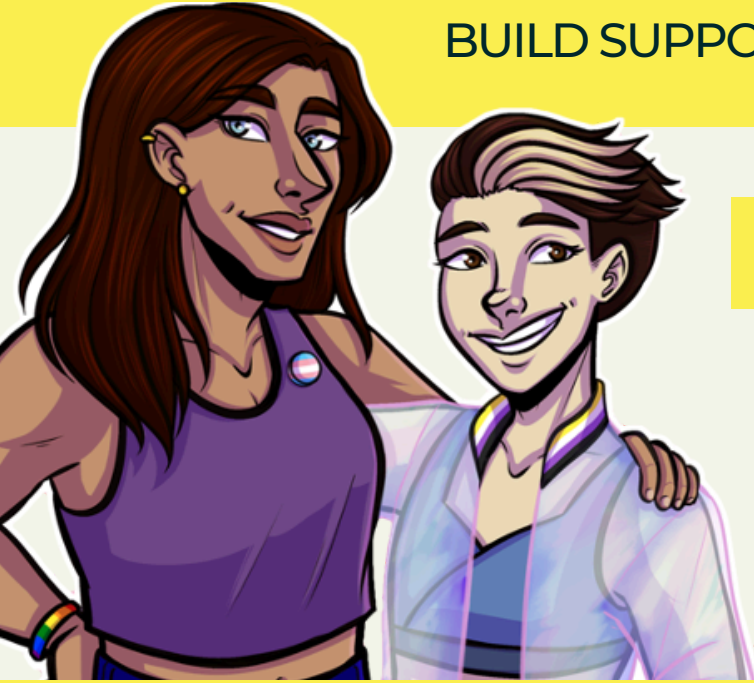


RESEARCH BRIEF:

HOW DO TRANS/NONBINARY YOUNG ADULTS BUILD SUPPORTIVE ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS?



WHAT DID WE DO?

We interviewed 30 trans/nonbinary young adults (ages 18-29 years) about their past and current romantic relationships. We asked about challenges they faced and support they received related to being transgender/nonbinary as well as their race, ethnicity, gender, disability, and sexual orientation.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

1

Romantic partners gave several types of support related to participants' identities:

- *Affirmation*: Validating and expressing appreciation for an identity
- *Supported exploration*: Being encouraging and non-judgmental as a partner tries new ways of understanding and expressing an identity
- *Trigger management*: Helping a partner cope with experiences that bring up difficult feelings about an identity
- *Stigma buffering*: Helping a partner deal with prejudice
- *Shared understanding*: Listening carefully and learning about an identity

[My relationships are] just a bunch of nonbinary Black people just dating each other. It's really nice and really healing to... be with someone who...can understand where you're coming from on a lot of identity aspects. –Participant

2

Ableism, cissexism, racism, sexism, and sizeism created challenges for dating and romantic relationships:

- Some participants were overlooked, misunderstood, fetishized, or rejected because of their identities.
- Some participants felt they had to downplay their identities or couldn't ask their partners for support.
- Some participants stayed in unhealthy relationships because they worried no one else would date them.

"Even if there's things that you really like about someone, if you often end up feeling like they aren't really listening to you or they're...not able to affirm how you see yourself... you deserve better! It is possible to find people who will be respectful and affirming of your needs." –Participant

3

Three factors helped young adults build supportive romantic relationships:

- Support from others, like friends, parents, therapists, or support groups
- Lessons from past relationships, like how to set boundaries
- Confidence that they deserved supportive relationships and would find the right partners

"It tends to be hard to visualize what 'future you' is gonna look like. Not just what surgery or hormones could make you physically look like, but the...people that are gonna love and support you... You're gonna meet people who will get it, and partners...who will surprise you beyond everything that you ever expected." –Participant

WANT MORE INFO?

- Visit <https://wholeselv.es> for ways to get involved
- Read the full research article for free at <https://bit.ly/identityneeds2022>

