Gender identity inclusion in the workplace: broadening diversity management research and practice through the case of transgender employees in the UK

Mustafa Bilgehan Ozturk & Ahu Tatli

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Gender identity inclusion in the workplace: broadening diversity management research and practice through the case of transgender employees in the UK

Mustafa Bilgehan Ozturk[a]* and Ahu Tatli[b]

[a]Department of International Management and Innovation, Business School, Middlesex University, London, UK; [b]School of Business and Management, Queen Mary University of London, London, UK

Based on 14 in-depth interviews, this paper explores the unique workplace experiences of transgender individuals in the UK employment context. The paper identifies gender identity diversity as a key blind spot in HRM and diversity management research and practice. The findings reveal the range of workplace challenges experienced by transgender employees. Major findings are that discriminatory effects are often occupation- and industry-specific; transition is a period where many transgender workers suffer due to lack of proper organisational support; and expertise deficits exist in supporting and accommodating transgender employees' needs. In unpacking these experiences, the paper demonstrates the distinctive dimensions of challenges faced by transgender employees, revealing the need for conceptually expanding how we frame diversity and diversity management. Our findings identify the necessity for an emic approach not only to researching diversity but also to devising organisational diversity strategies. The paper provides recommendations for HRM policy and practice in order to develop a more sophisticated approach to achieving inclusion.

Keywords: diversity management; equality; gender identity inclusion; inclusion; transgender workers

Introduction

McPhail, McNulty, and Hutchings (2014) recently noted that HRM research and practice should pay greater attention to the unique workplace experiences of sexual minority employees given that this group now makes up an important part of the global talent pool (see also Day & Greene, 2008). For example, research shows that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) employees face challenges and barriers in international assignments and thus HRM policies and practices in the area of expatriate management need to be better equipped to address complexities of an increasingly diverse workforce (Gedro, Mizzi, Rocco, & van Loo, 2013; McPhail et al., 2014). Accordingly, there have been calls to move LGBT workplace experiences from the margins into the centre of the HRM research agenda (e.g. Bell, Özbilgin, Beauregard, & Sürgevil, 2011; Wilkinson, Gollan, Kalfa, & Xu, 2014). Despite such calls and a growing HRM research interest on inclusion of sexual minorities, the experiences of transgender employees remain silenced, unseen and unaccounted for.

Transgender individuals face significant vocational challenges across the globe. An international study on sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination at work by

International Labour Organisation shows that transgender individuals suffer the highest degree of discrimination in employment (ILO, 2013). In a major UK study on transgender rights, it was estimated that more than 40% of transgender workers do not find the opportunity to live in their preferred gender identity expressions due to fears of workplace repercussions, and about a quarter of transgender workers are pressured to change jobs due to experiences of discrimination and victimisation (Whittle, Turner, Al-Alami, Rundall, & Thom, 2007, p. 15). However, transgender individuals have been largely understudied in HRM and diversity management research, and there is still a significant gap in the theoretical and empirical literatures with respect to the specific challenges they face at the workplace and how these can be remedied (Law, Martinez, Ruggs, Hebl, & Akers, 2011). Considering the recently growing literature on management of sexual orientation diversity, the lack of research that focuses on the management of diversity in terms of gender identity differences constitutes an important gap in our knowledge of how workplace differences can be managed to ensure an inclusive organisational context for all. The inattention to the workplace experiences of transgender employees is partly because research on employees who are sexual minorities is often focused on LGBT workers together, despite the sense that minority sexual orientation, i.e. lesbian, gay and bisexual, and gender identity non-conforming sub-populations, i.e. transgender, may not have the same workplace problems. For instance, some transgender employees wish to undergo gender transition, and these individuals often experience unique social, psychological and medical challenges (Pepper & Lorah, 2008), not encountered by their lesbian, gay and bisexual counterparts (Kwon, 2013). In addition, not only can the underlying mechanisms of exclusion and marginalisation operate divergently for lesbian, gay and bisexual versus transgender individuals, but also attitudes towards transgender people are often far more antagonistic, possibly with more severe personal and professional ramifications (Ozturk, 2011; Human Rights Campaign, 2009; Kwon, 2013). However, the existing diversity research and practice are not equipped to respond to the unique experiences of transgender employees. Bridging this gap is particularly important in the face of the growing body of HRM research that explores sexual orientation diversity (Bell et al., 2011; Day & Schoenrade, 2000; Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007). Our focus on transgender employees in this paper helps us uncover an important blind spot in the current research agenda of HRM and diversity management scholarship.

Successive legislative gains such as the Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations (1999), Gender Recognition Act (2004) and the UK Equality Act (2010) have enshrined the rights of transgender individuals into the law in the UK. The origins of the legislative protection against employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in the UK can be traced back to the Employment Equality Sexual Orientation Regulations 2003, which was passed to harmonise the national legislation with the European Employment Directive of 2000. In the years that followed, the UK legislation in the area has surpassed the EU framework to include gender identity as one of the core protected categories under the law. Consequently, there is now an established provision of legal remedies in cases where an individual's gender identity characteristics are used to deny them employment, promotion or training opportunities. Increasingly, trans-inclusive sexual minority trade union initiatives as well as focused intra-organisational networks and alliances are providing much-needed collective voice to transgender employees in standing up to discrimination (Colgan & McKearney, 2012). However, this has by no means entailed a proliferation of opportunities for transgender individuals, as legislative safeguards for all sexual minorities are associated with a deficit in actually transforming complex social reality on the ground. As a result, there is a regulation–practice gap in

terms of achieving full equality for transgender employees. A crucial reflection of this is the lack of organisational diversity practices and frameworks that tackle discrimination based on gender identity. Notwithstanding the recent push towards promoting diversity and equality along sexuality, addressing discrimination on the basis of gender identity has been slow. On the one hand, gender identity, as a part of the LGBT category, is marginalised as a diversity strand compared to categories such as race and ethnicity, and gender; on the other hand, transgender issues are pushed to the margins even when LGBT diversity is the focus of research or policy agenda.

The pushing of gender identity issues to the periphery, in diversity research and practice, could create a dangerous lacuna where transgender individuals are erased from the purview (Monro & Richardson, 2012). This article finds its genesis in the commitment to resolve this neglect. The research questions we pose are: What are the unique workplace experiences of transgender employees? How do transgender employees perceive the management of gender identity diversity in organisations? A sound understanding of transgender employment experiences is necessary in order to overcome the current neglect of gender identity in diversity management research and practice. To this end, the article first identifies gender identity diversity as a key blind spot in diversity management research. Then, on the basis of original empirical data collected through 14 qualitative interviews, the paper reveals the range of workplace challenges experienced by transgender employees as a result of lack of acceptance, support and inclusion due to enduring stigmas around non-conforming gender identities. In analysing these experiences, the paper demonstrates the unique dimensions of challenges faced by transgender employees, revealing the need for conceptually expanding how we frame diversity and diversity management. Our findings identify the necessity for an emic approach not only to researching diversity but also to devising organisational diversity strategies. The final contribution of our paper is practice-oriented. Grounded on research evidence, we provide recommendations for diversity management policy and practice in order to develop a more sophisticated approach to achieving inclusion of all employees including transgender employees.

In the following section, we first set the conceptual background by reviewing two strands of literature. First, we present a critical overview of the literature on diversity management with a particular focus on how responsive this literature is to the experiences and circumstances of transgender employees. Second, we explore the research on workplace challenges faced by transgender people in order to identify key issues permeating the employment experiences of transgender individuals. The insights from these two literatures inform the remainder of the paper. Next, research methodology is described followed by the presentation of findings and analysis. The last section provides a discussion of the conceptual and practical contribution of the paper, and identifies future directions for research. Throughout all these sections, the article is energised by an interest in tackling the twin questions of what distinctive experiences transgender employees face in workplaces, and how transgender employees view their organisations' management of gender identity diversity at work. The article aims to resolve the above questions with the overall objective of drawing much-needed attention to the issue of gender identity inclusion in diversity management research and practice.

Managing diversity and gender identity

The issue of workplace diversity and diversity management is now a well-established area of research inquiry as well as a key area of HR practice in organisations (Nkomo &

Hoobler, 2014). Diversity management as a research field gained popularity from the late 1980s onwards (Cox, 1991; Johnston & Packer, 1987). Informed by large-scale political and regulatory changes as well as social movements, the early research on diversity management focused particularly on the organisational and career outcomes of gender and race diversity in the US context (e.g. Heilman, 1997; Nkomo, 1992; Thomas, 1990). This trend was picked up on the other side of the Atlantic by UK researchers and practitioners in the 1990s (Kandola & Fullerton, 1994). Over the years, the number of diversity categories that were explored by researchers proliferated to include a range of cognitive diversity dimensions such as education, functional expertise and job role (e.g. Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Cronin & Weingart, 2007; Peters & Karren, 2009; Zimmerman, 2008) as well as demographic diversity characteristics such as age, disability, religion and belief, social class and sexual orientation (Clair, Beatty, & MacLean, 2005; Creed, DeJordy, & Lok, 2010; Ghumman & Ryan, 2013; Kulik, Perry, & Bourhis, 2000; McLaughlin, Bell, & Stringer, 2004). Despite this expansion, the field has retained a degree of inertia as its overall focus continued to be on gender and race diversity. Similarly, organisational diversity practice has been built on the issues around gender and race inequalities, and new categories are added to diversity framework that had been designed originally to manage gender and race diversity (Tatli, 2011). The outcome often was an underlying effort to fit organisational diversity issues in pre-determined mental schemata (cf. Alberti, Holgate, & Tapia, 2013). Diversity scholars have previously identified and critiqued the etic tendency within diversity management research (Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012). The popularity of some diversity categories over the others coupled with the implicit pecking order of diversity strands reflects the etic nature of the prevailing diversity scholarship. In that scenario, LGBT concerns are often a muted aspect of the wider diversity management field (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003; Ozturk & Rumens, 2014). Gender identity diversity, in turn, is almost a phantom concept in the make-up of LGBT equalities literature, and, as a consequence, it is sometimes relegated to a postscript in HRM theory and practice, which is usually more concerned with a more generic LGBT equality agenda.

To be sure, there are common issues that exert impact on the career courses of LGBT employees, and in this sense, the studies that consider the subject in an overarching manner make significant contributions (Colgan & McKearney, 2012; King & Cortina, 2010). Such an approach implicitly illuminates the conditions of possibility for the networked alliance of sexual minorities in overcoming enduring exclusionary logics at work. In fact, alliances of this type could garner sufficient power to upset more generic gender imbalances by extending support networks to include ciswomen. However, the growing equality, diversity and inclusion literature on the employment experiences of sexual minorities can potentially run the risk of homogenising the work lives of transgender individuals, when conveniently considering them in the same data pool with lesbian, gay and bisexual employees. There is a growing awareness that even within the LGBT community, transgender individuals experience marginalisation and disempowerment, despite obviously benefiting from a sense of minority solidarity (Browne & Lim, 2010). Inattention to the unique experiences of transgender workers in terms of coming out, possible transition and persistent gender identity-based exclusion may delay the identification of concrete pathways towards full transgender equality and achieving an inclusive organisational culture. Transposing the diversity solutions developed for other categories of diversity unto managing gender identity at work will potentially overlook the unique challenges and barriers experienced by transgender workers. Thus, the diversity management frameworks need to integrate gender identity diversity as a core dimension rather than an afterthought.

In order for diversity management to incorporate gender identity diversity, there needs to be a shift in the way in which difference is conceptualised. Understanding and researching the experiences of transgender employees require moving away from etic and static conception of difference. Transgender is a contested term in both scholarly and practical contexts. There is an ongoing debate about the definition of transgender identity (Boehmer, 2002). As transgender is at core anathema to the practice of considering gender identity within concrete boundaries, diversity research that integrates gender identity as a key strand must aim to challenge easy categorisations and long-held assumptions about gender identity (cf. Stryker, 2006). Defining transgender too generically could result in inadequate equality laws (Koch & Bales, 2008) and limited diversity policies. However, while it is crucial to recognise the justifiable plasticity of the term, it is necessary to conceptualise a working construct, which would at least approximately map the diversity of individuals with gender non-conforming identities. However, recognising intra-categorical differences is also crucial to avoid homogenised theorising (Hines, 2006). In diversity management research, the pre-formulated, etic conceptions of difference may fail to account for the complexity of diverse identities, an example of which is the within-group diversity of gender identity. Thus, diversity management research and organisational diversity practice both require a degree of flexibility that enables emic conceptions of difference to surface.

Overall, LGBT diversity remains a marginalised strand of diversity management, and is thus under-researched. Gender identity diversity, which is subsumed within the broad LGBT category, is rendered even more peripheral, suppressing transgender concerns to a state of obscurity. Exactly for that reason, our focus on gender identity diversity in this paper has a potential to showcase the pitfalls of a generic diversity management approach in responding to a broad range of often disparate diversities that are present in the workforce. Better integration of gender identity as a significant category in diversity management research is important for the field to stretch itself and gain further theoretical maturity in terms of the finesse with which diversity and difference are defined, operationalised and researched.

Workplace challenges faced by transgender employees

Workplace experiences of transgender individuals are often characterised by exclusion, marginalisation and stigmatisation. In an effort to avoid discrimination, transgender individuals often prefer to remain in the closet, making any quantification of the transgender population and the subsequent provision of social and workplace support very difficult (Whittle et al., 2007). Alternatively, transgender individuals may be out in one sphere of life activity (personal interactions), while remaining firmly within the closet in another sphere (workplace interactions). Such differentiated openness regarding a stigmatised identity often creates what is called a 'disclosure disconnect', where an otherwise out individual has to continually self-strategise to survive threats of disclosure in their work organisation (Ragins, 2008). Disclosure disconnects generate unique diversity management challenges centred on employee well-being, as they often entail 'psychological stress, role conflict, attributional ambiguity, and a pressure to establish congruent identities across life domains' (Ragins, 2008, p. 210).

A transgender individual, especially one who expects little or no support after disclosure, may attempt to undergo the transition process in a non-public manner for as long as possible. In work environments where there is a lack of organisational support, and where diversity practices are not sensitive to gender identity concerns, transgender workers

may be forced to go 'stealth' (burying previous gender identity history deep within) and attempt to 'pass' (embodying a new gender identity in a seemingly 'natural-born' manner). In the USA, such non-disclosure behaviour has been wrongly characterised as a form of non-transparency and dishonesty on the part of transgender employees, which has been used as a pretext by employers to proceed with a job termination decision (Tan, 2008). Despite laws and regulations that safeguard transgender individuals against such arbitrary rationales of discrimination in the UK, avoidance of disclosure before, during or after transition can still have important personal ramifications in itself. Non-disclosure often entails the concomitant sense of fear as to what might happen in the event that peers, supervisors and clients/customers find out about a source of stigma. For instance, as regards antecedents and consequences of sexual orientation disclosure, Ragins et al. (2007, p. 1108) find that those who fear strong negative consequences of disclosure experience greater 'psychological strain', while conceding that, as Day and Schoenrade (1997) point out, there is no simple positive relationship between disclosure and well-being at work either. Thus, the research suggest that one-size-fits-all diversity managementapproaches are not suitable for researching the nuances and complexities of gender identity diversity, neither are they effective in ensuring full inclusion of transgender employees in organisational life.

Another key area of research inquiry in gender identity context is the issue of transitioning. In terms of management of gender identity diversity, transition poses unique organisational challenges particularly in two broad areas. First, the varying degrees of transition and the associated gender fluidity create tension, anxiety, confusion and uncertainty in the organisation as these employees do not readily fit into conventional gender categories. Second, organisational diversity management policies and practices are not fit for purpose to facilitate an inclusive work environment for transgender individuals going through transition. There are many transgender individuals who reject a complete reassignment into a fixed gender identity category (Roen, 2002). Transgender employees who actively resist binary gender taxonomies and present a dynamic gender identity that bends and blends gender roles (for instance, cross-dressers, drag kings and drag queens, genderqueer people) may face even greater difficulties in the workplace (Budge, Tebbe, & Howard, 2010). At the extreme end, the failure to 'cross over' and fit into the category opposite to one's own birth-assigned gender identity is 'stigmatised, ostracised and socially delegitimized' to the extent that transgender people can no longer occupy the position of a 'socially recognised' subject (Gagné, Tewksbury, & McGaughey, 1997, p. 480). As Richardson and Monro (2012, pp. 175–176) put it, 'trans people who have had gender reassignment surgery (or intend to do so) have greater claims to social legitimacy and acceptability than those who identify as gender-fluid or diverse'. Stigma that surrounds transgender is multiplied many times over in those cases where an employee would not adopt a gender identity that fits into a normatively fixed destination gender identity.

A sizeable number of transgender individuals wish to transition fully into a new gender identity. As the whole process is lengthy, transitioning individuals often remain in paid employment during a significant part of this timeline. Indeed if the desired transition involves surgical treatment, medical authorities routinely stipulate that the transgender person live their life in the desired gender identity for an extended period of time (usually a period of 2 years) while undergoing hormonal support. In addition to such compulsory self-disclosure, the challenges experienced outside work by transgender individuals while undergoing transition spill-over to the work context as the transition period entails a significant investment of financial capital, time, energy and emotion with potentially disruptive consequences for career courses (Pepper & Lorah, 2008). The particular complexity and significance of transition is an issue that is not acknowledged adequately

or expertly by work organisations. As such, the extant literature on the workplace experiences of transgender individuals points to the as yet unfulfilled remit of diversity management research and practice in its capacity to take full account of transitioning as a crucial aspect of transgender work lives.

Methodology

The evidence presented in this article is based on 14 in-depth interviews performed over two and a half years of data collection activity. In-depth interviews are traditionally conducted with a limited number of participants, but in far greater depth than the more standardised and structured interview format (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003). It is particularly effective in the case of understudied contexts or subjects, where there is substantial need for exploration, before confirmatory studies can be conducted to analyse general patterns (Johnson, 2002). The method of subject recruitment involved purposive sampling and snowball sampling, which originated in the difficulties associated with reaching out to a sufficient number of transgender employees. This type of sampling approach is considered an appropriate means of reaching out to vulnerable populations, such as sexual minorities who are often difficult to identify and access (Browne, 2005). Interviews were solicited via personal contacts in the transgender community, invitations posted on online transgender forums, invitation messages sent to transgender member profiles on a gay social networking site (gaydar.co.uk) and email requests made to relevant staff in various union offices to communicate interviewer contact details to their out transgender members who might wish to participate in the study. Nine interviewees were recruited through these means, and 5 were recruited by referral through the interviewees themselves. In this study, the term transgender refers to those individuals who present a gender identity expression opposite to their initial status assigned at birth (with or without eventual hormonal/surgical treatments); those who are in the process of transitioning to accomplish a gender identity realignment; those who occasionally engage in cross-dressing behaviour without any interest in living their lives in a gender identity different from their birth-assigned one; those who permanently cross-dress without seeking hormonal or surgical intervention; and those who are genderqueer and thus occupy (or oscillate between) multiple gender identity categories by continually moving along a spectrum and expressing a high degree of gender fluidity as a permanent state of being (Butler, 2004; Hines, 2007).

The participants have a variety of background characteristics as summarised in Table 1. The interviewees comprised five transgender men, six transgender women and three transgender individuals who identify as genderqueer. The age range is 28–54, and all of the interviewees but one live in the Greater London area. The participants work in a range of job roles involving building construction, IT, professional services, local government, retail, special needs education, higher education, charity and healthcare across various institutional settings such as the private, public and non-profit sector organisations. Only two transgender men, out of the 14 transgender interviewees, are in deep stealth, while other participants are out to varying degrees. The interviews centred on questions, such as the extent to which the interviewees engage in disclosure at work; where relevant, the timeline, scope, process and nature of interviewee gender identity transition in the workplace; and the sources and types of transphobia encountered as employees. The participants were given assurance of full anonymity and confidentiality. All the participants were assigned pseudonyms throughout the article as a way to protect interviewee anonymity. The interviews, which lasted approximately an hour each, were voice-recorded and transcribed fully.

Table 1. Interviewee characteristics.

Interviewee pseudonyms	Self-identified gender identity	Industry	Job role	Mode of work
Alexandra	Transgender woman	Charity	Office worker	Full-time
Georgette	Transgender woman	Retail	Cashier	Part-time
Jackie	Transgender woman	Architecture/ design	Office manager	Full-time
Julia	Transgender woman	Local government	Administrator	Full-time
Pauline	Transgender woman	Charity	Fundraising assistant	Part-time
Samantha	Transgender woman	Healthcare	Nurse	Full-time
Brad	Transgender man	Higher education	PhD student/research assistant	Part-time
Dave	Transgender man	Special needs education	Teaching support staff	Full-time
Jase	Transgender man	Construction	Builder	Full-time
Marc	Transgender man	Travel	Online coordinator	Full-time
Trey	Transgender man	Retail	Sales associate	Part-time
Andy	Genderqueer	Consulting	IT support assistant	Full-time
Kerr	Genderqueer	Higher education	Administrator	Full-time
Lane	Genderqueer	Fashion	Creative assistant	Full-time

The analysis of the interview data was based on open coding through the identification of principal themes and issues (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The data analysis process began by gaining in-depth familiarity with the data through repeated readings of interview texts. After reaching a level of substantial immersion, an open coding approach was undertaken to systematically break down, draw linkages and develop comparisons within the mass of data to explore potential relations and patterns. This process of analytical scrutiny involved a constant comparison of codes with one another, which helped to delineate parallels, overlaps as well as contrasts within the data, which in turn facilitated the construction of emergent sub-themes. These sub-themes were appraised, demarcated and classified with one another while always interrogating them with the codes for further refinements. The combination of relevant sub-themes into distinct groupings at a higher level of abstraction provided emergent thematic categories, which ensured theoretical saturation. Table 2 presents the codes, sub-themes and thematic categories that were generated throughout the analysis of the data.

Findings and analysis

In this section, we provide an analysis of the participants' accounts of their workplace experiences as gender identity minorities. The findings are presented in three subsections, each focusing on a key thematic category that emerged from the data: (1) representation and visibility, (2) disclosure, and (3) transition. These three aspects also pose unique workforce diversity challenges along gender identity lines.

Representation and visibility

Representation and visibility are among key dynamics that have been long discussed in the diversity management literature (Kanter, 1977). Both of these issues gain particular prominence in understanding the employment experiences of transgender individuals as evidenced by the accounts of our interviewees. The majority of our participants indicated

Table 2. Codes, sub-themes and thematic categories for gender identity diversity.

Open codes	Sub-themes	Thematic categories
Appearance; Authenticity; Closet; Coming out; Communication; Context; Fear; Fitting in; Outcast; Passing; Privacy; Reactions	Desire to live according to destination gender identity; Encountering generic discrimination when opening up about gender identity; Possibility of rejection by the work organisation, colleagues and clients	*Disclosure*
Barriers; Disempowerment; Insecurity; Jobs; Legislation; Minority; Occupational culture; Recruitment/ selection; Respect; Silence	Challenges of securing professional jobs; Gender identity typing of jobs; Generic notion of intra-organisational diversity; Diversity training as a tick-box exercise	*Representation and visibility*
Identity; Fluidity; Health; Privacy; Questioning (from peers and supervisors/managers); Planning; Support; Threat; Time off from work; Uncertainty	Institutional control of bodies; Lack of organisational expertise/knowledge; Organisational and HR "management" of gender identity change; Poor accommodation of transgender needs	*Transition*

that gender identity was an encompassing and visible aspect of an individual's way of relating to others, and as such it would be infeasible and unhealthy to keep their gender identity differences hidden. The participants also suggested that once they reached self-acceptance after myriad personal struggles, it became self-defeating to hide at work. Furthermore, those participants who transitioned or were in the process of doing so needed to live in their destination gender in all aspects of their lives. However, the visibility of non-conforming gender identities exposed the participants to a variety of discriminatory forces in all aspects of employment, starting from selection and recruitment. As one interviewee explained visibility of gender identity often leads to pre-emptive exclusion from employment and consequent under-representation of gender identity minorities in organisations:

> I can't find a full-time job ... it's just ignorance, most employers just can't deal with it. It's also the accounting business ... So traditional, so macho ... It's all hetero men making all the rules. I get interviews, but the guys on the panel have this look of fear in their eyes the minute they figure out who I am ... they won't say a single mean word, but they're uncomfortable, so of course I don't get the job. So it's all good with the equality law, but what am I expected to do? Am I supposed to sue all these people, the companies? How do I prove it's my gender identity and not that someone else was better on the day? (Pauline, part-time worker, charitable organisation)

The narration above reveals the complexity of transgender discrimination where multiple levels of exclusion come into play to generate a discriminatory outcome. For example, the account of the above respondent demonstrates the insufficiency of protective legislation when discrimination is subtly enacted. Furthermore, organisations, which fail to understand non-conforming gender identities, tend to position transgender employees as the 'other' that cannot be dealt with, which in turn disadvantages gender identity minorities from the outset, as their visible difference is unintelligible or unreadable to the employers. Some participants explained that even as their colleagues and HR officers attempted to engage with transgender issues, there were major deficiencies in their organisations' diversity management capacity. This often meant what was on offer was not fit for purpose in ensuring the well-being of transgender employees:

HR itself needs lots of training … I've had to consult with them on some personal issues, but they don't even understand the issues. They try to be supportive, but they don't know how to. Management is the same, there's so much ignorance about transgender issues … nice people who'd never dream of discriminating against colleagues do it by default, … because they have no concept of me or my needs as a genderqueer person, how to facilitate solutions when I face a problem … and then they say the wrong thing … I thought it was accidentally on purpose in the past, but it's really just lack of knowledge. (Andy, IT support assistant, consulting company)

Workplace knowledge and training deficits regarding gender identity diversity issues permeate all levels, even the human resources function, the very nexus of expertise responsible for supporting diverse workers through the variety of challenges they may encounter at work and creating positive change. This produces not only an insufficiently supportive environment when a transgender employee asks for help in resolving an issue, but also it perpetuates the ground conditions for discrimination, even if discriminatory acts may be committed inadvertently. Moreover, in more masculinised industries such as accounting that still operates through traditional gender norms and devalues potential employees falling outside the heterosexual male subject position (Anderson-Gough, Grey, & Robson, 2005), the transgender identity takes on an especially fearsome dimension that must be rendered invisible by eliminating potential transgender employees in the process of selection. Under-representation of transgender employees in the organisational domain then gives rise to an imagination barrier for dominant groups, which precludes transgender employees from being perceived as equally legitimately belonging in a wide range of work contexts:

Transgender is completely underrepresented in regular work. People think of us as entertainers … Drag queens lip synching, people doing shows at gay pubs, working at sex shops … this is their view of us, so of course they can't see us working in the same office with them … they'd like to keep us on the outside. It won't change until companies are actually pressured to recruit us … the laws won't work if they can't push companies to employ us more widely. (Jackie, office manager at a private mid-sized company)

Transgender individuals encounter barriers to their careers, which start at the recruitment and selections stage and endure throughout their working lives. In the absence of strong enforcement of equality law that address barriers uniquely experienced by gender identity minorities, they express lack of trust and belief in progress towards better representation. In that context, for many of our participants, the solution lies in external pressure exerted upon companies in order to push organisations to increase transgender representation. Transgender employees in industries that are particularly unwelcoming to gender identity diversity find it necessary to opt for career change, making compromises in pay and rewards, and giving up hard-earned privilege and position as they enter into last-resort jobs. A participant explained the fundamental restructuring of transgender workers' career courses in the context of transition:

I know I lost out on certain job opportunities. As a trans woman who transitioned in my forties I lost lots of client contacts, found myself not getting call backs after interviews, and you know it's hard I can bang on the door till my hands drop, but certain doors will be kept shut. Actually estate agency work is like this: you have hot masculine guys and pretty young women and the assumption is clients like those types, they won't buy from anyone else. I know my stuff, but I am transgender, I'm the freak, so yeah no job for me … I think you will find a lot of transwomen have had to change careers … they won't get a job in their old careers and they have to go for a friendlier line of work. (Julia, full-time, administrator, local council)

The experiences of the respondents in terms of how their gender identity shapes their career chances and choices highlight the continuing power of restrictive industry norms that penalise transgender employees through loss of social capital, occupational standing

and pressure to pursue job prospects based on minimal acceptance by potential employers rather than accumulated experience, competency or career aspiration. The occupational culture of estate agency work, which is underscored by the above example, has deeply gendered underpinnings that exclude a variety of marginalised workers (Hall, Hockey, & Robinson, 2007). In case of transgender workers, the degree of exclusion may be so severe as to warrant an entire break from a previously well-established career trajectory. Previous research has also confirmed that transitioning constitutes a critical aspect of career decision-making for gender identity minorities (Budge et al., 2010). Overall, our interviews demonstrate that transgender employees are in an extreme position of under-representation, where most people do not even think of them as potentially appropriate employees within their organisation. Jobs are often typed according to gender identity, and this is then reflected at the level of work and occupations, with many companies reproducing gender identity stereotypes.

Disclosure

Gender identity-typing of jobs and the barriers to wider occupational representation figure perhaps most prominently in the cases of participants who worked in fields, which are not known for their transgender-friendly dispositions. Two interviewees, who have not disclosed their transgender status at work, cited industry-specific transphobia as an important component of their decision to go stealth. In one of the cases, the industry factor emerged later in the interview, as initially the participant explained his non-disclosure rationale based on his wish to be 'an authentic man' as he always desired, and his related wish to 'close the previous chapter' of his life. However, when probed further, he also suggested:

> If I had a different job, maybe I'd be more open. Some of it is the kind of company I work for, the work mates I have, and some of it is me, I reckon … We're all working-class English blokes, … we've got our rules we live by … some things aren't ever tolerated, and a transman just wouldn't be tolerated, never ever ever … so I forget about this part of me. (Jase, builder at a construction company)

In this account, the non-disclosure decision exhibits a heightened degree of complexity, where the transgender worker himself felt at variance as to the exact rationale. At one point, manifesting a different motivation from those of LGB individuals' non-disclosure scenarios (Ragins, 2008; Ragins et al., 2007), the participant suggested that transgender individuals might have a positive rationale for non-disclosure (i.e. the desire to live in the destination gender identity wholly, which requires a voluntary break from the past). However, referring to the masculine ethos undergirding workplace relations in the construction industry (Wright, 2013), the same participant later revealed that he could not imagine any circumstances under which his colleagues would accept his transgender identity. The case of this participant shows the significant role of social class and industry setting in influencing the disclosure behaviour of transgender employees. Traditional gender identity norms that are held strongly in the British working class culture offer little space for alternative gender identity expressions, thus shaping the relational experiences of transgender workers who are situated in such work settings. Yet another participant eschewed self-disclosure as a transgender male, based on a similarly industry-specific rationale:

> I work at a school, which is special needs, I am a teaching support staff, … and they don't know my history at all. It was kind of a conscious decision, just because, you know, … I didn't know how it would go over … I was a little worried about being judged or you know? … I think the policies are probably really good, but it doesn't carry over to the individuals [colleagues and parents], you can still be treated like crap by the individuals … I told two people, my deputy

head and a friend of mine there . . . The deputy head is lesbian . . . And she said, 'don't tell anybody at work,' . . . and so when I was gonna have surgery and everything, she said 'don't say what it is' . . . and so I didn't, I just said I had bladder problems . . . She had been at the school for 20 years at the time, and she kind of knows the mentality of some of the people . . . the other woman I told, . . . she also said 'don't tell anybody'. (Dave, teaching support staff)

As the above quotation highlights, certain service sector work contexts, such as a school, may be particularly inhospitable to the presence of transgender employees, due to presumed negative reactions from management, customers and service users. Particularly in the context of education, there is still a lingering prejudice that links LGBT teachers with threats to student welfare, often fuelled by anxieties about the impressionableness of children feared to emulate LGBT identities around them as they craft selves (Blount & Anahita, 2004). These prejudices create an employment environment where transgender individuals, perhaps the most vilified of all minority subjects at work, may consider their viability as employees closely linked to the disclosure decision and often opt for non-disclosure. Moreover, transgender employees may fear that if they disclose their gender identity, they would be the cause of panic and anxiety in their work environments. Non-disclosure is then routinised, as such work environments do not develop the organisational policies and guidance required to support and value transgender employees. Our participants particularly highlighted that their non-disclosure decisions were tied to their expectations of negative reactions from managers and colleagues. Although diversity training was available in some organisations, these were deemed ineffectual in terms of raising real awareness around gender identity. As a result, research participants often questioned the benefits of the existing diversity training provisions in their companies:

The diversity training here is a bit of a joke. New employees just go online, read a file on diversity issues, take a multiple choice test, and that's it really . . . it's very, very superficial, it just covers the basics . . . I was really surprised they had any concrete training to begin with, and when I saw how it was done, it was obviously a tick-box exercise. (Trey, sales associate, high street retail)

Our study shows that organisational awareness and support are key to disclosure decisions of transgender employees. Yet, not only do organisations often under-invest in activities that would create an inclusive organisational culture for transgender workers, but also there is a tendency to superficially offer support that serves more as lip service than actual deep-level organisational change action.

Transition

In this study, transition emerged as a central dimension of transgender workers' employment experiences. Almost all of the participants suggested that transition was a period of time where workplace relations could be under the greatest degree of strain. Most participants reported being viewed as fearsome or strange objects of fascination by colleagues as they underwent transition and started showing physical signs of change. Some participants explained that they were heavily encouraged to take time off from work mid-transition, and although this was done under the cloak of supportiveness, the participants felt a gentle, but firm, pressure which potentially indicated that an imposed break was a means for workplaces to remove 'threatening' physical signs of their transition from the work environment. Most participants who transitioned reported receiving uncomfortable questions regarding their bodies so that managers could ascertain which toilets they could be allowed to use, a common organisational anxiety, which is oft-repeated in the literature (Taylor, Burke, Wheatley, & Sompayrac, 2011). In one case, an M-to-F participant grew breasts, and there was a time lag before she could consider full

gender reassignment surgery. At the time, she worked as a discipline officer in the prison services, an extremely transgender-unfriendly environment, as inmates often called her names and threatened her for "changing sides", as they reportedly put, making her working life highly stressful. However, what she remembered as her most painful experience from this time was her managers' reaction to her demand to use the prison gym, as she asserted an employee privilege her co-workers unproblematically enjoyed in the prison:

> I couldn't use the common changing facility in either gender. I had growing women's bits, but still with my male sexual organ, you know penises don't fit in with women's changing rooms, and breasts don't fit in with men's … That was the first slight wrinkle to appear … And a manager was appointed to me, … and then one day he came in and said 'I hear you've been using the gym, you agreed not to', I said that's not what I agreed, and then I was up for gross misconduct just for arguing, … and it escalated, and so there's this gross misconduct thing, I consulted with equal opportunities commission at the time, and then had to raise this as a grievance. (Alexandra, full-time worker, charity)

This participant's experience highlights the organisational unpreparedness of the prison services to deal with the multiple needs a transgender employee may have during the process of transition. The palpable lack of support provision, despite the public sector equality duty of the organisation involved, is striking. Not only were the managers unnecessarily intrusive in their discussion of the bodily changes that the transgender employee was undergoing in this case, but they also totally failed to accommodate these changes in a satisfactory manner. In fact, the organisational response in this case is characterised by disciplinary action that stems from the organisation's lack of understanding and inability to respond to transition-related issues.

Organisational inability to understand, frame and accommodate transition leads to a heightened sense of panic and fear of the unknown. Resultantly, transition is seen by organisations as a process to be controlled and 'managed', lest it upsets sensitivities in the work environment or creates conflict between workers, which poses the unwelcome potential to disrupt actual business operations. One participant who worked as a full-time staff nurse in a private care home had to attend a series of meetings with charge nurses and ward managers to make elaborate plans as to how her transition would unfold and had to abide by timelines for the management of stages. For this participant, the excessive bureaucracy and control with which this process was overseen at work made her feel as if she had a 'terrible contagious disease' that needed to be handled with obsessive care. The procedural intensity created a dispiriting environment where the employee became a problem to be addressed through managerialist organisational intervention strategies. This focus created a disconnection with the employee, where she thought she was viewed as a threat to be neutralised through precisely planned action points. Conversely, another participant reported that the transition plan crafted by her company was so basic that it only involved what was required for her organisation to not suffer any efficiency losses operationally. The plan was focused on when she would take leave from work, the determination of cover for temporary absences, and what needed to be done in case of a medical emergency while at work. In these cases, transition was viewed as a frightening series of events for co-workers and managers – an episode which requires to be controlled and kept within bounds.

Discussion

Exploring gender identity discrimination in UK organisations, our study makes a significant empirical contribution to the growing literature concerned with the improvement of transgender employees' work lives (Colgan & McKearney, 2012; Budge et al., 2010;

Hines, 2010; Law et al., 2011; Monro & Richardson, 2010). We have posed two research questions at the outset: What are the unique workplace experiences of transgender employees? How do transgender employees perceive the management of gender identity diversity in organisations? Our study demonstrates that transgender employees encounter unique challenges that are not necessarily shared by LGB workers. As a result, transgender employees' perceptions of management of diversity are shaped by their distinctive experiences as gender identity minorities. In particular, three key themes, which emerged from the analysis of the qualitative interview data, reflect transgender employees' experiences in and perceptions of their work organisations. These three themes are representation, disclosure and transition.

There exists a deep representation gap in terms of gender identity diversity in organisations. Transgender individuals are seen as an anomaly and receive a reception that is characterised by othering and marginalisation. As a result, transgender job candidates are disadvantaged in the process of recruitment and selection, and once employed they encounter bias and exclusion. Not only are transgender employees numerically under-represented, but also gender identity issues are rendered peripheral, remaining invisible and unspoken in organisations. The lack of representation both quantitatively, in terms of the number of transgender employees in the internal workforce, and qualitatively, in terms of the exclusion of transgender identity from the organisational cultural norm, manifests itself in (non)disclosure decisions. Transgender employees in this study reported a pervasive fear of exclusion, anxiety around career prospects and social stigmatisation as part of their gender identity disclosure. Deep and complex, the transgender closet can compel individuals to lead elaborately bifurcated lives, with a set of friends, family members and colleagues known in their gender identity assigned at birth and a whole other set of significant relations in their transgender identity, thereby sustaining 'two closets' simultaneously (Davis, 2009, p. 115). Oftentimes sexual orientation and gender identity minorities avoid disclosure for good reason: they operate in employment settings where they know that they will pay a high price (e.g. salary stagnation, loss of promotion chances, constructive dismissal as well as more subtle exclusionary practices marring sense of belonging or welcome in the workplace) (Badgett, 2009). The difficulties with disclosure are experienced even more sharply within the gender identity transition process. Transition is a particularly painful period where many transgender workers meet the greatest challenges in their work lives. Our study reveals that rather than accommodating the unique needs of transitioning workers, organisations tend to respond with managerialist control and discipline, or pay inadequate attention to provision of appropriate support during transition.

Industry and organisation contexts have a key role in shaping the experiences of transgender employees across the three emergent themes, i.e. representation, disclosure and transition, in our study. A major problem, which emerged from our data analysis, is that out transgender individuals find it extremely hard to penetrate barriers to employment in certain industries, while the ones who have not disclosed their gender identity continue to keep firmly in the closet in order to survive. In line with Colgan and Wright (2011) assertion that traditionally gendered work contexts are particularly unfriendly towards sexual minorities, our study indicates persistent difficulties in normatively gender identity-typed industries ranging from construction to estate agency, accounting and education. Furthermore, the organisational context has a decisive role in shaping the workplace experiences of transgender employees. Although discriminatory effects vary across industry and occupations, there is a general sense of organisational awareness, understanding and expertise on gender identity diversity, which renders experiences of

discrimination pervasive and persistent. The absence of organisational expertise and awareness leads to the inability of organisations to effectively and sensitively support and accommodate transgender workers' needs. Overall, the knowledge deficits in HR processes and of organisational actors in assisting transgender employees emerge as a key barrier to achieving equality, diversity and inclusion at work.

This study enables us to expose the blind spots in how diversity and its management are conceptualised and researched in the HRM field. In diversity scholarship, gender identity diversity remains peripheral and invisible at times. An important outcome of the inattention at the scholarly level is the consequent inadequacy of practical diversity management approaches to foster work environments inclusive for all. Diversity management research frameworks that are modelled on conventional conceptions of difference such as race and gender are not always suitable to address, explore and expose the unique challenges associated with gender identity diversity. An emic approach is necessary in order to keep an open mind about emergent issues that may be uncovered during the research process. Gender identity is a particularly useful category of difference in exposing the potentially blinding effects of the established etic tradition of research on diversity management. There is a historically constructed imbalance in diversity research positioning specific categories of difference as more deserving of scholarly attention. As a research area, diversity management has originated and flourished in the US context and embedded the social movement concerns of the time as its main focus. While this historical and geographical legacy has had a key role in the subsequent maturation of the field, there is a need to open up diversity research to account for a wider range of differences. Not only would this conceptual expansion render diversity management research more representative of the complexities of employee difference in contemporary workplaces, but also it would serve to legitimate the concerns of more neglected experiences of diversity and difference.

Conclusions

This final section of the paper provides the implications of our findings for HRM research and practice. We also discuss the limitations of the study and identity future research directions.

Implications for research

The contemporary business organisation is structured in unequal and hierarchical terms aligned along binary classifications of gender (Pringle, 2008). Because the existence of transgender workers defies such conventions, they are often erased from the organisational sphere and social life, and their public and private selves are burdened with marginalisation (Hines, 2010). An emic research approach has the potential to unearth workplace experiences that often remain unspoken and invisible in conventional diversity investigations (Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012). The experiences of transgender employees demonstrate the ways in which traditional HRM approaches to diversity may miss crucial instances of exclusion, as these experiences are not shared with other diversity groups. Yet, different diversity categories have different organisational expressions and consequences. For example, the experience of transition is unique to transgender employees, but also provides an in-depth understanding of the state of organisational diversity and equality climate. Research indicates that transition generates vulnerabilities due to the experience of instability in a range of spaces including, most notably, the

workplace, as public and private distinctions blur, and deeply personal experiences are lived in the view of the public (Doan, 2010). This is exacerbated by the sense that employment contexts are often ill-equipped to provide adequate support mechanisms in transition cases, as they lack established guidelines, and transgender employees often interact with peers, managers and human resources officers, who are unaware of or untrained in how to facilitate a supportive transitional process (Barclay & Scott, 2006). While work organisations increasingly provide support on an ad hoc basis as and when needs arise, the lack of emic diversity management policies and practices in place to sustain a supportive environment to resolve 'co-worker concerns and education, restroom designation, dress codes, personal identification and records' creates undue anxieties and conflicts for many transgender employees (Taylor et al., 2011, p. 105). Organisational inability to understand gender identity differences and accommodate transition-specific issues is indicative of the necessity of a fundamental cultural shift and re-organisation of ideas of what diversity is and how it should be promoted. The test of true inclusiveness is the degree to which most marginalised groups are taken into consideration, valued and safeguarded in the organisation.

Implications for HRM policy and practice

Based on data from the UK context, our study reveals a variety of unique barriers and challenges faced by transgender employees in organisational settings. However, the implications of our findings have applicability across national settings and for effective management of human resources internationally. This study lays a fertile ground to imagine solutions and strategies that could effectively combat discrimination on the basis of gender identity in varied national contexts, as the three key themes identified by our research are not likely to be limited to the UK context only (ILO, 2013). Full transgender equality requires concerted effort at the levels of employment non-discrimination policy, industry norms and practices, organisational management ranks and specific HR actors. Our study highlighted the importance of equality legislation as a positive driver for organisations to engage with an equality agenda around gender identity. For many of our participants, the solution lies in external pressure exerted upon companies in order to push organisations to increase transgender representation. As our study demonstrated, industry context is also an important determinant of the quality of transgender work lives, as some industries are more prone to exclusionary practices than others. The evidence presented underlines the necessity for industry-level action with both organisations and professional associations taking responsibility about shortcomings of existing diversity approaches in promoting inclusion of transgender employees. In this sense, Tatli (2011) call for better professional regulation, training and credentialisation of diversity officers may be a useful step, given that transgender employees in this study prominently bemoan the lack of organisational expertise on transgender issues, figuring especially poignantly in the transition experiences the study reports.

Equality laws and industry regulation are important initial drivers, but they need to be complemented by genuine organisational willingness to engage with difference in general and gender identity diversity in particular. Recent research by Everly and Schwarz (2014) shows that many Fortune 500 companies voluntarily choose to implement LGBT-friendly HRM policies, despite the absence of regulatory pressures. Thus, a proactive diversity and HRM approach by organisations is crucial for promoting inclusion of transgender workers. However, gender identity diversity is a complex phenomenon that started receiving policy attention only recently. Therefore, the understanding deficit within organisations about

gender identity diversity is profound. As revealed by our study, the knee-jerk reaction by organisations to their transgender employees is the fear of the unknown and an urge to control and contain gender identity non-conformance. Thus, full inclusion requires in-depth understanding of gender identity diversity and a deep commitment to achieving organisational change. However, resource considerations may get in the way of proper investment in gender identity diversity initiatives. Thus, instead of costly but potentially more deeply engaging management of gender identity diversity, such as the provision of mentors and role models, face-to-face learning sessions, team meetings focused on diversity issues/questions, role-play activities and scenario enactments, and awareness-raising (Moore, 1999; Paluck, 2006; Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 1999), the default diversity action taken by most organisations is the cheaper option, such as online training which may ultimately fail to illuminate for non-transgender workers the full complexity of gender identity diversity issues their transgender counterparts may face.

Our study points to one of the significant problems with the current standards of diversity awareness and training provisions at many workplaces. HRM research has underscored the importance of an all-encompassing, rather than a stand-alone approach, to diversity management for the successful implementation of organisational diversity goals (Scott, Heathcote, & Gruman, 2011). In the case of transgender employees whose existence has been negated historically in the organisational sphere, it is of particular importance that all aspects of organisational life must be reviewed to pay due attention to transgender issues. Too little attention is paid to devising effective programmes to raise awareness around the importance and complexity of difference in general and gender identity diversity in particular (Hite & Mc donald, 2006; Roberson, Kulik, & Pepper, 2001). Coupled with a knowledge failure on the part of HR to adequately deal with transgender challenges, the systematic under-investment in the cascading of information across all workers may be responsible for the enduring difficulties surrounding transgender work lives. Given the expansiveness of the term transgender and the continually evolving and highly variegated nature of transgender identities (Boehmer, 2002; Hines, 2006; Stryker, 2006), this under-investment provides grounds for a major rethinking of the depth and breadth of diversity programmes. Nevertheless, harnessing HRM and diversity management for better inclusion outcomes requires transformation in all aspects and levels of organisational culture and practice (Scott et al., 2011), which is costly and requires strong commitment by top management (Day & Schoenrade, 2000). Greater organisational support through investment in the expansion of the knowledge stock of organisational actors (especially HR staff with specific responsibility for diversity issues) can assist the variety of transgender identities ranging from the socially most legible to the most stigmatised (more gender-fluid employees).

Our study underlines the crucial role played by organisational support and acceptance in creating an inclusive work climate for gender identity minorities (see also Barclay & Scott, 2006). As previous research on gay and lesbian employees suggests, organisational support in the aftermath of disclosure is a far more effective mechanism of minimising stigma (Day & Schoenrade, 2000). In that sense, disclosure in itself is no panacea against discrimination, rather it is the organisational reception of gender identity diversity that shapes the disclosure outcomes. Yet, positive, well-informed, care-driven, structured but flexible organisational support desired by the participants is often very difficult to find in practice (Barclay & Scott, 2006; Taranowski, 2008; Taylor et al., 2011). In this context, it is important for organisations to go beyond blanket approaches to diversity management and tailor their diversity and inclusion initiatives in line with the needs of their employees. In the case of transgender workers, organisational support and accommodation is essential

during the transition process. Organisations need to allow extended personal leave or career breaks, amendments to the employment contract to limit job responsibilities, job-sharing options or similar flexible work arrangements, the absence of which creates layers of ongoing stress for transgender workers. Human resource policies often lack design features to accommodate specific transition-related issues faced by transgender individuals (Taranowski, 2008), and going forward organisations need to pay due attention to transition in any plans and initiatives tailored to respond to transgender workers' needs.

Limitations and future research

As this study has taken an explorative approach, the sample of research participants was more limited in scope and the data collection was based on in-depth interviewing. Our research lays the groundwork to implement larger scale quantitative studies delving into both the challenges experienced by transgender employees and the requisite diversity management strategies to resolve such challenges. Taking a multi-stakeholder approach, future research may also be conducted with organisational actors from different functions and ranks in order to reveal belief and perceptions on gender identity diversity. In addition, future studies that take a comparative look at transgender workplace issues across several countries may be beneficial in tracing the variations as well as similarities in terms of discriminatory obstacles encountered by transgender workers in different legal settings with divergent historical and cultural contexts. There is also a pressing need for research into the transgender work lives in developing country contexts as well as heretofore understudied regions of the world such as Africa, Asia and the Middle East, where transgender individuals face significant social pressures to the point of summary exclusion from most forms of paid employment in the formal economy. In this sense, diversity studies that have an explicit societal and contextual element may prove particularly fruitful. Finally, this study invites further theoretical work in equality, diversity and inclusion scholarship that is not only nuanced and tailored, but also committed to advancing a dedicated framework for gender identity diversity management. Our research not only reveals the need for organisations to look at gender identity diversity issues with greater attention, but also serves as a call for future research that will provide specific conceptual models and practical road maps for the full inclusion of gender identity minorities in organisations.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

References

Alberti, G., Holgate, J., & Tapia, M. (2013). Organising migrants as workers or as migrant workers? Intersectionality, trade unions and precarious work. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 24, 4132–4148. doi:10.1080/09585192.2013.845429

Ancona, D. G., & Caldwell, D. F. (1992). Demography and design: Predictors of new product team performance. *Organization Science*, 3, 321–341. doi:10.1287/orsc.3.3.321

Anderson-Gough, F., Grey, C., & Robson, K. (2005). 'Helping them to forget': The organizational embedding of gender relations in public audit firms. *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, 30, 469–490. doi:10.1016/j.aos.2004.05.003

Badgett, M. V. (2009). Bias in the workplace: Consistent evidence of sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination 1998–2008. *Chicago-Kent Law Review*, 84, 559.

Barclay, J. M., & Scott, L. J. (2006). Transsexuals and workplace diversity. *Personnel Review*, *35*, 487–502. doi:10.1108/00483480610670625

Bell, M. P., Özbilgin, M. F., Beauregard, T. A., & Sürgevil, O. (2011). Voice, silence, and diversity in 21st century organizations: Strategies for inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender employees. *Human Resource Management*, *50*, 131–146. doi:10.1002/hrm.20401

Blount, J. M., & Anahita, S. (2004). The historical regulation of sexuality and gender of students and teachers: An intertwined legacy. In Mary Louise Rasmussen, Eric Rofes, & Susan Talburt (Eds.), *Youth and sexualities: Pleasure, subversion, and insubordination in and out of schools* (pp. 63–84). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Boehmer, U. (2002). Twenty years of public health research: Inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender populations. *American of Journal of Public Health*, *92*, 1125–1130. doi:10.2105/AJPH.92.7.1125

Bowen, F., & Blackmon, K. (2003). Spirals of silence: The dynamic effects of diversity on organizational voice. *Journal of Management Studies*, *40*, 1393–1417.

Browne, K. (2005). Snowball sampling: Using social networks to research non-heterosexual women. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *8*, 47–60.

Browne, K., & Lim, J. (2010). Trans lives in the 'gay capital of the UK'. *Gender, Place and Culture*, *17*, 615–633. doi:10.1080/0966369X.2010.503118

Budge, S. L., Tebbe, E. N., & Howard, K. A. S. (2010). The work experiences of transgender individuals: Negotiating the transition and career decision-making processes. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *57*, 377–393. doi:10.1037/a0020472

Butler, J. (2004). *Undoing gender*. London: Routledge.

Clair, J. A., Beatty, J. E., & MacLean, T. L. (2005). Out of sight but not out of mind: Managing invisible social identities in the workplace. *Academy of Management Review*, *30*, 78–95. doi:10.5465/AMR.2005.15281431

Colgan, F., & McKearney, A (2012). Visibility and voice in organisations. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, *31*, 359–378. doi:10.1108/02610151211223049

Colgan, F., & Wright, T. (2011). Lesbian, gay and bisexual equality in a modernizing public sector 1997-2010: Opportunities and threats. *Gender, Work and Organisation*, *18*, 548–570.

Cox, T. H. (1991). The multicultural organization. *Academy of Management Executive*, *5*, 34–47. doi:10.5465/AME.1991.4274675

Creed, W. D., DeJordy, R., & Lok, J. (2010). Being the change: Resolving institutional contradiction through identity work. *Academy of Management Journal*, *53*, 1336–1364. doi:10.5465/AMJ.2010.57318357

Cronin, M. A., & Weingart, L. R. (2007). Representational gaps, information processing, and conflict in functionally diverse teams. *Academy of Management Review*, *32*, 761–773. doi:10.5465/AMR.2007.25275511

Davis, D. (2009). Transgender issues in the workplace: HRD's newest challenge/opportunity. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, *11*, 109–120. doi:10.1177/1523422308329189

Day, N. E., & Greene, P. G. (2008). A case for sexual orientation diversity management in small and large organizations. *Human Resource Management*, *47*, 637–654. doi:10.1002/hrm.20235

Day, N. E., & Schoenrade, P. (1997). Staying in the closet versus coming out: Relationships between communication about sexual orientation and work attitudes. *Personnel Psychology*, *50*, 147–163. doi:10.1111/j.1744-6570.1997.tb00904.x

Day, N. E., & Schoenrade, P. (2000). The relationship among reported disclosure of sexual orientation, anti-discrimination policies, top management support and work attitudes of gay and lesbian employees. *Personnel Review*, *29*, 346–363. doi:10.1108/00483480010324706

Doan, P. L. (2010). The tyranny of gendered spaces – reflections from beyond the gender dichotomy. *Gender, Place and Culture*, *17*, 635–654. doi:10.1080/0966369X.2010.503121

Everly, B. A., & Schwarz, J. L. (2014). Predictors of the adoption of LGBT-friendly HR policies. *Human Resource Management*. doi:10.1002/hrm.21622

Gagné, P., Tewksbury, R., & McGaughey, D. (1997). Coming out and crossing over: Identity formation and proclamation in a transgender community. *Gender and Society*, *11*, 478–508.

Gedro, J., Mizzi, R. C., Rocco, T. S., & van Loo, J. (2013). Going global: Professional mobility and concerns for LGBT workers. *Human Resource Development International*, *16*, 282–297. doi:10.1080/13678868.2013.771869

Ghumman, S., & Ryan, A. M. (2013). Not welcome here: Discrimination towards women who wear the Muslim headscarf. *Human Relations*, *66*, 671–698. doi:10.1177/0018726712469540

Hall, A., Hockey, J., & Robinson, V. (2007). Occupational cultures and the embodiment of masculinity: Hairdressing, estate agency and firefighting. *Gender, Work and Organization*, *14*, 534–551. doi:10.1111/j.1468-0432.2007.00370.x

Heilman, M. E. (1997). Sex discrimination and the affirmative action remedy: The role of sex stereotypes. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *16*, 877–889. doi:10.1023/A:1017927002761

Hines, S. (2006). What's the difference? Bringing particularity to queer studies of transgender. *Journal of Gender Studies*, *15*, 49–66. doi:10.1080/09589230500486918

Hines, S. (2007). *Transforming gender: Transgender practices of identity, intimacy and care*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Hines, S. (2010). Queerly situated? Exploring negotiations of trans queer subjectivities at work and within community spaces in the UK. *Gender, Place and Culture*, *17*, 597–613. doi:10.1080/0966369X.2010.503116

Hite, L. M., & Mc donald, K. S. (2006). Diversity training pitfalls and possibilities: An exploration of small and mid-size US organizations. *Human Resource Development International*, *9*, 365–377. doi:10.1080/13678860600893565

Human Rights Campaign. (2009). *Degrees of equality: A national study examining workplace climate for LGBT employees*. Washington, DC: Human Rights Campaign.

International Labour Organization (ILO). (2013). Discrimination at work on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity: Results of pilot research. Retrieved from http://www.ilo.org/gb/GBSessions/GB319/lils/WCMS_221728/lang–en/index.htm

Johnson, J. M. (2002). In-depth interviewing. In J. F. Gubrium & J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: Context and method* (pp. 103–119). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Johnston, W. B., & Packer, A. H. (1987). *Workforce 2000: Work and workers for the 21st century*. Washington, DC: Hudson Institute.

Kandola, R., & Fullerton, J. (1994). *Diversity in action: Managing the mosaic*. London: IPD.

Kanter, R. M. (1977). *Men and women of the corporation*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

King, E. B., & Cortina, J. M. (2010). The social and economic imperative of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered supportive organizational policies. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, *3*, 69–78. doi:10.1111/j.1754-9434.2009.01201.x

Koch, K., & Bales, R. (2008). Transgender employment discrimination. *UCLA Women's Law Journal*, *17*, 243–267.

Kulik, C. T., Perry, E. L., & Bourhis, A. C. (2000). Ironic evaluation processes: Effects of thought suppression on evaluations of older job applicants. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *21*, 689–711.

Kwon, P. (2013). Resilience in lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *17*, 371–383. doi:10.1177/1088868313490248

Law, C. L., Martinez, L. R., Ruggs, E. N., Hebl, M. R., & Akers, E. (2011). Trans-parency in the workplace: How the experiences of transsexual employees can be improved. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *79*, 710–723. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2011.03.018

Legard, R., Keegan, J., & Ward, K. (2003). In-depth interviews. In J. Ritchie & J. Lewis (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social research students and researchers* (pp. 138–169). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

McLaughlin, M. E., Bell, M. P., & Stringer, D. Y. (2004). Stigma and acceptance of persons with disabilities: Understudied aspects of workforce diversity. *Group and Organization Management*, *29*, 302–333. doi:10.1177/1059601103257410

McPhail, R., McNulty, Y., & Hutchings, K. (2014). Lesbian and gay expatriation: Opportunities, barriers and challenges for global mobility. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 1–25. doi:10.1080/09585192.2014.941903

Monro, S., & Richardson, D. (2010). Intersectionality and sexuality: The case of sexuality and transgender equalities work in UK local government. In Y. Taylor, S. Hines, & M. Casey (Eds.), *Theorizing intersectionality and sexuality* (pp. 99–118). Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Monro, S., & Richardson, D. (2012). *Sexuality, equality and diversity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Moore, S. (1999). Understanding and managing diversity among groups at work: Key issues for organisational training and development. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, *23*, 208–218. doi:10.1108/03090599910272086

Nkomo, S. (1992). The emperor has no clothes: Rewriting 'race in organizations'. *Academy of Management Review*, *17*, 487–513. doi:10.5465/AMR.1992.4281987

Nkomo, S., & Hoobler, J. M. (2014). A historical perspective on diversity ideologies in the United States: Reflections on human resource management research and practice. *Human Resource Management Review*, 24, 245–257. doi:10.1016/j.hrmr.2014.03.006

Ozturk, M. B. (2011). Sexual orientation discrimination: Exploring the experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual employees in Turkey. *Human Relations*, 64, 1099–1118. doi:10.1177/0018726710396249

Ozturk, M. B., & Rumens, N. (2014). Gay male academics in UK business and management schools: Negotiating heteronormativities in everyday work life. *British Journal of Management*, 25, 503–517. doi:10.1111/1467-8551.12061

Paluck, E. L. (2006). Diversity training and intergroup contact: A call to action research. *Journal of Social Issues*, 62, 577–595. doi:10.1111/j.1540-4560.2006.00474.x

Pepper, S. M., & Lorah, P. (2008). Career issues and workplace considerations for the transsexual community: Bridging a gap of knowledge for career counselors and mental heath care providers. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 56, 330–343. doi:10.1002/j.2161-0045.2008.tb00098.x

Peters, L., & Karren, R. J. (2009). An examination of the roles of trust and functional diversity on virtual team performance ratings. *Group and Organization Management*, 34, 479–504. doi:10.1177/1059601107312170

Pringle, J. K. (2008). Gender in management: Theorizing gender as heterogender. *British Journal of Management*, 19, S110–S119. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8551.2008.00576.x

Ragins, B. R. (2008). Disclosure disconnects: Antecedents and consequences of disclosing invisible stigmas across life domains. *Academy of Management Review*, 33, 194–215. doi:10.5465/AMR.2008.27752724

Ragins, B. R., Singh, R., & Cornwell, J. M. (2007). Making the invisible visible: Fear and disclosure of sexual orientation at work. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92, 1103–1118. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.92.4.1103

Richardson, D., & Monro, S. (2012). *Sexuality, equality and diversity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Roberson, L., Kulik, C. T., & Pepper, M. B. (2001). Designing effective diversity training: Influence of group composition and trainee experience. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 22, 871–885. doi:10.1002/job.117

Roen, K. (2002). 'Either/or' and 'both/neither': Discursive tensions in transgender politics. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 27, 501–522. doi:10.1086/495695

Scott, K. A., Heathcote, J. M., & Gruman, J. A. (2011). The diverse organization: Finding gold at the end of the rainbow. *Human Resource Management*, 50, 735–755. doi:10.1002/hrm.20459

Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research*. London: Sage.

Stryker, S. (2006). (De)subjugated knowledges: An introduction to transgender studies. In S. Stryker & S. Whittle (Eds.), *The transgender studies reader* (pp. 1–17). London: Routledge.

Tan, S. H. (2008). When Steve is fired for becoming Susan: Why courts and legislators need to protect transgender employees from discrimination. *Stetson Law Review*, 37, 579–613.

Taranowski, C. J. (2008). Transsexual employees in the workplace. *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*, 23, 467–477. doi:10.1080/15555240802540186

Tatli, A. (2011). A multi-layered exploration of the diversity management field: Diversity discourses, practices and practitioners in the UK. *British Journal of Management*, 22, 238–253. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8551.2010.00730.x

Tatli, A., & Özbilgin, M. F. (2012). An emic approach to intersectional study of diversity at work: A Bourdieuan framing. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 14, 180–200.

Taylor, S., Burke, L. A., Wheatley, K., & Sompayrac, J. (2011). Effectively facilitating gender transition in the workplace. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, 23, 101–116. doi:10.1007/s10672-010-9164-9

Thomas, R. R. (1990). From affirmative action to affirming diversity. *Harvard Business Review*, 68, 107–117.

Wentling, R. M., & Palma-Rivas, N. (1999). Components of effective diversity training programmes. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 3, 215–226. doi:10.1111/1468-2419.00079

Whittle, S., Turner, L., Al-Alami, M., Rundall, E., & Thom, B. (2007). *Engendered penalties: Transgender and transsexual people's experiences of inequality and discrimination*. Manchester: Press for Change/Manchester Metropolitan University.

Wilkinson, A., Gollan, P., Kalfa, S., & Xu, C. (2014). Special issue of international journal of human resource management : Voices unheard?. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *25*, 2751–2753. doi:10.1080/09585192.2014.949092

Wright, T. (2013). Uncovering sexuality and gender: An intersectional examination of women's experience in UK construction. *Construction Management and Economics*, *31*, 832–844. doi:10.1080/01446193.2013.794297

Zimmerman, M. A. (2008). The influence of top management team heterogeneity on the capital raised through an initial public offering. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *32*, 391–414. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6520.2008.00233.x