for the Annual Income variable is *over 100,000*, for the Race/Ethnicity variable is *white (non-Hispanic)*, and for the Outness variable is *very few, if any*. Education level of *still in high school* not represented in analytic sample due to exclusion of minor participants. Boldface indicates statistical significance at $\alpha = .05$. SE = standard error. CI = confidence interval. ^a Five observations deleted from analytic sample due to missingness.

Figure 1. Average weekly frequencies of identity nonaffirmation microaggressions by age and status as a transgender woman or transgender man. Error bars represent standard deviation of mean microaggression frequency. One participant identified as a transgender man 65 years or older, therefore no standard deviation is available for that category.