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Transmisogyny and its Effects

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Abstract

Trans femme individuals have faced high rates of violence, discrimination, and prejudice all because they are viewed as inferior for ‘choosing’ to leave behind male superiority. This study includes references to several studies to help readers to understand the discrimination faced by individuals on a feminine spectrum. There are themes of sexual violence against trans femmes, the discrimination faced by them in health care, educational institutes and shelters, and state violence against trans femmes across the globe. This study employed a phenomenological approach. Statistics were taken from research papers published by well-known trans-rights activists such as Julia Serano. Interviews were read and analyzed to form a perfect understanding of the bigotry faced by the trans community, especially the trans-femme community. The article concludes with recommendations to help make the world a safer place for trans femmes/individuals on the feminine spectrum.

Key Words: transmisogyny, trans femme, feminine, LGBTQIA+, transphobia, violence, discrimination, bigotry, prejudice.

Introduction

Transphobia isn't a new word, it has been around for ages. It has been around since the idea of being transgender came out into the open. And misogyny is a known term for the discrimination of women for the sole fact that they are women. Now put the two together, multiply the oppression by two, and here is yet another term that oppresses people for being themselves - transmisogyny. The discrimination faced by trans females/people on the feminine spectrum is not merely a result of transphobia but is better described as transmisogyny. This article covers trans-misogyny, the discrimination and oppression faced by trans-female people in several institutions, and the bigotry against those on the more female/feminine side of the spectrum.

Trans-misogyny is wholly based on the assumption that femaleness and femininity are inferior to maleness and masculinity. Studies show that feminine boys are viewed a lot more negatively than masculine girls. Boys are forbidden from crying, from going to the salon, and are viewed as ‘feminine and weird’ if they show interest in mainly ‘female-related’ interests, for example - makeup, fashion, etc. Transwomen are looked down upon for leaving behind a life of ‘superior maleness/masculinity’ for a life of ‘inferior femaleness/femininity.’ Transgender people are oppressed and discriminated against, but transwomen are oppressed more. Transmisogyny is to transphobia what womanism is to feminism. Double the oppression. The majority of the violence committed against the trans community targets individuals on the trans female/feminine spectrum.

Transmisogyny in media.

The portrayal of individuals on the trans female/feminine spectrum on social and mainstream media has a huge part to play in their oppression. They are constantly sexualized and mocked for ‘choosing’ to identify as feminine, as though a trans person chooses to be whatever they identify as. It is their desire to be feminine that is constantly ridiculed. Even though trans men/individuals on the masculine spectrum also deal with oppression, statistically those who identify as female face twice the trauma, oppression, and discrimination. They are portrayed as people who only begin to identify as female for sexual purposes, to be predatory, and just men who are pretending to be women for the attention of other, heterosexual men. On the other hand, individuals on the male spectrum are portrayed as those who wish to gain male privilege and not for sexual reasons.

Transgender individuals are viewed as mentally ill.

For a while, being transgender was listed as a mental illness when in reality it’s the distress caused by being unable to be oneself that is the mental illness, better known as gender dysphoria. Being trans has been declared as not a mental illness by the World Health Organisation as of 2019 (CNN 2019). But sadly, to this day we see conversion camps for those who identify as trans and trans individuals are still treated like mental patients who need help when in reality, they need to stop being oppressed for just existing.

Violence against trans femme individuals.

Hate crimes against transgender individuals are at their all-time high. Unfortunately, most of this violence is faced by transwomen/individuals who are on the feminine spectrum. Over half of anti-LGBTQIA+ homicides are perpetrated against trans women. And three-quarters of these homicides targeted trans women of color. We also see transmisogyny in state violence as well. 1 in every 5 trans women (21%) is incarcerated at least once in their life. It is even higher for black trans women (47%). Due to the gender profiling that is done by the police, trans people face disproportionately high rates of homelessness, poverty, and discrimination in jobs and housing says National Center for Gender Equality. Trans women are constantly targeted and incarcerated for being involved in sex work, even if they aren’t involved in said work. There have been many cases where trans women have been incarcerated for carrying a pack of condoms in New York City which is used as evidence of sex work. They are profiled, searched, and arrested for being a trans woman in the wrong place at the wrong time. They have also faced violence directly at the hands of the police. A 2012 study by the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Program found that transgender individuals face three times more police violence than cisgender people. Nearly half the transgender individuals who reach out to the police for help against these hate crimes experience mistreatment whilst asking for their help.

Transmisogyny in Women’s Spaces.

Unfortunately, transmisogyny is very much present in women’s spaces, as well as in LGBTQIA+ spaces. Even within the LGBTQIA+ community, trans women are constantly excluded and social spaces constantly denigrate trans people who are on the feminine spectrum. Masculine privilege is present heavily even in a safe space for those in the LGBTQIA+ community. Trans women are often excluded from women’s shelters. Many feminists even argue that trans women are not “real” or “authentic” women and rally against them. They are oppressed in spaces created to fight oppression which is saddening.

Transmisogyny in Health Care.

Transgender persons suffer from multiple health disparities in comparison to cisgender people. Trans femmes are often denied basic health care due to the lack of openness. Trans women are often subject to suicide due to the constant feeling of alienation inflicted upon them by health care workers who don’t treat them as “real women” and by police who refuse to help them against the hate crimes they face. This, in turn, only increases cases of bad mental health, sexual violence went unreported and untreated and increases the oppression faced by feminine individuals. Barriers in accessing health care services are due to the

providers' lack of skills, knowledge, and trans affirmative openness when working with trans individuals (Institute of Medicine 2011).

Sexual Violence against Trans femmes.

Transgender individuals, especially trans femmes are at a higher risk of sexual violence than cisgender individuals in the U.S (Stotzer, 2009). Research shows that 50% of transgender individuals have experienced unwanted sexual contact. Kenagy (2005) found that cases of sexual violence were higher in trans femmes (69%) than in trans males (30%). Comparatively, estimates show that 27.3% of women and 10.8% of men have faced sexual violence in the entirety of the U.S. (Basille, et al., 2014). Evidence points to trans femme individuals being at very high risk of sexual violence, more so than trans-male individuals. Despite this evidence, trans femme individuals continue to face stigma and discrimination when seeking help for substance abuse, mental health issues, and sexual violence. They are often rejected from mental health facilities, health care centers, rape-crisis centers, shelters, etc. (Grant, et al., 2011.)

Transmisogyny in Educational Institutions and Bullying.

We are aware of transphobic words such as 'tranny', 'he-she', and 'she-male', and whilst these words are blacklisted by educational institutions, students and faculty find ways around them to oppress the trans community. Transphobic bullying occurs in several ways. There is a purposeful refusal to acknowledge gender identity in these institutions. Forms usually have options of 'male', 'female', and 'prefer not to say', which in turn makes the trans, non-binary community feel belittled and ashamed. Even if a trans person is openly out, faculty use the pronouns of their gender assigned at birth and use the name given to them at birth instead of the name they go by. They are referred to as 'it' and 'thing' and constantly humiliated. They are required to go to the restroom of their gender assigned at birth or they are viewed as dangerous. Lately, schools have begun adopting ways to make the trans community feel safer by increasing the gender options in forms, and by having unisex bathrooms and locker rooms. These are all steps taken to ensure that their bullying ceases to exist.

How can we get rid of Transmisogyny?

Educational systems must adopt curricula on discrimination and educate students as well as faculty on the unfair bias faced by the trans femme community. Housing should not be limited to cisgender people, More employment opportunities should be provided to trans females. Trans femme women should stop being viewed as dangerous to 'real', 'authentic' women. Feminists must stop rallying against trans femmes. Transmisogynistic activities should be called out and openly criticized. Health care facilities should be better equipped to deal with trans individuals. All these would help make the world a safer place for trans individuals, especially trans femme individuals.

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