



MacLaren, Jenny (2016) *Passing/Out and bathroom privileges: doing transgender in the UK labour market* [MSc.]

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Passing/Out and Bathroom Privileges:
Doing Transgender in the UK Labour Market

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Equalities and Human Rights MSc

Dissertation

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Abstract

This dissertation explores how passing and being openly trans affects work experiences and how access to gendered spaces is navigated at work. In order to investigate transgender at work qualitative data was generated from six semi-structured qualitative interviews with trans people across the UK. The workplace negotiations were explored through the theoretical lens of 'doing transgender', which builds on the theory of doing gender in order to be inclusive of a diversity of gender identities. I adopted a feminist approach to the research so as to centralise the voices of the participants, and to address the marginalisation of transgender in workplace theory. Analysis of the trans experiences revealed that all of the participants took part in both doing and undoing gender to differing degrees, and that this was often directly related to the structure of the workplace and sector of employment, with increased protections resulting in more flexibility with gender expression. I conclude that trans inequalities are perpetuated in workplace settings through organisations' subscription to the gender binary and the prevalence of cisnormativity.

I.

INTRODUCTION

Gender permeates almost all social spaces, but in different ways (Ridgeway, 2011). Work is a site where gender, and I will argue transgender, inequalities are practiced and perpetuated, where rigid notions of sex and gender difference are upheld. For most people their biologically defined sex correlates with their gender identity (cisgender), but for others their biological sex and gender do not correlate (transgender). Despite an increase in the visibility of transgender in Western culture in recent years,¹ transgender continues to be marginalised in the workplace. Moreover, transgender is marginalised within the theoretical literature on workplace inequalities. There is tendency in research to investigate LGBT employees as a group, thus subsuming transgender concerns under the broader category of sexual minorities. Despite sharing certain parallels of inequity with the LGB workforce, transgender employees face unique challenges that ought to be explored, such as negotiating gender transitions and the visibility that comes with gender non-conformity. In addition, attitudes towards transgender people can often be more antagonistic, with possibly more severe personal and professional ramifications (Ozturk and Tatli, 2016: 782). For this reason, I contend that transgender be assessed through gender rather than sexuality (see Aspinall and Mitton, 2008), as gender and transgender are arguably more analogous. Yet the literature on gender in the workplace has tended to exclude transgender, focusing only on binary genders. Therefore, this dissertation aims to address this proclivity for either subsuming or excluding transgender: bringing the voices of trans employees from the periphery to the centre, by focusing specifically on transgender and the prevalence of trans inequality.

Transgender is a pressing issue, both ethically and politically, and is especially pertinent following the passing of the Equality Act (2010) which, for the first time in the UK, conferred legal protections to trans employees, outlawing discrimination on the grounds of 'gender reassignment' and enshrining a public sector equality duty for the active promotion of equality in the workplace.² Such legislation offers the security for employees to be more open about their gender identities, something which previous large-scale studies have found to be lacking.³ As feminism has argued (Acker, 1990; Walby, 1990; England, 2010/2014), the workplace is a crucial site for the reproduction of gender inequality. It perpetuates conformity to hegemonic gender norms and buttresses the two-gender system. This research will explore how organisations, as the bearers of gender (Acker, 1990), can reproduce and culturally define transgender and trans experiences. This dissertation will investigate how transgender is negotiated within organisations which, I will show, have the ability to both omit and shape transgender and non-binary identities. By focusing specifically on work, I intend to highlight how interactions in public spaces can influence and constrain gender doings and gender determinations. This will help illuminate if and how transgender inequality is socially produced and performed within the labour market.

In order to do this, I begin with a review of the literature on transgender which is presented in chapter II. I open with a preliminary discussion on the relationships between sex, gender and the gender binary, before going on to highlight how previous theories have failed to adequately include transgender populations by assessing the limitations of interactional, feminist and queer theories. This provides the framework for my theory of doing transgender, which serves as a conceptual and methodological lens for this study. To develop this theory, I build upon the work of Candace West and Don Zimmerman (1987) and Catherine Connell (2010) to argue that trans people perform both the doing and undoing of gender; thereby doing transgender.

As I believe that gender is achieved through interactions (West and Zimmerman, 1987), I argue that analysing transgendered interactions will enable us to observe how transgender is achieved. Chapter III sets out the methodological considerations for this research, and details the fieldwork of recruiting participants and conducting semi-structured qualitative interviews. I delineate my reflexive feminist approach to the research design, which enables me to incorporate and centralise the participants' experiences, and I present an argument for the use of Skype and telephone interviews in place of in-person interviews. More crucially, I highlight how interviewing trans people about their experiences will serve to make their experiences visible, and raise awareness of the complex issues faced by transgender persons. Thus, raising awareness of trans people and their marginalisation within the UK labour market by examining their lived experiences.

Through an analysis of those experiences I consider whether trans workers are doing transgender. Chapter IV will answer the research questions: What are trans people's experiences of doing gender in the workplace? What are trans people's experiences of undoing gender in the workplace? And, how do trans people negotiate gendered spaces at work? This chapter explores the relationship between passing and openly trans identities, and how this is negotiated when accessing gendered work spaces such as toilets. In this chapter I consider whether trans people's accounts of their work experiences challenge the binary or uphold it (or both), and assess what this means for trans (in)equalities at work. The main findings of the research suggest that passing and being out are constantly renegotiated, depending on the context, and that workplace structures and procedures can in fact enforce the doing or undoing of gender. Furthermore, organisations fail to incorporate transgender into cisnormative organisations, most notably through the lack of gendered spaces appropriate for non-binary persons. I argue that transgender is not a homogenous category, all experiences and interactions are unique, and therefore generalisations cannot be made.

Though what can be garnered from the findings is that the sector of employment plays a critical role in how gender identities are expressed at work. I will conclude in chapter V with a discussion of the implications of the research, both theoretically and methodologically, as well as offering some suggestions for future research.

Before turning to the literature review, a small note on terminology. The term transgender entered the public discourse in the mid-1980s generally replacing the term transsexual which had become negatively associated with sexuality and the medical discourse (Vidal-Ortiz, 2008: 435). The medical discourse assumes a two-gender system, offering either male or female, thus maintaining the gender binary. Transgender is now commonly used as an umbrella term and includes a diverse range of gender identities, referring to all those who live, or desire to live, a large part of their life in a gender which differs from that of their birth sex (Whittle, 2002: xxiii). This includes non-binary gendered individuals, those who express a gender identity that diverges from the binary distinction of male/female (Browne and Lim, 2010: 617). More recently the term trans has been favoured by theorists as it incorporates both transgender and non-binary identities; both those who choose to live in the opposite gender and those who wish to transcend gender (Ekins and King, 2006: 22) and so throughout this dissertation I will adopt the inclusive terms trans people, trans men and trans women when referring to individuals, and the term transgender when referring to the concept.

II.

DOING (TRANS)GENDER: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This chapter provides a review of the literature on transgender and transgender at work. I will first introduce some of the fundamental concepts that are key to understanding transgender, such as the relationship between sex and gender and the gender binaries, before going on to address the interactional, feminist, and queer approaches to transgender. I propose that current theoretical approaches fail to incorporate both the doing and undoing of gender, and so argue for a theory of doing transgender which is both inclusive and specific to transgender and, I suggest, the most appropriate method for analysing trans experiences. Finally, I will outline the current research on transgender at work to suggest why doing transgender ought to be applied to the workplace.

(De)constructing the Binary

Undoubtedly, how we conceptualise transgender is inextricably linked to how we theorise the relationship between sex and gender, and their relationship to social interactions.⁴ It is widely accepted that gender is a social construction (Stoller, 1968/2006; Millett, 1971; Oakley, 1972/2015; Goffman, 1979; West and Zimmerman, 1987; Beauvoir, 1988/2009; Butler, 1990, 2004; Lorber, 1994/2014; Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Hird, 2002; Jackson and Scott, 2002) and so it must follow that gender is subject to change. Others have gone further and suggested that sex is also a construction (Butler, 1990; Grosz, 1994; Hird, 2002). Generally however, sex is understood as referring to the biological division between the categories of 'male' and 'female'; and gender is understood as referring to the parallel cultural or social

meanings assigned to 'masculine' and 'feminine' (Oakley, 1972/2015: 21-22). Western societies have traditionally understood the binaries of male/female and masculine/feminine as dichotomous in nature, together with an assumption that an individual's sex and gender are congruent and fixed (Lorber, 1994/2014). However, rather than separating the social (gender) from the biological (sex), gender has largely been constructed on sex (Nicholson, 1994), relying on sex as its "initiating point" (Dozier, 2005/2014: 488). One consequence of this relationship is a binary model of the sex/gender system (Rubin, 1975), which enforces the either/or categorisation of individuals, as either male or female, either masculine or feminine. This in turn obscures those identities which fall outside of binary definitions. Furthermore, if sex and gender are understood as congruent, then we are unable to account for those who alter their gender inside of binary definitions. If we separate gender from sex then there is the potential for a greater diversity of identities (Hines, 2007: 22). Therefore, I propose that in order to theorise about transgender that sex and gender are understood as distinct and alterable characteristics, and furthermore, that what is constructed can also be deconstructed.

By nature, binaries such as men/women, mind/body, and nature/culture are hierarchical (Derrida, 1982); one is constructed as superior, whilst the other is cast as subaltern. Binary thinking perpetuates a polarised and hierarchical view of gender which permeates through our institutions and organisations. The gender binary has been central to second-wave feminist debates which have observed how the binary works to Other and oppress women and those attributes associated with femininity (Irigaray, 1980; Beauvoir, 1988/2009; Grosz, 1994). What has been less theorised however, is to what extent the gender binary subordinates transgender. By denying transgender a space within the (cis)binary, this in turn establishes a new cis/trans dualism. Transgender interacts with the male/female binary in that it encourages transgendered individuals to 'cross over' or 'change sex', whilst those who enact a fluidity of gender are punished (Butler, 1990, 1993), thus serving to protect the Western

hegemonic binary gender order. Transgender identities can in this way be perceived as either crossing over the male/female divide, whereby they ‘pass’ in their acquired gender and thus uphold the binary; or as transgressing the male/female divide, whereby they are ‘out’ and thus disrupt the binary. Yet, as I will argue in chapter IV, trans identities are not homogenous, there are differences both between and within the categories of gender (McCall, 2005).⁵ Rather than viewing cis/trans or male/female as opposing gender identities, we should understand them as mutually constituted (Grosz, 1994). To do otherwise generates hierarchical notions of difference and perpetuates structural inequality. As such, I aim to move away from either/or and neither/nor distinctions (Roen, 2002), which merely serve to sustain the privilege of the dominant group, and instead acknowledge the “fusions” of gender (Haraway, 1991), to acknowledge those who exist both inside and outside the binaries.⁶ Thus, to deny men’s dominance over women, and cisgender’s dominance over transgender the binaries need to be deconstructed, along with their associated hierarchies (Knights and Kerfoot, 2004). In deconstructing the binaries we can acknowledge the in-between and the fluidity of gender. The remainder of this chapter will delineate some of the theoretical approaches to transgender before setting out my argument for a theory of doing transgender.

Theoretical Approaches to Transgender

INTERACTIONAL THEORIES OF GENDER

In the 1960s and 1970s Anglo-American research into transgender began to emerge within the social sciences (Benjamin, 1966; Garfinkel, 1967/1984; Stoller, 1968/2006; Kessler and McKenna, 1978). Despite this, much of the research appropriated a medical perspective on transgender (Benjamin, 1966; Stoller, 1968/2006) or used trans subjects as a means to exploring cisgender inequalities (Garfinkel, 1967/1984; Kessler and McKenna, 1978; West

and Zimmerman, 1987, 2009). For instance, Garfinkel (1967/1984) illustrates how gender is enacted in everyday life with his ethnomethodological case study of Agnes, a trans woman. He focuses on how Agnes performs femininity to pass as a “natural, normal female”, thus challenging the notion that sex correlates with gender and that sex is biologically defined and fixed. Garfinkel advanced the notion that gender is an interactional process, something that is both enacted by individuals and determined by others. Kessler and McKenna (1978) expand on Garfinkel’s work, focusing on ‘gender attribution’—how we assign a gender to people in interactions—to argue that people look for visual cues to discern whether a person is male or female. They highlight the social construction of gender and gender norms, positing that gender is not a natural biological property, but a behavioural and social one.

West and Zimmerman (1987, 2009) elaborate further on the ethnomethodological perspective with their influential feminist theory of ‘doing gender’. They propose that gender is an ongoing situated process which casts “particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine ‘natures’” (West and Zimmerman, 1987: 126). For West and Zimmerman gender is achieved; it is not a property of individuals, but a feature of routine social interactions. Following Garfinkel (1967/1984) and Kessler and McKenna (1978), they argue that gender is also contingent, individuals are gendered insofar as they accomplish gender through their interactions. And it is through these interactions that gender inequality is produced, as men do dominance and women do deference; thus, doing gender is doing inequality.

Garfinkel (1967/1984), Kessler and McKenna (1978) and West and Zimmerman (1987) provide an initial critique of the medical perspectives on transgender which tended to pathologise transgender, locating gender at the level of the social. They develop an interactional theory of gender, as something which is both performed and determined through social interactions. Ultimately however, they utilise their findings to analyse the gendered, rather than transgendered, society. Agnes acts more as a metaphor for gender (Thanem, 2011:

197), a way to illuminate cisgendered relations and assumptions, rather than as a route to exploring trans subjectivity. In this way, trans identities are problematically viewed as supplying unique access to knowledge about gender inequality. This tends to ignore cisgender's advantages over transgender and the distinct challenges that trans people face, mapping out cisgender as the default identity position.

What is more, these theories emphasise a binary model of gender, due to their assumption that all individuals fall within either a male or female gender category (Dozier, 2005/2014: 488; Hines, 2007: 9); doing gender is merely doing male or doing female. This serves to reinforce the binary by aligning masculinity with men and femininity with women. Therefore, these theories are unable to explain those whose gender falls outside the binary definitions. In order to acknowledge the various "shades of gender" (Doan, 2010: 647), the diversity and fluidity of trans identities, a theory is needed which can move beyond the binary relations of gender. In sum, although doing gender theory offers a fruitful way to analyse gendered interactions, it exploits trans identities in order to illuminate gender relations, and subscribes to the existing gender binary thereby obscuring the diversity of gender identities.

FEMINIST AND QUEER THEORIES

While ethnomethodological approaches highlighted the social construction of gender and its associated sex category, some radical feminists considered sex and gender to be fixed and unchangeable (Raymond, 1980; Greer, 1999; Jeffreys, 2003). Second-wave radical feminist scholarship challenged the medical model of transsexuality, whilst simultaneously being largely hostile to transgender practices. Specifically, trans people were seen to be bolstering women's oppression by ascribing to the rigid gender binary, underscoring highly dichotomised conceptions of gender. For instance, Janice Raymond's (1980) lesbian feminist

manifesto focuses primarily on trans women and argues that transsexuals reinforce stereotypical notions of the gender divide with their exaggerated enactments of femininity, and are a threat to 'authentic' women's emancipation. Raymond (1980), Greer (1999) and Jeffreys (2003) paint transgender as standing in opposition to the feminist goal of challenging inequality, by working in collusion with patriarchy and reproducing gender stereotypes.

This radical feminist understanding, however, is underpinned by the belief that biology defines gender and that this is absolute. Furthermore, Raymond (1980) and Jeffreys (2003) erase trans men in their analyses by focusing solely on trans women, thereby occluding the multiplicity of trans identities. As Hines (2007: 9) notes, their focus on the categories of male and female, (alongside feminism's premise that women are subjugated by men) is problematic for understanding transgender: it leaves no room for gender out-with the oppressive binary, thus reinforcing the marginal position of the transgender individual. Additionally, Vidal-Ortiz (2008: 438) notes how feminists have tended to burden trans women with upholding the binary, thereby placing a greater responsibility on trans people to disrupt the dual gender system. Thus, radical feminism charges transgender with being harmful to women by upholding the oppressive binary, yet ignores the multiplicity of trans identities and those who may choose to disrupt the binary.

Whilst radical feminists have tended to cast trans people as perpetuating an oppressive and dichotomised view of gender, other theorists have celebrated trans as a site of gender transgression (Butler, 1990, 1993, 2004; Stone, 1991/2006; Bornstein, 1994; Stryker, 2004). From the late 1980s theorists began to draw on the tenets of postmodernism and poststructuralism to challenge the categorisation of identities. Advanced by feminist Judith Butler (1990, 1993, 2004), queer theory proposed the deconstruction of gender categories and the gender binary. Butler (1990) argues that gender is fluid, unfixed, and performative, and that sex is just as culturally constructed as gender. There is no pre-given, fixed biological sex

as Raymond (1980) and other radical feminists suggest; there is no authentic femininity or masculinity. Rather, bodies become gendered through the continual performance of gender. Butler (1990: 33) states, there is “no gender behind the expressions of gender”; no ‘original’ which parodic identities such as drag imitate, gender merely exists within the performance itself. She illustrates how the hegemonic discourse restricts the available subject positions within the gender binary and heterosexual matrix, which encourages people to be read as either masculine or feminine. Butler (1990) augments the ethnomethodological theories of gender by arguing that gender is what one does, and for Butler, transgender *undoes* gender as it exposes the construction of the gender binary through the performance of multiple masculinities and femininities. But, as critics have pointed out (Knights and Kerfoot, 2004: 431; Kelan, 2010: 186) these transformative positions are not outside of the gender binary, they merely disturb it by offering a different reading, and so the binary and sex/gender system remains intact. Despite the recognition of more masculinities and femininities, they still exist in a binary relation, with masculinities dominant and femininities subordinate.

In the 1990s transgender theory provided a platform for trans subjects to speak as experts in their field, and to engage in debates which centred on the objective of passing (Stone, 1991/2006; Feinberg, 1992; Bornstein, 1994; Califia, 1997). In her poststructuralist analysis of gender, Stone (1991/2006) highlights trans oppression as distinct from sexist oppression, thereby creating space for theorising trans inequalities. Drawing on Butler’s theory of performativity, Stone also advocates that transsexuals forgo passing in favour of disrupting the gender binary. Similarly, Bornstein (1994) argues that gender fluidity challenges gender oppression and to pass is to align oneself within the gender binary and uphold the two-gender system. For Bornstein (1994: 125):

passing becomes the outward manifestation of shame and capitulation. Passing becomes silence. Passing becomes invisibility. Passing becomes lies. Passing becomes self-denial.

She argues instead for a 'third space' outside the binary, where one can be neither man nor woman. Trans writers such as Stone and Bornstein reflect a queer subjectivity in positioning themselves not as transsexuals, but as 'gender outlaws', speaking outside the boundaries of gender (Hines, 2007: 25). However, the concept of a third space can result in a reaffirmation of the power and purity of the originals (male and female) (Beauchamp and D'Harlingue, 2012), thus maintaining the dominance of the cisgendered categories. Rather than creating a space where transgender can merely exist alongside the binary, it ought to be acknowledged as a legitimate identity within normative culture.

Several theorists have argued that queer theory's deconstruction of sex and gender may, however, be unhelpful for those who seek to realign their sex with their gender identity (Prosser, 1997; Roen, 2002; Browne, 2004; Hines, 2010). To conceive of passing as a form of capitulation diminishes those trans persons who feel they are inherently male or female, as well as those who simply cannot afford to be openly trans. Roen (2002) suggests that Bornstein comes close to accusing passing trans people of having false consciousness (also levelled at Raymond (1980)) and merely placing alternative gender norms on trans people. Prosser (1997) views queer theory, especially Butler's work, as encouraging the ongoing social exclusion of transsexuals. Rather than recognising the legitimacy of their identity claims, it excludes the voices of those who wish to stabilise, not destabilise, their gender (Beasley, 2005: 154). Prosser (1997: 320) argues that being openly trans is not something that all trans people could ascribe to, and we must acknowledge "the lure of passing, account for the very human desire to belong, be accepted and be seen for who one feels oneself to be". Likewise, Hines (2010: 608) argues that queer theory "has a tendency to overstate the relationship between trans and transgression", when some people do not wish to be part of the gender revolution, and Browne (2004: 334) suggests that queer theory presents an almost "playful image" of gender transgressions. In contrast to Butler (1990), Stone (1991/2006) and

Bornstein (1994), Prosser (1997) urges conformity with the normative gender binary, suggesting that people wish to align their sex and gender rather than deconstruct it. Yet Prosser's theory is arguably too dualistic in nature (Halberstam, 1998). Both the queer theorists and those who argue for a passing transsexuality do not sufficiently allow for the multiplicity of gender identities, as they argue for either/or, passing or unpassing. I suggest that we do not assume that all trans persons will be willing to become Stone's (1991/2006) open 'posttranssexual', nor should we assume that all trans identities wish to align themselves within the binary. In this way we can accommodate trans men and trans women as well as non-binary trans identities, and emphasise neither passing nor subversion.

UNDOING (TRANS)GENDER

Neither feminist nor queer theories are able to comprehensively account for the complex array of trans identities and subjectivities. Feminist theory elides those who wish to challenge the gender hegemony, whereas queer theory elides those who wish to uphold the binary. Trans people are seen as either a means for assessing cisgender, or as a means for subverting gender. Therefore, in order to bridge the gap between feminist and queer theories, I argue for a theory which can incorporate all shades of gender, and a theory which does not rely on a binary model for categorisation. One way in which sociologists have suggested we can incorporate this is to acknowledge the undoing of gender as well as the doing of gender, for equal acceptance of both gender ambiguity and gender conformity (Roen, 2002).

Undoing gender has been the focus of recent debates (Butler, 2004; Risman, 2004, 2009; Deutsch, 2007; West and Zimmerman, 2009; Kelan, 2010) which suggest that it may enable us to account for social change. Deutsch (2007: 107) draws on Butler's theory of undoing gender to propose that we acknowledge "the links between social interactions and structural

change”; and argues that by focusing our attentions on how we can undo gender, it will enable us to challenge the binary and the two-gender system. Deutsch (2007: 122) wants to reserve *doing* gender for referring to social interactions that reproduce gender difference and *undoing* gender to refer to social interactions that reduce gender difference; to do gender is to act according to gendered norms, and to undo gender is to act in discordance with them. This would allow for the incorporation of both identities that conform and identities that resist the gender binary, while the resistance of undoing gender maintains the focus on how to tackle inequalities.

However, what Deutsch’s (2007) theory is missing, with her focus on the differences between men and women, is how to incorporate transgender and non-binary identities. Both Butler (2004) and Deutsch (2007) suggest that trans people are always undoing gender, merely by virtue of being transgender. In response to this, West and Zimmerman (2009) argue that gender is rather ‘re-done’, as the binary system tends to enforce conformity with either/or, trans people *expand* gender norms rather than undoing them. Yet I argue that many trans identities, for instance non-binary identities, undo gender rather than merely re-do it: re-doing gender focuses on the determining of gender by others, the repatriation to the binary model, and ignores the agency of the individual who is performing an undoing of gender. By retaining the framework on gendered norms, this prohibits space for those who challenge norms (and we cannot merely turn these challenges into ‘new norms’).

Although I agree with Deutsch (2007) that undoing gender can enable positive social change, I disagree with Butler (2004) and Deutsch (2007) that trans persons are accountable for enacting this change, and that all enactments of undoing gender by trans persons help towards the goal of gender equality. Painting transgender as transgression unfairly tasks trans people with tackling gender and transgender inequalities, through performances of undoing gender which are often policed. I contend that trans persons do not undo gender merely by virtue of

being trans, in fact they can just as equally do gender. In line with this, Risman (2009: 83) proposes that people can often do and undo gender at the same time: “It is perhaps often the case that at the same moment people are undoing some aspects of gender and doing others”. Risman suggests that our aim ought to be to go beyond gender, to move to a ‘postgender’ equal society. Building on this idea that gender can be both done and undone, Connell (2010) proposes that trans people ‘do transgender’, which she suggests may operate:

more like ‘doing gender’ or like ‘undoing/redoing gender’, depending on the context [and] captures transpeople’s unique management of situated conduct as they, with others, attempt to make gendered sense of their discordance with sex and sex category (Connell, 2010: 50).

Connell offers way to incorporate the multiplicity of gender doings and undoings whilst maintaining the emphasis on interactions. Yet ultimately, Connell (2010) focuses on how trans people do *cisgender*, and how they are incorporated into the two-gender binary, thereby eliding the agency and enactment of *transgender*.

Drawing on both Risman (2009) and Connell’s (2010) theories of un/doing trans/gender I propose that we define doing transgender as both the doing and undoing of gender, which can change depending on the context, whilst maintaining the focus on trans rather than gender inequalities. I argue that this theory of doing transgender will enable the incorporation of the experiences of both stealth (those who do not disclose their trans status) and out (those who do disclose their trans status) trans persons, as well as those who are situated in-between. In this way, it bridges the gap between feminist and queer theories, by encompassing both those who wish to pass within the binary, and those who wish to disrupt it. Ultimately, trans equality means acceptance of both passing and un-passing trans identities. However, these experiences are contingent on context, and this dissertation will explore trans experiences in the context of the workplace in order to illuminate how trans inequality is both enacted and negotiated. The following section will review some of the previous literature on transgender

at work, in order to delineate the current gaps in the literature that this theory of doing transgender will address.

Doing Transgender at Work

The workplace is a crucial site where gender performances occur. Researchers have repeatedly shown how gender is embedded in organisational processes and practices (Acker, 1990, 1992, 2006; Walby, 1990; Hall, 1993a, 1993b; Pierce, 1995; Williams, 1995; Crompton and Harris, 1998; Korvajärvi, 1998; Halford and Leonard, 2001, 2006; Browne and Misra, 2003; Martin, 2003; Thomas, Mills and Mills, 2004; Connell, 2006; Pullen and Knights, 2007; Lester, 2008; England, 2010/2014; Cha, 2013), effecting gendered segregation and enabling workplace inequalities. Acker (1990) highlights how organisational hierarchies perpetuate gendered inequalities. Martin (2003) draws attention to how gendered practices at work can serve to both construct and maintain men's privileged positions and underscore the difference between men and women. Thomas, Mills and Mills (2004) show how women adopt male characteristics to obtain higher positions, while Pullen and Knights (2007) suggest women endorse masculine norms and values, upholding the 'master narrative'. Yet while gender has been widely theorised at work, the same cannot be said for transgender. In recent years there has been a growth of interest in transgender identities at work (Schilt, 2006, 2010; Schilt and Connell, 2007; Schilt and Wiswall, 2008/2014; Budge, Tebbe and Howard, 2010; Connell, 2010; Thanem, 2011), however this has largely been confined to the US, with few empirical studies documenting the experiences of transgender employees in the UK (Whittle, Turner and Al-Alami, 2007; Browne and Lim, 2010; Hines, 2010; Ozturk and Tatli, 2016). Moreover, I argue that those who have considered transgender have tended to focus on how trans experiences can illuminate cisgender at work (Schilt 2006,

2010; Schilt and Connell, 2007; Schilt and Wiswall, 2008/2014), thus furthering the marginalisation of transgender. Research is lacking that analyses how trans employees experience *transgendered* workplace hierarchies and the gender binary, and how this perpetuates specifically trans inequalities. Furthermore, much of the current research has tended to cast trans people as in a unique position to undo gender (Schilt and Wiswall, 2008/2014; Connell, 2010) which serves to amplify the differences between cis and trans employees and contributes to their Othering (Zevallos, 2014). There are gaps in both the theoretical and empirical literatures concerning the specific and unique challenges transgender employees face at work in the UK and how these can be remedied.

In researching transgender at work, many theorists have suggested that trans identities are constrained by workplace interactions, as they are policed to present an identity more in line with normative binary conceptions of gender (Gagné, Tewksbury and McGaughey, 1997; Schilt and Connell, 2007; Connell, 2010; Doan, 2010; Hines, 2010). For instance, Gagné, Tewksbury and McGaughey (1997: 479) found that coming out for trans people in the US often resulted in individuals passing within the binary to maintain safety and prevent stigmatisation, as they ended up “redefining their identities in ways that conform to hegemonic belief systems and institutional demands”. Schilt and Connell (2007: 598) suggest that individuals who disclose or transition at work are “firmly repatriated” to the opposite binary gender, as many of their participants noted a pressure to perform in stereotypically feminine or masculine ways. Likewise, Connell (2010: 43) found that “those who transgress the rules find themselves corrected or misinterpreted in ways that support the gender binary”. Similarly in the UK, Hines (2010: 605) found that participants who were anxious about their work colleagues’ reactions to their disclosure “were more likely to stress the importance of adopting normative feminine or masculine appearances in order to keep discriminatory glances, comments and acts at bay”. For Hines’s (2010) participants, levels of self-regulation

around gender performance varied according to the levels of public interaction required at work, with more public interaction resulting in increased self-regulation. Participants policed their gender according to their work environment and the associated culture of acceptability. Nevertheless, what these theorists seem to assume to differing extents is that all trans persons desire to subvert the binary yet are constrained by others. However, as I suggested earlier in this chapter, many trans people also wish to pass and align with the binary. More investigation is needed to question the extent to which trans employees do gender at work and align with the gender binary (which is my first research question), and to what extent they undo gender at work and disrupt the binary (my second research question), and how this is constrained or enabled within the context of the workplace.

There is also a dearth of qualitative research into trans experiences at work, especially regarding discrimination, something which quantitative surveys suggest is common (Mitchell and Howarth, 2009: 52). There is a lack of research which focuses on how this discrimination occurs in public, regulated spaces such as the workplace, and how gendered spaces at work such as toilets are policed. Most workplaces consist of both gender segregated and non-gender segregated spaces, and the extent to which someone's gender is policed is contextually and spatially based (Namaste, 1996; Schilt, 2010; Westbrook and Schilt, 2014). Segregated spaces, such as toilets, are often also sexed spaces and can be places of high-risk for trans people (Browne, 2004; Doan, 2010) as gender differences are emphasised. Westbrook and Schilt (2014) argue that such spaces tend to be policed according to biology-based criteria rather than self-defined identity criteria, constructed on an assumption that gender is natural and immutable. In Western culture, when faced with ambiguity we often turn to biology and genitals as the signifier of gender (Lorber, 1994/2014: 42; Overall and Sellberg, 2012: 218). In such cases of ambiguity, when people do not pass or are non-binary, there can be an interactional breakdown, generating anxiety, concern and even anger towards

trans persons; what Westbrook and Schilt (2014: 35) term ‘gender panics’. Not only is gender policed within gendered spaces, often it can also be altogether excluded. Critics have previously noted the ways in which women have been excluded from workplaces by a lack or shortage of toilets (Anthony and Dufresne, 2007; Plaskow, 2008). Plaskow (2008) contends that bathroom design and distribution can perpetuate a wide range of social inequalities, and that the absence of appropriate toilets clearly reflects the exclusion of those persons within that space, signalling that they are outsiders; “that there is no room for them in public space” (Plaskow, 2008: 61). This should be investigated with regards to transgender and non-binary identities at work, as transgender becomes more visible within the workplace. Thus this dissertation will also examine how transgender is negotiated in gendered workspaces (my third research question).

This dissertation will focus on the experiences of trans employees in order to add to the scant empirical literature on this topic, and to open up the debates about how transgender is negotiated within the context of the UK workplace. I will draw upon a theory of doing transgender in order to understand trans experiences and examine what constraints the labour market places on the un/doing of gender as well as what possibilities it may allow. First however, I turn to the methodological considerations of this research project, which are outlined in the following chapter.

Research Questions

1. What are trans people’s experiences of doing gender in the workplace?
2. What are trans people's experiences of undoing gender in the workplace?
3. How do trans people negotiate gendered spaces at work?

III.

RESEARCHING TRANS SUBJECTS

Epistemological and Ontological Considerations

As I am interested in trans people's experiences of the labour market I adopted an interpretivist epistemological approach to the research, which contends that valid knowledge can be obtained through the interpretations of participants, and through these interpretations we can understand the social world (Burns, 2000). I also employed a constructionist ontological approach, which is founded on the belief that the social world is constructed by interactions (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 1996). Since trans people are a socially marginalised group, it was also ethically pertinent for me that they were not exploited by the research process and so I adopted a feminist approach to the research design, which prioritises the voices of the participants (Skeggs, 2001). A feminist approach corresponds with my research aims of exploring trans people's lived experiences at work, as it stresses the importance of a subjective knowledge, and draws attention to the role of power in research (Oakley, 1981; Mies, 1993; Westmarland, 2001). Since there can often be a hierarchical power relationship between researcher and researched, I employed semi-structured qualitative interviews, which allowed the interviewee more freedom and control over the interview process (Maynard, 1998; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015) and enabled me access to their interpretations of the

social world. By treating the participants as experts in their field, it highlighted the validity of their statements, enabled a depth of data, and facilitated an emphasis on their voices and experiences.

Recruiting Participants

In order to recruit participants who would be relevant to the research questions I employed a purposive sampling strategy. Trans people are located in a variety of jobs rather than concentrated in one particular industry (Connell, 2010: 36) and are a relatively small and sometimes hidden population (Schilt and Wiswall, 2008/2014). Therefore, in order to recruit as many participants as possible, the only criteria for participants were that they identified as trans or had a trans history⁷, were over 18 years of age, and had some experience of working in Glasgow. As I embarked on the fieldwork however, it became clear that accessing trans participants in a single location would not be a viable option as the small proportion of trans people in the UK population are likely to be geographically dispersed (Mitchell and Howarth, 2009: 22), and so I widened the search for participants to the rest of the UK.⁸ To recruit the participants I contacted several UK-based organisations including transgender support networks, trans activism groups and trans-led associations. Three organisations—LGBT Youth, Press for Change and My Genderation—disseminated information about the research project via their social media platforms. I recruited five participants via this method and one participant through a personal contact.

I carried out six interviews with two trans men, three trans women, and one non-binary person. As summarised in Table 1, the ages of the participants ranged from 23 to 52 and they all identified as White. Since the majority of the contacts were made through social media this may account for the younger age group of the participants, as adults aged 16 to 24 years

show the highest rates of internet use (Office for National Statistics, 2015). The participants came from across the UK: England (2); Northern Ireland (1); Scotland (2); Wales (1). Five of the six participants were employed at the time of the interviews, with four in full-time employment. Their work experience included a range of job roles across the public, private and third sectors, involving call centres, retail, hospitality, social care, and the police force. Of the six research participants one performed stealth at work, two were out though with the aim of going stealth in the future, and three were openly trans.

Table 1: *Characteristics of participants*

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender identity</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Time since began transition (years)</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Sector</i>	<i>Current earnings per annum</i>
Emily	23	Trans woman	White	2.5	Retail	Private	£10,000 to £20,000
Fiona	52	Trans woman	White	1	Police	Public	More than £30,000
Iain	25	Trans man	White	1.5	Call Centre	Public	£10,000 to £20,000
Lauren	43	Trans woman	White	2.5	Social Care	Third	£20,000 to £30,000
Robin	24	Non-binary	White	3	Call Centre	Private	Less than £10,000
Simon	23	Trans man	White	3	Hospitality	Private	Less than £10,000

Gathering the Data

Mitchell and Howarth (2009) suggest the best method for researching transgender is online surveys as there is a large online trans community, however I contend that online interviews are a suitable alternative for gathering qualitative data. Although I initially aimed to conduct in-person interviews wherever possible, as I began recruiting participants from across the UK this became less feasible, and so I offered Skype (an online video communication program) and telephone interviews as an alternative in order to reach the largest possible sample. One interview was conducted in-person, four were conducted over Skype and one was by telephone. Although I had arranged an additional in-person interview, after failing to attend the participant expressed their preference for a Skype interview.

There is disagreement over whether synchronous interviews such as Skype are a suitable alternative to in-person interviews. Several critics argue that Skype interviews are able to produce data that is as reliable and in-depth as face-to-face encounters, since verbal and nonverbal cues do not differ significantly (Berg, 2007; Hanna, 2012; Sullivan, 2013; Deakin and Wakefield, 2014; Janghorban, Roudsari and Taghipour, 2014), whereas others note that subtle visual cues may be lost when using online mediums (Chen and Hinton, 1999; O'Connor et al., 2008; Hay-Gibson, 2009). I argue that there are in fact a number of advantages to using a program like Skype over in-person interviews. Online interviews allow for increasing access to participants, those who are geographically dispersed or have physical mobility constraints, and eliminate the requirement for travel which could be costly and time consuming (Janghorban, Roudsari and Taghipour, 2014). Furthermore, it is possible to schedule the interview at a time that suits the participant such as evenings and weekends, without having to rely on access to an interview space. There is also more freedom to shift interview times last minute, with less obligation felt than when meeting in person. Participants can be interviewed in their natural environment and can feel more relaxed; “a neutral yet personal location is maintained for both parties throughout the process” (Hanna,

2012: 241). Moreover, online interviews are able to increase safety, anonymity and privacy (Bargh, McKenna and Fitzsimons, 2002). Ending the interview or withdrawing from it would also be easier with Skype than with face-to-face, as the participant can just end the call by clicking a button. These benefits are also true of telephone interviews (Burke and Miller, 2001; Novick, 2008). Because of these factors, more participants may be encouraged to take part who would otherwise have been reluctant.

One drawback to using online interviews however is that certain populations may not have access to online programs such as Skype. There is also the requirement of a certain level of technological competence which would not be present with in-person interviews. Thus, access to certain groups may be a problem which could lead to issues regarding sample representativeness (O'Connor et al., 2008). And although there is a large online trans community, they will most likely be a certain demographic of people: young, computer literate, and possibly well-educated (Whittle, 1998; Whittle et al., 2008). Technical issues are another possible constraint when using a program like Skype, although there were no technical issues experienced in the four Skype interviews I conducted. More significantly, seeing oneself on screen could be a source of unease and anxiety for some interviewees (Hay-Gibson, 2009; Deakin and Wakefield, 2014), which could result in participants not being willing to share personal information. For these reasons, telephone interviews were offered to avoid alienating those who did not feel comfortable with online interviews and those who were unable to access Skype or meet for in-person interviews.

While Skype interviews share some of the characteristics of in-person interviews, telephone interviews differ in terms of being able to interpret non-verbal cues, therefore, I attempted to limit the number of telephone interviews. Telephone interviews are also thought to compromise rapport (Novick, 2008). Despite this, the lack of visual data may allow participants to feel more relaxed and therefore more comfortable with disclosing sensitive

information. Rapport could also be difficult to create over Skype, however I communicated with all the participants prior to the interview in order to build up a relationship and instigated an informal chat before the interview began to set a relaxed tone. Specific to researching trans persons, the choice of either telephone or Skype interview may be more fruitful, as some trans persons may have concerns about their appearance or their voice, and so enabling them to choose whichever medium they are most comfortable with could produce the best results. In sum, I believe that the benefits of the chosen interview methods override the drawbacks, in that participants felt comfortable and were in a neutral environment, in most instances were able to carry out the interview face-to-face whilst maintaining safety and privacy, and were required to commit less time and energy than would have been the case with in-person interviews. I also suggest that offering a choice of interview method can increase access to participants and enable them to feel more at ease.

Ethical Concerns

During the fieldwork the participants were asked about their experiences of working as a trans person, any discrimination that may have resulted from their gender identity, and how they felt their place of work affected their gender. As a marginalised group some of the participants may be considered vulnerable, thus the interview process had the potential to raise some sensitive issues, however emphasis was placed on non-triggering topics. All participants were informed of the interview themes prior to the interview so they could make an informed decision about their involvement with the research, and I obtained their continued informed consent. The average length of an interview was fifty-five minutes. All participants were given the details of a support service should they feel the need for some support after the interview, although no participants reported any distress during or

subsequent to the interviews. As five of the six interviews were carried out either online or on the telephone safety issues were not a large concern in my research design, however for the in-person interview, in order to minimise any risks, it was conducted in a public work space during the day. To ensure that confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process I employed pseudonyms and changed the details of any identifiable places or characteristics.

Reflexivity and Thematic Analysis

Although I aimed to place the voices of the participants at the centre of the research I acknowledge that those voices were ultimately analysed and interpreted through my voice as well. My aim was to carry out research which was non-exploitative and so I adopted a reflexive approach, which can ensure that relationships between the researcher and the researched are non-authoritarian whilst allowing for an acknowledgement of difference (Nencel, 2013). Throughout the research process I was aware of my role as researcher: how I was able to control the situation (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015) and define people's realities for them from an interview transcript (Ribbens, 1989). I aimed to be transparent about any assumptions I made throughout the research process, engaging in active, continuous and critical reflection on the knowledge produced and my influence on the research process. One way I did this was by acknowledging any biases that I brought with me to the research process. These included an assumption that trans work experiences would be primarily negative and that workplaces would encourage conformity with the gender binary. Although bias can never be eradicated as interviews are social interactions, I remained aware of these assumptions whilst conducting the research and analysing the data to be aware of how they may impact the coding process. I acknowledge that a different researcher or different

theoretical framework would likely result in different findings, and as such it is my role as researcher that has shaped the results.

The characteristics of the researcher can also shape the quality of the interactions and influence the data collection and interpretation (Barnard, 1992). As a white western heterosexual woman I brought to the research certain assumptions, and as a cisgender researcher I was an outsider to those that I interviewed. Therefore, I assumed that it may be difficult to create a trusting relationship with the participants, so that they felt able to speak openly and share personal information. However, the participants often used trans colloquialisms and assumed a certain level of expertise on my part, which suggested that they accepted me as an 'inside-outsider' (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). Yet despite my aim to create a non-hierarchical relationship, I found it difficult to balance the gains I will directly receive from the research against those the participants will garner. As such, for future research I would consider adopting a participatory feminist approach to the research design (Reinharz, 1992).

Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. In order to become cognisant with the data I listened to the interview recordings and read the transcripts several times, and then identified emerging and relevant themes. I highlighted the transcripts according to these themes and copied and pasted them into sections, whilst making sure to retain the context of the quotes. Following this I analysed how the common themes could be linked to the theoretical research and research questions. Thus, themes were generated both from the data (inductive) and from the theoretical considerations (a priori) (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). From the literature review, I found the themes for my research questions were doing and undoing gender in work spaces, and from the interview data, the three main themes that were generated were passing, being out and negotiating the use of toilets. The following chapter will present these findings.

IV.

EXPERIENCES OF DOING TRANSGENDER AT WORK: PASSING/OUT AND GENDERED SPACES

As highlighted in the preceding chapter, the three main experiences that emerged from the interviews involved passing, being out, and using gendered spaces. This chapter will analyse the participants' experiences through the lens of doing transgender theory as outlined in chapter II, and will be structured according to the research questions: What are trans people's experiences of doing gender at work? What are trans people's experiences of undoing gender at work? And how do trans people negotiate gendered spaces at work? Firstly, I will address the participants' experiences of passing in order to assess the extent to which they do gender, as they perform masculinities or femininities that are in more line with normative conceptions of gender. Secondly, I will address the participants' experiences of being out in order to

assess the extent to which they undo gender, as they disrupt the assumed connection between sex and gender. Thirdly, I shall turn to how the interviewees' experiences of passing or being out can in turn be amplified in gendered spaces such as toilets, which enforce and normalise the gender binary. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of the research findings.

Doing and Determining Transgender: Passing at Work

“I wouldn't want to come out at work in case they thought that that's all I was [...] then they just see me as, oh that one whose different, which you don't really wanna be” (Simon).

“[I]t's not something I want to be, it's something I have to be” (Emily).

Simon is a 23-year-old trans man and has worked in numerous private sector jobs in the hospitality industry. Simon performs stealth at work (he does not disclose his trans history) as he has concerns about how accepted he would be as a trans employee. Thus passing at work is essential for Simon. Although he is now able to pass as male, during his transition Simon's gender was determined differently depending on the context:

there's been jobs where obviously I'm not being very passing. So it's been difficult, you know, people, like either my colleagues would see me as male but then customers would see me as something else, and things would be awkward with that situation [...] working in customer jobs, there's a lot of customers that would misgender you.

The in-between stages of transitioning means that gender can be harder to read, as people look for visual cues to attempt to categorise others within the two-gender system (Kessler and McKenna, 1978). The difference between how Simon's gender was determined by his colleagues and by customers suggests that passing is not merely visual however, and perhaps

additional cues such as having a male name, and the continuity that comes with interacting with colleagues on a more regular basis, resulted in his gender being determined appropriately. As noted by Butler (1990), repetitively performing gender creates the impression of being natural. On the other hand, new or transitory interactions with customers may make gender categorisation harder, as there are fewer cues to determine. For instance, Simon noted that “just because of your build or anything else” customers would automatically gender him as female. When Simon is misgendered by customers, they are misinterpreting his gender expression, trying to place him within the rigid boundaries of the male/female binary, when he may in fact be positioned somewhere in-between. Simon interprets this as due to the fact that, “everyone just kinda, they don’t realise that trans people exist”. The invisibility, or “assumed absence” (Beauchamp and D’Harlingue, 2012), of trans people at work can result in such inappropriate determinations of gender. Thus, any ‘feminine’ traits that Simon possessed, such as having a small build, act to indicate that he is female. In addition, people could also assume Simon is female because he works in a female-dominated industry (72 percent of waiting staff are women) (Office for National Statistics, 2013), thus drawing on social assumptions of job (and gender) roles (Hall, 1993a, 1993b). Every interaction is a performance, and how much masculinity Simon is able to perform in each interaction will colour how his gender will be determined, as people look for cues to align him within the binary. Simon’s experience highlights how passing can be complicated by customer-facing jobs; who you have to interact with can impact the extent to which you are able to pass. Gender is interactional, both performed and determined (Garfinkel, 1967/1984), and like gender, passing is also an interactional process, to pass successfully requires that someone else perceives the gender that you present, which can differ with context.

Although Simon is able to pass in his current job at a night-club he is still accountable for performing gender in line with his perceived sex category (West and Zimmerman, 1987). At work Simon is forced to do gender in ways that he is not always comfortable with. Along with the other male employees, Simon is tasked with manual shifts, such as building the stage, whereas the women employees (and one male gay employee) are tasked with the “fun jobs” like dressing up and handing out sweets to customers. Simon noted how his employers allocate jobs based on gender (and sexuality) rather than on capabilities:

like I'm pretty small, there are girls that are far bigger than me [and] if you're not pulling your weight the other guys give you stick for it [they call you weak and say 'come on a girl could do better than that'] and they don't understand that everyone just has a different body type, and I'm not, I'm strong enough I'm just not as strong as someone who goes to the gym five times a week and was born male.

Despite being smaller than some of his female colleagues, Simon is presumed to be suited to certain jobs because of his binary gender. Simon's colleagues simultaneously police his gender (as they berate his lack of physical strength) and subordinate femininity under masculinity. The gendered segregation of jobs ultimately perpetuates traditional notions of femininity and masculinity (Leidner, 1993; Pierce, 1995), in this case aligning strength with masculinity and weakness with femininity. Simon's managers and colleagues bolster the gender binary as a result of their interactions, upholding its hierarchical and essentialising structure through their performances of doing gender (Linstead and Brewis, 2004; Pullen and Knights, 2007). Simon subsequently feels constrained by his work environment, which enforces a normative and restricted conception of gender and determines what constitutes appropriate conduct for men and women.

Simon works in a small, private-run night-club and due to the “very informal” structure of Simon’s workplace he does not feel able to challenge discriminatory behaviour: “management all kind of have each other’s back so, if you called them out on anything it wouldn’t get anywhere”. In addition to there being no structural hierarchy within the company, working in the private sector means that the Equality Act does not require Simon’s employers to actively promote equality. Therefore, Simon has little opportunity to challenge the culture of hetero and cis normativity. To retain his job and protect himself from discrimination Simon performs stealth and chooses to do gender along with his colleagues. Simon values passing for the protections it ascribes, yet he equally perceives negativities in passing, such as having to perform gendered tasks. Much like women have been seen to adopt masculine characteristics to advance within the labour market (Thomas, Mills and Mills, 2004), so might stealth trans people adopt cis characteristics and conform with the binary in order to refrain from being “that one who’s different”. Yet equally, to pass as male or female is to also pass beyond (or through) the gender binary, as there is a disruption of the assumed correlation between biological sex and gender. This problematizes the notion of traditional roles for men and women. In this way, Simon can be seen to be doing gender, whilst drawing attention to the restrictions of the gender binary and its associated hierarchies.

Emily, a 23-year-old trans woman, also works in the private sector, and since beginning her transition two and a half years ago has worked in three retail positions. Emily explained that she is unable to pass, and so discloses her trans identity to prospective employers in interviews. Emily reasons that she has to mention “the elephant in the room” because she is aware that people will determine her as transgender; she claims her identity yet positions herself as Other. Emily’s unpassing appearance means that people may find it hard to place her within the gender binary, which can make people feel uncomfortable (Ridgeway, 2011),

something Emily experienced in her job as a sales assistant. When she first joined the organisation her manager came to speak to her about being trans:

we got put in a room and he said, 'well I need to speak to you about it because obviously it's going to cause issues at work'. And I was like, 'I don't know why it would cause issues', he said 'oh well people might say things they don't mean', [...] he was adamant that something was going to happen.

Emily's manager suggests that she will experience harassment from her colleagues, yet is reluctant to apportion any blame, since they "don't mean" it. He suggests that Emily's visibility as a trans employee will result in "issues at work", but through no fault of the management or other employees. In addition to this, Emily's manager requested that she sign a contract to agree that if anything did happen at work she would not "take it higher within the company", thereby acting to protect himself and the organisation rather than Emily, the person who he perceives will experience the discrimination. Rather than say, carrying out training for the members of staff that he assumed would act inappropriately, Emily's manager created a situation where she had to pre-emptively permit this behaviour. The manager's reaction to Emily implies an inability to incorporate a trans employee within a cisnormative organisation, viewing her gender as a threat to the workplace. Although Emily "conform[s] more in the female fashion" by presenting feminine gender cues, she inadvertently challenges the gender binary by not being determined as female. Emily suggests that in a few years she will look different and will "probably never tell anyone, I'd just be female and walk into wherever I need to be". Despite wanting to be able to pass and do gender, by not passing Emily is constantly undoing gender, as she repeatedly discloses her trans identity. Because Emily works in customer-facing roles, she must constantly negotiate and account for the discordance between her gender identity and perceived gender.

In contrast to Simon's experience of passing resulting in the enforcement of doing gender, Emily's experience of not passing highlights how workplaces can also serve to enforce an undoing of gender, by treating transgender as divergent from the norm. This establishes and maintains the (trans)gendered hierarchy. In workplaces cisgender is the norm, and people are expected to conform to an 'appropriate' representation of femininity or masculinity. Simon and Emily's experiences of passing exemplify how passing can be construed as doing gender, yet is a contextual and interactional process. Emily desires to do gender, but is forced to undo gender by others who read her as transgender, yet this undoing of gender is then policed, as seen with her manager. Simon is able to pass and protect himself from discrimination, yet Emily is not afforded this privilege as she has to account for her non-normative presentation. Thus, Simon's experiences highlight the safety that comes with the privilege of passing.⁹

Both performance and determination are required for someone to 'achieve' gender (West and Zimmerman, 1987), and Simon and Emily's experiences highlight how working in customer-facing roles problematizes transgender as they are constantly 'being determined'. Thus, I argue that the levels of interaction required within a job affect how accountable one is for un/doing gender. Furthermore, I suggest that workplaces can serve to enforce the binary through both instances of doing and undoing gender, by imposing gendered segregation and traditional gender roles, or by highlighting transgender as deviance from the norm; either assuming the absence of transgender or casting it as Other.

Undoing and Disclosing Transgender: Being Out at Work

"I'm not actually sure if I care if I pass now. I used to but right now I'm comfortable enough"

(Lauren).

"I've got a gift here, it's not a curse, it's a gift [...] I am me, and it's just, I'm trans" (Fiona).

Lauren is a 43-year-old trans woman who has worked in social care in the third sector for seventeen years, and a large part of her job is to meet with clients in their homes. Lauren had a very positive experience at work when she disclosed as trans three years ago, she felt accepted by her colleagues and supported by her employers through their Dignity at Work policy. Although passing was important for Lauren at the beginning of her transition, she remarked that she is “increasingly less bothered”, as she has become more comfortable with her identity. Nevertheless, Lauren explained how being visibly trans not only affects her, but affects her clients as well:

they know I’m a worker, I know I’m a worker, but their neighbour just sees a tranny that comes on a Tuesday. And that can, I mean that can have a really negative impact for you, where you live.

Lauren highlighted that this was only really a concern for two of her clients who were “both single men”. Here Lauren points to the implication that she may be construed as a sex worker, emphasising how society tends to perceive transgender as correlated to sexuality. In this way, Lauren’s transgender affects her ability to support her clients, something that would plausibly not occur were she a cis or passing trans worker. Lauren’s experience highlights the different constraints and factors of gender performance that are dependent upon the space that you are accessing; by entering a private, personal space Lauren’s gender attribution (Kessler and McKenna, 1978) is more crucial than when she is in her office with her colleagues. Certain environments can make trans people more visible, and therefore more vulnerable (something that is explored further in the subsequent section). Furthermore, Lauren highlights how trans inequality can be perpetuated through the notion that trans people are more likely to be sex workers than social care workers.

Lauren is currently half-way through her transition and rarely discloses her trans status to new clients. In contrast to Emily, Lauren chose to disclose her trans history only in situations where she felt it was necessary. Lauren discussed two situations where she felt she “*had to tell*” her clients:

One was a Pakistani woman, [...] in Pakistan, the transsexual thing can either play very well or not well at all, and I wasn't sure culturally whether she'd be happy to have me come to see her [...] then it ended up that I'm actually actively working with the woman. [...] There was one other guy, the referral painted him out to be a particularly violent and aggressive man, and I thought, might like to clarify that before I go! And he just wanted help, he didn't care what I was when I turned up, as long as there was some kind of help, that was his only concern.

Lauren brings in ethnicity and gender as factors which may affect her ability to work with clients, those who may come from cultures that deem transgender to be objectionable, or who may react violently if faced with someone who visibly challenges the gender binary. The nature of Lauren's occupation and her visibility as a trans worker means that she must negotiate her disclosure by assessing a client's likelihood for acceptance on a case-by-case basis. In contrast to Simon who does gender to protect himself, Lauren undoes gender to protect herself: disclosing her identity when she feels there is the possibility of a transphobic reaction. Interestingly, in both the examples that Lauren describes her clients prioritise her role as a social care employee over her gender identity. Lauren's acceptance by her clients could therefore be illustrative of a social acceptance of trans identities, as she is working with members of the general public rather than members of an organisational structure. A further point to highlight is that both Lauren and Emily's experiences underscore the contrast between coming out for LGB persons and for trans persons; sexual orientations are not often

a discernible trait, yet Lauren and Emily's visibility as trans means that they are unable to withhold such personal information should they wish to.

Fiona, a trans woman who is 52, works in the police force and has been openly trans for a year. Rather than negotiating visibility at work like Lauren, Fiona chooses to be permanently out with her colleagues and the general public, in order to increase transgender awareness and acceptance in her workforce. She stated:

my aim for being in the police now having had people come out to me, is to kind of show, not only show the public that [...] being trans is no barrier to being a police officer, [...] and I want to show colleagues that being trans is no barrier to being a police officer, that you can be yourself, and it's just the most amazing thing [...] because I look at it and think, I've got a gift here, it's not a curse, it's a gift.

Fiona adopts a "politicised trans identity" (Roen, 2002) thereby challenging the gender binary. In highlighting her trans status, Fiona undoes gender and gendered assumptions within the police, whilst also signalling that the police accept trans employees. Yet Fiona also noted the allure of passing (Prosser, 1997) when meeting colleagues from different stations which, she reported, felt like a form of gender achievement (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Therefore, Fiona both does and undoes gender at work, by enjoying passing in some contexts yet disrupting the binary in others. Through her 'outness' strategy (Connell, 2010), Fiona creates a space outside the gender binary where people can 'be transgender'. As Califia (1997) suggests, the growing visibility of the trans community creates an alternative to being male or being female—to be transgender—and to therefore question the gender binary that creates these labels. As a public sector employee, Fiona is protected by the Equality Act's equality duty, which she states empowered her to be openly trans at work. Perhaps this is why Fiona is able to view her trans identity as "a gift", something that she can share with others,

because she is protected from discrimination in this way. This points to, I would suggest, the differences between public and private sector experiences, and the possibilities that the Equality Act enables for some.

Being out can be negotiated on a case-by-case basis or can be a political decision, but context is just as important as it is with passing, since being more visible at work means being more open to discrimination or harassment. I contend that a sense of acceptance at work and positive work experiences have the possibility to affect how you perceive your own trans identity. Whereas Emily and Simon felt that their gender identity was or would be constrained or policed, both Lauren and Fiona felt there were possibilities within work to take ownership of their 'outness', enabling them to be more open about their gender and gender histories. Thus, I would argue that these experiences (and disclosures) have a direct relationship to the work environments and the associated protections of the Equality Act's public sector duty; organisations can thereby be sites of both gendered possibility and gendered constraint. Nonetheless, the difference between each of the experiences serves to further underscore the diversity of transgendered identities, and bolsters my contention from chapter II, that we cannot theorise that all trans people wish to pass nor that they all wish to be out; there are a multiplicity of gender identities and a multiplicity of motivations for disclosure.

Bathroom Privileges and Exclusions: Negotiating Space at Work

“I'd rather keep [my trans status] unsaid, it's just for the peace of mind when I'm using the toilet really” (Iain).

“[T]hey didn't have any gender-neutral toilets, they didn't have gender-neutral titles, [or] other gender options” (Robin).

Iain, a trans man, is 25 and works in a public sector call centre where he began his transition a year and a half ago. Iain disclosed his gender identity to his managers and work colleagues in order to facilitate his medical transition and to secure time off to attend medical appointments. However, his manager advised him to use the female toilets during his transition: “she said ‘to protect you, just in case like, so to keep everybody sort of happy just use the female toilets’”. By framing this decision as protecting Iain, his manager seems to presuppose some risk in his use of the male bathrooms, whilst also anticipating negative responses from others to his presence in this space. Yet rather than protecting Iain, she is arguably protecting the cisnormative structure of the workplace, redefining the private space as a public space, one that needs to be regulated. Iain’s manager thereby polices his transition and his gender identity by attempting to reaffirm his position on the female side of the binary, and in doing so determines his gender by biology-based criteria rather than his self-defined gender (Westbrook and Schilt, 2014). Iain’s workplace thus adheres to the hegemonic sex/gender system rather than allowing for a more fluid understanding of gender identities.

Nonetheless, Iain chose to use the male toilets, although he was uncomfortable using them with colleagues that knew of his trans status. Iain negotiated this by using the disabled toilet at the beginning of his transition, something that both Lauren and Fiona chose to do as well. The disabled toilet can be viewed as an “ungendered” space (Munt, 2001) whilst equally an “ungendering” space (Browne, 2004); providing a safe space in terms of being non-binary bound, yet preventing alignment with the binary for those who wish to live as male or female. Once Iain was able to pass he began to use the male toilets though he felt more comfortable using them stealth, and so used toilets which were on a different floor from his colleagues:

so I now use the toilet with loads of other men that I don't know, they don't know me, my history, so it's, I'm comfortable there. [...] The only thing that was uncomfortable was probably using the toilets for the first, like getting used to the toilets.

Because Iain works for a large organisation, he has more freedom in how he negotiates the gendered spaces, ultimately being able to find a place where his gender identity can be hidden. Thus, Iain values being able to pass over disclosure in some contexts, which allows him the freedom to use gendered spaces without question, preferring to do gender for "peace of mind". Yet Iain simultaneously values being out at work, which helps facilitate his medical transition. This highlights how gendered spaces can require differing modes of gender performance, and supports my argument that we cannot categorise trans people as either doing or undoing gender, as they often merge the two depending on the context; thereby doing transgender.

Robin is 24 and identifies as non-binary (and adopts the pronouns 'them' and 'they'). They worked at a private sector call centre but found that there was no space for their gender identity as there were no gender-neutral toilets. Robin explained how they negotiated this:

when it came to the toilets, they were like which toilets would you prefer to use [...] I was like to be honest I don't mind using the ones that has the male sign on the door because it doesn't have urinals [...] because it is all cubicles I don't mind using it because no-one can see me and I don't see people and I don't feel uncomfortable going in there.

Robin noted how the design of the male space contributed to their comfort or discomfort in using the space; because there was more privacy with the cubicles, they felt able to use the male toilets. As with Iain, for Robin visibility in the gendered space was important, a space which is presumed to be private yet in the context of work becomes a public, regulated space

(Plaskow, 2008). The lack of toilets matching their gender meant Robin was forced to choose a side of the binary, to identify as either male or female in order to access a toilet. Doan (2010: 637) suggests that the heteronormative “tyranny of gender” means that trans persons are often forced to cling to the rigid binary model, as the “patriarchal social structure does not tolerate intermediate genders”; there is no space for those in-between. Robin’s experience exemplifies how workplaces can enforce this tyranny through the structure of space. By having only male or female toilets, Robin’s employers only account for the presence of “intelligible genders” (Butler 1990: 23). Even if someone does not want to do gender, or wants to do gender other than the two recognised by society, others will do gender for them (Lucal, 1999), by enforcing binary gendered spaces. Robin’s employers materially construct cisgender as the norm, undergirded by an assumption that non-binary genders do not exist, or at least, do not exist in the workplace. Again, there is an assumed absence of transgender bodies (Beauchamp and D’Harlingue, 2012), which serves to marginalise trans and non-binary identities. This indicates that there is a trans hierarchy of those who can cross over, and those who enact a fluidity of gender. Robin’s work space not only enforces the binary with its lack of appropriate gender-neutral space, but actively discourages the expression of a non-conforming gender identity.

Cis or passing trans employees are privileged over unpassing or non-binary employees when it comes to gender-segregated spaces, as their gender is not questioned or policed. Iain does gender depending on the context, and his experiences highlight how passing assists with the negotiation of binary gendered spaces, spaces which are often policed. Robin undoes gender by being out as non-binary yet is forced to do gender, by having to choose which sexed space to use at work. Much like the fact that workplace structures have historically favoured male workers and masculinity (Acker, 1990; Thomas, Mills and Mills, 2004; Pullen and Knights, 2007), these same structures tend to favour cis workers and normative genders, serving to

maintain trans inequality at work. Those who do not conform to the binary, either because they are in transition or are gender-ambiguous, are excluded from certain areas unless they choose to categorise themselves within the two-gender system.

Discussion

From the analysis of the six participants' experiences at work I propose the following findings. With regards to passing, I found that it can be simultaneously a privilege and a constraint; it can enable acceptance at work and protection from discrimination, yet it can also entail being compelled to do normative gender which can ultimately reinforce cisnormativity. This was highlighted by Simon's experiences of performing stealth at work, yet having to participate in traditionally 'masculine' labour. Furthermore, I have underlined how passing relies on context and is interactional; it requires both performance and being successfully determined by others, as highlighted by Simon and Emily's contrasting experiences of being cast as either cis or trans. In addition, I have suggested that gender achievement is often affected by job type and the kinds of interactions that it entails. In sum, passing is contextual, interactional, and can be simultaneously an opportunity and a limitation, depending on whether you wish to challenge gendered assumptions or wish to be incorporated into the gender binary.

Similarly, I found that being out can be experienced as both oppression and emancipation. Emily, who was unable to pass, found that being out was involuntary, yet for Fiona and Lauren, visibility was a choice at work. Moreover, the culture of the workplace can influence how openly trans one can be; both Fiona and Lauren felt that their gender identities were accepted at work and therefore had more control over their expressions of gender. I found that the participants negotiated being out depending on the levels of acceptance they

experienced, which signals that the more workplace protections there are, the more open and thus normalised trans employees can become. Being accepted at work by one's clients or colleagues can affirm one's gender identity and in turn make passing less of a priority; creating a space where they can 'be transgender'.

From analysing the participants' access to gendered spaces, I found that public space can often be defined through gender binaries, and workplaces can serve to enforce the binary by omitting a space for those deemed to be 'gender outlaws' (Bornstein, 1994). Gender is a construction, but is constructed differently in different spaces. In Robin's case binary categorisation was enforced as there was a lack of gender appropriate toilets for them to use, whereas Iain identified within the binary and so was able to access gendered spaces stealth. These experiences emphasise the hierarchy between passing and unpassing (or out) transgenders, as well as the hierarchy of cisgender over transgender.

Ultimately, I found that all participants took part in both the doing and undoing of gender. While some participants noted a desire to pass, for gender achievement or safety in certain situations, others noted the desire to be openly trans, to increase the visibility of transgender and disrupt normative conceptions of gender. Therefore, we cannot categorise trans people as *either* doing or undoing gender, as they often shift between the two depending on the context; i.e. doing transgender. Furthermore, passing, being out and access to toilets has been shown to be closely linked to the context of the workplace, and what structures, hierarchies, and policies are in place. In the same way that participants both do and undo gender, workplaces can also encourage the doing or undoing of gender, as they establish differing constraints and possibilities. All of the public or third sector participants, Lauren, Fiona and Iain, were out to some extent at work, and all found that their gender was accepted: passing was less important for Lauren and Fiona, and important for Iain mainly for comfort in accessing gendered spaces. The private sector participants who had less formal protections, Simon, Emily and

Robin, all faced some form of discrimination at work: Simon and Emily both wished to pass to avoid discrimination and harassment of either sexism or 'genderism' (Browne, 2004), and Robin's non-binary identity was excluded from certain spaces. This could arguably be due to the public sector equality duty that the Equality Act proscribes. Although this research cannot generalise these findings to account for the experiences of all public or private sector employees, it hints to a possible connection between sector of employment and how trans individuals are treated. This would suggest that motivations to pass or be out at work bears a relation to the sector of employment and its associated legal protections. Certainly, the equality duty must result in trans employees feeling at least secure in their employment.

The findings support my argument that there is a diversity of trans experiences and identities, thereby challenging the notion that transgender is a homogenous category. Analysis of the experiences has suggested that to 'be' transgender is both to pass and not pass, to be both out and stealth, to be both visible and obscured; yet crucially, it is also to be all the spaces in-between. This points to the fluid, intersecting nature of identities; there can be no solid lines when it comes to gender, as genders exist both within and out-with the binary definitions. To understand transgender in this way is to offer an inclusive, rather than exclusive, conception of the identity category, which pulls away from the dualistic and dichotomous Western understandings of gender. However, while I posit the heterogeneity of trans subjectivities, I acknowledge that this can be problematized by the process of grouping individuals within the confines of categories or placing them into either/or divisions. Nonetheless, I suggest that for organisations to be able to incorporate transgender, we first need to be able to identify it, alongside the power dynamics at play both between the categories of transgender and cisgender, and within the categories themselves. Placing people into concrete categories enables them to be dominated and oppressed (Gamson, 1995), yet, I contend that it just as

equally enables them to be visible and empowered (Erel et al., 2010; Walby, Armstrong and Strid, 2012), and it is the latter that this dissertation has endeavoured to do.

V.

CONCLUSIONS

Transgender is marginalised in Western society in a way that perpetuates inequality. This dissertation has illuminated how transgender inequality is created and perpetuated in the

workplace through a consideration of trans experiences of the UK labour market. These experiences were analysed under the rubric of doing transgender theory, which examined how the doing or undoing of gender can serve to support or subvert the gender binary. By employing this theory I was able to examine how trans employees negotiated binaries at work, in order to critique the workplace constraints of a normative two-gender system and transgendered hierarchies.

I propose that this dissertation offers three central contributions. First, I have expanded on the theory of doing and undoing gender by offering an example of how such theory can be augmented to be more inclusive, thereby illustrating a way in which to theorise the diversity of transgender. In reviewing the literature on transgender in chapter II I highlighted that until recently, doing gender theory had been largely confined to doing male or doing female (West and Zimmerman, 1987), thus obstructing the understanding of those genders outside or in-between the binary definitions. I explored how some feminist research on transgender has tended to charge trans people with upholding the binary and its associated stereotypes, whilst some queer and transgender theorists paint them as continually disrupting the binary by performing a gender discordant with their associated sex category. Thus, trans people are seen to be either always doing gender or always undoing gender. In order to bridge the gap between feminist, queer, and transgender theories, and to be able to acknowledge the continuum of gender I proposed the adoption of a theory of doing transgender (Connell, 2010), which can acknowledge and incorporate the diversity of genders and gender identities, whilst maintaining the interactional nature of (trans)gender. In addition to this, I demonstrated a way in which doing transgender theory can be utilised to conceptualise transgender within the structure of the workplace. Therefore, the first contribution of this dissertation is to contribute to a sociological understanding of transgender, and to support recent academic work regarding trans people at work (Schilt, 2006, 2010; Schilt and Connell,

2007; Whittle, Turner and Al-Alami, 2007; Schilt and Wiswall, 2008/2014; Budge, Tebbe and Howard, 2010; Connell, 2010; Hines, 2010; Law et al., 2011; Ozturk and Tatli, 2016) by developing a theory of doing transgender.

The second contribution of this study has been to address the omission of trans experiences within the literature of gender and transgender at work through an analysis of the experiences of the six trans interviewees. While several previous studies have used transgender to illuminate cisgender inequalities or performances, I have focused primarily on how my participants do transgender and the implications of this for trans equality. In chapter IV I set out to investigate the extent to which trans people un/do gender at work, and how this is negotiated in certain spaces. I proposed that passing be construed as doing gender and being out construed as undoing gender, to demonstrate how trans employees navigate this in their workplaces, and found that my participants both do and undo gender, while often performing a merging of both. This analysis served to highlight that transgender is not a homogenous category, rather, trans people both wish to subvert and support the binary depending on the context; trans people do not *either* do or undo gender. Furthermore, in contrast to previous studies I contend that trans people do not do gender more than anyone else (Vidal-Ortiz, 2008) or undo gender more than anyone else, nor do they highlight what cis genders do. Rather, they do transgender, which is merely to perform one's gender identity and for that identity to be determined by others in different contexts. How successful the doing or undoing of gender is, is dependent upon the place or space and to what extent the binary is policed. Thus, the second contribution of this study is to centralise trans voices within the debates around transgender inequalities at work, and to illustrate how passing, being out, and accessing gendered spaces are constrained or enabled by different environments.

The third and final contribution is to add to debates about beneficial research design when studying minority populations. In chapter III I argued that there are a number of advantages to using a program like Skype over in-person interviews, such as increased safety for both researcher and researched, applicability for projects with time and cost constraints, and increased access to populations who may be geographically dispersed. I found from the interviews that the interactions were not compromised by online interactions, and in fact may have provided a more valid data as the participants were in the comfort of their own homes. I also argued that offering a choice of either visual or audio interviews may be the most fruitful way to recruit trans participants and gather a depth of data.

One limitation of this study is the dearth of non-white participants, something that is prevalent in much of the research on transgender (Gagné, Tewksbury and McGaughey, 1997; Schilt and Connell, 2007; Whittle, Turner and Al-Alami, 2007; Budge, Tebbe and Howard, 2010; Connell, 2010; Hines, 2010, 2011; Law et al., 2011). Future research should explore why access to minority populations is so limited, and how this can be remedied. In line with this, more intersectional research would be beneficial to fully comprehend the matrix of multiple oppressions faced by trans people, bringing in gender, race, disability, age, sexuality, class, and religion, to explore the connections between different categorisations and how they interact in the labour market.¹⁰ A further limitation could be the sample size, as there are six participants there is limited generalisability, however future research could draw on this research design to further test the results on a larger scale. In addition, although investigating exclusion from the labour market, this study does not explore any trans experiences of those who are predominantly unemployed, and so further research should investigate the extent of unemployment or underemployment within the trans population. I also propose that for future research which aims to analyse the workplace and other gendered institutions, that the

experiences of trans people are not obscured, but embedded within analyses of gender (rather than sexuality).

By investigating the behaviours and interactions of trans people at work, this research has illustrated important connections between disclosing gender identity and workplace policies and practices, and between the gender binary and access to gendered spaces. Yet beyond this I have aimed to carry out research which is non-exploitative and emancipatory, and so I will close with some of the implications of this research for policy and practice. Governmental policies and legal protections was something that was mentioned by all participants, who were often acutely aware of their rights pertaining to gender identity in the workplace. The discrepancies between the experiences of the public sector and private sector employees (highlighted in chapter IV) brings to light the significance of the Equality Act's (2010) public sector equality duty and the effects this can have on gender identity disclosure. Drawing from the positive experiences of Fiona and Lauren for example, who both benefitted from a Dignity at Work policy and were protected by the public sector duty, I would contend that private sector employees ought to be granted the same protections and as such, that equality be actively advanced within all workplaces. In addition to the Equality Act granting protections to all employment sectors, I agree that it must also be expanded, to be inclusive of non-binary genders and those who do not wish to undergo a medical transition (see Women and Equalities Committee, 2015). Furthermore, the participants' use of gendered space served to highlight how space needs to be created for transgender within the workplace, in order to deconstruct the dominant relationship of cisgender over transgender. Drawing primarily from the experiences of Robin, I therefore also suggest that gender-neutral spaces such as toilets be legally provided in all workplaces, in addition to non-binary titles being included in employment forms. More generally, there is a necessity to increase organisational awareness of trans people and the unique challenges they face within the labour market. This could be

addressed with workplace training on gender diversity and gender non-conformity. It is the absence of understanding that leads to marginalisation, while increased visibility can lead to normalisation and acceptance. This dissertation has attempted to add to the debates around transgender, to increase knowledge and understanding, and to emphasise the processes that legitimate transphobia and trans inequality within the labour market. As Simon recounts: “people need to be more educated and understanding, that you know, these people do exist in the world”.

Notes

¹ For example, the public transition of Caitlyn Jenner (see Bissinger, 2015), the controversies over Olympic medallist Caster Semenya (Eastmond, 2016) and campaigner Jack Monroe (Cadwalladr,

2016), and the increase in trans actors on screen such as Rebecca Root and Laverne Cox (see McNamara, 2015).

² The Equality Act (2010) has however been argued to be out of date, as it adopts terminology such as ‘gender reassignment’ and ‘transsexual’, which denotes that only those who transition from one gender to the other will be protected (Women and Equalities Committee, 2015), and so although it offers protections it requires expansion to be comprehensive.

³ For instance, in a UK study Whittle, Turner and Al-Alami (2007: 15) found that 42 percent of transgender workers were not living in their preferred gender due to fears of workplace repercussions, and about a quarter of transgender workers were pressured to change jobs due to experiences of discrimination and victimisation.

⁴ Many theorists argue that transgender is linked to sex, gender *and* sexuality (Butler, 1990; Dozier, 2005/2014; Hines, 2011; Westbrook and Schilt, 2014). However, in the first half of the twentieth century transsexualism was associated with sexual deviance and homosexuality, a notion which still lingers today. I aim instead to disrupt the association of transgender with sexuality and so will not focus on sexuality in this paper.

⁵ Whilst I will adopt the use of binary thinking for the purposes of this dissertation I acknowledge its limits, namely its tendency to oversimplify what are complex issues (Cloke and Johnston, 2005) and to homogenise groups. However, since I focus on encounters of trans people in cis-dominant spaces, and explore the gendered norms that are imposed in the workplace, I temporarily employ binary definitions in order to analyse these structures; using identity categories whilst striving to problematize them (Spivak, 1989).

⁶ Black feminist scholars (hooks, 1984; Hill Collins, 1986) also argue against either/or distinctions, contending that categorisation such as black/white and man/woman leads to oppressive hierarchies, underscoring an immutable difference between the groups.

⁷ This wording was specifically chosen so as to be inclusive of the diversity of trans people, those who identify as trans, and those who have a trans history but may not necessarily identify as trans.

⁸ Data on the UK trans population is inconsistent, with figures ranging from 65,000 to 300,000 (see Office for National Statistics, 2009: 10-11). The Women and Equality Commission (2015: 6) propose there are around 650,000 people who are “gender incongruent to some degree” in the UK.

⁹ Several theorists have argued that there is a passing hierarchy which relates to gender. Whittle, Turner and Al-Alami (2007), Schilt and Wiswall (2008/2014), Budge, Tebbe and Howard (2010) and Schilt (2010) observe that passing for women can be more difficult, due to the retention of certain traits interpreted as masculine, such as a deep voice, being tall or having an Adam’s apple. Schilt and Wiswall (2008/2014) argue that masculine appearance cues are harder to get rid of with hormones, which can mean trans women often face more transphobia or social stigmatisation. Certainly from my sample, the two trans men recounted finding it relatively easy to pass when compared with the trans women’s experiences. Thus the experience of passing can also involve a gendered hierarchy.

¹⁰ For example, see Vidal Ortiz (2009) for a gendered investigation of trans women of colour.

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Appendix

Ethics Application Approval

[Please see overleaf]