

OUTLOOK OPEN ACCESS

Reviewing Research on Transgender and Nonbinary People in Social Psychology: Insights and Future Research Directions

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ABSTRACT

Transgender and nonbinary (TGNB) identities and issues faced by TGNB people are receiving growing attention in social psychology. At the same time, this is a relatively new area, and most research on LGBTQ+ issues primarily focuses on sexual minorities, whereas most research on gender focuses on women and men. We provide an overview of the social psychological literature on TGNB issues specifically and discuss gaps in the literature that can serve as a springboard for future research. A systematic search identified 48 articles spanning five research themes: stereotyping and prejudice, experiences of stigma and affirmation, support and allyship, physical androgyny and measurements and methods. We summarize findings from these articles and point out future directions that can help enhance social psychology's contributions to solutions for the issues faced by TGNB people in today's highly polarized world.

1 | Introduction

Views of gender/sex¹ have been changing, with more than half of Gen Z rejecting binary views of gender/sex (Twenge 2023) and an increasing number of individuals—particularly young people—identifying as transgender or nonbinary (TGNB; Herman et al. 2022). At the same time, there is vocal opposition to these changes across the world, describing 'gender ideology' (presumably meaning trans-inclusive, less binary views of gender) as a threat to Christianity, an imperialist import from 'the West', and a danger to women and gender equality (Butler 2024). This opposition often manifests in ways that actively harm TGNB people. For example, in the United States, anti-transgender legislation has proliferated—with a record-breaking 972 anti-transgender bills being proposed in 2025 alone as of August (Trans Legislation Tracker 2025) and several executive orders targeting TGNB people (Kurtzleben 2025). Likewise, the UK Supreme Court ruled that the legal definition of 'woman' under the Equality Act 2010

is based on biological sex, thus excluding transgender women (Cochrane 2025).

Reflecting these changes, interest in these topics in social psychology has also increased. Yet, this is a relatively new area of research within social psychology. Indeed, most research on gender/sex in social psychology and psychology more broadly continues to operate within a binary gender/sex framework, focusing on issues faced by cisgender women and men (Means and Morgenroth 2024). Likewise, research on LGBTQ+ topics focuses primarily on sexual orientation (e.g., a PsycINFO search for 'LGBT*' and 'gay' 6463 results, whereas a search for 'LGBT*' and 'trans' returns 2292). Issues faced by people whose gender identity violates assumptions of the gender/sex binary, either because their binary gender identity does not match their sex assigned at birth (i.e., transgender women and men) or because their gender identity falls outside the gender binary altogether (i.e., nonbinary² people), are thus not particularly very well

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represented in either subfield. In this article, we provide an overview of the social psychological literature on TGNB people and identify gaps in the literature that can serve as a springboard for future research.

2 | Research on TGNB People in Social Psychology

2.1 | Literature Search

Reviewing the entire literature on TGNB people is beyond the scope of this article. Instead, we were interested in the contribution of social psychology specifically. We first identified a list of social psychology journals (see Figure 1). To identify articles on TGNB people, two research assistants independently implemented the search strategy used by Means and Morgenroth (2024) for the resulting 24 journals (see Step 2 in Figure 1 for details). This strategy included the term ‘androgynous’. Although TGNB people are not necessarily androgynous, we included this search term to identify articles examining reactions to visible gender nonconformity that TGNB people may express. However, we excluded articles that used “androgynous ” to refer to a mix of feminine and masculine traits according to the Bem Sex Role inventory (Bem, 1981). The two authors read the titles and abstracts of each identified article to determine which articles should be excluded. Note that we excluded articles focusing on LGBTQ+ topics/populations more broadly because TGNB people were generally not the focus of this work (e.g., although the article focused on the experiences of ‘LGBT’ people, a small minority of the participants were TGNB). The final number of articles was 48 (see Table 1), with the first article being published in 1996 and over half of articles being published since 2021 (see Figure 2).

2.2 | What Questions Has Social Psychology Asked?

To identify themes in the literature, we (the two authors) independently grouped all articles into categories, discussed their categories and finalized a list of 10 topics, which we then grouped into five broader themes (see Table 2 and Figure 3). Interrater reliability (Cohen’s kappa, i.e., the agreement between raters correcting for the agreement that would be expected by chance) was substantial to be perfect for all five themes: stereotyping and prejudice ($\kappa = 0.83$), experiences of stigma and affirmation ($\kappa = 0.85$), support and allyship ($\kappa = 0.67$), physical androgyny ($\kappa = 0.74$) and measurements and methods ($\kappa = 1.00$), and inconsistencies were resolved through discussion. Each article could fit into multiple themes.

2.2.1 | Stereotyping and Prejudice

This category was by far the most frequent topic studied and can be broadly divided into research on predictors of attitudes towards TGNB people or TGNB-related policies (most commonly policies regulating TGNB people’s bathroom use), beliefs and stereotypes about TGNB people, and rhetoric used in the defence of anti-TGNB views.

Predictors for attitudes towards TGNB people and TGNB-inclusive policies often overlap, which is perhaps unsurprising given that these two types of attitudes are strongly associated with each other (Axt et al. 2021; Morgenroth, Axt, et al. 2024). More specifically, negative attitudes towards TGNB people (including physically androgynous people) and TGNB-related policies are associated with ideological variables, such as political conservatism (Atwood and Axt 2021; Locantore and Wasarhaley 2020; Rye et al. 2019), religiosity (Locantore and Wasarhaley 2020) and (gender) essentialism (Axt et al. 2021; Morgenroth et al. 2021; Roberts et al. 2017; Schudson and van Anders 2022; Wilton et al. 2019). More basic psychological factors, such as a need for cognitive closure (Atwood and Axt 2021; Morgenroth et al. 2021) and social identity-related factors (Hayes and Reiman 2022; Morgenroth et al. 2021; Outten et al. 2019), are also associated with negative attitudes. In line with the intergroup contact hypothesis (Allport 1954), contact with transgender people, including imagined contact, but also with sexual minority people, is associated with more positive attitudes towards TGNB people and policies (Earle et al. 2021; Healy et al. 2017; Moss-Racusin and Rabasco 2018; Walch, Sinkkanen, et al. 2012). Attitudes are particularly negative towards transgender people who do not voluntarily disclose their transgender identity (Adams and Webster 2017), transgender women (compared to transgender men; Totton and Rios 2021) and more androgynous transgender people (Stern and Rule 2018).

Many of these predictors, such as contact, conservatism and religiosity, mirror those associated with prejudice towards sexual minorities (Etengoff and Lefevor 2021; Smith et al. 2009). Other factors such as strength of gender identification and associated social identity threats may play a unique role for TGNB attitudes given that TGNB people directly threaten the current gender categorization system (see Morgenroth and Ryan 2021).

The work on beliefs about TGNB people shows that stereotypes of transgender people are largely negative, including ‘mentally ill’ (Howansky et al. 2021; Locantore and Wasarhaley 2020), ‘deceptive’ (Totton and Rios 2021), ‘confused’ (Howansky et al. 2021) and ‘deviant’ (Howansky et al. 2021). Illustrating the clear link between gender/sex and sexual orientation in people’s minds, TGNB people are also stereotyped as gay (Howansky et al. 2021), an effect that decreases for TGNB people who have spent more time transitioning and are more gender-typical (Spiellmann and Stern 2021). Studies that focused on physical appearance find that TGNB are expected to look, are evaluated as and are remembered as less gender-congruent—even when they look identical to cisgender people (Howansky et al. 2020; Wittlin et al. 2018), findings that mirror appearance expectations for lesbian and gay people (Rieger et al. 2010). Similarly, even when presented with the same faces, targets labelled TGNB are perceived as less attractive than when they are labelled cisgender (Mao et al. 2019). These findings highlight that simply labelling someone as TGNB can bias face processing.

Lastly, some articles focused on the arguments and rhetoric used by people opposing TGNB rights. These articles documented the contradictions in anti-trans rhetoric (Morgenroth, Means, et al. 2024) and the strategic victimization rhetoric used by those

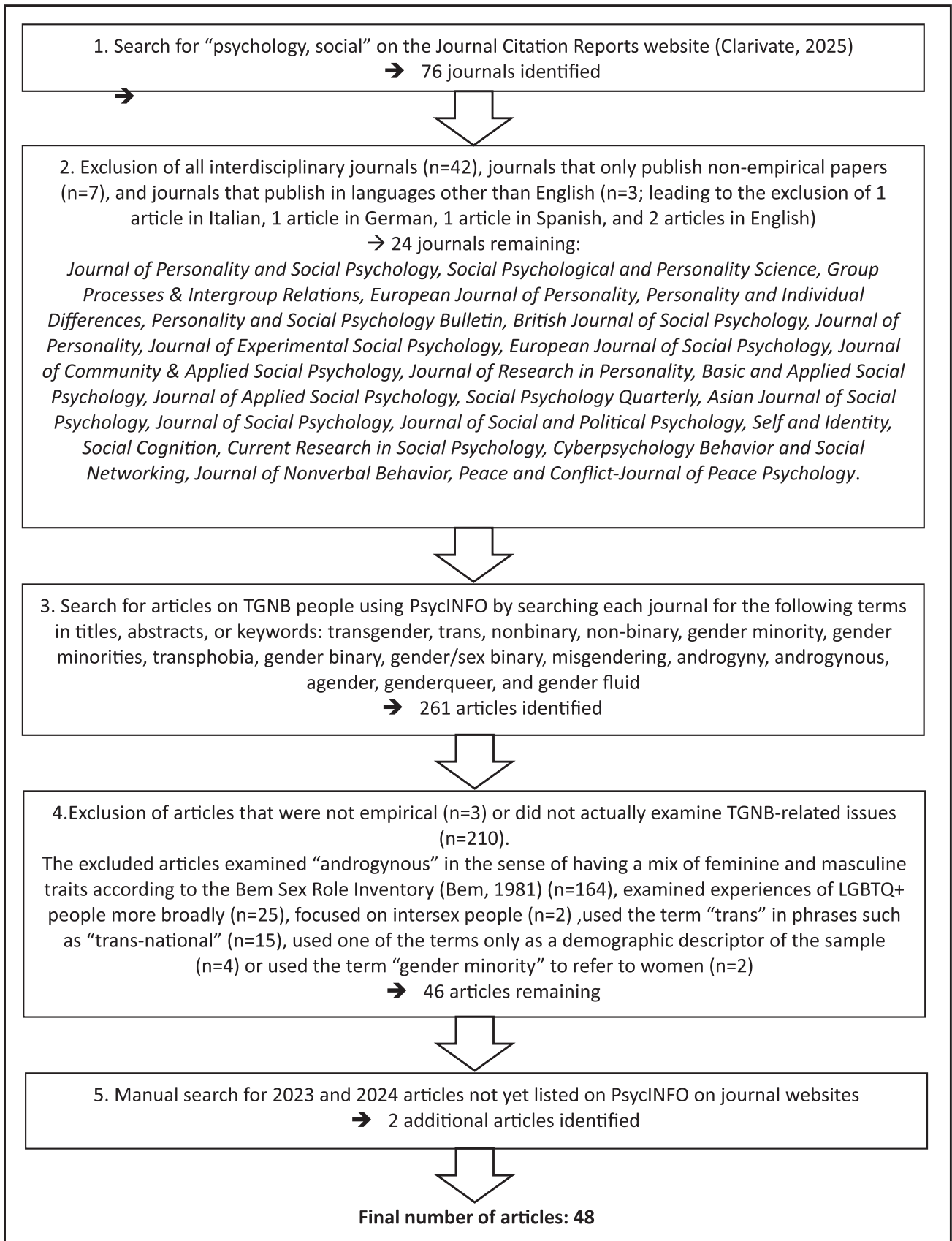


FIGURE 1 | Flowchart of literature search.

TABLE 1 | Information about identified articles.

Reference	Title	No. of studies	Total N	Location of data collection	Type of sample(s)	Main findings	Theme(s)
Mason-Schrock (1996)	Transsexuals' narrative construction of the 'true self'	1	10	The United States	Members of a transgender support group	Transgender people draw on dominant gender ideologies to creatively construct self-narratives to interpret their biographies and affirm their gender	Experiences of stigma and affirmation
Tee and Hegarty (2006)	Predicting opposition to the Civil Rights of trans persons in the United Kingdom	1	151	The United Kingdom	Student sample	Heterosexism, authoritarianism, contact with sexual minorities and the belief that gender is biologically based predict opposition to transgender people's civil rights	Stereotyping and prejudice
Johnson et al. (2012)	Race is gendered: How covarying phenotypes and stereotypes bias sex categorization	5	329	The United States	Student samples	Gender/sex categorization is facilitated (e.g., when disambiguating androgynous faces) when the race category shares facial phenotypes or stereotypes with the correct gender/sex category, whereas the opposite is the case for incompatible phenotypes or stereotypes	Physical androgyny
Walch, Sinkkanen, et al. (2012)	Using intergroup contact theory to reduce stigma against transgender individuals: impact of a transgender speaker panel presentation	1	45	The United States	Student sample	Exposure to a transgender speaker panel (vs. only a presentation on transphobia) reduces transphobia	Stereotyping and prejudice; support and allyship
McLemore (2015)	Experiences with misgendering: identity misclassification of transgender spectrum individuals	2	249	The United States	TGNB online samples	Being misgendered is a common experience among TGNB people (especially among NB people) and is associated with lower wellbeing but also with higher identity importance and stronger verification and enhancement striving	Experiences of stigma and affirmation

(Continues)

TABLE 1 | (Continued)

Reference	Title	No. of studies	Total N	Location of data collection	Type of sample(s)	Main findings	Theme(s)
Yang et al. (2015)	Preferences for sexual dimorphism on attractiveness levels: An eye-tracking study	1	62	China	Student sample	Heterosexual people largely prefer feminine female faces and masculine male faces to androgynous faces	Stereotyping and prejudice; physical androgyny
Adams and Webster (2017)	When leaders are not who they appear: The effects of leader disclosure of a concealable stigma on follower reactions	2	315	The United States	Employed participants	When leaders disclose that they are transgender, they are viewed as less likable and less effective, especially when disclosure is involuntary and at a later point (compared to voluntary and at an earlier point)	Stereotyping and prejudice
Healy et al. (2017)	Prejudice, polyculturalism, and the influence of contact and moral exclusion: A comparison of responses toward LGBT, TI, and refugee groups	1	154	Australia	Heterosexual people recruited via a professional participant recruitment service	Polyculturalism (an ideology that focuses on the interactions and connections between groups) is associated with prejudice towards transgender and intersex people, and this relationship is mediated by moral exclusion and contact quality	Stereotyping and prejudice
Roberts et al. (2017)	Making boundaries great again: Essentialism and support for boundary-enhancing initiatives	8	1948	The United States	MTurk samples	Essentialism is associated with boundary-enhancing policies and practices, including legislation that mandates that transgender people use the bathroom associated with their sex assigned at birth	Stereotyping and prejudice
Chaney and Sanchez (2018)	Gender-inclusive bathrooms signal fairness across identity dimensions	3	572	The United States	Student and MTurk samples	Women and racial minority people believe that companies with all-gender bathrooms are procedurally fair and have a more positive and inclusive gender/racial climate compared to companies with gender/sex-segregated restrooms	Support and allyship

(Continues)

TABLE 1 | (Continued)

Reference	Title	No. of studies	Total N	Location of data collection	Type of sample(s)	Main findings	Theme(s)
Moss-Racusin and Rabasco (2018)	Reducing gender identity bias through imagined intergroup contact	3	616	The United States	MTurk samples	Highly qualified transgender job candidates are viewed as less likable and hireable than their cisgender counterparts. An imagined contact intervention can reduce or even eliminate these biases	Stereotyping and prejudice; support and allyship
Stern and Rule (2018)	Physical androgyny and categorization difficulty shape political conservatives' attitudes toward transgender people	2	960	The United States	Student and MTurk samples	People (especially conservatives) view transgender people who look androgynous more negatively than those who look gender/sex-typical because they struggle to identify their gender/sex	Stereotyping and prejudice; physical androgyny
Witlin et al. (2018)	About face: Memory for transgender versus cisgender targets' facial appearance	5	1551	The United States	MTurk samples	When exposed to identical faces, faces of targets labelled cisgender are viewed and remembered as more gender-typical than faces labelled transgender	Stereotyping and prejudice; physical androgyny
Ang et al. (2019)	Difference in new product adoption among at-risk members of society: A critical analysis of males, females, and transgender individuals	1	1823	Botswana, India, Kenya, Peru, South Africa, Thailand, Uganda and Ukraine	Individuals at high risk for HIV	Embarrassment predicts resistance to the adoption of pre-exposure prophylaxis to prevent HIV, especially among women and transgender people	Experiences of stigma and affirmation
Cronin et al. (2019)	Internalized transphobia and well-being: The moderating role of attachment	1	101	Australia	TGNB people	Attachment style affects the extent to which internalized transphobia is associated with life satisfaction, such that this effect is absent for those low in attachment anxiety	Experiences of stigma and affirmation

(Continues)

TABLE 1 | (Continued)

Reference	Title	No. of studies	Total N	Location of data collection	Type of sample(s)	Main findings	Theme(s)
Groyecka et al. (2019)	Challenge your stereotypes! Human library and its impact on prejudice in Poland	1	204	Poland	General public	'Human Library' interventions decrease social distance towards Muslims but not towards transgender people	Stereotyping and prejudice; support and allyship
Mao et al. (2019)	How gender identity and transgender status affect perceptions of attractiveness	1	319	The United States	Student sample	Identical cross-sex targets are viewed as less attractive when they are labelled nonbinary or transgender compared to when they are labelled cisgender, especially by men and by women with traditional views of gender	Stereotyping and prejudice
Outten et al. (2019)	Heterosexual women's support for trans-inclusive bathroom legislation depends on the degree to which they perceive trans women as a threat	1	245	The United States	MTurk sample	Heterosexual, cisgender women who view transgender women as a threat to women as a whole are more supportive of increasing the number of gender-neutral bathrooms than of giving transgender women access to women's bathrooms. The opposite is the case for women low in threat	Stereotyping and prejudice
Rye et al. (2019)	Individual difference predictors of transgender beliefs: Expanding our conceptualization of conservatism	1	218	The United States	Student sample	Being a man, homophobia, benevolent sexism and authoritarianism predict attitudes towards transgender people	Stereotyping and prejudice
Wilton et al. (2019)	Lay theories of gender influence support for women and transgender people's legal rights	4	708	The United States	MTurk samples	Gender essentialism increases opposition to women's and transgender people's rights	Stereotyping and prejudice
Howansky et al. (2020)	Seeing gender: Perceptual representations of transgender individuals	4	833	The United States	Student and MTurk samples	Transgender individuals are perceptually represented as less gender-typical, which has consequences for gender categorization and evaluation of gendered behaviours	Stereotyping and prejudice; physical androgyny

(Continues)

TABLE 1 | (Continued)

Reference	Title	No. of studies	Total N	Location of data collection	Type of sample(s)	Main findings	Theme(s)
Locantore and Wasarhaley (2020)	Mentally ill, HIV-positive, or sexual predator? Determining myths perceived as representative of transgender people	1	1450	The United States	MTurk sample	Mental illness, but not HIV-status or sexual predation, is seen as representative of transgender people	Stereotyping and prejudice
Rubin et al. (2020)	Transgender and cisgender children's stereotypes and beliefs about others' stereotypes	1	241	The United States	Transgender children, cisgender siblings of transgender children, cisgender control children	Cisgender and transgender children do not differ in their prescriptive gender stereotypes or their perceptions of others' prescriptive stereotypes. However, perception of others' prescriptive stereotypes is associated with stereotype endorsement for cisgender control children but not for transgender children	Stereotyping and prejudice
Atwood and Axt (2021)	Assessing implicit attitudes about androgyny	6	6124	The United States	Project Implicit samples	This article develops a novel Implicit Association Test (IAT) that assesses implicit attitudes towards androgynous people. The novel IAT is reliably correlated with explicit attitudes towards androgyny but did not show the expected correlation with behavioural outcomes	Stereotyping and prejudice; physical androgyny; measurement and methods
Axt et al. (2021)	Implicit transgender attitudes independently predict beliefs about gender and transgender people	4	9311	The United States	Project Implicit samples	This article develops a novel Implicit Association Test (IAT) that assesses implicit attitudes towards transgender people. Implicit transgender attitudes measured via this new IAT predict gender essentialism, contact with transgender people and support for trans-inclusive policies, over and above explicit attitudes	Stereotyping and prejudice; measurement and methods

(Continues)

TABLE 1 | (Continued)

Reference	Title	No. of studies	Total N	Location of data collection	Type of sample(s)	Main findings	Theme(s)
Clements and Munro (2021)	Biases and their impact on opinions of transgender bathroom usage	1	260	The United States	Student sample	People with higher levels of scientific reasoning evaluate the quality of arguments in an article about transgender people's bathroom use more negatively when the argument does not align with their pre-existing views	Stereotyping and prejudice
Earle et al. (2021)	A multilevel analysis of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) rights support across 77 countries: The role of contact and country laws	1	70,056	77 different countries	ILGA-RWI Global Attitudes Survey sample	Personal contact with transgender people and living in a country with more transgender rights predict more support for transgender rights	Stereotyping and prejudice; support and allyship
Howansky et al. (2021)	(Trans)gender stereotypes and the self: Content and consequences of gender identity stereotypes	2	735	The United States	MTurk sample and members of LGBTQ+ organizations and online communities	Stereotypes of transgender people include a mix of masculine and feminine stereotypes, as well as unique, largely negative stereotypes such as 'mentally ill'. These stereotypes are evaluated as more negative by transgender people themselves (vs. by cisgender people)	Stereotyping and prejudice
Johnson et al. (2021)	What's in a pronoun: Exploring gender pronouns as an organizational identity-safety cue among sexual and gender minorities	3	445	The United States	CloudResearch sample and Prolific samples	Including gender pronouns in employee biographies signals identity safety to LGBTQ+ people	Experiences of stigma and affirmation; support and allyship
Lorusso and Albanesi (2021)	When the context rows against. Voicing parents of transgender children and teenagers in Italy: A qualitative study	1	13	Italy	Parents of transgender children	Parents of transgender children report difficulty accessing information and mental health support. They engage in advocacy for their children and work against cisheterosexist norms	Experiences of stigma and affirmation

(Continues)

TABLE 1 | (Continued)

Reference	Title	No. of studies	Total N	Location of data collection	Type of sample(s)	Main findings	Theme(s)
Morgenroth et al. (2021)	Defending the sex/gender binary: The role of gender identification and need for closure	2	904	The United Kingdom, Sweden	Online samples of cisgender women and men	Centrality of gender identity is associated with cisgender women's and men's endorsement of the gender binary and opposition to gender-inclusive policies and practices, particularly those that seek to eliminate or avoid gender/sex categorization	Stereotyping and prejudice
Spielmann and Stern (2021)	Gender transition shapes perceived sexual orientation	2	2636	The United States	MTurk and Qualtrics research panel	The amount of time transgender people have spent transitioning influences perceived sexual orientation such that transgender people who have been transitioning for a longer time are more likely to be viewed as straight, partially mediated by gender typicality	Stereotyping and prejudice
Totton and Rios (2021)	Predictors of anti-transgender attitudes: Identity-confusion and deception as aspects of distrust	3	849	The United States	Student and MTurk samples	People hold more negative attitudes and greater distrust towards transgender people (particularly transgender women) than gay men, primarily because they view them as deceptive	Stereotyping and prejudice
Hayes and Reiman (2022)	Evoking gender distinctiveness threat in cisgender women lowers their support for gender-inclusive bathroom policies	1	520	The United States	Women recruited via CloudResearch	Evoking distinctiveness threat leads cisgender women to be less supportive of legislation that gives transgender women access to women's bathrooms	Stereotyping and prejudice
Klysing et al. (2022)	Gender diversity in recruitment: Influence of gender trouble on applicant attraction and evaluation	2	1361	Sweden and the United States	TGNB and cisgender people recruited via Qualtrics online panel and Prolific; HR staff recruited via social media and email	Gender-inclusive (vs. binary) equal opportunity statements lead to lower identity threat among TGNB people without negative consequences for cisgender people. Non-normative gender expression did not lead to biased evaluations by HR-specialists	Stereotyping and prejudice; experiences of stigma and affirmation; support and allyship; physical androgyny

(Continues)

TABLE 1 | (Continued)

Reference	Title	No. of studies	Total N	Location of data collection	Type of sample(s)	Main findings	Theme(s)
Du Plessis et al. (2023)	A trans agent of social change in incarceration: A psychobiographical study of Natasha Keating	1	1	Australia	n/a	This psychobiographical study examines the life of Natasha Keating, a trans woman incarcerated in two male prisons in Australia, focusing on her resilience and advocacy work	Experiences of stigma and affirmation
Renström et al. (2022)	The multiple meanings of the gender-inclusive pronoun hen: Predicting attitudes and use	3	2892	Sweden	Representative samples recruited via survey company Enkätfabriken	Traditionalism is the main predictor of negative attitudes towards using the Swedish pronoun 'hen' (which functions similarly to the English pronoun 'they') to refer to anyone or people of unknown genders, whereas endorsement of the gender binary primarily predicts negative attitudes towards using 'hen' to refer to nonbinary identities	Stereotyping and prejudice
Schudson and van Anders (2022)	Gender/sex diversity beliefs: Scale construction, validation, and links to prejudice	4	1152	The United States	MTurk samples	The article introduces the Gender/Sex Diversity Beliefs Scale (GSDB) to assess beliefs about gender/sex, including essentialist and social constructionist beliefs. The different factors are associated with prejudice against transgender and gender-non-conforming people	Stereotyping and prejudice; measurements and methods
Spielmann et al. (2022)	Mental health contributors among transgender people in a non-WEIRD society: Evidence from China	1	1106	China	Participants from the 2017 Chinese Transgender Population General Survey	More frequent discrimination is associated with worse mental health and increased self-harm for transgender people. Environmental support, on the other hand, is associated with better mental health but unrelated to self-harm	Experiences of stigma and affirmation
Holland and Kahlor (2023)	A Google Trends analysis of interest in nonbinary identities	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	There has been an increase in Google searches related to nonbinary identities in the past decade	Stereotyping and prejudice

(Continues)

TABLE 1 | (Continued)

Reference	Title	No. of studies	Total N	Location of data collection	Type of sample(s)	Main findings	Theme(s)
Kodipady et al. (2023)	Beyond virtue signaling: Perceived motivations for pronoun sharing	3	2641	The United States	Quasi-representative Prolific samples	People perceive at least three motivations when they learn that others have shared their pronouns: trying to enhance one's reputation, indicating one's identity and endorsing pronoun sharing as a norm. Perceptions of reputation signalling are lower, whereas perceptions of the other two motivations are higher, when pronouns are shared by a TGNB person	Support and allyship
Ansani and Olivera-La Rosa (2024)	Moral inferences from androgynous faces are beyond categorical uncertainty: Evidence of a positive bias towards androgynous targets	4	346	Primarily Spanish-speaking countries and Italy	Italian- and Spanish-speaking people recruited via social media and email	Androgynous faces are harder to categorize into gender/sex categories, but this difficulty does not necessarily lead to negative evaluations	Stereotyping and prejudice; physical androgyny
Maxwell et al. (2025)	A mixed-methods approach to understand victimization discourses by opposing feminist sub-groups on social media	1	27	The United Kingdom	Feminist Twitter accounts	Trans-inclusive feminists' tweets focus on shared victimhood between cisgender women and transgender women, whereas tweets by trans-exclusionary feminists reflect competitive victimhood narratives	Stereotyping and prejudice
Mezzapelle and Reiman (2025)	(Mis)matching expectations: The effects of claimant gender identity and harassment form on perceptions of sexual harassment claims	2	1268	The United States	CloudResearch samples	When transgender women, compared to women assumed to be cisgender, experience gender harassment or sexual harassment, they elicit less empathy and are more likely to be viewed as overreacting and as complainers	Stereotyping and prejudice
Morgenroth, Axt, et al. (2024)	What underlies the opposition to trans-inclusive policies? The role of concerns about male violence versus attitudes toward trans people	7	3864	The United Kingdom and The United States	Prolific samples and Project Implicit sample	Those who oppose the presence of transgender women in women-only spaces claim that their opposition is based on concerns about male violence but is actually driven by negative attitudes towards transgender people	Stereotyping and prejudice

(Continues)

TABLE 1 | (Continued)

Reference	Title	No. of studies	Total N	Location of data collection	Type of sample(s)	Main findings	Theme(s)
Morgenroth, van der Toorn, et al. (2024)	Gender Nonconformity Leads to Identity Denial for Cisgender and Transgender Individuals	3	1096	The United Kingdom	Prolific samples	People show stronger identity denial towards transgender (vs. cisgender) people and towards people who do not conform (vs. do conform) to gender norms. The effect of gender nonconformity is not moderated by transgender vs. cisgender status	Stereotyping and prejudice
Morgenroth, Means, et al. (2024)	The contradictory nature of anti-transgender rhetoric	4	2159	The United States	Prolific samples	There is a positive association between endorsement of contradictory arguments used in anti-transgender rhetoric, even among people who view the arguments as contradictory and even when the contradictions are made salient	Stereotyping and prejudice
Moss-Racusin et al. (2024)	Mothers of transgender youth experience Stigma-by-association	1	489	The United States	MTurk sample	Mothers of transgender children are viewed more negatively than mothers of cisgender children, especially by conservatives	Stereotyping and prejudice

Abbreviation: TGNB, transgender and nonbinary.

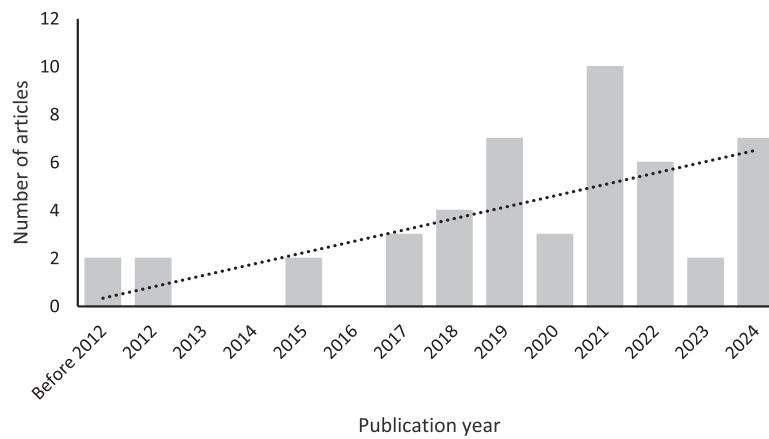


FIGURE 2 | Number of articles on TGNB people published each year.

TABLE 2 | Summary of themes.

Theme	Summary of findings
Stereotyping and prejudice	• Essentialism, conservatism, religiosity, need for cognitive closure and social identity factors predict negative attitudes towards TGNB people and TGNB-inclusive policies • Intergroup contact is associated with more positive attitudes • Beliefs about, expectations of, and perceptions of transgender people are largely negative (e.g., mentally ill, unattractive and deceptive)
Experiences of stigma and affirmation	• Discrimination and marginalization experiences, including misgendering, reduce wellbeing of TGNB people • Support and allyship as well as a range of psychological factors can protect against these negative effects
Support and allyship	• Intergroup contact can reduce prejudice against TGNB people, but effects are mixed • Safety cues such as pronoun sharing largely have positive effects
Physical androgyny	• People generally prefer gender-typical to androgynous people • However, effects are mixed and dependent on moderating factors
Measurement and methods	• There are implicit measures of bias against trans people and androgynous people • We can measure people's beliefs about gender/sex via the validated Gender/Sex Diversity Beliefs Scale

Abbreviation: TGNB, transgender and nonbinary.

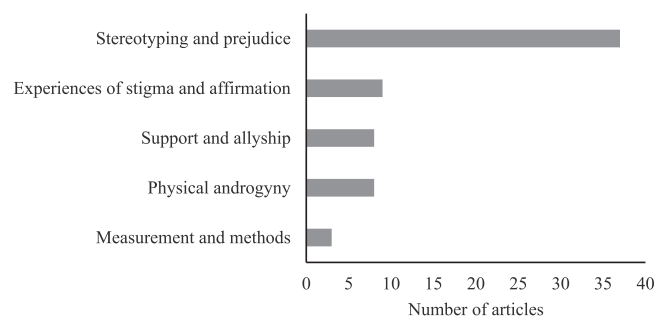


FIGURE 3 | Frequency of topics.

opposed to trans-inclusion (Maxwell et al. 2025; Morgenroth, Axt, et al. 2024).

2.2.2 | Experiences of Stigma and Affirmation

Whereas the previous theme focused on the psychology of perceivers, this theme focuses on the experiences of TGNB people themselves, for example, on their wellbeing and belonging or their perceptions of their own gender.

Research examining the wellbeing of TGNB people, including health, mental health, stress and belonging, and factors associated with wellbeing finds that allyship and protective policies largely have the intended positive effects, whereas experiences of stigma and discrimination unsurprisingly have negative effects. For example, inclusive organizational practices such as pronoun sharing (Johnson et al. 2021) and gender-inclusive equal opportunity statements (Klysing et al. 2022) can serve as safety cues for TGNB people (and LGBTQ people more broadly). On the other

hand, negative treatment, such as misgendering (McLemore 2015) and discrimination (Spielmann et al. 2022), can lead to poorer wellbeing. This literature has also identified protective factors. For example, low levels of attachment anxiety can reduce the negative effect of internalized transphobia on life satisfaction (Cronin et al. 2019).

The work on self-perception illustrates how external factors (e.g., misgendering; stigma; Cronin et al. 2019; McLemore 2015) and internal factors (e.g., attachment styles; childhood experience; Cronin et al. 2019; Mason-Schrock 1996) come together to shape TGNB people's perceptions of themselves as well as the active role TGNB take in crafting their identities using these different factors (Mason-Schrock 1996).

2.2.3 | Support and Allyship

Work on this theme examined different efforts to increase inclusion and support and the effects of such efforts. Identifying effective strategies is crucial given current attacks on TGNB people's rights. The studies identified here provide some promising first findings but also show the limitations of different efforts and heterogeneity in effects. For example, there is evidence that intergroup contact, including imagined contact (Moss-Racusin and Rabasco 2018), can improve attitudes towards TGNB people. However, Groyecka et al. (2019) found that a contact-based, interactive intervention did not decrease social distance towards TGNB people. This heterogeneity mirrors findings from the literature on intergroup contact and sexual prejudice (Smith et al. 2009). Likewise, pronoun sharing can serve as a safety cue (Johnson et al. 2021) but can also be perceived as a disingenuous way to enhance one's own reputation (Kodipady et al. 2023). Importantly, despite being controversial, trans-inclusive policies and practices can also positively affect other groups. For example, Chaney and Sanchez (2018) found that gender-inclusive restrooms also signal fairness to groups unaffected by the policy, namely, women and racial minority people.

Given these mixed effects, we urge researchers to further examine this question. Social psychology has a long and rich history of research on prejudice reduction (e.g., Hildebrand et al. 2024; but see also Paluck et al. 2021), which can provide the basis for such research.

2.2.4 | Physical Androgyny

This theme includes articles that do not necessarily focus on TGNB people but instead on effects or perceptions of physical androgyny and gender non-conforming appearance. This body of work shows that people tend to prefer gender-typical/gender-conforming people to androgynous people, both on an explicit and implicit level (Atwood and Axt 2021; Stern and Rule 2018). However, this preference seems to depend on the exact stimuli used and a range of moderating factors such as gender/sex category and attractiveness (Ansani and Olivera-La Rosa 2024; Yang et al. 2015). Indeed, some authors have found *positive* effects of androgyny, with androgynous targets being perceived as, for example, more trustworthy (Ansani and Olivera-La Rosa 2024)

and more suitable for certain jobs (Klysing et al. 2022). Future research should investigate these conflicting findings further.

2.2.5 | Measurements and Methods

This category refers to articles that introduce a new method or measurement to examine questions related to TGNB people. Two of the works introduced new versions of the Implicit Association Test (IAT) that measure implicit attitudes towards androgynous people (Atwood and Axt 2021) and transgender women and men (Axt et al. 2021), respectively. The third work (Schudson and van Anders 2022) introduces the Gender/Sex Diversity Beliefs Scale (GSDB), a five-factor scale that measures affirmative beliefs about gender/sex diversity, endorsement of gender normativity, beliefs about uniformity of gender/sex groups, beliefs about the importance of genital surgery for gender/sex category assignment and beliefs about the role of a person's upbringing.

It is notable that no article introduced a new explicit measure of attitudes towards TGNB people, given that this is a frequent topic of study. Most work examining explicit attitudes towards transgender people uses feeling thermometers (e.g., Locantore and Wasarhaley 2020) or a relative measure of bias asking participants about feelings towards transgender and cisgender people (e.g., Axt et al. 2021; Morgenroth, Axt, et al. 2024), rather than validated scales. Validated scales of TGNB prejudice do exist outside of the journals included here (e.g., Hill and Willoughby 2005; Jones et al. 2024; Walch, Ngamake, et al. 2012). However, many of these scales use outdated terminology or do not reflect current understandings of TGNB identities, highlighting the contribution that social psychology could make.

3 | Gaps and Future Research Directions

The increased interest in TGNB topics is promising, and the field has provided useful insights. Nevertheless, there are noticeable gaps that can serve as springboards for future research. We have pointed some of these out in the different sections above. Here, we emphasize some gaps that we noticed across topics.

First, most studies do not distinguish between different groups under the TGNB umbrella and instead examine 'transgender people' or 'gender minorities' broadly. Although there is certainly overlap in experiences of, attitudes towards and perceptions of these groups, the studies that do distinguish between different subgroups consistently find differences. For example, transgender men, but not transgender women, are stereotyped as aggressive and anxious, whereas transgender women, but not transgender men, are stereotyped as attractive and emotional (Howansky et al. 2021). In addition, people report more attraction to the same face when it is labelled nonbinary compared to when it is described as the face of a transgender woman or man (Mao et al. 2019). Differences can also be observed in the anti-transgender rhetoric used when discussing different subgroups. Although transgender women are often portrayed as a danger to women and children or to women's rights (Atwood et al. 2024), transgender men and boys are more often described as confused, misled and possibly in need of saving from 'dangerous' gender-affirming care (see Ashley 2020). Future research should

further examine these differences and the psychological underpinnings of the endorsement of harmful myths about transgender women/girls and transgender men/boys as well as bias against them.

Relatedly, although we describe this manuscript as a review of the social psychological literature on TGNB people, the 'NB' is largely absent from research. Indeed, of the 114 studies across the 48 articles included here, only 6 explicitly examined nonbinary people or issues faced by nonbinary people (Atwood and Axt 2021, Study 3; Mao et al. 2019; McLemore 2015; Morgenroth et al. 2021). We thus know very little about a group that is rapidly growing, especially among young people (Twenge 2023), and that is likely to face unique reactions and obstacles given its 'intermediate' status (Burke et al. 2023).

A substantial number of studies examined predictors of attitudes towards TGNB people and policies and practices affecting TGNB people, providing useful insights into the psychological mechanisms underlying such attitudes. However, most of this work was correlational and cross-sectional. Thus, we encourage researchers to study these questions using experimental and longitudinal designs to understand which psychological constructs *cause* such attitudes, which will be important information for developing interventions.

Additionally, it may be useful to understand for whom different psychological constructs are predictive of attitudes. Indeed, opposition to gender inclusivity comes from a range of groups that otherwise seem to have little in common (e.g., conservatives and feminists; see Morgenroth and Ryan 2021). This heterogeneity among those with negative attitudes towards TGNB people and TGNB-inclusive policies has received no attention. Importantly, such heterogeneity is likely to pose an important obstacle reducing prejudice as different people may hold negative attitudes for different reasons. For example, gender-critical (i.e., trans-exclusionary) feminists' opposition may be driven by essentialist views of gender/sex that clearly divide people into oppressors (men) and the oppressed (women) with no room for fluidity between these categories (see Greer 1999). Men with traditional views of masculinity, on the other hand, might react negatively to inclusive views of gender because they threaten their manhood (see Vandello et al. 2008). Future research should therefore attend to this heterogeneity.

Mirroring general trends in social psychology, most of the research reported here was conducted in the United States, followed by Western Europe. We thus echo the call made by others (e.g., Barrientos et al. 2024; Hässler et al. 2024; Thalmayer et al. 2021) that (social) psychology should be mindful of and actively address the inequities that exist in our publishing systems, as these inequities favour White, Western voices and often ignore the rich, nuanced and insightful work on LGBTQ+ issues conducted outside of the narrow slice of the world that is North America and Western Europe.

Lastly, our review itself is not without limitations. We excluded from our search research published in interdisciplinary journals, research examining LGBTQ+ issues more broadly and research published in languages other than English. We view this review

as a useful overview over (mainstream) social psychology's contribution to the research on TGNB issues and encourage others to conduct a broader search to address some of the issues we identified in the previous paragraph and provide a more comprehensive picture of the rich research on these topics.

4 | Conclusion

Over the last decade, social psychology has shown an increased interest in TGNB people and the issues they face. Reflecting the field's interest in stereotyping and prejudice, the majority of this work has focused on predictors and correlates of attitudes towards TGNB people and policies and practices affecting TGNB people as well as on beliefs about and perceptions of TGNB people. We have provided an overview of the literature and pointed out important gaps with the hope that this article can serve as a springboard for future research that contributes to solutions for the issues faced by TGNB people in today's highly polarized world.

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Ethics Statement

The authors have nothing to report.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The authors have nothing to report.

Endnotes

¹ We use the term gender/sex to acknowledge that these two terms cannot always be clearly distinguished (e.g., it is often unclear if 'woman' refers to sex or gender in lay language as well as scientific publications) and that gender (both in the sense of gender identity and gender roles) is influenced by sex (biological attributes, such as chromosomes, hormones and primary and secondary sex characteristics) and vice versa (see also van Anders 2015). Additionally, sex is always viewed through a gendered lens (Butler 1990).

² In this article, we use the term 'nonbinary' as an umbrella term for all gender identities other than 'woman/female' or 'man/male', such as (but not limited to) genderfluid, agender, genderqueer and bigender.

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