Identities in Transition: Sexual Fluidity, Sexual Satisfaction, and Relationship Satisfaction Among Partners of Transgender and Nonbinary Individuals

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Author Note

Data for this study are not publicly available; given the potentially sensitive topic of the study, participants were assured in the consent form that only the researchers would have access to their responses. The questionnaire and analysis code are available on the Open Science Framework at https://osf.io/g9x6c/?view_only=de496ba15b464010bd561135d9c69e1b.

Abstract

Partners of transgender and nonbinary (TGNB) individuals face a unique set of relationship experiences and challenges, one of which may be a renegotiation of their own sexual identity. The current study explored how sexual fluidity beliefs, relationship satisfaction, and LGBTQ+ community connectedness were associated with sexual satisfaction among partners of TGNB individuals (n = 175; 72% cisgender women) via an online survey. Results showed that a minority of participants (27%) shifted their sexual identity label in response to having a TGNB partner; when shifts did occur, they were most often to broader labels. Relationship satisfaction was the strongest predictor of sexual satisfaction, and individuals who reported higher LGBTQ+ community connectedness reported higher relationship/sexual satisfaction relative to before their partner's TGNB identity disclosure. Relationship satisfaction fully mediated the effect of LGBTQ+ community connectedness on sexual satisfaction. However, sexual fluidity beliefs were not associated with sexual satisfaction. The findings point to the ways in which relationships including a TGNB partner show similar patterns to those identified in other types of relationships, as well as highlight the importance of LGBTQ+ community connectedness for well-being in partners of TGNB individuals.

Keywords: LGBTQ+ community, relationships, sexual fluidity, sexual satisfaction, transgender

Public Significance Statement

This study suggests that partners of transgender and nonbinary (TGNB) individuals who report higher satisfaction with their relationship as a whole also report higher sexual satisfaction, a pattern that has been shown in numerous studies with other types of couples. Partners who reported feeling more connected to the LGBTQ+ community also reported higher satisfaction with their relationship and sexual intimacy.

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"When it comes down to it, there is no word for what I am as concerns my love for Betty. […] Betty and I have ended up in a kind of no-man's land, where we aren't straight anymore, but we aren't lesbian either."

-Helen Boyd, *She's Not the Man I Married*

Research over the past two decades has documented the potential for sexual fluidity, or situation-dependent flexibility in same-sex and other-sex desires (Diamond, 2008, 2016). Sexual fluidity is a multifaceted phenomenon that can manifest as shifts in sexual attractions, behaviors, and/or identities over short-term or long-term periods (Diamond, 2016). Although there are some theoretical and empirical reasons to believe sexual fluidity is more prevalent in women (Diamond, 2008), recent research points to sexual fluidity occurring to varying degrees in some but not all individuals across genders (Diamond, 2016; Katz-Wise, 2015; Katz-Wise et al., 2017, in press). As a result of the growing body of research documenting sexual fluidity, current theories of sexuality often reject the notion of sexual orientation as fixed and stable for all individuals. For example, Sexual Configurations Theory (van Anders, 2015) uses the language of "branched" and "coincident" to describe how a person's current partnering status may or may not reflect the entirety of their sexual identity (e.g., a pansexual man who is attracted to all genders but currently in a relationship with a man could be described as having a branched sexual configuration).

In general, research on sexual fluidity has focused on shifts in the gender/sex target of attractions, behaviors, and identities that occur *across* relationships. For example, in her longitudinal research with sexual minority women, Diamond (2003b, 2008) discussed cases of

lesbian women who fell in love with specific close male friends; these women acknowledged that their attractions remained primarily to women and considered their male partners an exception. However, a particularly striking example of the potential for sexual fluidity occurs *within* relationships where one partner comes out as transgender or nonbinary (TGNB) and the couple remains together (Aramburu Alegría, 2013). Even when a partner's gender transition occurs prior to the relationship, having a TGNB partner may cause an individual to more deeply consider to what extent their attractions reflect gender (e.g., attraction to femininity or masculinity), sex (i.e., physical characteristics such as beards, breasts, or genitals), or a gender/sex gestalt (van Anders, 2015).

Sexual Identity Renegotiation in Trans-Inclusive Relationships

Given the potential for sexual fluidity among those in trans-inclusive relationships, some research has examined how having a TGNB partner influences one's own sense of their sexual identity. This research, which is almost exclusively qualitative, has generally pointed to three patterns: identity confirmation, identity revision, and identity deferral (Aramburu Alegría, 2013; Brown, 2009; Chester et al., 2017; Perri, 2022; Pfeffer, 2014, 2017; Platt & Bolland, 2018; Rosner, 2018; Siboni et al., 2023; Theron & Collier, 2013). Identity confirmation may occur when an individual's sexual identity poses no conflict with their partner's gender identity (e.g., a heterosexual or bisexual woman dating a transgender man; Theron & Collier, 2013), and having a TGNB partner may serve to reinforce the existing identity of plurisexual (e.g., bisexual, pansexual, queer) individuals (Brown, 2009; Rosner, 2018; Siboni et al., 2023). Indeed, one prior study found that the majority (65%) of cisgender women partnered with a transgender individual reported no change in their sexual identity label relative to the start of their relationship (Platt, 2020), and another study found that a little over half (53%) of participants with TGNB partners

reported no identity change or questioning as a result of their relationship (Siboni et al., 2023). In some instances, participants maintained their existing identity while considering their partner the exception, as in the case of some cisgender women partnered with transgender women who considered themselves heterosexual but used language like "situational" or "accidental" lesbian to describe their relationship (Aramburu Alegría, 2013).

In other cases, trans-inclusive relationships led participants to revise the labels they used to describe their sexual identity, often by switching from a more specific label like lesbian to a broader label like queer (Brown, 2009; Joslin-Roher & Wheeler, 2009; Perri, 2022; Pfeffer, 2014, 2017; Platt, 2020; Platt & Bolland, 2018; Siboni et al., 2023). Adopting a broader label was described as a way to validate the TGNB partner's gender identity, and additionally often served as a way to better describe the fluidity in participants' own experiences of their sexuality (Brown, 2009; Joslin-Roher & Wheeler, 2009; Perri, 2022; Pfeffer, 2014, 2017; Platt & Bolland, 2018; Siboni et al., 2023). However, some participants acknowledged that the term "queer" was still an imperfect solution; while its flexibility could be freeing, queer could be *so* all-encompassing as to feel empty or meaningless (Pfeffer, 2014, 2017). Finally, some partners of TGNB individuals engaged in identity deferral, rejecting labels altogether due to the lack of a term that fit them (Brown, 2009; Joslin-Roher & Wheeler, 2009; Rosner, 2018). Notably, a study of cisgender women partnered with transgender men suggested that participants had long and complex histories with attempting to find accurate language for their sexualities, and that this process of exploration predated their current relationship (Perri, 2022).

Regardless of whether or not partners of TGNB individuals select a new term for their sexual identity label, research consistently shows that they undergo a complex process of self-discovery or renegotiation related to their sexual identity (Gunby & Butler, 2022; Pfeffer, 2014,

2017). This process often includes positive outcomes such as feelings of personal growth and broadening one's perspective on sexuality and gender (Platt & Bolland, 2018; Siboni et al., 2023). The process can also be challenging; in particular, some cisgender women with transmasculine partners grappled with the loss of visibility as lesbian, a label they had often fought hard to claim (Brown, 2009; Joslin-Roher & Wheeler, 2009; Pfeffer, 2014, 2017; Theron & Collier, 2013). Social ramifications of their partner's transition, such as feelings of disconnection from the LGBTQ+ community, took precedence over their partner's physical changes in many sexual minority women's accounts of their experiences (Brown, 2009; Platt & Bolland, 2018; Theron & Collier, 2013). It is worth noting that much of this research focuses on cisgender women partnered with transgender men (Brown, 2009; Joslin-Roher & Wheeler, 2009; Perri, 2022; Pfeffer, 2014, 2017; Theron & Collier, 2013); even in studies with broader recruitment criteria, cisgender women are often over-represented (Platt, 2020; Platt & Bolland, 2018; Siboni et al., 2023).

Does a person's sexual identity renegotiation process have implications for their individual well-being and for their relationship? Although the process of sexual identity renegotiation in response to a partner's transition or having a TGNB partner is relatively well-documented through qualitative research, the implications of this process are less understood. Research suggests that some individuals have greater propensity for sexual fluidity than others (Diamond, 2008), and that individuals with greater sexual fluidity in their attractions also more strongly endorse sexual fluidity *beliefs*, such as the belief that romantic love depends on the person not the gender (Katz-Wise & Hyde, 2015). It is possible that individuals who conceptualize their sexuality as fluid are more easily able to accommodate their TGNB partner's gender identity into their schema of their sexual attractions and identity, regardless of the specific

sexual identity label they use or any branchedness between their identity label and their partner's gender identity. In this way, people with stronger fluidity beliefs may experience less dissonance between their identity and their partner's, and this could potentially translate to greater satisfaction with sexual intimacy or with the relationship.

Sexual and Relationship Satisfaction in Partners of TGNB Individuals

Although prior research has not explicitly considered the role of sexual fluidity in sexual or relationship satisfaction among partners of TGNB individuals, some research has examined other factors that contribute to partners' relationship satisfaction or well-being. Partners of TGNB individuals face a unique set of relationship experiences and challenges, a process that has been called "co-transition" by some researchers (Theron & Collier, 2013). Partners may experience stigma and discrimination, isolation, or (particularly when disclosure occurs during the relationship) feelings of loss (Gunby & Butler, 2022; Platt & Bolland, 2018). Many partners also describe positive changes as a result of co-transition, such as improved communication, a deepened emotional bond, greater appreciation for the gender spectrum, and having a happier partner (Aramburu Alegría & Ballard-Reisch, 2013; Coppola et al., 2021; Dierckx et al., 2016; Gunby & Butler, 2022; Platt & Bolland, 2018). In one of the few quantitative studies on relationship quality in partners of TGNB people, Platt (2020) found that a shorter length of time in the relationship prior to the partner's transition and greater personal resilience each predicted higher relationship satisfaction, which in turn predicted higher commitment. For cisgender men partnered with transgender women, relationship quality was lower when the transgender partner reported greater stigma associated with their relationship, and when they experienced greater financial hardship (Gamarel et al., 2014). A recent study found that partners (about half of whom were TGNB themselves) reported higher sexual/relationship satisfaction if their TGNB partner

had experienced surgical transition, particularly genital surgery (Ockerman et al., in press). Taken together, these studies suggest a range of potential personal, social, structural, and transition-related characteristics can contribute to relationship satisfaction in this population.

Research on sexual satisfaction in trans-inclusive relationships has focused heavily on changes in the transgender partner's sexual function or satisfaction after hormone replacement therapy or other forms of medical transition; partner perspectives and the broader social context of the relationship are often neglected (Burns et al., 2024). The limited qualitative research on partner perspectives points to the importance of communication and trust in negotiating the potential for a TGNB partner to experience gender dysphoria during sexual activity (Brown, 2010; Siboni et al., 2022). Related to sexual fluidity specifically, one qualitative study found that non-fluid lesbians expressed more concerns about their sexual desire for their transgender male partner relative to bisexual, queer, and fluid lesbian women (Brown, 2010). While this finding is suggestive that sexual fluidity could predict sexual satisfaction in those with TGNB partners, quantitative research to test this hypothesis is lacking. Studying sexual satisfaction in this population is important given that higher sexual satisfaction is associated with better physical and mental well-being (del Mar Sánchez-Fuentes & Sierra, 2015) and higher relationship satisfaction (Byers, 2005; Calvillo et al., 2020b; del Mar Sánchez-Fuentes & Sierra, 2015; Fallis et al., 2016; Fleishman et al., 2020) in other populations.

Current Study and Hypotheses

The current study explored whether higher sexual fluidity beliefs predict higher sexual satisfaction in partners of TGNB individuals. In addition to sexual fluidity beliefs, relationship satisfaction was measured as a general factor expected to predict sexual satisfaction, given their interrelatedness in past studies of cisgender heterosexual and LGBTQ+ populations (Byers,

2005; Calvillo et al., 2020b; del Mar Sánchez-Fuentes & Sierra, 2015; Fallis et al., 2016; Fleishman et al., 2020). Finally, LGBTQ+ community connectedness was included as a social factor that might be associated with sexual satisfaction in this population specifically, given the gaps in research on how social context relates to sexual satisfaction in partners of TGNB individuals. The research questions and hypotheses were as follows:

RQ1: Do participants experience shifts in the label(s) they use to describe their sexual identity in response to having a TGNB partner?

RQ2: Do sexual fluidity beliefs predict sexual satisfaction in relationship partners of TGNB individuals?

H1: Stronger endorsement of sexual fluidity beliefs will predict higher sexual satisfaction.

H2: Higher relationship satisfaction will predict higher sexual satisfaction.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited primarily from social media groups likely to include partners of TGNB individuals, such as the /mypartneristrans Reddit group, PFLAG, and private Facebook groups for partners and family of TGNB individuals. Participants were also recruited via the university Pride and Trans Wellness organizations, the psychology and behavioral neuroscience major listserv, and the author's social media accounts to allow for snowball recruitment. Recruitment materials specified that the study was seeking individuals 18 years or older, of any gender identity and sexual identity, who currently had a romantic relationship partner who identifies as transgender and/or nonbinary to complete an anonymous online survey. Data were collected via Qualtrics from October to December 2022.

The number of individuals who viewed the initial survey page was 458, and of these, 397 consented to participate. Participants were excluded if they did not meet eligibility criteria (i.e., responding no to or failing to answer the required eligibility question about having a TGNB partner, or clearly indicating in the open-ended comments that their partner was not TGNB; n = 14) or for excessive missing data (n = 49). Additional responses (n = 159) were flagged as bots and excluded. Based on criteria from prior studies (Griffin et al., 2022; Simone, 2019), bots were flagged based on illogical or nonsensical responses to open-ended questions, exact duplicate responses by sequential participants, inconsistent responses to demographic questions, or completing the survey in less than 5 minutes. In prior online studies, our lab has noted that recruiting from Reddit can result in bots infiltrating a survey, even with use of a captcha and the "prevent ballot box stuffing" settings in Qualtrics (Goldey et al., 2024).

All together, these exclusions resulted in a final sample size of 175 participants. A power analysis conducted with G*Power for a regression with up to six predictors (setting effect size at 0.15, alpha at 0.05, and power at 0.95) yielded a planned sample size of 150 participants. Recruitment proceeded more quickly than expected, resulting in the 175 participants; it is also worth noting that the regression models ultimately had up to 10 predictors given the need to create multiple dummy codes to control for participant and partner gender identity.

Design and Procedure

Participants completed an anonymous online survey that included a consent form and the measures described below[1]. Participants could choose to enter into a raffle for one of thirty $25 Amazon gift cards. On the consent form and at the conclusion of the survey, participants were provided with links to support resources including the university health and counseling center,

[1] The survey also included the Transgender Individuals and their Partner's Identity Process Scale (Rosner, 2018), which was included for exploratory purposes and not discussed further here.

the Trevor Project, Transgender Education Network of Texas, PFLAG, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, and the 988 Lifeline. All procedures were approved by the St. Edward's University IRB, and the study's pre-registration can be found in supplementary materials or at https://aspredicted.org/5QB_4R2.

Measures

Background, Relationship, and Sexual Identity Questionnaire

Participants indicated their age and race/ethnicity. Definitions were then provided for the terms cisgender ("someone whose gender identity corresponds to the one assigned at birth"), transgender ("someone whose gender identity does NOT correspond to the one assigned at their birth…may include people who are binary, nonbinary, genderqueer, etc."), and nonbinary ("someone whose gender identity does not strictly correspond with the gender binary ex. bigender, agender, third gender, genderfluid, etc."). Participants then indicated their gender identity [check all that apply with options of: cisgender man, cisgender woman, transgender man, transgender woman, nonbinary, genderqueer, other, and prefer not to say], and responded to a separate item about whether they self-identify as transgender. Participants responded to the same two items regarding their relationship partner's gender identity. Participants who had multiple current relationship partners (e.g., polyamorous relationship) were instructed to answer the questions about their TGNB partner, and if multiple partners are TGNB, the partner they had been in a relationship with the longest. Participants were asked about their relationship status, relationship length, and relationship characteristics (i.e., long-distance relationship, consensually non-monogamous relationship, whether you and/or your partner have children).

Participants were asked about the timing of their partner's gender identity disclosure or coming out (defined as "when your partner first told you that they identified as transgender or

nonbinary") relative to their relationship [options: at the beginning of our relationship; during our relationship]. If disclosure occurred during the relationship, participants were asked to indicate how long ago. Next, participants responded to items about their own sexual orientation/identity. Participants were asked what label(s) they use to describe their sexual orientation currently [check all that apply with options of: asexual, bisexual, gay/lesbian, heterosexual, pansexual, queer, questioning, unlabeled/prefer not to label my sexual orientation, other, and prefer not to say]. Participants were then asked if they used a different label(s) before their current relationship (for those whose partners were out as TGNB at the beginning of relationship) or before their partner disclosed their TGNB identity (for those whose partners disclosed during the relationship), and if so, to indicate which label(s). Participants were also asked to indicate their agreement with two statements on a scale from *1 = Strongly disagree* to *5 = Strongly agree*: "Even before my current relationship, I questioned or explored my sexual orientation/identity" and "Even before my current relationship, I felt that available terms failed to properly describe my sexual orientation/identity." These items were included based on prior qualitative research showing that cisgender women with transmasculine partners had a long history of finding language inadequate to describe their sexual identities, often prior to their current relationship (Perri, 2022).

Global Measure of Sexual Satisfaction (GMSEX)

The Global Measure of Sexual Satisfaction (Lawrance & Byers, 1995) asks participants to rate their sexual relationship with their partner on five semantic differential items, with each item measured on a 7-point scale: very bad – very good, very unpleasant – very pleasant, very negative – very positive, very unsatisfying – very satisfying, and worthless – very valuable. The GMSEX was chosen to measure sexual satisfaction in this study for its brevity,

unidimensionality, sound psychometric properties relative to other measures, and validity in participants in other-sex and same-sex relationships (Calvillo et al., 2020a; Mark et al., 2014). Participants first answered a question asking them to indicate whether or not they are sexually active with their partner, defined as passionate kissing or any activity that involves you or your partner's genitals; only participants who indicated they are sexually active with their partner completed the GMSEX. Internal consistency for the GMSEX was high in this sample ($\alpha = .95$), and total scores were obtained by computing a mean for the five items, with higher scores reflecting higher sexual satisfaction.

Quality Marriage Index (QMI)

The Quality Marriage Index (Norton, 1983) was used to measure relationship satisfaction. The QMI was designed as a unidimensional, evaluative, "gestalt" scale of relationship quality and shows expected associations with variables such as perceived similarity of attitudes between partners and how often the couple seriously discussed ending the relationship (Norton, 1983). The QMI consists of 5 items on a scale of *1 = Very strong disagreement* to *7 = Very strong agreement*, such as "We have a good relationship" and "I really feel like part of a team with my partner" ($\alpha = .95$). A sixth item asks participants to indicate the point from *1 = Very unhappy* to *10 = Very happy* that best represents the degree of happiness, everything considered, in their relationship. All items were worded to refer to a relationship rather than to marriage. Total scores were obtained by summing the six items, such that higher scores reflect higher relationship satisfaction.

Relationship and Sexual Intimacy Happiness Comparison Items

Participants who indicated that their partner's gender identity disclosure occurred during their relationship were asked to complete two additional items: 1) *Relationship Happiness*

Comparison: "Compared to before your partner disclosed their transgender or nonbinary identity, how would you describe YOUR overall happiness with your relationship now?"; and 2) *Sexual Intimacy Happiness Comparison:* a similarly worded item that asked participants to compare "YOUR overall happiness with the sexual intimacy aspects of your relationship now?". These items were answered on a response scale from *1 = Much less happy* to *7 = Much happier*.

Sexual Fluidity Beliefs

Katz-Wise and Hyde's (2015) 5-item Sexual Fluidity Beliefs Scale was developed based on themes from Diamond's (2003a, 2005) research on sexual fluidity. The scale measures beliefs related to a role for choice in one's sexual identity label, love depending on the person vs. the gender, uncertainty about future attractions, uncertainty about future sexual orientation identity, and one's sexuality as fluid. As expected, past research showed that participants who endorsed experiencing sexual fluidity in their attractions (i.e., a change in attractions to others over time in relation to gender) also endorsed higher sexual fluidity beliefs (Katz-Wise & Hyde, 2015). Items are worded such that participants answer in relation to their *own* sexuality, not in relation to human sexuality in general. Example items include "For me, I believe romantic love depends on the person, not the gender" and "I don't know who (which gender) I will be attracted to in the future." In the current study, participants responded on a scale from *1 = Completely disagree* to *7 = Completely agree* ($\alpha = .66$), and total scores were computed by taking the mean of the five items, with higher scores reflecting higher fluidity beliefs.

Connectedness to the LGBTQ+ Community

The Connectedness to the LGBT Community Scale developed by Frost and Meyer (2012) measures the extent to which participants feel they have close, positive, and rewarding connections with the LGBT community. In prior research, the scale showed good reliability,

convergent validity (e.g., with behavioral connectedness to the LGBT community), and discriminant validity (e.g., with general sociability) among sexual minority individuals across gender and race/ethnicity (Frost & Meyer, 2012). In this study, "LGBT" was replaced with "LGBTQ+" in each item, and the final item which asks about bonds with other same-gender similar others (e.g., other gay men, other lesbian women) was omitted. Participants indicated their agreement with each of seven items on a scale from *1 = Disagree strongly* to *4 = Agree strongly*. Example items included "You feel you're a part of the LGBTQ+ community" and "Participating in the LGBTQ+ community is a positive thing for you". Internal consistency was good in this sample ($\alpha = .88$), and mean scores were computed such that higher scores reflected higher connectedness to the LGBTQ+ community.

Attention Check Items

Midway through the survey, participants responded to the item "To show you are paying attention, please select 'strongly agree' from the options below." At the conclusion of the survey, participants responded to an item indicating whether they were taking the survey seriously, or whether they were clicking randomly or joking. All of the participants included in the final sample indicated that they were taking the study seriously. However, 14 participants (8%) failed the 'strongly agree' attention check. As reported below, the pattern of results in the primary analysis was very similar with these 14 participants excluded, so results are reported for all 175 participants.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 29. Sample sizes vary across analyses, given that only participants who indicated being sexually active with their partner responded to the GMSEX, and only participants who were in their relationship prior to their partner's TGNB

identity disclosure responded to the Relationship and Sexual Intimacy Happiness Comparison items. Continuous predictors in regression models were centered prior to analysis. Data for this study are not publicly available; given the potentially sensitive topic of the study, participants were assured in the consent form that only the researchers would have access to their responses. The questionnaire and analysis code are available on the Open Science Framework at https://osf.io/g9x6c/?view_only=de496ba15b464010bd561135d9c69e1b.

Results

Participant and Relationship Characteristics

Table 1 summarizes the demographic and relationship characteristics of the 175 participants. Many combinations of participant gender and partner gender were represented, but cisgender women with transgender women partners (n = 72) were the most frequent group in the sample, followed by cisgender women with transgender men partners (n = 29) and cisgender women with nonbinary partners (n = 28). Some participants (n = 18) self-identified as transgender themselves and had TGNB partners. The sample was relatively homogenous in terms of race/ethnicity (92% White, 11% Hispanic/Latino, 9% other groups; participants could check all that apply so percentages do not equal 100%), but ranged in age from 18 years to 71 years (M = 34.78, SD = 10.93). The majority of participants (68%) were married, engaged, or in a life partnership, with an average relationship length of 9.01 years (SD = 8.48). Although some participants indicated that their partner disclosed their TGNB identity at the beginning of their relationship (27%), the majority (73%) indicated their partner disclosed their TGNB identity during the relationship. For those whose partner came out during their relationship, coming out occurred 2.30 years ago on average (SD = 2.64). The majority of participants (64%) indicated

that their partner began gender transition (defined as including social and/or medical transition) during their relationship. Most (82%) reported that they are sexually active with their partner.

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Descriptive statistics and correlations between the main study variables are shown in Table 2. In bivariate correlations, higher sexual fluidity beliefs were associated with significantly higher scores on measures of relationship satisfaction (i.e., QMI and Relationship Happiness Comparison item), but not significantly associated with measures of sexual satisfaction (i.e., GMSEX and Sexual Intimacy Happiness Comparison item). Higher LGBTQ+ community connectedness was significantly associated with higher sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and sexual fluidity beliefs. As expected, measures of relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction were strongly correlated.

Among participants who had been in their relationship prior to their partner coming out as TGNB (n = 127), the majority indicated being equally happy or happier with their relationship now, compared with before their partner disclosed their TGNB identity. Responses to the item on happiness with sexual intimacy relative to pre-disclosure were variable, with “about the same” as the most frequent response (see Figure 1).

Sexual Identity Labels

Participants reported using a wide variety of current identity labels, with bisexual (n = 53), heterosexual (n = 44), queer (n = 44), pansexual (n = 32), and gay/lesbian (n = 21) being the most commonly selected in the check-all-that-apply question; 47 participants selected multiple labels. Of the 48 participants whose partners disclosed their TGNB identity at the beginning of their relationship, 11 (23%) reported using a different sexual identity label(s) prior to their current relationship. Of the 127 participants whose partner came out during their relationship, 37

(29%) reported using a different sexual identity label(s) before their partner disclosed their TGNB identity. Participants who reported using a different sexual identity label before their relationship or before their partner came out were coded as identity shifters (n = 48); those who answered 'no' to this item were coded as non-shifters (n = 127). Among identity shifters, most shifts (n = 34) involved a shift to a broader label(s), or a label potentially encompassing attraction to more genders/sexes, such as bisexual to pansexual, heterosexual to bisexual, bisexual to queer, or adding queer to other identity labels (e.g., queer and gay/lesbian). A few participants indicated shifts from heterosexual to unlabeled (n = 5), from heterosexual to asexual (n = 2), or to more specific labels (e.g., bisexual to gay/lesbian, n = 2). Several participants (n = 5) experienced other shifts that did not fit any of these categories, such as from pansexual to questioning (see Figure 2).

Relative to non-shifters, those who shifted their identity labels had significantly higher sexual fluidity beliefs, $t(173) = 2.85$, $p = .005$, $d = 0.48$, but did not significantly differ in sexual satisfaction (as measured by the GMSEX or the Sexual Intimacy Happiness Comparison item), relationship satisfaction (as measured by the QMI or the Relationship Happiness Comparison item), or LGBTQ+ community connectedness (all p's > .10) (see Supplementary Figure 1). Identity shifters were significantly more likely to endorse the statement, "Even before my current relationship, I felt that available terms failed to properly describe my sexual orientation/identity", $t(172) = 2.97$, $p = .003$, $d = 0.50$. However, identity shifters and non-shifters scored similarly on the item "Even before my current relationship, I questioned or explored my sexual orientation/identity" ($p = .791$) (see Figure 3). Therefore, those who shifted their identity labels in response to their relationship with a TGNB partner endorsed stronger sexual fluidity beliefs and were more likely to agree that available terms failed to describe their sexual orientation even

before their current relationship. However, whether or not participants shifted their identity labels did not predict their sexual or relationship satisfaction.

Predicting Sexual Satisfaction

To test the primary hypothesis, a hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to evaluate how sexual fluidity beliefs, QMI scores, LGBTQ+ community connectedness, and control variables predicted sexual satisfaction as measured by the GMSEX. The first step included control variables – participant gender identity, participant self-identification as transgender, partner gender identity, relationship length, and disclosure timing (before vs. during the relationship). The second step added the primary variables: sexual fluidity beliefs, the QMI, and LGBTQ+ community connectedness. The full model (Step 2) explained 39.2% of the variance in sexual satisfaction ($R^2_{adjusted} = .344$). In Step 2, the QMI was the only significant predictor of GMSEX scores ($B = .084$, $p < .001$). Thus, participants who reported higher relationship satisfaction also reported higher sexual satisfaction, but sexual fluidity beliefs were not a significant predictor of sexual satisfaction (see Table 3).

Follow-Up Regression Analyses

Because sexual and relationship satisfaction were so strongly correlated ($r = .56$ between GMSEX and QMI), follow-up analyses were conducted to better understand predictors of sexual and relationship satisfaction individually. With the QMI removed from the regression predicting GMSEX, significant predictors of GMSEX were partner gender and relationship length. Specifically, participants who were partnered with transgender men reported being more sexually satisfied than other groups, and longer length of relationship was associated with lower sexual satisfaction. Sexual fluidity beliefs did not significantly predict sexual satisfaction, even with QMI removed from the model (see Table 3).

Given that relationship satisfaction (i.e., QMI) was such a strong predictor of sexual satisfaction, this led to the question of what variables predicted QMI scores. In a regression predicting QMI from control variables, sexual fluidity beliefs, and LGBTQ+ community connectedness, relationship length and LGBTQ+ community connectedness were the only significant predictors. That is, shorter relationship length and higher LGBTQ+ community connectedness each predicted higher relationship satisfaction (see Table 4). Perhaps not surprisingly, when GMSEX was included in the model predicting QMI, it became the only significant predictor (see Table 4).

An additional question was what might predict satisfaction – relationship and sexual – as a single construct, given their interrelatedness in this sample and in past research. To test this question, an overall Relationship/Sexual Happiness Comparison score was computed by taking the mean of the Relationship Happiness Comparison Item and the Sexual Intimacy Happiness Comparison Item. Because these items required participants to compare their current experience to their experience before their partner's gender identity disclosure, this analysis included only participants whose partner came out during their relationship. The full model, which included control variables, sexual fluidity beliefs, and LGBTQ+ community connectedness, explained 15.6% of variance in participants' satisfaction relative to before their partner came out (R^2_{adjusted} = .097). In this case, LGBTQ+ community connectedness was the only significant predictor. That is, participants who reported feeling more connected to the LGBTQ+ community also reported higher relationship/sexual satisfaction relative to before their partner came out (see Table 5).

Therefore, the results showed that relationship satisfaction was the strongest predictor of sexual satisfaction among partners of TGNB individuals. In turn, shorter relationship length and

higher LGBTQ+ community connectedness each predicted higher relationship satisfaction. Among participants whose partners came out during their relationship, higher LGBTQ+ community connectedness was associated with higher relationship/sexual satisfaction relative to before their partner's TGNB identity disclosure. Sexual fluidity beliefs were not significantly associated with relationship or sexual satisfaction when controlling for other variables.

Mediation Analysis

To more fully understand the links between LGBTQ+ community connectedness, relationship satisfaction, and sexual satisfaction, a mediation analysis was conducted using the PROCESS macro for SPSS version 4.2 (Hayes, 2022). Because higher LGBTQ+ community connectedness predicted higher relationship satisfaction, which in turn predicted higher sexual satisfaction, it was expected that relationship satisfaction might mediate an association between LGBTQ+ community connectedness and sexual satisfaction. Figure 4 shows the results of this mediation analysis, which included partner gender (transgender man or other) and relationship length as covariates. First, the effect of LGBTQ+ community connectedness on relationship satisfaction was significant, $b = 2.76$, $p = .005$. Second, the effect of relationship satisfaction on sexual satisfaction was significant, $b = 0.08$, $p < .001$. Third, the total effect of LGBTQ+ connectedness on sexual satisfaction approached significance, $b = 0.32$, $p = .052$. Finally, when controlling for the mediator of relationship satisfaction, the effect of LGBTQ+ connectedness on sexual satisfaction decreased substantially, $b = 0.09$, $p = .531$. A Sobel test (calculated using van den Berg, 2025) indicated that relationship satisfaction fully mediated the association between LGBTQ+ community connectedness and sexual satisfaction (indirect effect = 0.23, 95% CI [0.06, 0.41] , $z = 2.60$, $p = .009$).

Exploratory Subgroup Analyses

Due to the relatively homogenous nature of our sample (i.e., primarily white cisgender women), exploratory subgroup analyses were conducted to examine to what extent the patterns found in the full sample were present in subgroups of the sample – people of color (POC) and/or those who did not identify as cisgender women. These subgroup analyses are available in the Supplementary Materials. In general, relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction were strongly linked across gender (categorized as cisgender woman or other) and race/ethnicity (categorized as POC or white) subgroups. Additionally, higher LGBTQ+ community connectedness predicted a higher overall Relationship/Sexual Happiness Comparison score in all subgroups with the exception of genders other than cisgender women. Notably, our mediation analysis did not show significant mediation in the subgroup analyses, likely due to low statistical power.

Attention Check

The overall pattern of results in the primary analyses (i.e., the regression models and mediation model) was very similar when excluding the 14 participants who failed the attention check. The three exceptions were: 1) partner gender reached significance as a predictor of QMI (when GMSEX was not included in the model), with participants partnered with transgender men reporting higher relationship satisfaction relative to other groups; 2) relationship length was no longer statistically significant as a predictor of the overall Relationship/Sexual Happiness Comparison in Step 1 of the model; and 3) the total effect of LGBTQ+ community connectedness on sexual satisfaction reached significance in the mediation model, $b = 0.37$, $p = .034$.

Discussion

The current study investigated fluidity in sexual identity labels and predictors of sexual satisfaction in partners of TGNB individuals. In our sample predominately composed of cisgender white women, about three quarters of participants reported maintaining the same sexual identity label relative to before their current relationship or before their partner came out as TGNB. Participants who shifted their identity label endorsed stronger sexual fluidity beliefs than those who maintained their label. However, sexual fluidity beliefs did not significantly predict sexual satisfaction. Instead, higher LGBTQ+ community connectedness predicted higher relationship satisfaction, which in turn predicted higher sexual satisfaction.

These results mirror some past findings suggesting that having a TGNB partner does not necessarily result in a shift in one's sexual identity label (Platt, 2020; Siboni et al., 2023). Having a TGNB partner may affirm an existing identity label for plurisexual individuals or for those whose identity label poses no conflict with their partner's gender identity (Brown, 2009; Rosner, 2018; Siboni et al., 2023; Theron & Collier, 2013); others may maintain an identity label that is branched with their partner's gender identity (Aramburu Alegría, 2013; van Anders, 2015). When shifts in identity labels did occur, they most often reflected a shift to a broader sexual identity label (e.g., bisexual to pansexual, gay/lesbian to gay/lesbian and queer), which is also consistent with past research on partners of TGNB individuals (Platt & Bolland, 2018). In general, research on sexual fluidity suggests that broadening of gender/sex target(s) of attractions is more common than narrowing of attractions over the lifespan (Diamond, 2008). Whether this is due to a broadening of attractions themselves, a delay in individuals recognizing some of their attractions (e.g., due to heteronormativity or other factors), or a combination of both remains a fascinating question for future research.

Individuals who shifted their identity labels reported higher sexual fluidity beliefs, but whether an individual shifted vs. maintained their identity label did not predict their sexual or relationship satisfaction. Similarly, and contrary to the primary hypothesis, sexual fluidity beliefs did not predict sexual satisfaction, nor did they predict relationship satisfaction after controlling for other variables. This finding may have important implications for therapists or other professionals who counsel couples in trans-inclusive relationships, especially when gender transition occurs during a relationship. That is, it is normative for partners of TGNB individuals to continue identifying with their current label or to shift their label; similarly, partners vary in their fluidity beliefs. However, neither of these factors have clear implications for relationship or sexual satisfaction. Transgender individuals and their partners may find the language of "branched" and "coincident" from Sexual Configurations Theory useful in understanding that someone's relationship status may or may not reflect their sexual identity (van Anders, 2015). Similarly, it may be reassuring for those in trans-inclusive relationships (particularly those who believe their sexuality is less fluid) to know that variation in fluidity beliefs does not clearly translate to variation in relationship and sexual satisfaction.

The finding that sexual fluidity beliefs did not predict sexual satisfaction was unexpected, given that prior qualitative research had suggested that non-fluid individuals expressed more concerns about sexual desire for their transgender partner relative to fluid individuals (Brown, 2010). It may be that other factors, such as overall relationship satisfaction or communication quality, are stronger quantitative contributors to sexual satisfaction than fluidity beliefs, as discussed below. Another reason for this null finding could relate to the measure of sexual fluidity beliefs used in this study, which had adequate but not strong internal consistency in our sample. Interestingly, internal consistency for the 5-item Sexual Fluidity Beliefs Scale was lower

in our sample than in a past study of young, cisgender sexual minority adults that did not specifically recruit those in trans-inclusive relationships (Katz-Wise & Hyde, 2015). This suggests that the construct of sexual fluidity beliefs itself could be more complex or multidimensional among those with TGNB partners. Further research could examine the reliability and validity of the Sexual Fluidity Beliefs Scale among those in trans-inclusive relationships, specifically whether additional items may be needed to capture fluidity beliefs in this population.

Although fluidity beliefs did not predict sexual satisfaction, this study was able to identify several predictors of sexual and relationship satisfaction in partners of TGNB individuals. Relationship satisfaction was the strongest predictor of sexual satisfaction (and vice versa), such that those who reported higher satisfaction with their relationship (e.g., feeling like part of a team with their partner) also reported that their sexual relationship with their partner was more satisfying. This finding is not particularly surprising, as a strong link between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction has been shown in past research (Byers, 2005; Calvillo et al., 2020b; del Mar Sánchez-Fuentes & Sierra, 2015; Fallis et al., 2016; Fleishman et al., 2020), although to the author's knowledge this study is the first to focus on this link in partners of TGNB individuals. Past research with primarily cisgender heterosexual couples suggests that communication – both sexual and nonsexual – is an important aspect of this link (Byers, 2005; Mark & Jozkowski, 2013). That is, couples who were more satisfied with their relationship reported higher quality sexual and nonsexual communication, translating to higher sexual satisfaction (Mark & Jozkowski, 2013). In a qualitative study about sexual satisfaction in transmasculine and nonbinary individuals, participants discussed how a partner's ability to understand their gender identity and respect boundaries around their bodies – elements inherently

tied to communication – promoted sexual satisfaction (Lindley et al., 2021). Future studies should consider measuring sexual and nonsexual communication quality quantitatively among both partners in trans-inclusive relationships, as high-quality communication may be especially important for partners navigating the social and physical changes associated with gender transition together.

In turn, when exploring predictors of relationship satisfaction, shorter relationship length and higher LGBTQ+ community connectedness each predicted higher relationship satisfaction. Negative links between relationship length and relationship (or sexual) satisfaction have been demonstrated in multiple past studies not specific to trans-inclusive relationships (Bühler et al., 2021; Bühler & Orth, 2024; del Mar Sánchez-Fuentes & Sierra, 2015; Kurdek, 1999), particularly during the first 10 years of a relationship. This may reflect life stressors that couples encounter as relationships age (e.g., transition to parenthood) or the conclusion of the "honeymoon" phase of a relationship (Bühler et al., 2021; Bühler & Orth, 2024; Kurdek, 1999). In trans-inclusive relationships specifically, past research has demonstrated that longer length of time in a relationship prior to a partner's gender transition is negatively associated with relationship satisfaction among cisgender women, potentially because transition requires a greater adjustment in this case (Platt, 2020). Thus, the negative association between relationship length and satisfaction in the current study could reflect both general patterns expected in committed relationships and factors specific to trans-inclusive relationships.

When considering a measure of overall satisfaction (relationship and sexual) compared to before a partner came out, participants with higher connectedness to the LGBTQ+ community were more likely to report that their satisfaction with their relationship and sexual intimacy increased. Additionally, relationship satisfaction fully mediated the effect of LGBTQ+

community connectedness on sexual satisfaction. LGBTQ+ community connectedness may facilitate relationship well-being for partners of TGNB individuals by providing examples of other relationships like theirs or offering opportunities for concrete support for questions about navigating co-transition. These effects on relationship well-being may then translate to positive effects on sexual satisfaction. In past qualitative studies, some partners of TGNB individuals reported experiences of growth through engaging in advocacy for the transgender community (Gunby & Butler, 2022; Platt & Bolland, 2018). Importantly, some prior studies suggest that LGBTQ+ community connectedness may be lacking for some partners of TGNB individuals, either because their relationship can appear straight or because not all partners identify as LGBTQ+ themselves (Joslin-Roher & Wheeler, 2009; Platt & Bolland, 2018). This study suggests that efforts to help partners of TGNB individuals feel connected to the LGBTQ+ community may benefit their relationships. Future studies could explore what types of LGBTQ+ community engagement, such as in-person or online support groups, participating in Pride events, political or social activism, or more informal connections such as friendships, are most beneficial for partners of TGNB individuals.

The findings point to both general and unique factors predicting sexual and relationship satisfaction in partners of TGNB individuals. In some ways, relationships including a TGNB partner are very similar to other relationship types studied, in that those who are more satisfied with their relationship report being more satisfied with sexual intimacy. The current study also identified a more specific factor, LGBTQ+ community connectedness, that predicted satisfaction. These findings mirror past research suggesting that both general factors – lower sexual anxiety, higher body image, and higher relationship commitment – and the specific factor of higher

LGB+ identity pride – predicted stronger sexual satisfaction among LGB+ individuals in relationships (Shepler et al., 2018).

The current study helps fill a gap in quantitative research on satisfaction among partners of TGNB individuals. Until relatively recently, much of the focus on trans-inclusive relationships, both in research and in popular culture, has been on whether a relationship can "survive" gender transition (see St. Amand et al., 2013 for a discussion). Perhaps instead researchers should be asking – what factors contribute to a relationship *thriving* during co-transition? One important finding of this study is that the majority of participants reported being just as happy or happier in their relationship compared with before their partner disclosed their TGNB identity. Of course, it is likely that participants who are struggling in their relationships or whose relationships have dissolved are less likely to participate in research on this topic. It is important to remember that co-transition occurs against the backdrop of other dynamics, changes, and stressors in a relationship[2]; indeed, some past research suggests that when trans-inclusive couples made the decision to separate, gender transition was cited as the primary reason only about half the time (St. Amand et al., 2013). This research adds to a growing body of studies suggesting that, while the very real challenges associated with co-transition should not be minimized, the potential for positive outcomes and satisfaction among partners of TGNB individuals should not be ignored (Gunby & Butler, 2022; Marshall et al., 2020).

This study has several limitations that are important to acknowledge. The sample was primarily composed of white cisgender women, such that the experiences of those navigating a trans-inclusive relationship alongside a marginalized racial or ethnic identity, as well as those

[2] It is interesting to note that although the current study did not specifically ask participants about factors outside the partner's transgender identity that influenced their relationship quality, at least six participants mentioned these factors in open-ended comment boxes without specific prompting. For example, participants identified factors such as addiction issues, parenting, and discrimination stress as contributing to their relationship quality.

who are male, nonbinary, and/or transgender themselves, are under-represented. In particular, future research is needed to evaluate whether LGBTQ+ community connectedness would remain an important predictor of relationship satisfaction in a more diverse sample. Prior research showed that Black, Latino, and white participants reported similar levels of LGBTQ+ community connectedness on the measure used in the current study (Frost & Meyer, 2012). Yet, some Black sexual minority individuals report that social support for their racial or religious identity may come at the expense of support for their sexual orientation or relationship and vice versa (reviewed in Tornello, 2021), and queer POC often experience racism from white LGBTQ+ communities (Cyrus, 2017; Han, 2007). Among Black LGBTQ+ individuals, belongingness to the Black community was linked with better mental health, and belongingness to the Black LGBTQ+ community specifically was linked with better subjective well-being (Watts & Thrasher, 2024). Therefore, future research is needed to determine whether connectedness to intersectional LGBTQ+ POC communities, rather than LGBTQ+ community connectedness generally, might predict higher relationship satisfaction among POC in trans-inclusive relationships. Notably, there are few studies on experiences of trans-inclusive relationships among cisgender men or POC outside of a sexual risk focus. In an important exception, Gamarel and colleagues' (2014) findings point to the importance of external stressors (i.e., financial hardship, relationship stigma) in predicting relationship quality among cisgender men and their transgender women partners in a primarily POC sample. A limitation of the current study's recruitment strategy was the reliance on online support spaces, which perhaps are more likely to include white cisgender women; future studies should employ a more intentional recruitment strategy (e.g., reaching out to community organizations that center queer POC).

Future research could use dyadic, longitudinal designs to investigate questions of directionality as well as variables unaddressed by the current study. For example, longitudinal studies could examine communication as a predictor of relationship and sexual satisfaction among both partners in trans-inclusive relationships. Longitudinal research could also help clarify how a partner's understanding of their sexual identity and sexual fluidity shift at various stages of a TGNB partner's transition. Research should also examine how factors less specific to gender identity and transition, such as the transition to parenthood or sexual desire discrepancy, influence sexual and relationship satisfaction in trans-inclusive relationships.

This study of sexual fluidity and sexual satisfaction in partners of TGNB individuals demonstrated evidence for both stability and change in the sexual identity labels used by participants. Contrary to predictions, sexual fluidity beliefs were not an important predictor of sexual satisfaction among partners of TGNB individuals. Instead, higher LGBTQ+ community connectedness predicted higher relationship satisfaction, which in turn predicted higher sexual satisfaction. The findings point to the ways in which relationships including a TGNB partner show similar patterns to those identified in other types of relationships, as well as highlight the importance of LGBTQ+ community connectedness for well-being in partners of TGNB individuals.

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Table 1

Demographic and Relationship Characteristics of the Sample ($N = 175$)

Characteristic	*n* (%)
Age (*M* = 34.78 years, *SD* = 10.93) [a]	*n* = 173
18-29 years	52 (30.1%)
30-39 years	77 (44.5%)
40-49 years	28 (16.2%)
50-59 years	9 (5.2%)
60-71 years	7 (4.0%)
Race/Ethnicity [b]	*n* = 175
Asian	4 (2.3%)
Black/African American	5 (2.9%)
Hispanic/Latino	20 (11.4%)
Native American/Alaska Native	3 (1.7%)
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1 (0.6%)
White/Caucasian	161 (92.0%)
Other	2 (1.1%)
Prefer not to say	2 (1.1%)
Gender Identity [b]	*n* = 175
Cisgender man	8 (4.6%)
Cisgender woman	126 (72.0%)
Transgender man	5 (2.9%)
Transgender woman	3 (1.7%)

Nonbinary	27 (15.4%)
Genderqueer	8 (4.6%)
Other	11 (6.3%)
Prefer not to say	2 (1.1%)
Self-Identify as Transgender	*n* = 175
Yes	18 (10.3%)
No	155 (88.6%)
Prefer not to say	2 (1.1%)
Partner Gender Identity [b]	*n* = 175
Cisgender man [c]	2 (1.1%)
Transgender man	41 (23.4%)
Transgender woman	87 (49.7%)
Nonbinary	54 (30.9%)
Genderqueer	8 (4.6%)
Other [d]	16 (9.1%)
Partner Self-Identifies as Transgender	*n* = 175
Yes	158 (90.3%)
No	15 (8.6%)
Prefer not to say	2 (1.1%)
Relationship Status	*n* = 175
Dating/casual relationship	3 (1.7%)
Committed relationship	51 (29.1%)
Married, engaged, or life partnership	119 (68.0%)

Other	2 (1.1%)
Relationship Length (*M* = 9.01 years, *SD* = 8.48) [a]	*n* = 174
Less than 1 year	17 (9.8%)
1-5 years	60 (34.5%)
6-10 years	35 (20.1%)
11-20 years	45 (25.9%)
21-42 years	17 (9.8%)
Long-Distance Relationship	*n* = 175
Yes	20 (11.4%)
No	155 (88.6%)
Consensually Non-Monogamous Relationship	*n* = 175
Yes	38 (21.7%)
No	137 (78.3%)
Self and/or Partner Have Children	*n* = 174
Yes	74 (42.5%)
No	100 (57.5%)
Timing of Partner's TGNB Identity Disclosure	*n* = 175
At the beginning of our relationship	48 (27.4%)
During our relationship (*M* = 2.30 years ago, *SD* = 2.64)	127 (72.6%)
Less than 1 year ago	35
1-5 years ago	76
6-17 years ago	11
Response missing or not codeable	5

Timing of Partner's Gender Transition [e]	*n* = 175
My partner considered their transition complete when we started our relationship	10 (5.7%)
My partner had begun transitioning when we started our relationship, and has continued transition during our relationship	21 (12.0%)
My partner began their transition during our relationship	112 (64.0%)
My partner has not begun transition but intends to in the future	10 (5.7%)
My partner does not intend to transition	7 (4.0%)
Other/none of these options fit	15 (8.6%)
Sexually Active with Partner [f]	*n* = 175
Yes	144 (82.3%)
No	31 (17.7%)

[a] Measured on a ratio scale; participants self-reported in an open-ended textbox

[b] Participants could select all options that applied, such that percentages do not equal 100.

[c] Two participants selected this option for their partner's gender identity in addition to transgender man

[d] Other responses included: genderfluid (*n* = 7), transmasculine (*n* =3), and one each as transfemme, man, woman, bigender, genderless, and questioning

[e] Transition was defined as including social transition like changing pronouns and may or may not include medical transition, depending on the individual

[f] Defined as passionate kissing or any activity that involves you or your partner's genitals, including manual, anal, vaginal, or oral sex

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, Ranges, and Correlations for Main Variables

Variable	*n*	M	SD	Range [possible range]	1	2	3	4	5
1. GMSEX	143	5.64	1.26	2-7 [1-7]					
2. QMI	174	36.48	8.33	9-45 [6-45]	.56***				
3. Relationship Happiness Comparison	127	4.72	1.64	1-7 [1-7]	.24*	.40***			
4. Sexual Intimacy Happiness Comparison	127	4.36	1.77	1-7 [1-7]	.42***	.41***	.60***		
5. Sexual Fluidity Beliefs	175	4.30	1.43	1-7 [1-7]	.16	.24**	.18*	.14	
6. LGBTQ+ Community Connectedness	175	3.21	0.65	1.14-4 [1-4]	.23**	.32***	.35***	.27**	.33***

GMSEX = Global Measure of Sexual Satisfaction. *QMI* = Quality Marriage Index. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 3

Regression Analyses Predicting the Global Measure of Sexual Satisfaction (GMSEX) from Control Variables, Sexual Fluidity Beliefs, Quality Marriage Index (QMI), and LGBTQ+ Community Connectedness

	GMSEX (n = 138)			GMSEX (without QMI) (n = 139)		
	B	(*SE*)	ΔR^2	*B*	(*SE*)	ΔR^2
Step 1: Controls			.169***			.166**
Participant gender: Man	0.08	0.39		0.06	0.39	
Participant gender: NB	0.18	0.28		0.16	0.28	
Participant transgender identity	0.07	0.37		0.06	0.37	
Partner gender: Man	0.64	0.25*		0.64	0.25*	
Partner gender: NB	0.02	0.23		0.05	0.22	
Relationship length (years)	-0.05	0.02**		-0.05	0.02**	
Disclosure timing	0.13	0.26		0.11	0.26	
Step 2: Key variables			.223***			.021
Participant gender: Man	0.25	0.34		0.13	0.39	
Participant gender: NB	0.16	0.24		0.07	0.28	
Participant transgender identity	-0.30	0.33		-0.07	0.38	
Partner gender: Man	0.41	0.22		0.61	0.25*	
Partner gender: NB	0.16	0.20		0.08	0.22	
Relationship length (years)	-0.02	0.02		-0.04	0.02*	
Disclosure timing	0.14	0.22		0.11	0.25	

Sexual fluidity beliefs	0.02	0.07	0.05	0.08
QMI	0.08	0.01***	-----	------
LGBTQ+ Connectedness	0.12	0.16	0.28	0.18

Note. For participant gender, "Man" is coded as 1 if participant indicated identifying as a man (cisgender or transgender); 0 if not. "NB" is coded as 1 if participant indicated identifying as nonbinary or genderqueer; 0 if not. For participant transgender identity, 1 = yes (i.e., participant self-identifies as transgender), 0 = no. Partner gender variables are coded similarly to participant gender variables. For disclosure timing, 1 = at the beginning of the relationship, 0 = during the relationship. *B* = unstandardized beta.

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 4

Regression Analyses Predicting the Quality Marriage Index (QMI) from Control Variables, Sexual Fluidity Beliefs, the Global Measure of Sexual Satisfaction (GMSEX), and LGBTQ+ Community Connectedness

	QMI (n = 138)			QMI (without GMSEX) (n = 169)		
	B	(*SE*)	ΔR^2	*B*	(*SE*)	ΔR^2
Step 1: Controls			.118*			.164***
Participant gender: Man	-1.69	2.29		-1.92	2.51	
Participant gender: NB	-0.27	1.64		0.01	1.72	
Participant transgender identity	3.67	2.21		3.70	2.28	
Partner gender: Man	2.64	1.47		2.49	1.51	
Partner gender: NB	-1.59	1.34		0.22	1.37	
Relationship length (years)	-0.24	0.10*		-0.28	0.08***	
Disclosure timing	-0.24	1.51		1.43	1.56	
Step 2: Key variables			.248***			.048**
Participant gender: Man	-1.58	1.98		-1.27	2.48	
Participant gender: NB	-1.25	1.43		-0.87	1.71	
Participant transgender identity	2.90	1.95		2.54	2.29	
Partner gender: Man	0.64	1.30		2.23	1.49	
Partner gender: NB	-1.53	1.15		0.25	1.34	
Relationship length (years)	-0.07	0.09		-0.22	0.08**	
Disclosure timing	-0.63	1.30		1.31	1.52	

Sexual fluidity beliefs	0.30	0.40	0.57	0.46
GMSEX	2.91	0.45***	-----	------
LGBTQ+ Connectedness	1.27	0.94	2.43	1.01*

Note. For participant gender, "Man" is coded as 1 if participant indicated identifying as a man (cisgender or transgender); 0 if not. "NB" is coded as 1 if participant indicated identifying as nonbinary or genderqueer; 0 if not. For participant transgender identity, 1 = yes (i.e., participant self-identifies as transgender), 0 = no. Partner gender variables are coded similarly to participant gender variables. For disclosure timing, 1 = at the beginning of the relationship, 0 = during the relationship. *B* = unstandardized beta.

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 5

Regression Analyses Predicting the Relationship/Sexual Happiness Comparison from Control Variables, Sexual Fluidity Beliefs, and LGBTQ+ Community Connectedness, Among Participants Whose Partner Came Out During their Relationship (N = 125)

	B	(*SE*)	ΔR^2
Step 1: Controls			.070
Participant gender: Man	-0.80	0.78	
Participant gender: NB	0.14	0.43	
Participant transgender identity	0.82	0.64	
Partner gender: Man	0.29	0.36	
Partner gender: NB	-0.08	0.30	
Relationship length (years)	-0.03	0.02*	
Step 2: Key variables			.086**
Participant gender: Man	-0.90	0.75	
Participant gender: NB	-0.04	0.42	
Participant transgender identity	0.59	0.62	
Partner gender: Man	0.19	0.35	
Partner gender: NB	-0.07	0.29	
Relationship length (years)	-0.02	0.02	
Sexual fluidity beliefs	0.04	0.10	
LGBTQ+ Connectedness	0.67	0.22**	

Note. For participant gender, "Man" is coded as 1 if participant indicated identifying as a man (cisgender or transgender); 0 if not. "NB" is coded as 1 if participant indicated identifying as nonbinary or genderqueer; 0 if not. For participant transgender identity, 1 = yes (i.e., participant self-identifies as transgender), 0 = no. Partner gender

variables are coded similarly to participant gender variables. For disclosure timing, 1 = at the beginning of the relationship, 0 = during the relationship. *B* = unstandardized beta.

$^{*}p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.

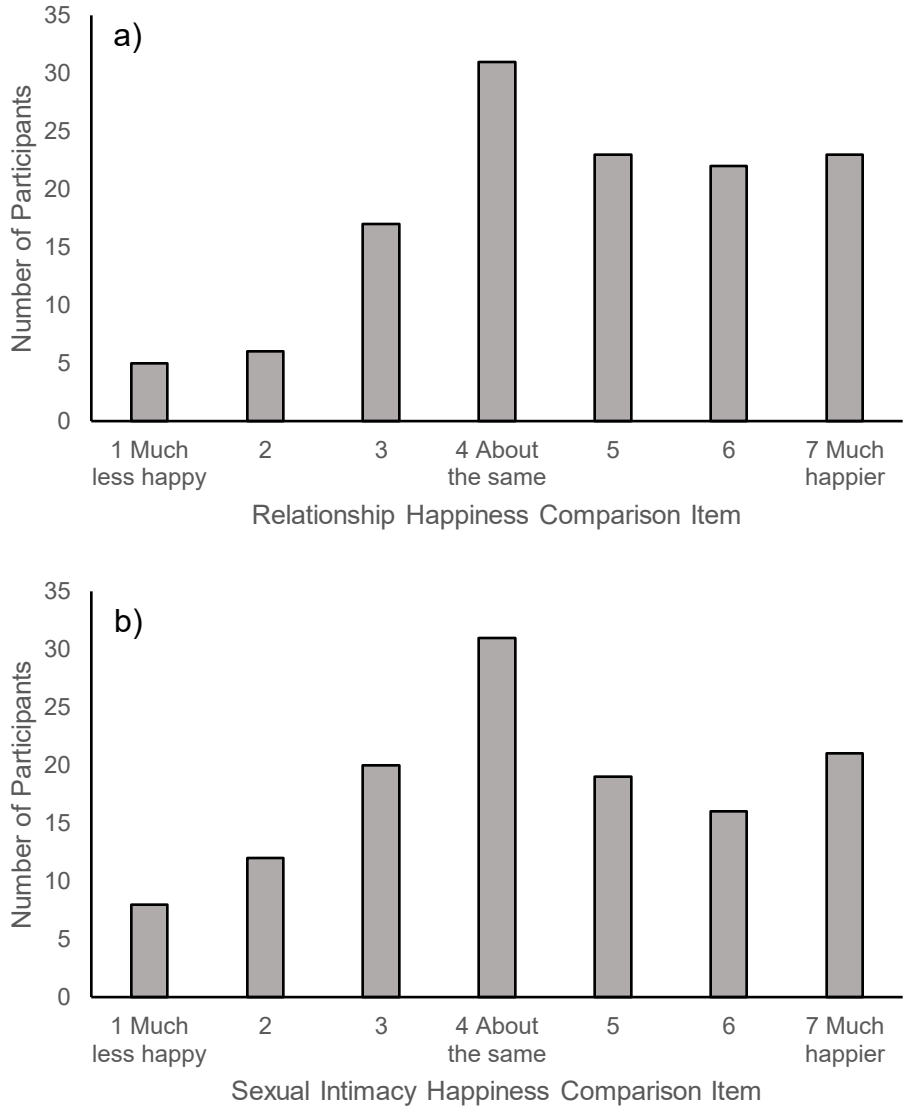


Figure 1. Responses of participants who had been in their relationship prior to their partner coming out as TGNB (n = 127) to items comparing their happiness now with a) their relationship and b) sexual intimacy, compared with before their partner disclosed their TGNB identity.

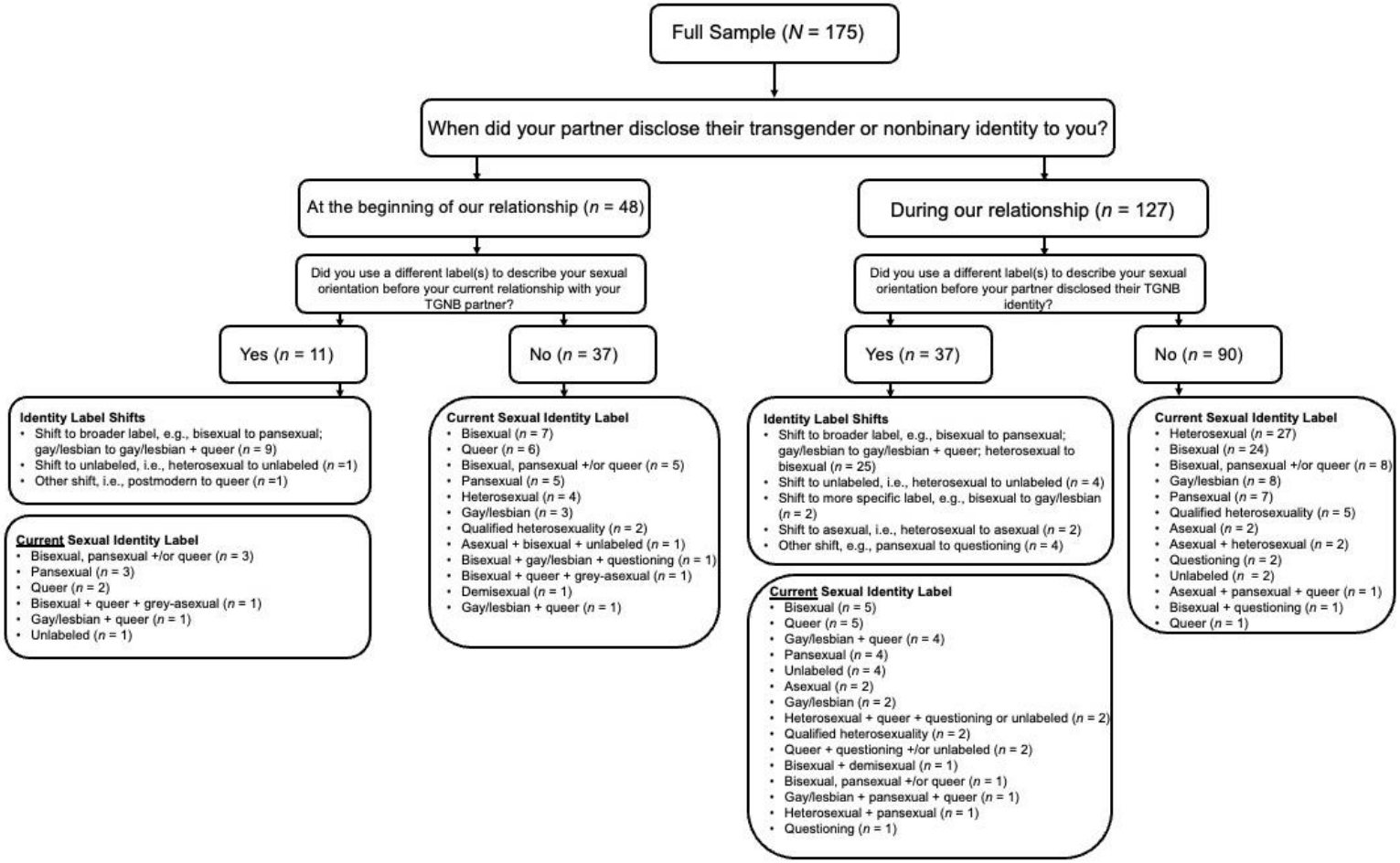


Figure 2. Flow chart showing the distribution of participants who shifted versus maintained sexual identity labels relative to before their current relationship with a TGNB partner or before their partner disclosed their TGNB identity. Participants indicated their current sexual identity label(s) (and prior label(s) used if applicable) in a check-all-that-apply question. *Notes.* "Bisexual, pansexual +/or queer" means that participants checked at least 2 of these 3 labels. "Qualified heterosexuality" refers to when participants checked heterosexual in addition to questioning or unlabeled, or indicated in the 'other' textbox that they were heteroflexible, bicurious, or considered their partner their exception.

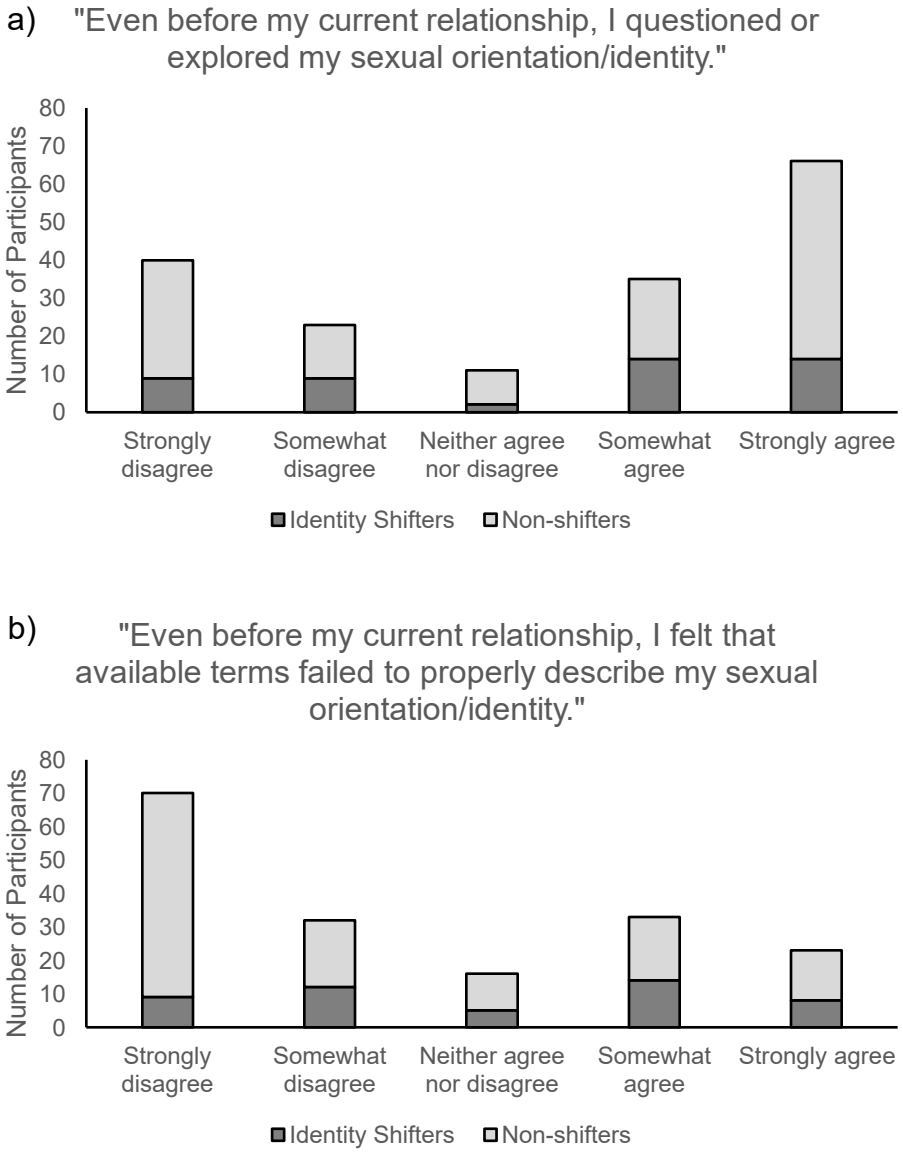


Figure 3. Responses of identity shifters (n = 48) and non-shifters (n = 126-127) to the items a) "Even before my current relationship, I questioned or explored my sexual orientation/identity" and b) "Even before my current relationship, I felt that available terms failed to properly describe my sexual orientation/identity." Mean scores on the available terms item were significantly higher for identity shifters, whereas identity shifters and non-shifters' mean scores did not differ for the questioned or explored item.

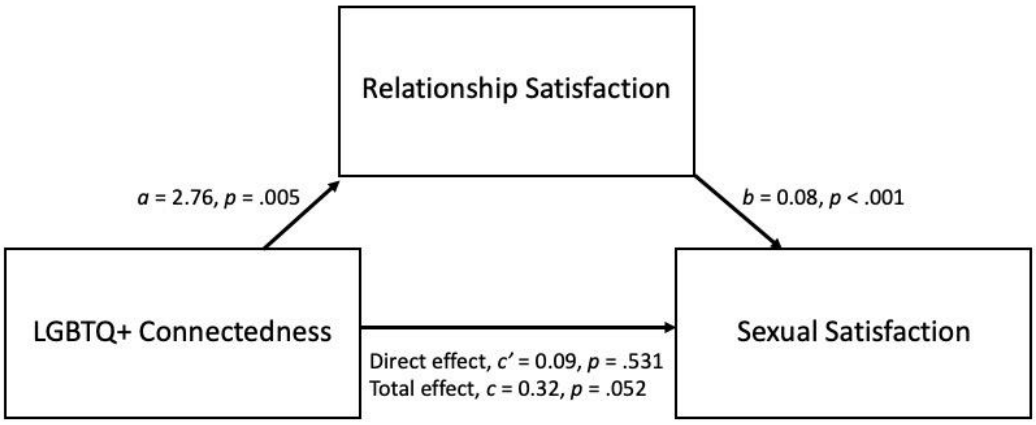
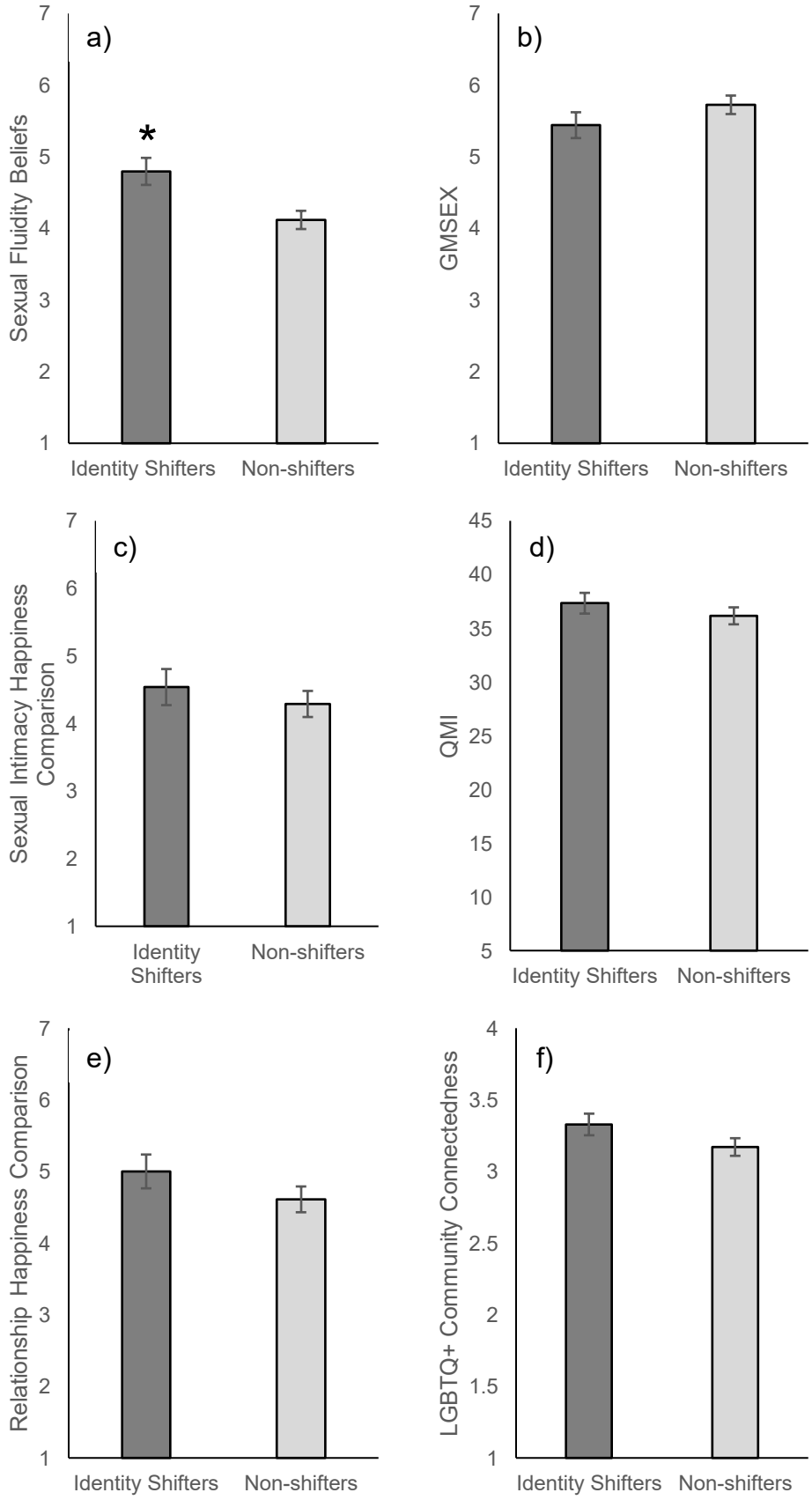


Figure 4. Mediation analysis demonstrating that relationship satisfaction (QMI) fully mediated the effect of LGBTQ+ community connectedness on sexual satisfaction (GMSEX) *(n* = 141). Partner gender (transgender man vs. other) and relationship length in years were included in the model as covariates.


a)
Sexual Fluidity Beliefs
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
*
Identity Shifters
Non-shifters
b)
GMSEX
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
Identity Shifters
Non-shifters
c)
Sexual Intimacy Happiness Comparison
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
Identity Shifters
Non-shifters
d)
QMI
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
Identity Shifters
Non-shifters
e)
Relationship Happiness Comparison
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
Identity Shifters
Non-shifters
f)
LGBTQ+ Community Connectedness
4
3.5
3
2.5
2
1.5
1
Identity Shifters
Non-shifters

Supplementary Figure 1. Comparisons between those who shifted their sexual identity label ("identity shifters") and non-shifters in a) sexual fluidity beliefs, b) GMSEX, c) the sexual intimacy happiness comparison item, d) QMI, e) the relationship happiness comparison item, and f) LGBTQ+ community connectedness. *reflects a significant difference at $p < .05$

Exploratory Subgroup Analyses

1. Subgroups by Race/Ethnicity

For this subgroup analysis, participants were categorized either as people of color (POC; *n* = 29; including multiracial participants) or white (*n* = 144). For the sake of brevity, only Step 2 of the models (with key variables added) is shown in the tables below. Results were generally similar across subgroups: relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction predicted one another, and higher LGBTQ+ community connectedness predicted higher relationship/sexual happiness relative to before a partner came out. There were some nuances across subgroups related to control variables.

1a. Regression predicting sexual satisfaction (GMSEX). Higher relationship satisfaction (QMI) predicted significantly higher sexual satisfaction among POC and white participants.

	POC (*n* = 20)			White (*n* = 116)		
	B	(*SE*)	ΔR^2	*B*	(*SE*)	ΔR^2
Step 2: Key variables			.343*			.218***
Participant gender: Man	0.46	0.95		0.14	0.39	
Participant gender: NB	-0.24	0.46		0.08	0.28	
Participant transgender identity	-0.44	0.70		-0.31	0.42	
Partner gender: Man	-0.41	0.58		0.49	0.25	
Partner gender: NB	-0.26	0.47		0.21	0.22	
Relationship length (years)	-0.14	0.05*		-0.01	0.02	
Disclosure timing	-0.72	0.67		0.29	0.25	
Sexual fluidity beliefs	0.17	0.15		0.02	0.08	
QMI	0.10	0.03*		0.09	0.02***	
LGBTQ+ Connectedness	-0.17	0.35		0.20	0.18	

Note (applies to all tables in this document). For participant gender, "Man" is coded as 1 if participant indicated identifying as a man (cisgender or transgender); 0 if not. "NB" is coded as 1 if participant indicated identifying as nonbinary or genderqueer; 0 if not. For participant transgender identity, 1 = yes

(i.e., participant self-identifies as transgender), 0 = no. Partner gender variables are coded similarly to participant gender variables. For disclosure timing, 1 = at the beginning of the relationship, 0 = during the relationship. *B* = unstandardized beta.

$^{*}p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.

1b. Regression predicting sexual satisfaction (GMSEX), with QMI removed from the model. There were no significant predictors of GMSEX in this model among POC. Having a transgender man partner predicted higher GMSEX among white participants.

	POC (n = 20)			White (n = 117)		
	B	(*SE*)	ΔR^2	*B*	(*SE*)	ΔR^2
Step 2: Key variables			.087			.019
Participant gender: Man	0.77	1.30		0.01	0.45	
Participant gender: NB	-0.50	0.63		-0.02	0.33	
Participant transgender identity	-0.18	0.96		0.04	0.47	
Partner gender: Man	0.37	0.72		0.62	0.28*	
Partner gender: NB	-0.09	0.65		0.12	0.25	
Relationship length (years)	-0.13	0.07		-0.03	0.02	
Disclosure timing	-1.11	0.91		0.31	0.29	
Sexual fluidity beliefs	0.14	0.21		0.05	0.09	
LGBTQ+ Connectedness	0.43	0.41		0.26	0.21	

1c. Regression predicting relationship satisfaction (QMI). Higher sexual satisfaction predicted significantly higher relationship satisfaction for both subgroups.

	POC (n = 20)	White (n = 116)

	B	(*SE*)	ΔR^2	*B*	(*SE*)	ΔR^2
Step 2: Key variables			.492*			.226***
Participant gender: Man	-1.04	7.11		-1.34	2.26	
Participant gender: NB	0.11	3.50		-1.00	1.64	
Participant transgender identity	3.61	5.14		3.95	2.37	
Partner gender: Man	5.92	3.94		-0.09	1.45	
Partner gender: NB	2.28	3.49		-1.80	1.24	
Relationship length (years)	0.78	0.44		-0.14	0.10	
Disclosure timing	1.99	5.22		-0.51	1.46	
Sexual fluidity beliefs	-1.07	1.14		0.34	0.44	
GMSEX	5.40	1.70*		2.85	0.49***	
LGBTQ+ Connectedness	3.81	2.29		0.24	1.05	

1d. Regression predicting relationship satisfaction (QMI), with GMSEX removed from the model. Shorter relationship length predicted higher relationship satisfaction among POC. There were no significant predictors of QMI in this model among white participants.

	POC (*n* = 26)			White (*n* = 141)		
	B	(*SE*)	ΔR^2	*B*	(*SE*)	ΔR^2
Step 2: Key variables			.125			.036
Participant gender: Man	-2.26	8.53		-1.02	2.76	
Participant gender: NB	-0.21	3.97		-1.15	2.00	
Participant transgender identity	-1.73	5.80		3.56	2.66	
Partner gender: Man	4.38	4.54		1.87	1.70	

Partner gender: NB	1.23	4.52	0.62	1.44
Relationship length (years)	-0.62	0.21**	-0.16	0.09
Disclosure timing	-2.19	5.38	2.36	1.67
Sexual fluidity beliefs	0.58	1.43	0.56	0.50
LGBTQ+ Connectedness	4.87	2.73	1.97	1.12

1e. Regression predicting the Relationship/Sexual Happiness Comparison. Higher LGBTQ+ community connectedness predicted significantly higher relationship/sexual happiness for both subgroups.

	POC (n = 20)			White (n = 104)		
	B	(*SE*)	ΔR^2	*B*	(*SE*)	ΔR^2
Step 2: Key variables			.333*			.055
Participant gender: Man	-----	------		-0.43	0.81	
Participant gender: NB	-0.80	0.73		0.33	0.54	
Participant transgender identity	2.14	1.35		-0.11	0.75	
Partner gender: Man	0.12	0.77		0.28	0.42	
Partner gender: NB	0.31	0.85		-0.27	0.32	
Relationship length (years)	-0.03	0.03		-0.03	0.02	
Sexual fluidity beliefs	-0.03	0.29		0.01	0.12	
LGBTQ+ Connectedness	1.46	0.50*		0.55	0.24*	

2. Subgroups by Gender

For this analysis, participants were categorized either as cisgender women (n = 123) or another gender (including transgender women, transgender men, cisgender men, and nonbinary/genderqueer participants; n = 50). Note that the numbers do not perfectly match those in Table 1 Participant Demographics because some participants indicated multiple labels for their

gender identity. For the sake of brevity, only Step 2 of the models (with key variables added) is shown in the tables below. Relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction predicted one another across gender subgroups; higher LGBTQ+ community connectedness predicted higher relationship/sexual happiness relative to before a partner came out for cis women only, although this could be due to the small sample size of the other gender subgroup.

2a. Regression predicting sexual satisfaction (GMSEX). Higher relationship satisfaction (QMI) predicted significantly higher sexual satisfaction among cis women and other genders.

	Cis Women (n = 96)			Other Genders (n = 42)		
	B	(*SE*)	ΔR^2	*B*	(*SE*)	ΔR^2
Step 2: Key variables			.225***			.271**
Participant gender: Man	-----	-----		-0.02	0.49	
Participant gender: NB	-----	-----		-0.02	0.52	
Participant transgender identity	-----	-----		-0.32	0.37	
Partner gender: Man	0.34	0.27		0.50	0.41	
Partner gender: NB	0.28	0.26		-0.35	0.37	
Relationship length (years)	-0.02	0.02		-0.06	0.03	
Disclosure timing	0.10	0.32		0.28	0.30	
Sexual fluidity beliefs	0.03	0.09		0.06	0.12	
QMI	0.08	0.02***		0.11	0.03***	
LGBTQ+ Connectedness	0.10	0.19		-0.06	0.35	

2b. Regression predicting sexual satisfaction (GMSEX), with QMI removed from the model. There were no significant predictors of GMSEX in this model for either subgroup.

	Cis Women (n = 97)			Other Genders (n = 42)		
	B	(*SE*)	ΔR^2	*B*	(*SE*)	ΔR^2

Step 2: Key variables			.020			.027
Participant gender: Man	-----	-----		-0.25	0.59	
Participant gender: NB	-----	-----		-0.21	0.63	
Participant transgender identity	-----	-----		-0.14	0.45	
Partner gender: Man	0.48	0.30		0.93	0.49	
Partner gender: NB	0.07	0.28		0.01	0.44	
Relationship length (years)	-0.03	0.02		-0.07	0.04	
Disclosure timing	0.04	0.37		0.20	0.37	
Sexual fluidity beliefs	0.05	0.10		0.08	0.14	
LGBTQ+ Connectedness	0.25	0.21		0.34	0.42	

2c. Regression predicting relationship satisfaction (QMI). Higher sexual satisfaction (GMSEX) predicted significantly higher relationship satisfaction among cis women and other genders.

	Cis Women (n = 96)			Other Genders (n = 42)		
	B	(*SE*)	ΔR^2	*B*	(*SE*)	ΔR^2
Step 2: Key variables			.234***			.327**
Participant gender: Man	-----	-----		-1.28	2.69	
Participant gender: NB	-----	-----		-1.08	2.85	
Participant transgender identity	-----	-----		2.17	2.03	
Partner gender: Man	0.55	1.59		0.94	2.32	
Partner gender: NB	-3.26	1.48*		3.27	1.98	
Relationship length (years)	-0.11	0.11		0.16	0.20	
Disclosure timing	-0.73	1.90		-1.36	1.67	

Sexual fluidity beliefs	0.20	0.51	-0.07	0.64
GMSEX	2.86	0.56***	3.30	0.80***
LGBTQ+ Connectedness	1.37	1.13	2.56	1.90

2d. Regression predicting relationship satisfaction (QMI), with GMSEX removed from the model. Shorter relationship length predicted higher relationship satisfaction among cis women. There were no significant predictors in this model for the other gender subgroup.

	Cis Women (n = 122)			Other Genders (n = 47)		
	B	(*SE*)	ΔR^2	*B*	(*SE*)	ΔR^2
Step 2: Key variables			.047*			.081
Participant gender: Man	-----	-----		-1.76	3.14	
Participant gender: NB	-----	-----		-1.64	3.35	
Participant transgender identity	-----	-----		1.50	2.29	
Partner gender: Man	1.86	1.88		3.00	2.42	
Partner gender: NB	-0.78	1.76		3.63	2.12	
Relationship length (years)	-0.23	0.10*		-0.16	0.17	
Disclosure timing	1.77	2.19		0.23	1.90	
Sexual fluidity beliefs	0.63	0.58		0.09	0.75	
LGBTQ+ Connectedness	2.27	1.21		4.26	2.13	

2e. Regression predicting the Relationship/Sexual Happiness Comparison. Higher LGBTQ+ community connectedness predicted higher relationship/sexual happiness for cis women, but this did not reach significance for the other gender subgroup.

	Cis Women (n = 101)		Other Genders (n = 24)	

	B	(*SE*)	ΔR^2	*B*	(*SE*)	ΔR^2
Step 2: Key variables			.084*			.062
Participant gender: Man	-----	-----		-0.75	1.18	
Participant gender: NB	-----	-----		-0.15	1.39	
Participant transgender identity	-----	-----		0.40	0.71	
Partner gender: Man	0.39	0.41		-0.57	0.82	
Partner gender: NB	-0.06	0.34		-0.27	0.64	
Relationship length (years)	-0.02	0.02		-0.04	0.05	
Sexual fluidity beliefs	0.03	0.12		0.01	0.29	
LGBTQ+ Connectedness	0.66	0.24**		0.72	0.62	

3. Mediation Analyses and Additional Notes

When testing the mediation analysis (QMI mediating the effect of LGBTQ+ connectedness on GMSEX) for the subgroups (POC or white; cis women or other gender), the mediation effect became non-significant (i.e., non-significant indirect effect and/or at least one necessary pathway non-significant), likely due to issues with statistical power.

It is also worth noting that the subgroup analyses presented here are unable to address potential differences within the POC group (e.g., Latine, multiracial, Black, Asian, etc.) or within the other gender group (e.g., transgender women, transgender men, cisgender men, nonbinary/genderqueer individuals). These differences could be highly meaningful, such that much is lost by combining all POC or all genders besides cis women together; however, statistical power is too low to address these questions in our sample.