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## 8. Discourses of Disclosure: The Un/Revolutionary Potential of Transmasculine Sexual Scripts

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### Abstract

Questo articolo discute le narrazioni sullo “svelamento” (disclosure), in contesto sessuale, di informazioni sulla propria corporeità ed esperienza di persona trans, raccolti durante un’etnografia sulle sessualità degli uomini trans condotta in Francia tra il 2019 e il 2023. Concentrandosi sul modo in cui lo svelamento è inscritto nei modelli di condotta sessuale (sexual scripts) degli uomini trans, l’articolo dimostra, in primo luogo, che questo fa parte di una gestione specifica e strategica delle proprie temporalità in relazione all’altro. In secondo luogo, sottolinea un aspetto impensato di questa pratica: lo svelamento è considerato obbligatorio quando il potenziale partner viene percepito come non consapevole. L’inconsapevolezza rivela dinamiche di potere in contesto sessuale. Infine, queste dinamiche sono reinterpretate alla luce di una contro-narrazione marginale di non svelamento volontaria emersa tra i partecipanti. I diversi posizionamenti adottati dagli uomini trans permettono di ripensare i modelli di condotta sessuale e le loro contingenze.

This paper discusses the discourses around transidentity or transness disclosure in sexual contexts that have been collected during an ethnographic research on transmasculine sexualities carried out in France between 2019 and 2023. Focusing on the way in which disclosing is inscribed in transmasculine sexual scripts, it intends to address three points. First, it will show that disclosure is part of a specific and strategic management of its temporalities in relation to the other. Secondly, it will expose an unthought-of aspect of the discourses on disclosure: the fact that disclosure is considered mandatory when the desired partner is perceived as perhaps not being aware of it. This unthought reveals different power dynamics at work, which will, thirdly, be reconsidered against a marginal counter-narrative of voluntary non-disclosure that emerged in the course of the research, allowing for new perspectives on the ways of thinking about the scripts and their contingencies.

**Keywords:** transgender, scripts, disclosure, identity, sexuality.

### 8.1. Introduction

This paper addresses transmasculine disclosure practices in sexual contexts in order to analyze their logics of action and their transformative potential. In sexuality studies, sexual script theory (Gagnon, Simon 1973) has been used to frame how sexual encounters can occur. However, when it comes to the sexual scripts undertaken by trans people, knowledge is very limited: research conducted on female partners of trans men described a greater reliance on gendered scripts in early transition (Brown 2012), and not much is known about scripts used by transmasculine people engaging in sex with men, although (cis-)homosexual dating scripts have long been described as distinct from (cis-)heterosexual ones (Klinkenberg, Rose 1994) which suggest that there may be some differences between them. However, when looking closer at the sexual stories (Plummer 1995) of transmasculine people, the matter of disclosing transidentity or transness<sup>1</sup> to one’s partner

<sup>1</sup> Transness refers to the state of being trans. This term will be mostly used in this paper as it reflects largely what is communicated at the time of disclosure, which is not necessarily conceptualized in terms of identities. The term transidentity will also be employed when relevant.

appears to be an element that not only distinguishes trans scripts from cis ones but also presents certain specificities of its own. Transmen's disclosing practices in romantic and sexual contexts have been described as means to increase intimacy between partners, but they have also been portrayed as strategically used to avoid violence and manage risks of rejection (Kade 2021). Yet, both in the literature and in an ethnographic fieldwork conducted on transmasculine sexualities that will be discussed here, one thing seems to be left unthought: the mandatory aspect of disclosing. Thus, naming or showing transness to a potential partner who is thought to be unaware of it is almost always thought of as a condition of possibility to pursue the scripts beyond a certain point. Taking the discourses of transmasculine individuals surrounding transgender disclosure practices in sexual contexts, this paper proposes to address and analyze what is inscribed as a proper step in transmasculine sexual scripts and its potential to affect them. This will lead to questioning how disclosure can be thought of both as empowering and as subjectivizing, allowing to act on the conditions surrounding the reception of the information but also reminding the inability to conform to dominant – cis/silent – scripts.

## 8.2. *Materials and methods*

In order to analyze how transgender disclosure constitutes an underquestioned, yet central part of transmasculine sexual scripts, I propose to reverse the interest Gagnon and Simon had in the transition from the sexual world to the world of speech, and to look at how verbalizing identity and/or the body make the transition possible to the sexual world. To do so, sexual stories (Schrock 2006; Plummer 1995), and speech of disclosure have been retrieved from in-depth interviews<sup>2</sup> conducted with 35 transmasculine people in France as part of an ethnographic research on transmasculine sexualities that took place between 2019 and 2023. Material collected from a digital ethnography carried out on transmasculine social media and various dating and hook-up sites was also used to complete the analysis. In 2022, the transmasculine participants who had granted me an initial interview were re-contacted and asked for a follow-up interview. Twenty additional interviews were thus conducted. The time laps between the first and second interviews ranged from eight months for the shortest to two and a half years for the longest. In this second interview, interviewees were asked to recount what had happened in their lives meanwhile and more clarifications were sought on aspects that had not been discussed during the first interview. Moreover, the follow-up interview comported an additional part where some preliminary analyses were briefly presented to the interviewees who were then invited to discuss and comment on them. Among the different elements presented was a statement about disclosure, saying: "Disclosing one's transness to a potential partner is necessary for a sexual encounter to happen". This claim was mentioned in a declarative way in order to give respondents the opportunity to add complexity. The data collected in these follow-up interviews were included in the analysis. This text is structured in three parts. The first part will show that the ways of addressing disclosure focus not on the decision to disclose but on the different methods of doing so. These means of disclosure will be discussed as they hinge on the strategic management of its temporalities. The second part will be interested in specificizing something unthought: the necessary aspect of the disclosure, seen as a way of communicating to a potential partner a fact thought to be mandatory to be known by them. It will be argued that the disclosure of transness materializes different power dynamics at work in the relationship to one another. The third part

2 All interviews were conducted in French and translated in English for the purpose of this paper.

will focus on a marginal counter-discourse of voluntary non-disclosure that has emerged with an interviewee who frequents gay cruising spots, places where disclosure enters in contradiction with the usual flow of scripts in place. This will lead to questioning some aspects of the discourses on disclosure and its consequences on its emancipatory character.

### *8.3. Strategic logics of the scripts: assessing the risks of disclosure*

First, when the topic of disclosure was raised in the interviews, it was not discussed by the interviewees as a choice to be made (to disclose or not) but as a method of carrying it out (how to disclose). Being apprehended as something that can induce various reactions from the potential partner, whether they are ones of rejection, acceptance, or interrogation, its realization was associated with a narrative reporting a relatively high emotional charge. This was handled through the deployment of different strategies for disclosure that were found to be structured around temporalities' management. One important distinction regarding the temporalities of disclosure has been made in the very limited literature on trans disclosure: the coming-out made before the transition, identified as a declaration, and the coming-out that is done after the transition, conceived as disclosure. The former discloses a gender identity, and the latter reveals a gender history (Zimman 2009). Indeed, a transmasculine person who is read as a woman faces different stakes in disclosure than one who is read as a man. Although all types of disclosures are concerned by the analysis, most of them were found to be disclosures of gender history (coming-out made after the transition). Nonetheless, it is another dimension of temporality that seemed to be preeminent in the discourses on disclosure, which is the one concerning the temporal management of the moment of disclosure, in relation to when it occurs within the temporality of the relationship with the person to whom the disclosure is made.

#### *8.3.1. Delaying disclosure : “Ok, I have something to tell you”*

“I don't put it forward at the first meeting. Because I tell myself that the person will judge me on that, before judging me as a person. [...] I get to know the person, and if I see that there is really a possibility, that there is a feeling that is created, then I talk about it calmly<sup>3</sup>.”

Nathan<sup>4</sup>, 19 years old, heterosexual man / transman<sup>5</sup>

Delaying the moment between the beginning of an interaction with a potential partner and the act of disclosure allows for the construction of an interpersonal relationship in and of itself, independent of transness, but leads to a more high-stakes moment of disclosure. In this example, Nathan strategically extends the amount of time he spends with someone before disclosing. This serves two purposes. It first allows him to construct a relationship with his potential partner, where, by building trust, he aims to create a situation where he can be judged by his potential partner independently of his transness before bringing in that information that he considers as discreditable (“I tell myself that the person will judge me on that”). Nathan thinks that extending the delay may have a positive effect on the reaction of his potential partner, to whom he will

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3 “Je le met pas en avant dès la première rencontre. Parce que je me dis que la personne va me juger par rapport à ça, avant de me juger en tant que personne. [...] je sympathise avec la personne, et si je vois qu'il y a vraiment une possibilité, qu'il y a un feeling qui se créé, par la suite j'y en parle calmement.”

4 Names of respondents have been changed for anonymization purposes.

5 The terms used in this text are the respondents' own self-identifying terms, translated from French.

meanwhile have been able to provide other elements on which she could base herself before considering whether to enter a potential romantic and sexual relationship with him or not. Furthermore, it also allows a certain economy of exposure. Nathan can take advantage of this time and decide if the disclosure is worthwhile, “If there is really a possibility”. This allows him to sort out his partners and select the people he wants to disclose to and the people with whom no further romantic and/or sexual interaction is considered, which may not be worth the cost of exposure. Despite those advantages, delaying disclosure was found to be emotionally costly. One interviewee, Thomas (25 years old, pansexual and transmasculine), used to disclose upfront on hook-up apps, attempted to make new types of encounters using Tinder, a dating app where he did not disclose his transness up front. During the interview, he recalled how he disclosed to his Tinder date who was unaware of his transness when they first met at a restaurant. He remembers telling him: “I have something to tell you. Well, I’m a trans guy. Do you have any questions?” [...] and [he] thought: ‘shit, I should have talked about this before. What am I going to do now if he reacts badly, etc.’”<sup>6</sup> Thomas uses the same temporal strategy as Nathan, with a relatively shorter delay. Delaying disclosure carries a certain amount of stress for him. He apprehends it as something that can cause bad reactions, and that could possibly lead to a major change in the interaction.

### 8.3.2. *Disclosing right up front and sorting out people*

“it’s easier to meet queer people [...] who already know me [and] know that I am trans [...] I’ve had to say it, but I usually put it very, very early in the conversation, before there is even any flirting”<sup>7</sup>

Antoine, 30 years old, queer, trans

On the other hand, disclosing upfront avoids this stressful moment with a partner with whom a relationship has been initiated and to whom a more or less formal moment of disclosure must be delivered. Early disclosure includes explicit disclosures that take place before the sexual interaction had started or at its very beginning, announcements made indirectly in a group or face-to-face on a generally more casual register, but it also includes indirect disclosure via the participation in social groups in which the subject of their transness is already known – it has been disclosed – and sometimes discussed. Indeed, for transmasculine people who met new partners in social circles in which they are already recognized as being trans, the moment of disclosure was not mentioned as being such a great issue since their potential partners were already aware of it. A prior disclosure in a non-sexual social context can then allow meeting potential partners with whom a transition to sexuality can be made without adding the step of disclosure, already made. Early disclosure can act as an affirmative strategy. It can help to avoid the later moments of vulnerability and the eventual stress related to the disclosing process. However, disclosing from the outset also has downsides: it can lead to a multiplication of misunderstandings in that people frequently reported potential partners being confused about what a transperson – especially a trans man – is, which can then require additional work of definition or explanation on the part of the transperson: “Afterwards,

6 “J’ai dit voilà j’ai un truc à te dire. En fait je suis un mec trans, est-ce que t’as des questions?” [...] je me disais: ‘merde j’aurais dû en parler avant, comment je vais faire maintenant s’il réagit mal, *et cetera*.’”

7 “c’est plus facile de rencontrer que des personnes queer [...] qui me connaissent déjà et qui du coup savent déjà que je suis trans [...] Ça m’est arrivé de devoir le dire, mais généralement je le place très très tôt dans la conversation, avant même qu’il y ait du flirt”.

I usually had to explain for half an hour [what] it was all about. [...] And it's exhausting, annoying, especially with some of the reactions you get"<sup>8</sup> (Jérémie, 21 years old, FTM-Transman, pansexual-gayromantic).

### 8.3.3. *Disclosing before being seen*

The strategic handling of the temporalities of disclosure is also articulated with a strategic increase or decrease of physical distance, whether it is a matter of disclosing one's transness in a private, face-to-face context, or via a dating or hook-up app. On dating apps, disclosure have been described as sexual scripts accelerators (Rivière, Licoppe 2015) but they are also to be considered here as scripts facilitator and as a mean to set a physical distance that avoids being directly confronted with the person's reactions when meeting face to face. For Hugo, 38 years old transmasculine *transpédégouine*<sup>9</sup>, disclosing beforehand on dating apps not only allow him to avoid the risk of rejection but allows the scripts to run smoothly so that they do not have to be interrupted by this generally unexpected step or, as he states it: "I prefer that it happens when I'm not yet on the doorstep" <sup>10</sup>. However, some aspects of the public displaying of transness and transidentity can also raise unexpected issues and many people who publicly disclose, particularly on dating apps, mention that they are subsequently contacted by translovers – people who are seeking transpeople to have sex with – which is usually perceived as something unwanted. The choices of temporalities can be inscribed in what Goffman described as stigma and risk management strategies (Goffman 1963): by disclosing early in the interaction, the risk of later rejection is thought to be lessened since this variable is removed from the outset. Conversely, disclosing later can be thought to reduce the risk of rejection by providing other elements to be taken into consideration in the evaluation. Disclosing practices – in particularly indirect disclosures where transness is made known to the potential partner through their participation in an environment where this information is already known, and not through direct communication with them – show that disclosing is less about the act itself, than it is about the need to know that the transness had been made known to a potential partner.

## 8.4. *Underlying power dynamics*

### 8.4.1. *An unavoidable step in the interaction*

The different discourses produced on disclosure strategies reveal something that is unthought of, namely that disclosure is conceived as a necessary element in the pursuit of the scripts. Individual interviews show that knowledge of one's transness by a potential partner is an essential element in the pursuit of scripts, and disclosure is what makes it possible. Of the 35 participants, all but three claimed to systematically disclose their transness to their potential partners who are not thought to already be aware of their transness. Of those three, two usually disclose their transness but also

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8 "Après, généralement je devais expliquer pendant une demie-heure [en quoi] ça consistait. [...] Et c'est fatigant, saoulant, surtout avec certaines réactions qu'on a".

9 *Transpédégouine* is a French umbrella term used to refer to a sexo-political community that could be translated into "transfagdyke". Its uses are similar to that of the word queer in the Anglo-Saxon context in that it refers to the reversal of insults that are used in France towards trans, gay and lesbian people.

10 «Je préfère que ça, ça se passe quand je suis pas encore sur le pas de la porte».

mentioned one or several occasions when they did not, and one person stated that they chose to use non-disclosure as a method. Indeed, it is otherwise not thought to be possible to engage in a sexual relationship unless one's partner is aware of one's transness. Disclosing one's transness can then be seen as having a transformative power over sexual relationships: it makes them possible or not. However, the reflections surrounding disclosure practices are also revealing of specific power dynamics.

#### 8.4.2. *The trans burden of disclosure*

Considering disclosure as an unavoidable step to inform a potential partner of one's transness, this must be inserted into sexual scripts where it is not expected. This highlights the cisnormativity – the presumption that everybody is cisgender – of the scripts that make disclosure appears as an unexpected, usually disruptive, element that is to be brought up by the transperson in the interaction. Indeed, if we consider that transness must be discussed, these practices point to an imbalance and a charge of disclosure that weigh on trans people in relation to cisgender people who, one may think, hardly ever disclose their cisgender identity, nor engage in discussions on the subject with their potential partners. If disclosure is considered as being necessary, it is also because transness is considered unthought or impossible or, as Asher states: «I think it shouldn't be up to me to say that I am trans, it should be up to the world to say: everyone can be trans or not » (36 years old, queer fag)<sup>11</sup>. Disclosure is conceived as having to take place before a certain point in the scripts, after which their continuation will no longer be possible if it has not occurred. This is a point after which non-adherence to cisgender bodies and scripts is thought to be unavoidable. An example of where this point is can be seen in how Maurice (36 years old, fag, trans guy) recalls one of his interactions with a man he met at a party: “And then he actually starts to want to get closer to me and my sex. And then I feel like I'm in a movie. I'm thinking this is the part where you go: ‘wait, I have something to tell you’”<sup>12</sup>. A range of power dynamics is displayed in the interactions between the disclosing partner, the partner who needs to disclose, and the partner who does not think to think about disclosing.

#### 8.4.3. *Something that can't be hidden*

When confronted with the idea of the necessary aspect of disclosure in the progress of a sexual interaction, the reactions of the participants were in majority similar: either they replied that they agreed with this idea and that it made sense to them because it was a very difficult thing to hide unless one does not use their genitals or have genitals that look cismasculine, either they disagreed, mentioning that they had some acquaintances who were able to have sex without disclosing it by hiding it or they read online about it:

-Asher: But it's also a question of the fact that there are... I don't know many trans masc people who have done a phallo[plasty]. So it's hard to have a, like... It depends on what you're doing sexually, but there's always the fear that you're not going to get genital passing. And so I'll always be in that situation. But I know some trans girls who

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11 “je trouve que ça devrait pas être à moi de dire que je suis trans, ça devrait être au monde de se dire: tout le monde peut être trans ou pas” (Asher, 36 ans, pédé queer).

12 “Et là en fait il commence à vouloir se rapprocher de moi et de mon sexe. Et là j'ai l'impression d'être dans un film. Je me dis c'est le moment où tu fais: ‘attends, j'ai quelque chose à te dire’”.

won't... say it.

- Paul: Because they had surgery?

- Asher: Absolutely<sup>13</sup>

What is interesting here is not so much that the reactions to this statement reinforce or contradict what was proposed, but that they did so by explaining it in terms of the impossibility of dissimulation. In other words, non-disclosure is only thought to be possible when what is not willing to be disclosed can be hidden. Depending on the acts performed, some participants added that it might be possible to have sex without disclosing, giving examples such as only performing oral sex. Having genital sexuality with a body that may be conceived as non-conforming to cisgender bodies without announcing it before engaging in it is simply not thought of as a possibility.

### *8.5. Third point - Not disclosing – A marginal counter-narrative*

#### *8.5.1. Facing up conflicting scripts: “In a backroom, you can’t talk. You’re not actually going to explain<sup>14</sup>”*

Although disclosure is thought to be inevitable for most of the interviewees, a marginal counter-narrative of voluntary non-disclosure also appeared, bringing new perspectives on the pursuit of scripts by challenging what is otherwise thought to be impossible. These discourses were found in the narratives of transmasculine people who frequent gay cruising spots, places where scripts have been described as principally based on silence (Lopes 2020), and where the interactions are conducted with gestures (Leroy 2012) and throw positioning (Humphrey 1970). A question that may arise is how one can disclose in contexts where verbal communication is at its most minimal. While a few respondents reported frequenting these spaces, many mentioned their desire to but their inability to do it because of their lack of understanding of the scripts involved. Daniel (31 years old trans / trans guy) explains the experience he had once when he visited a gay sauna: “My sociological experience [laughs] at the gay sauna! I was like, shit, how do they fuck without talking you know! I mean... [...] I would see myself... I don’t know. But I think, how do you do it? I mean, how do you know if the person likes what you’re doing, or... Oh shit, I’m... easily shocked<sup>15</sup>. Beyond the sole question of disclosure, the problem of the absence of speech arises in silent sexual scripts. Engagement in sexuality is not thought to be possible without a passage through the world of speech.

#### *8.5.2. Safety issues: “afraid of getting my face smashed”*

Among those who express an interest in participating in these activities without doing so, safety issues were often raised. An example of these discourses can be the one of Joey (39 years old, pansexual transguy) who says that, despite his fascination and desire to do so, he doesn’t go on

13 “Asher: Mais c’est aussi une question du fait que il y a... je connais peu de personnes trans masc qui ont fait une phallo. Donc c’est difficile d’avoir une, genre... Ça dépend de ce que tu fais sexuellement, mais il y a toujours la peur que tu vas pas avoir un passing niveau génital. Et du coup, je serai toujours dans cette situation. Mais je connais des meufs trans qui vont pas... le dire. Paul: Parce qu’elles ont eu une opération? Asher: Tout à fait”

14 “Dans un backroom, tu peux pas parler. Tu vas pas expliquer en fait”. (William)

15 “Mon expérience sociologique [rire] au sauna gay ! J’étais là, putain, comment ils font pour baiser sans parler tu vois! Enfin... [léger rire] genre sans rien se dire. [...] Je me verrais... je sais pas. Mais je me dis, comment tu fais quoi. Enfin comment tu sais en fait, si ce que t’es en train de faire ça plait à la personne ou... Ah putain, moi ça me... choque facilement quoi.”



cruising spots or meet men through dating apps because he is “really afraid of getting [his] face smashed, as a trans person<sup>16</sup>”. Not disclosing is thought to be exposing oneself to danger once it is discovered. This can indicate that transness is being thought of as something not only unexpected but as something that can justify violence from others when discovered. We can question why transness is, among the different features that can be considered as stigmatized, thought to be likely to provoke such violent reactions. The avoidance of places where a desire to go is expressed, and the disclosure strategies discussed above seemed to be taking place in a more general narrative of the management of a stigmatized corporality or identity (Goffman 1963) where the fear of violence that can be associated with. This fear can be recontextualized as taking part in a larger context of violence perpetrated against trans people in which the panic provoked by the discovery of one’s partner’s transness can, in some countries, be used as a valid legal argument (Trans panic defense) by those who have perpetrated violence against trans people (Andresen 2022). While this issue has not been raised in France, violence is not however absent. Disclosure makes it possible to anticipate it by knowing in advance that the prospective partner is aware of their transness and won’t react violently when exposed to it in the course of a sexual act.

### 8.5.3. *Non-disclosure as an emancipatory strategy?*

In spite of that, one interviewee, William (24 years old, gay trans man) made the deliberate decision to stop disclosing his transidentity: “Before, on my profile on applications, it said it. And... now I’ve taken it down because [sighs], anyway... well there you go, I’m more comfortable like that actually. [...] It’s not that I don’t assume, because in fact I do. And it’s just that I assume it as something lambda, you know<sup>17</sup>”. In contrast to discourses that conceive non-disclosure as something dangerous in that it exposes the person to risk of being discovered, William’s avoidance of this act can be thought of as normalizing transness (“something lambda”). By refraining to disclose without hiding it, this action can be thought of as deconstructing the stigmatizing nature of the trans body/ transness that no longer needs to be said: « it’s true that it has been quite an effort to allow myself this possibility, but I’m much happier now that I can do this because I feel equal to the rest of the world<sup>18</sup>”. He explains his approach in this way :

I don’t say it, and when I undress, people generally understand that there is something different than usual. This is what I’ve been doing since I go to the sauna. Now I do it in all circumstances. When I meet someone on an app, I don’t tell them. Except if they ask me something directly. Meaning that if he asks me: “are you trans?” I won’t answer no. Or if he asks me: “show me your dick”, I show him my dick. [...]<sup>19</sup>.

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16 “J’ai hyper peur de me faire péter la gueule, en tant que personne trans.”

17 “Avant, sur mon profil sur les applications, il y avait écrit. Et... maintenant je l’ai enlevé parce que [souponne], de toute façon... enfin voilà, je suis plus à l’aise comme ça en fait. [...] C’est pas que j’assume pas, parce qu’en fait j’assume. Et justement, j’assume ça comme quelque chose de lambda tu vois”.

18 “c’est vrai qu’il m’a fallu un effort pour m’autoriser cette possibilité, mais je suis beaucoup plus heureux maintenant que je peux faire ça parce que je me sens à égalité avec le reste du monde”.

19 “Je le dis pas, et puis quand je me désape, en général les gens ils comprennent qu’il y a un truc qui est différent de d’habitude. Et ça je le fais, depuis que je vais au sauna, maintenant je fais ça dans toutes les circonstances. C’est-à-dire que quand je rencontre quelqu’un sur une application, je lui dit pas. À part s’il me demande quelque chose frontalement. C’est-à-dire s’il me demande : est-ce que t’es trans ? Je vais pas lui dire non. Ou s’il me demande : ‘montre-moi ta bite’, je lui montre ma bite.”

William has somehow adopted the non-disclosure scripts that were already in place in the gay sauna he frequents. Afterward, he also applied this method to his online encounters via dating apps. Doing so, he aligns himself with the scripts that are present in the places he frequents: by not breaking the non-verbalization implicit rule at work in the sauna he frequents, he sometimes encounters reactions of surprise or rejection, but his lack of verbalization of his transness can be thought of as a shift of his perception of the stigmatizing nature of his non-cis body into the ordinary, where his physicality or genitality is thought as one among others.

William affirms that he is less prone to rejection when operating in this way: “I actually get more rejection when I say I’m trans than when I don’t [laughs].”<sup>20</sup> Although fear of violence is one of the main reasons raised by people who want to but refrain to participate in these activities, he and the two additional interviewees who mentioned using this method occasionally reported a majority of interactions without any particularity, except for the fact that some of their desired partners sometimes reacted by breaking off the sexual interaction at some point by walking away or by breaking the silence (initiating a discussion or asking questions): “Often, there are reactions of surprise. But... there are many times when I had sex with people and I didn’t tell them I was trans. They didn’t know that I was trans until we had sex. And until then, it’s always went well, really. And it’s a crazy thing because I didn’t think it was possible”<sup>21</sup>. Indeed, the narratives of people who described not disclosure practices showed interactions similar to the ones that were encountered among people who disclose: acceptance, rejection, or indifference on the part of the partner, and the possibility of the partner breaking off the sexual interaction (by talking and asking questions – leaving the world of the sexual to enter the world speech –, by withdrawing from the interaction, etc.). Yet, verbal, physical, or sexual, violence was found in narratives where disclosure was present and in those where it was not. If the three people using this procedure did not mention being more prone to violence using that method than when they are/were not, the fear of violence plays an important role in the general transmasculine disclosure narratives. This has to be understood in a context where violence committed against trans women in sexual contexts is known to be potentially severe, some cases being well known among trans people and sometimes appearing in the media. Several major assaults related to non-disclosure experienced by transwomen relatives were also reported by transmasculine people and some people have also referred to violent acts committed against transmasculine people that have been depicted in cultural materials: “I was thinking like the first representation in American movies, it was like *Boys Don’t Cry* I think, where like at the end the guy gets shot.”(Hally, 28 years old, trans guy)<sup>22</sup>

### 8.6. Conclusion

Whether done face-to-face, in larger groups, or on dating apps, disclosing can be thought of to engage in more genuine relationships, a strategy used to avoid future violence or disappointment that is apprehended in not meeting the potential partner’s expectations, but perhaps even more

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20 “En fait, je me fais plus rejeter quand je dis que je suis trans plutôt, quand je le dis pas [rires].”

21 “Et du coup... ben souvent, voilà, il y a des réactions de surprise. Mais... mais voilà. Il y a plein de fois où j’ai eu des relations sexuelles avec des gens, je leur ai pas dit que j’étais trans, et ils savaient pas, jusqu’à ce qu’on ait des relations sexuelles, que j’étais trans. Et jusque-là, ça s’est toujours bien passé, vraiment. Et c’est un truc de fou parce que je pensais pas que c’était possible.”

22 “je me disais genre la première représentation au cinéma étatsunien, c’était genre *Boys Don’t Cry* je crois, où genre à la fin le gars il se fait buter.”

importantly, as something that must be said if a potential partner is thought to be unaware of one's transness. A major turning point in sexual scripts occurs through the moment of disclosure, which not only reorients the interaction but also the position adopted by the subject. Indeed, the act of describing oneself in certain chosen words through disclosure establishes the self as an affirmative subject and the verbalization of transness is then often the very condition for the possibility of an interaction to enter the sexual world. Disclosure can then be considered as a source of empowerment or subjectification in that it allows not only to engage in sexuality but to do so fully by affirming oneself as a (trans)sexual subject. Nevertheless, disclosure can also reveal certain logics of subjection in that it complies with a particular injunction to say oneself that appears in reaction to cis-normative scripts that mark trans people as having to reveal themselves. Still, the emancipatory aspect that can be found within disclosure narratives where the act of saying oneself allows the interaction to be furthered could also be identified as being present in non-disclosure narratives where non-disclosure can be thought of as enabling one to escape from the injunction of naming one's transidentity, transness, or trans body and thereby de-specify transness. Nonetheless, de-specifying transness is not necessarily sought after or desired by all, and as such, differences in discourses of disclosure highlight practices rooted in broader understandings that individuals have of their transness.

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