

*transphobia* and *misogyny*) was intended to better capture this disparity.

### Transmisogyny and the “Lesser Sex”

A rudimentary understanding of transmisogyny follows from the fact that women have historically been viewed as inferior to men in Western, North American culture, and therefore people tend to view AMAB individuals who express a desire to be female or feminine as more perplexing or pathological than assigned-female-at-birth (AFAB) individuals who desire to be male or masculine. This premise is supported by research showing that feminine AMAB children are viewed far more negatively and are brought in for psychotherapy more often than masculine AFAB children. Furthermore, throughout the mid-to-late 20th century, trans-related psychiatric studies, diagnoses, theories, and therapies were centered on “effeminate” boys and men, AMAB crossdressers, and trans women—Serano called this tendency *effemimania* (an obsession with “male femininity”). During this same time period, the media exhibited a similar effemimanic focus, often depicting these same AMAB groups as either potential threats (e.g., predators, murderers) or objects of ridicule (e.g., cliché jokes about men who dress or behave femininely or want their “penis cut off”). The pervasiveness of these stereotypes, and the fact that they were constantly reproduced by media creators who were not personally familiar with trans people, indicates that they were primarily rooted in sexist presumptions about women and men.

#### citation:

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## TRANSMISOGYNY

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The term *transmisogyny* (also written *trans-misogyny*) was coined by Julia Serano in the mid-2000s as an intervention in discussions about anti-transgender prejudice. At the time, such prejudice was generally conceptualized in terms of transphobia, which targets people for their failure to conform to gender norms. Serano pointed out how, in a male-centric culture, gender transgressions toward the female or feminine—as typically occur in assigned-male-at-birth (AMAB) trans people—tend to garner more public sensationalization, consternation, and demonization than their trans male/masculine counterparts. Transmisogyny (a portmanteau of

### Transmisogyny, Femininity, and Artificiality

Transmisogyny also relies heavily on sexist presumptions about gender expression. In our culture, femininity is marked relative to masculinity, with the former garnering far more attention and scrutiny. Furthermore, feminine dress and behaviors are often interpreted as “frivolous” and “artificial,” whereas their masculine counterparts are taken for granted as “serious” and “natural” (as evident in the notion that women get “all dolled up” while men simply partake in “grooming”).

Given these disparities, it is not surprising that those who wish to portray trans people as “fake” women and men will be inclined to dwell on trans female/feminine individuals. In her aforementioned analysis of media depictions, Serano showed that, even though trans women vary in how femininely they dress and act (just as cisgender women vary in these ways), they are almost always portrayed in a hyperfeminine manner, and feminine accoutrement (e.g., displays of putting on clothing or cosmetics, slipping while wearing high heels) is regularly employed as a device to emphasize their supposed “fakeness.” In contrast, because masculine dress and mannerisms are viewed as “natural” and “practical,” it is more difficult to depict trans male/masculine individuals as putting on an “artificial exterior”—this may contribute to the media’s relative disinterest in such individuals (i.e., trans male/masculine invisibility).

### Transmisogyny and Sexualization

Sexualization may be the most blatant manifestation of transmisogyny. Trans female/feminine individuals are routinely depicted in sexually provocative and objectifying ways and often have sexual motives attributed to them. Historically, the two most common stereotypes of trans women have been the “sexual deceiver” (i.e., “men” who “impersonate” women in order to “trick” or “trap” straight men into having sex) and trans women who do not “pass” as female but transition anyway in order to fulfill some personal sexual fantasy. Serano has chronicled the proliferation of these two stereotypes in media depictions and psychiatric discourses alike, noting how they both center hetero-male sexual desire. In stark contrast, sexual motives are rarely projected onto trans men; in fact, the most common lay theory to explain trans male/masculine individuals is that they must be attempting to attain male privilege and status. Thus, the popular assumptions that trans men transition in order to become men, but that trans women must be doing it for sexual reasons, implies that women as a whole have no worth beyond their ability to be sexualized.

### Interpretations and Critiques of Transmisogyny

As the term has caught on, *transmisogyny* has increasingly been used as shorthand for any

prejudice expressed toward trans women, regardless of content. However, while trans women are certainly targets of transmisogyny, any person who is perceived as, or presumed to be, a feminine or feminized “male” may be subjected to these same derogatory, pathologizing, and sexualizing attitudes (albeit to varying extents).

Some have critiqued transmisogyny for downplaying the role that misogyny plays in policing trans male/masculine identities. While said misogyny undoubtedly occurs, it may take on different forms—for example, a trans man may be perceived as, and ridiculed for, being a feminine man (which undoubtedly falls under the umbrella of transmisogyny described here), or alternatively, he may be invalidated as a “woman pretending to be a man” (which comes with a very different set of sexist assumptions and social meanings); see Serano’s distinction between *traditional sexism* and *oppositional sexism* for further discussion.

While transmisogyny strives to describe the interplay of transphobia and misogyny that many trans female/feminine people experience, the concept has been criticized for potentially excluding or erasing other forms of marginalization. As but one example, victims of transphobic violence are disproportionately trans women of color; if one were to cite this as an example of “transmisogyny,” it would render invisible the critical role that racism plays in this phenomenon. Others have forwarded new terms (e.g., *transmisogynoir*) to expand upon or reframe the intersection of these various forms of marginalization. Thus, rather than view transmisogyny as a “single issue” unto itself, it should be recognized as a broad category of sexist attitudes and sentiments that intersect with other social forces and that may play out in various ways in different individuals’ lives.

*Julia M. Serano*

*See also* Femininities and Femme; Feminism; Trans Women; Transmisogynoir; Transphobia

### Further Readings

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