

Stereotypes of Transgender Categories: Attributes and Lay Theories

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Abstract

What is the descriptive content and guiding lay theory of transgender stereotypes? The recent rise in public visibility and the numeric minority of this gender group make this an opportunity to understand not only the content of stereotypes applied to transgender individuals today, but also the ontology of gender guiding the content of these stereotypes. Using convergent methods, we measure the descriptive content of transgender stereotypes and assess the role of essentialist beliefs in guiding that content. We show that transgender categories are perceived less positively than cisgender categories, and that while perceptions of cisgender men and women differ sharply, those of transgender men and women show striking similarity. Essentialist beliefs about gender exaggerate these patterns.