

**At the Frontier: Gender diverse professionals in corporate workplaces and LGBT+ support mechanisms in Sydney, Australia**

Elizabeth Bennett, BSocSC (Political Economy), Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts

A thesis presented to Macquarie University in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree Master of Research (MRes).

Submitted 26<sup>th</sup> November 2018

# Table of Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Statement of Originality.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
A note on terminology.....	4
Research questions and research aims.....	6
<b>Chapter 2: Literature review.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Workplace inclusion and diversity.....	9
The “pecking order”: LGBT+ diversity and inclusion .....	11
Existing research about gender diverse employees .....	13
<i>Recruitment process .....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Transitioning, self-affirmation and disclosure in the workplace.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Gender diverse employees in gender binary, cisnormative workplaces.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Navigating gender binary conventions at work.....</i>	<i>18</i>
LGBT+ workplace support mechanisms .....	20
<b>Chapter 3: Research methods.....</b>	<b>21</b>
Advertising, recruitment and data management.....	23
Semi-structured interviews with gender diverse employees .....	24
Semi-structured interviews with representatives of LGBT+ workplace support mechanisms .....	27
Researcher positionality .....	28
Methods of analysis.....	30
Project scope.....	31
<b>Chapter 4: Analysis and findings, interviews with gender diverse skilled professionals .....</b>	<b>32</b>
Interviewee profiles.....	33
From applying for a job to commencing employment.....	36
Processes of disclosure .....	38

Everyday experiences of gender binary workplaces.....	42
<i>Pronouns and names</i> .....	42
<i>Gender binary facilities</i> .....	43
<i>Dress codes</i> .....	45
<i>Informal and social interactions with colleagues</i> .....	47
The simultaneous development of gender and professional identities.....	51
Gender diverse employees and their access to LGBT+ support mechanisms .....	55
<b>Chapter 5: Analysis and findings, interviews with representatives of LGBT+</b>	
<b>workplace support mechanisms .....</b>	<b>59</b>
LGBT+ workplace activism.....	59
Interviews with representatives of LGBT+ workplaces support mechanisms.....	61
Representative profiles .....	61
The ‘business case’ vs. the ‘social justice case’ for gender diverse inclusion.....	62
A corporatised model of LGBT+ workplace activism.....	67
Gender diverse representation in the workplace and workplace activism.....	69
Homonormativity, cisnormativity and mainstream acceptance.....	74
<b>Chapter 6: Conclusion .....</b>	<b>78</b>
Recommendations for future research .....	83
<b>Appendix A: Employee recruitment flyer.....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Appendix B: Participant information and consent form .....</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>Appendix C: Project information and consent form .....</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Appendix D: Macquarie University Ethics Committee approval letter .....</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>Appendix E: Employees – interview topics .....</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>Appendix F: Support Mechanisms – interview topics .....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>95</b>

## **Abstract**

With focus on highly skilled professionals, this thesis seeks to contribute to the growing literature on the experiences of gender diverse employees, who collectively face some of the most severe forms of workplace discrimination. Using semi-structured interviews, this research examines the lived experiences of individual employees, as well as the role lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT+) workplace support mechanisms play in their advocacy and representation. Additionally, this thesis extends on previous research in the area by exploring how workplace experiences may overlap or diverge between the transgender and gender non-binary employees interviewed.

My analysis reveals the centrality of the workplace to the on-going process of identity formation, a site where employees' gender and professional identities were connected and moulded simultaneously. The employees interviewed navigated the challenges of having a stigmatised gender identity creatively and resiliently, but in isolation from LGBT+ support mechanisms. Interviews with representatives from an LGBT+ intra-firm employee network and a non-profit LGBT+ workplace inclusion program showed they were eager to advocate for gender diverse employees. However, the homonormative and cisnormative nature underpinning past LGBT+ workplace activism and the leadership structures meant they lacked the know-how. Moreover, these mechanisms more readily reached professionals at large and well-resourced corporations, indicating unequal distribution of support. I argue that gender diverse employees are at the frontier of not only workplace diversity and inclusion reform, but also of the evolving LGBT+ rights movement as it grapples with its corporatisation, and intersectional inequalities within.

## Statement of Originality

*This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself. I have complied with the terms of the Human Research Ethics Committee approval reference number 5201800311*

(Signed)



2018 Elizabeth Bennett

Date: 26<sup>th</sup> November

## **Acknowledgements**

Completion of this thesis was one of the most difficult experiences I've ever had. There were tears, way too much Red Bull, and late nights that went through to early mornings. Despite this, it was also one of the most amazing times of my life. I learnt about my own identity as much as I learnt about the identities of those interviewed. I would like to thank T, Ash and Leslie for their kindness and openness in sharing their inspiring stories with me, which helped me come to terms with who I am as a proud gender diverse person. I have never felt so loved and supported by those close to me. Nelda, Arne, Davin and Reif you have been there through thick and thin, your love and guidance taught me to be resilient and never give up. Andrew, Sam, Kathryn and Cazza, you were always there to distract me and encourage me. To my 'Mres Fam', Aprill, Megan, Kathryn and Kate, you are my chosen family. Thank you for all the love, fun and support when the thesis got the best of me. Kumiko Kawashima, you have been a guiding light that has kept me grounded throughout this project. From our casual chats about intersectional feminism in a Newtown café to your late nights spent going through my work, I am thankful to have had you as my supervisor. Meagan Mclean, you are more than a housemate or friend, you are also my family. Finally, to my beautiful partner Colleen, to whom this thesis is dedicated. I am so grateful to have had you by my side during this rocky journey. You inspired me to keep going, you picked me up when I was down and made me laugh when I wanted to cry. I love you and couldn't have finished this thesis without you.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

“12 simple ways to make your workplace more inclusive of transgender people”

*MarketWatch (2018)*

“Navigating Nonbinary Gender Employee Needs: It’s More Than Bathrooms”

*Forbes (2018)*

These news headlines indicate the emergence of a new frontier to workplace gender equality. Large organisations are increasingly paying attention to the needs of ‘gender diverse’<sup>1</sup> employees, those whose gender identity differs from their sex-assigned-at-birth. Variouslly termed transgender, transmen/transwomen, gender non-binary, gender fluid, gender non-conforming, androgynous to name a few, gender diverse identities are those that do not meet the expectations of ‘cisnormativity’ (Fiana and Han 2018:2; Köllen 2016: 389). Cisnormativity is a concept used to describe the normative biological and essentialist assumption that a person’s gender identity always aligns with that of their ‘sex-assigned-at-birth’, referred to in this thesis as ‘cisgender’<sup>2</sup> (Fiana and Han 2018: 2; Köllen 2016: 389). Gender diverse employees, a population who breach

---

<sup>1</sup> There are a number of different labels used to define identities that are different from sex-assigned-at-birth. Up until recently, the term ‘transgender’ was predominantly used to describe individuals who medically or surgically transitioned from one gender to the other, such as a person who was assigned-female-at-birth transitioning to a transgender man (transman), or a person who was assigned-male-at-birth transitioning to a transgender woman (transwoman) (Roen 2002) More recently however, the ‘transgender’ label has been used as an umbrella term to describe the variety of possible genders individuals may identify with (Köllen 2016; Brewster et al 2014; Dentice and Dietert 2015: 70). I have decided to use the label ‘*gender diverse*’ to acknowledge the in-group diversity within this community, including identities that may function within the gender binary, such as transmen and transwomen, as well as those who function outside or along binary, such gender non-binary (Richards et al. 2016; Dietert and Dentice 2009: 122)

<sup>2</sup> Cisgender is an umbrella term to describe both cisgender men/cismen (those who identify as their male sex-assigned-at-birth identity) and cisgender women/ciswomen (those who identify with their female-sex-assigned-at-birth) (Fiana and Han 2018:2; Dentice and Deitert 2015: 69)

cisnormative assumptions have, up until recently, remained on the periphery of workplace equality discussion. However, there is mounting statistical evidence that this group of employees face some of the most extreme forms of inequality and discrimination in the workplace. In the ground-breaking quantitative study surveying 6,450 gender diverse individuals in the United States Grant et al. (2011: 3-4) found that 90% of respondents reported workplace harassment, 47% experienced a variety of “adverse” job outcomes including being fired or denied promotional opportunities, and 71% reported hiding their identity at some points to avoid workplace discrimination. Job loss due to gender bias was also statistically connected to high rates of homelessness, extreme poverty and negative health. Shockingly, the respondents in this study were 25 times more likely to attempt suicide than that of the general population, over 60% had been exposed to physical or sexual assault, while many reported living in extreme poverty—leading the authors to conclude that this population faces “injustice at every turn” (Grant et al. 2011:2). Closer to home, Leonard et al. (2015), the Australian Human Rights Commission (2014) and Hyde et al. (2014) similarly all found that gender diverse Australians reported high rates of unemployment, physical and verbal abuse and barriers to accessing basic health services. While the Australian Workplace Equality Index run by Pride in Diversity (2018), and the largest representative survey of LGBT+ employees workplace experiences in Australia, found gender diverse employees face disproportionate levels of discrimination and negative employment outcomes in the workplace, even when compared to their lesbian and gay counterparts.

Increasingly, studies have more keenly focused on employment and the workplace issues among gender diverse individuals, particularly as emerging evidence has



demonstrated the link between negative employment outcomes and broader disadvantage facing gender diverse employees in their lives beyond the workplace (Connell 2010; Davidson 2016). Moreover, in addition to the small but growing number of studies that have focused upon transgender male and transgender female employees in the workplace, very few have included an analysis of the ways in which the workplace issues and needs may overlap or diverge from those experienced by their gender non-binary counterparts.

This research project addresses the urgent need to explore current corporate workplace diversity and equality trends aimed at supporting gender diverse employees. This will be done by focusing on the experiences of gender diverse skilled professionals in Sydney, Australia. Additionally, this project extends on current research by also paying close attention to gender non-binary employees, individuals whose identities do not fit strictly within the gender binary and may even fluctuate between and outside of it. Existing studies have advanced our understanding of the workplace discrimination facing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (here on in referred to as 'LGBT+')<sup>3</sup> employees, especially lesbian women and gay men (Willis 2011; Ragins 2004), and more recently, transgender men and women (Schilt and Connell 2007; Schilt 2006). However, research in this area has also drawn criticism for its gender binary approach (Ozturk and Tatli 2016; Connell 2010). With a focus on highly skilled professionals around Sydney, this thesis seeks to contribute to the growing literature on the

---

<sup>3</sup> The umbrella term and acronym 'LGBT+' is used in this thesis to describe both sexual and gender identities including but not limited to diverse sexual identities such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, asexual, queer and pansexual identities (Brewster et al. 2014), and gender diverse identities including but not limited to transgender, transmen, transwomen, transsexual, genderqueer, gender non-binary and androgynous (Richards et al. 2016). The use of 'LGBT+' is contested within the community, as some suggest it may render invisible the array of other unique identities, such as those listed above. However, this thesis uses this acronym to reflect collective solidarity, but not the homogenisation, of both the sexual and gender diverse minority community (Mananzala and Spade 2008: 53).

experiences of gender diverse employees who face some of the most severe forms of workplace discrimination. Such a focus is especially important, as Köllen (2016: 14) has argued the shunting of the:

“T”...into a miscellaneous category that nebulously groups it together with diverse sexual orientations...indicates the way that diversity initiatives monopolize the dimension of gender (sex) for cisgender men and women...and those initiatives can actually work to exclude, rather than include, some dimensions

### **A note on terminology**

Before moving on, a more detailed explanation of the terminology used within this thesis is provided. ‘Gender diverse’ is used as an umbrella term to describe any identity that does not align with individuals sex-assigned-at-birth (Richards et al. 2016). The gender diverse population is itself extremely diverse, making it difficult as well as not desirable to define this population distinctly (Richards et al. 2016; Dietert and Dentice 2009:122; Dentice and Dietert 2015: 70; Ozturk and Tatli 2016: 785). In fact, during a search of the literature, over twenty different types of gender identification were present including, but not limited to, ‘genderqueer’, ‘transgender’, ‘agender’, ‘androgynous’ and ‘gender non-binary’ (see: Brewster et al 2014: 162; Davidson 2016: 3; Dentice and Dietert 2015: 70). While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to comprehensively explain the subjective meanings attached to these diverse identities, I will briefly discuss how this thesis conceptualises the use of the term ‘gender non-binary’ as these unique identities are included as an area of interest in this research.

While no distinct and concrete definition exists, ‘gender non-binary’ is used in this project as an umbrella term to describe identities that are both different to that assigned-

at-birth, as well as those that may fluctuate between and outside of the gender binary (Brewster et al 2014: 160; Davidson 2016: 3). Within this umbrella, again are a wide variety of unique identities, yet the commonality between them is the universal rupturing of cisnormative expectations attached to the gender binary (Dentice and Dietert 2015: 71; Richards et al. 2016: 96). For simplification purposes, a non-binary identity may be conceptualised as any that falls outside or along the gender binary/sexual classification of male/female, feminine/masculine or even heterosexual/homosexual (Macdonnell and Grigorovich 2012; Köllen 2016; Nicolazzo 2016).

Finally, the term ‘transition/transitioning’ has been commonly used to refer to the medical or physical transformation of individuals from one gender to the other through processes such as undergoing hormone treatments, chest reconstruction/augmentation and gender affirmation surgery (Brewster et al. 2014: 160). More recently, transitioning has been used interchangeably with the term ‘self-affirmation’, and both these terms have expanded on medical and physical understandings of this process. For instance, Brewster et al. (2014: 160) define transitioning/self-affirmation as including physical and medical changes but also as reflecting the “larger variety of steps individuals take to express their gender identity” including “appearance-based changes (e.g., wearing different clothing, weight-training to build muscle), as well as social changes (e.g., changing one’s legal documentation, adopting different gender pronouns to refer to oneself)”. At various times throughout this thesis, transitioning/self-affirmation may be used interchangeably, or separately depending on the context and how participants described these processes in their own words.

## **Research questions and research aims**

Using semi-structured interviews with individual gender diverse employees as well as representatives from an LGBT+ intra-firm employee network and a non-profit run LGBT+ workplace inclusion program, this project seeks to answer the following overarching research questions and sub-questions:

1. How does being gender diverse influence skilled workers' experience of corporate workplaces around Sydney?
  - a. In what ways may the workplace experiences of transgender employees overlap or diverge with that of gender non-binary employees?
  - b. How does gender identity intersect with factors such as educational background and occupational status and in what ways do these shape both experiences of oppression as well as privilege among these workers?
2. What are the gains and challenges underpinning LGBT+ activism regarding gender diverse (including gender non-binary) workers and corporate workplace diversity and inclusion?

This thesis aims to understand the lived experience of gender diverse skilled professionals in the corporate sector. Specifically, I set out to examine the relationship between identity as a gender diverse person and how this shaped their workplace experience as skilled professionals. I also aimed to explore how forms of LGBT+

workplace activism, which I refer to in this thesis as ‘support mechanisms’<sup>4</sup>, tackle the emerging issues regarding gender diverse workers in a corporate environment, and what opportunities exist to better support these members of the LGBT+ community in the workplace.

With these findings, I hope to contribute to the small but growing body of research specifically exploring the way in which workplaces are experienced by gender diverse employees. By also incorporating a focus on gender non-binary employees, this thesis aims to uncover some initial insights on an employee group that has received little attention to date, even in studies specifically focused on transgender workplace inclusion. In doing so, I hope these findings can be used to provide some much-needed awareness of the ways workplace inclusion policies and practices may be able to better support the unique issues and needs of gender non-binary employees, as both distinct and overlapping from those of transgender workers. Moreover, by focusing on gender diverse skilled professionals, I hope to underscore the difficulties of navigating the process of becoming a highly skilled professional while having a stigmatised gender identity, but also recognising these employees as occupying a relatively privileged position, compared those in the gender diverse community who occupy a further marginalised position in and outside of the workplace. I hope these findings can be used to better understand the barriers *to* employment and *within* employment, that are both shaped by oppression and privilege, facing the gender diverse community. Additionally, via an exploration of existing forms of LGBT+ workplace activism, these

---

<sup>4</sup> ‘Support mechanisms’ refers to various forms of organised groups/collectives/programs aimed at addressing the issues and needs pertinent to supporting LGBT+ employees and their employers in the workplace. Further details exploring the use of this term are outlined in Chapter 2: Literature Review.

findings can be used to provide some preliminary guidance on how to support not only those leading the way in corporate LGBT+ workplace inclusion but also how they can better plan for gender diverse workplace inclusion.

In answering these questions, this thesis first presents a review of the literature. Chapter 3: Research methods, will provide an outline of the research methods used. Chapter 4: Analysis and findings, interviews with gender diverse skilled professionals, is used to present the analysis and findings from interviews with gender diverse employees, while Chapter 5: Analysis and findings, interviews with representatives of LGBT+ workplace support mechanisms, covers the analysis and findings from interviews with representatives from LGBT+ workplace support mechanisms. Finally, Chapter 6: Conclusion, covers a summary of the project as well as offering recommendations. The following section, Chapter 2: Literature Review, evaluates the body of literature around the evolution of LGBT+ organisational workplace inclusion, existing studies exploring the workplace issues and needs of gender diverse employees and types of workplace supports that exist for their workplace inclusion.

## **Chapter 2: Literature review**

In this chapter, I review literature from organisational management studies that have focused on the development of ‘diversity and inclusion’ as a policy and practice area, and how this has evolved to include attention on the LGBT+ employee population. I then review those that specifically focus on exploring gender diverse employee issues and needs in the workplace, and why this group remains on the periphery of both

LGBT+ focused organisational research and organisational inclusion. Literature pertaining to the difficulties facing gender diverse employees across a range of workplace contexts is covered, before briefly reviewing various forms of LGBT+ support that may exist within the corporate sector, and what approaches can be used to further the workplace inclusion of gender diverse employees.

### **Workplace inclusion and diversity**

The last several decades have seen ‘diversity’ and ‘inclusion’ emerge as one of the most important policy and practice areas in organisations. This emergence has been credited to both the “socio-political” (Pringle and Strachan 2015: 2-4) struggles following the Civil Rights and Feminist movements (Bergen et al. 2002: 239; Acker 2006), and the subsequent global economic and demographic transformations kick-started from the 1980s onwards (Bassett-Jones 2005; Bergen et al. 2002).

Diversity and inclusion has shifted and transformed considerably from its initial inception into organisations, particularly since the 1980’s (Ozturk and Tatli 2016: 784). This area initially concentrated on workplace anti-discrimination protections for “visible minorities” (Bendl et al. 2008: 383), particularly women and people of colour (Ozturk and Tatli 2016: 784). Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)<sup>5</sup> and Affirmative Action (AA) legislation are examples of earlier measures to “remedy for past injustices and malpractices for certain groups/categories of the population” (Gotsis and Kortezi

---

<sup>5</sup> Affirmative Action, kick-started in the 1960’s, represented initiatives to actively “redress past discrimination and injustices perpetuated by society” (Gilbert et al. 1999: 64), most notably discrimination against women and people of colour in the workplace, through strategies to proactively increase the representation of minority individuals in the workplace (Gilbert et al. 1999). EEO includes various forms of protective anti-discrimination legislation that prohibit discrimination in the workplace on the basis of social identity such as race, religion and gender, and also serves to ensure equal access to employment opportunities for all (Strachan et al. 2007: 526).

2015: 14). The focus then expanded to include other visible and invisible demographic characteristics such as age, physical ability, religious beliefs and cultural background (Ozturk and Tatli 2016: 784). More recently, the language of workplace ‘cultures of inclusion’ has developed, where organisations are progressively adopting practices to support individual employees, regardless of their background, through measures such as flexible working hours, options to work from home, education and training opportunities, team collaboration building, offering health and well-being services, social groups and networking events and so on (Berrey 2014: 365). Some scholars have argued that the predominant focus on creating workplace ‘cultures of inclusion’ serves to de-politicise identity politics within organisations, and the effect of this de-politicisation is evidenced by the continuing workplace inequality still experienced by minority workers (Hill 2009: 38; Berrey 2014).

Despite the fight for workplace equality over the last few decades, evidence of persistent inequalities continues to be found. For instance, women continue to experience high rates of workplace discrimination and disadvantage (Feather and Boeckmann 2007, Berrey 2014), and a gender pay gap exists in every Australian industry (Workplace Gender Equality Agency 2017). Dobbin and Kalev (2016: 54) have also found the representation of women and people of colour at management level has decreased in certain American business sectors while Ghumman et al. (2013: 439) determined religious minorities experienced workplace discrimination at a higher rate compared to other groups protected by the Civil Right Act. These findings show that modest gains can be reversed particularly if the underlying sources of this inequality, those embedded within organisational cultures, are not critically considered.



## **The “pecking order”: LGBT+ diversity and inclusion**

The LGBT+ employee population has been identified by Ragins (2004: 35) as “one of the largest, but least studied, minority groups in the workforce”. Numerous other studies offer consistent evidence that this employee population remains on the periphery of both organisational management research and within organisational practices aimed at diversity and inclusion (see: Bell et al. 2011:132; Hill 2009: 39; Colgan et al. 2007; Pizer et al. 2012; Ozeren 2014; McFadden 2015). Ozturk and Tatli (2016: 784) argue that the invisibility of LGBT+ issues and needs in broader diversity discussion may be due to the “popularity of some diversity categories over the others coupled with the implicit pecking order of diversity strands”. For instance, organisational management and research continue to predominantly focus on traditional diversity areas such as gender, racial and religious equality in organisations (Berrey 2014: 348). Although these areas remain important to consider, such a hierarchy of focus has, up until recently, led to the issues and needs of the LGBT+ employee population being largely overlooked.

To bridge this gap, a mounting body of both qualitative and quantitative research specifically focusing on the workplace experiences, issues and needs of LGBT+ employees has emerged. This is a welcome development within the field of organisational management research, bringing to light the unique experiences and needs of LGBT+ employees (McFadden 2015; Ozeren 2014). Additionally, insight derived from this research is finally leading to the availability of guidance for organisations wishing to develop LGBT+ inclusion and diversity policy and practices. This progress is vital as LGBT+ employees face persistent disadvantage in the

workplace including widespread discrimination and harassment that can negatively impact these workers in areas such as wages, health and well-being, job satisfaction and productivity (Badgett et al. 2007: 21; Sears and Mallory 2011: 16). Numerous other studies have consistently provided similar evidence across a number of different business sectors throughout the globe (see: Colgan et al. 2007; Willis 2011; Irwin 2002; Ragins 2004; Ozeren 2014; Priola et al. 2014; Smith and Ingram 2004).

Despite the increased focus on the LGBT+ employee population as a whole, some scholars have identified a number of gaps in organisational management research that has led to some LGBT+ employee issues and needs being overlooked. For instance, gender diverse employees are underrepresented in organisational management research, and in the social sciences generally (Bell et al. 2011: 132; Gedro et al. 2013: 283; Brewster et al. 2014: 159). Of particular concern is the homogenisation of ‘sub-groups’ falling under the LGBT+ umbrella (Köllen 2016). Various studies focusing on the workplace experiences of LGBT+ employees tend to conflate the issues facing sexual minorities, particularly lesbian women and gay men, with those of people who identify as transgender within the binary (such as transmen and transwomen) or who fall under the non-binary umbrella.<sup>6</sup> While Organisational Management Research and other fields of study have provided much-needed evidence of employment-related discrimination on the basis of sexual and/or gender identity, they have also attracted criticism for their gender binary approach (Connell 2010; Davidson 2016; Williams and Giuffre 2011). That is, they have most commonly focused on the workplace

---

<sup>6</sup> For instance, Gedro et al. (2013: 282-283) in their article on LGBT+ professional international mobility stated, “...we consider a person a sexual minority who is non-heterosexual, including those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and transgendered”. Other examples include Bell et al. (2011: 132); Hill (2009: 38); McFadden (2015); Ozeren (2014); Priola et al. (2014).

equality between men and women, gay men & lesbian women and/or transgender men and transgender women.

### **Existing research about gender diverse employees**

Although research is still limited, recent evidence demonstrates that gender diverse employees face distinct and disproportionate levels of discrimination and disadvantage, even when compared to sexual minorities and other minority groups. Ozturk and Tatli (2016: 782) point out that within the workplace “attitudes towards transgender people are often more antagonistic, possibly with more severe personal and professional ramifications”. Given this, the call for more nuanced research on gender diverse people and other ‘sub-groups’ under the LGBT+ umbrella is particularly important. Research is more keenly beginning to illuminate the experiences of employees who identify as transsexual (Law et al. 2011), transmale or as transfemale (Diertert and Dentice 2009; Irwin 2002; MacDonnell and Grigorovich 2012), demonstrating a growing understanding that gender diverse individuals do not constitute a uniform group. These findings can be extended towards developing a greater understanding of gender diverse employees and the issues they face at work. Such areas are explored in the following sections.

### ***Recruitment Process***

The recruitment process has been identified as one of the most difficult times to navigate for gender diverse job applicants (Ozturk and Tatli 2016; Schilt and Connell 2007; Connell 2010; Davidson 2016; Austin 2016; Dietert and Dentice 2009). During

this time, many are faced with weighing up whether to conceal or embrace their gender identity (Dietert and Dentice 2009; Davidson 2016). On the one hand, being visibly gender transgressive can expose them to discrimination as well as an increased risk of experiencing pre-emptive negative employment outcomes due to gender bias (Ozturk and Tatli 2016; Grant et al. 2011; Davidson 2016, Richards et al. 2016). On the other hand, if they gain employment by concealing their gender identity and later decide to transition or ‘come out’, this initial non-disclosure may be interpreted by employers and colleagues as a form of deception and dishonesty (Ozturk and Tatli 2016: 786; Barclay and Scott 2006). Some gender diverse employees, particularly transmen and transwomen who have undergone transitioning/self-affirmation and feel they are able to ‘pass’ as their affirmed gender may choose non-disclosure during the recruitment process not only to avoid discrimination but also because they do not find doing so necessary (Dietert and Dentice 2009). Additionally, there are now well-established laws that have made it easier for transgender men and women to have their affirmed gender identity placed on official identification documents, including on birth certificates, driver’s licenses and passports (Davis 2017). This shows certain protections can be afforded to those who can exhibit a consistent binary gender identity visually and legally (i.e. identifying either as man or woman).

The process to secure legal recognition is even more complex for gender non-binary employees whose gender presentation may be fluid, androgynous, or fall outside of the traditional male-female binary (Köllen 2016: 3-4; Ozturk and Tatli 2016: 786; Richardson and Monro 2012: 175-176). In Australia, the federal government recently added the option of an ‘X’ (indeterminate/unspecified/intersex) marker on passports (Davis 2017: 231). However, changing ones’ gender to X often requires “psychological

and/or medical evidence in the form of a letter or statutory declaration from a medical practitioner or psychologist” (Davis 2017:235), and takes significant time and resources (Clucas and Whittle 2017). Moreover, state laws and federal laws are inconsistent, as the X marker has not been adopted on state-mandated identification documents such as drivers’ licenses and birth certificates, except in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory (Davis 2017; Clucas and Whittle 2017). In this context, gender non-binary employees are likely to feel pressured to both present themselves as and use identification under their sex-assigned-at-birth identity to avoid complication and discriminatory treatment during the hiring process (Ozturk and Tatli 2016: 789). This area of research is extremely scarce, demonstrating a significant gap that needs to be addressed both within organisational research and organisational practices themselves.

### ***Transitioning, self-affirmation and disclosure in the workplace***

Once gender diverse people gain employment, they embark on complex identity management processes in the workplace. Because of the stigma attached to visible gender non-conformity within many workplaces (Brewster et al 2014; Miller and Grollman 2015: 812), gender diverse employees often choose to postpone their transitioning, self-affirmation or disclosure of their identity if already employed in a workplace under their previous identity (Barclay and Scott 2006; Ozturk and Tatli 2016; Harrison et al. 2012: 22). In a qualitative study of gender diverse people’s workplace experiences, Ozturk and Tatli (2016: 792) found that “most participants reported being viewed as fearsome or strange objects of fascination by colleagues once they underwent transition and started showing physical signs of change”. Brewster et al. (2014: 162-165) conducted a qualitative content analysis of data collected from 139

employees who identified along the “transgender spectrum”<sup>7</sup>, finding that between 80-100% reported severe discrimination (such as being fired), being ridiculed and threatened by colleagues and/or more subtle forms of discrimination including being left out of social events. Similar findings are presented in a number of other studies, highlighting that transitioning/self-affirmation on the job is a particularly perilous time for gender diverse workers and is often characterised by increased exposure to discrimination (see for example: Dietert and Dentice 2009; Connell 2010; Harrison et al. 2012: 22; Law et al. 2011; Schilt and Connell 2007). While research on this area has predominantly focused upon transmen and transwomen, these pioneering works can also be extended to gain a better understanding of how gender non-binary employees navigate similar processes.

### ***Gender diverse employees in gender binary, cisnormative workplaces***

Workplaces and other institutions have long been discussed as sites that perpetuate gender inequality. Acker (2006: 460) contends that these ‘inequality regimes’ are a result of organisational processes and practices built upon a hierarchy of privilege that itself is embedded with harmful gender and other assumptions. Men, masculine traits, and whiteness continue to occupy a privileged status in organisations while women, feminine characteristics and employees of colour continue to be devalued and marginalised (Acker 2006: 459-460). For instance, women and people of colour continue to be underrepresented at management level in some business sectors (Dobbin

---

<sup>7</sup> Authors used ‘transgender’ as a term that also included participants who identified as broadly under the gender non-binary umbrella such as gender queer and androgynous (Brewster et al. 2014: 162).

and Kalev 2016), while women have reported perceiving men as occupying a higher status in the workplace (Feather and Boeckmann 2007: 39).

Gender diverse employees can also become embedded in organisational cultures of inequality. Where people transitioned from one gender to another on the job, they have reported that their employer's evaluation of their abilities shifted. Transwomen<sup>8</sup> who adopted a feminine appearance reported feeling devalued by superiors and experienced decreased income after transitioning (Connell 2010; Schilt and Connell 2007; Davidson 2016). Conversely, Transmen<sup>9</sup> who appeared masculine reported increased promotional opportunities (Connell 2010), positive interactions with colleagues (Schilt and Connell 2007), higher income (Davidson 2016), greater decision-making responsibility and increased authority (Schilt 2006: 465) compared to when they were working under their female-assigned-birth identity. Rather than disrupting these gendered workplace norms, gender diverse employees, particularly those who identify strongly within the binary, may inadvertently reinforce them. There is some evidence that those whose physical presentation aligns both with their affirmed gender identity, and stereotypical gender binary norms, may gain more acceptance in the workplace compared to those who do not, partly because they eased the "anxiety of co-workers and employers who were uncomfortable with their appearance pre-transition" (Connell 2010: 41; Richardson & Monro 2012: 175-176). That is, through physical alignment to their affirmed gender, transgender people may enjoy the rewards of conforming to cisnormative workplace cultures. These findings demonstrate that gender diverse

---

<sup>8</sup> Transwomen is a term used to describe a person who was born male but transitioned to female (Dietert and Dentice 2009).

<sup>9</sup> Transman is a term used to describe a person who was born female but transitioned to male (Dietert and Dentice 2009).

workers are exposed to the same ‘inequality regimes’ (Acker 2006: 460) faced by their cisgendered counterparts.

### *Navigating gender binary conventions at work*

A number of well-known difficulties arise in relation to workplace facilities and conventions that are based on the binary gender system. Toilets and other sex-segregated facilities are often discussed as sites of exclusion for gender diverse workers (Mathers 2017: 295-298). While transmen and transwomen may encounter negative reactions from others while using sex-segregated facilities (Dietert and Dentice 2009; Davidson 2016), being able to safely and comfortably access facilities that align with one’s gender identity can also increase feelings of personal authenticity and inclusion for these employees<sup>10</sup> (Connell 2010; Dietert and Dentice 2009; Brewster et al. 2014; Schilt and Connell 2007). While gender-neutral facilities, such as bathrooms, are beginning to be identified as a key area in ensuring gender diverse employee workplace inclusion, most workplaces are yet to implement such spaces (Mathers 2017; Clucas and Whittle 2017:83; Davis 2017: 241). There is limited research exploring the way gender non-binary employees navigate such sex-segregated facilities.

Furthermore, dress code policies have been identified as a source of difficulty for gender diverse employees. Most organisations require employees to wear professional attire that tends to be gendered. Even without formal dress codes, many gender diverse employees are pressured to conform to certain presentations by their co-workers. For example, transmen and transwomen may feel pressured to conform to stereotypically

---

<sup>10</sup> Such situations can include transmen and women feeling safe using toilets that aligned with their gender, engaging in ‘gendered’ banter in environments such as lockers rooms or in toilets and being included a variety of other “gender rituals” (Schilt and Connell 2007: 612).



masculine or feminine presentations (Schilt and Connell 2007: 604-605). Being read as 'gender conforming' has also been linked to increased expectations for gendered social interactions, such as male colleagues holding transmen "accountable to rigid standards of masculine language and actions" (Connell 2010: 42; also see Schilt and Connell 2007: 605; Dietert and Dentice 2009: 128). Comparatively, according to studies by Miller and Grollman (2015) and Brewster et al. (2014), the more gender transgressive an employee's appearance, the greater the likelihood of experiencing workplace gender-based discrimination including being fired, experiencing verbal harassment and physical assault. Workplace discrimination on the basis of visible gender non-conformity needs urgent scholarly attention.

A number of studies have highlighted the importance of proper use of names, pronouns and titles in increasing gender diverse employees' feelings of authenticity and inclusion in the workplace (Dietert and Dentice 2009: 134; Brewster et al. 2014: 165; Richards et al. 2016: 96; Schilt and Connell 2007). Misuse of pronouns essentially misgenders these employees. A transman who uses he/him pronouns but is addressed as she/her by colleagues is one such example. Schilt and Connell (2007: 608) and Brewster et al. (2014: 165) found that many of their gender diverse participants reported that co-workers had difficulties using correct pronouns. Dietert and Dentice (2009: 134) found that most of their participants reported co-workers and upper management as blatantly refusing or ignoring their request to be addressed using correct pronouns.

Having consistent and legally recognised identification documents that align with one's affirmed gender identity, including identity markers such as names, pronouns and titles, may ensure some gender diverse employees are able to formally request their identity

markers be changed in the workplace. However, as already discussed, this is far from easy, both legally and emotionally.

### **LGBT+ workplace support mechanisms**

Some studies have critically analysed the under-representation of gender diverse specific knowledge, both within organisations and organisational research, compared to their sexual minority counterparts. Critical transgender and organisational studies have particularly questioned the effectiveness of LGBT+ workplace activism as these forms of advocacy are historically modelled upon supporting sexual minorities, such as lesbian and gay individuals, rather than gender diverse issues and needs. This is evidenced in the number of gaps discussed in the above sections of the literature review. In light of this, there is a call to critically analyse existing forms of LGBT+ activism in general, including those focused on advocating for LGBT+ workplace inclusion, to identify the specific gaps that exist in supporting gender diverse employees in the workplace (Spade 2015; Mananzala and Spade 2008). Where a top-down focus to LGBT+ workplace activism is historically modelled upon supporting sexual minorities, suggestions presented in this body of work emphasise the need for a bottom-up-focus with ‘trickle-up’ strategies to gender diverse activism, which must be designed through contextually exploring the lived reality of this population in order to identify their specific and unique issues and needs. (Nicolazzo 2016; Spade 2015; Miller and Grollman 2015).

This thesis uses the umbrella term ‘support mechanisms’ to refer to these various forms of organised groups/collectives/programs that aim to address the issues and needs

pertinent to supporting LGBT+ employees and their employers in the workplace. These support mechanisms can be located within a corporation, such as LGBT+ intra-firm employee networks, or in the form of non-profit organisations and programs which work in the area of LGBT+ workplace inclusion. These are but a few of the growing array of various support mechanisms that have increasingly become available to not only support organisations in becoming more LGBT+ inclusive but also in supporting LGBT+ employees themselves.

This chapter briefly explored the emergence of LGBT+ workplace activism and its influence on organisational diversity and inclusion. The literature clearly demonstrates how organisational research has more keenly focused on issues and needs facing sexual and gender diverse minorities. In doing so, this body of small but growing literature has shown that gender diverse employees face significant marginalisation in many organisational areas. In light of this, the following section lays out the methodology and methods used in this project to extend on the existing body of research.

### **Chapter 3: Research methods**

This thesis responds to calls for research to develop a more nuanced understanding of employees whose gender identity is different from that assigned-at-birth. In recent years, a number of large quantitative projects have consistently established the scope of issues relating to gender diverse employees, including high rates of workplace discrimination, harassment and barriers to their workplace inclusion (see: Grant et al. 2011; Davidson 2016; Harrison et al. 2012; Miller and Grollman 2015; Richards et al. 2016; Pride in Diversity 2018). Moreover, gender non-binary employees remain a

particularly under-researched population at both a conceptual and empirical level, and within both quantitative and qualitative research (Williams and Giuffre 2011; Schilt and Connell 2007). As such, this project also sought to gain additional insight into the ways gender non-binary employees experience the workplace as well as how these experiences may overlap, or diverge, compared to their transgender counterparts.

This project used a qualitative approach, which has been identified in similar studies (Ozturk and Tatli 2016; Connell 2010; Austin 2016) as appropriate for exploring the contextual experiences of an under-researched population. I draw on its strength in examining the unique experiences of individuals in an in-depth fashion. It allowed this project to pay close attention to gender diverse employees, and those within this group who identify as non-binary. This project used semi-structured interviews as the main research method, supplemented by observational data collected through one visit to a participant's workplace.

This chapter will provide an overview of the processes underpinning advertising, recruitment and interviewing. The approaches used for semi-structured interviews with both gender diverse employees and representatives of LGBT+ workplace support mechanisms will also be explained. In addition, I will discuss the impact of my status as a researcher being positioned both as an 'outsider' and 'insider' during fieldwork, before outlining the approach taken for data analysis, the project scope, the limitations as well as the benefits of using a qualitative two-pronged approach in this field of research.

## **Advertising, recruitment and data management**

A purposive sampling method was used and as such, recruitment of gender diverse employees was targeted towards gender diverse and non-binary identifying employees working full-time in a corporate organisation (Barratt et al. 2015). Recruitment flyers were posted on a range of Facebook groups<sup>11</sup> that catered towards the LGBT+ community. Non-profit LGBT+ organisations, such as the Gender Centre and Out For Australia were also approached via email to circulate recruitment flyers via their e-newsletters and to display them on their premises. I contacted a number of local LGBT+ intra-firm employee networks via email and phone in order to seek assistance in circulating the recruitment flyers within their organisations. A copy of the employee recruitment flyer is located in Appendix A: Employee recruitment flyer<sup>12</sup>. Three participants subsequently contacted me and were supplied a 'Participant Information and Consent Form' (see Appendix B: Participant information and consent form).

A purposive sampling method was also used to recruit individuals who were currently a representative (e.g. chairperson, director, CEO) of an LGBT+ workplace inclusion group, employee network, organisation, or program located in Sydney (Barratt et al. 2015). The first step involved identifying local support networks focused on LGBT+ workplace inclusion in the corporate sector through an online search, and sending out

---

<sup>11</sup> This included the Facebook groups 'Trans Pride Australia', 'Sydney Gay and Lesbian Business Association' and the 'Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras'. I obtained the permission of the administrators to post the flyers.

<sup>12</sup> Some terminologies used in earlier descriptions of this project changed later. For example, in the recruitment flyers the population changed from 'Non Binary Trans\*' (NBT\*) (an overarching umbrella term initially used to describe gender non-binary identities where the asterisk denotes the inclusion of diverse identities within this term) to the use of 'gender diverse', and gender non-binary where distinguishing between transgender and gender non-binary was necessary in certain contexts.

invitation emails with an explanation of the project, which achieved the recruitment of two representatives. Representatives were then supplied with a Project Information and Consent Form (see Appendix C: Project information and consent form).

All interview data was stored securely on a password protected laptop and personal computer in my home office. Any hard copies of data were locked in a secured safe in my home office. Data was only accessible to my thesis supervisor and myself. Further details relating to confidentiality, withdrawal of participation, and other ethical considerations pertaining to the employee interviews are located in Appendix B: Participant information and consent form, and for the representative interviews in Appendix C: Project information and consent form. A copy of the formal ethical approval letter for the research is included in Appendix D: Macquarie University Ethics Committee letter.

### **Semi-structured interviews with gender diverse employees**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain rich, in-depth insights (Denzin 2001) into the unique experiences of gender diverse skilled professionals employed in a corporate organisation. Using a purposive sampling method (Barratt et al. 2015), three participants were recruited who fit the following sampling criteria:

- Identified as gender diverse (identity different to their sex-assigned at birth) or broadly identified as gender non-binary (identities that fluctuated along or outside the gender binary of male or female)
- Were currently employed full-time in a corporate organisation
- Were 18+ years old

It is important to note the inclusion of Leslie, a transgender woman, in this thesis. While Leslie has not come out as a transwoman in her workplace, she feels she is perceived as non-binary. Her accounts of working under an identity with which she does not align and her process of transitioning/self-affirmation helped investigate where the needs of gender non-binary and transgender employees overlap, as well as diverge. As a result of this, findings did highlight that the ‘one size fits all’ approach to advocacy and representation of gender diverse people is not adequate in supporting the unique needs within this very diverse group.

Following ethics approval as well as written and verbal consent, all interviews were conducted in July 2018, taking place at public venues agreed with each interviewee. Before commencing the interviews, participants were asked if they would like to choose their own pseudonyms. Where they declined, I supplied one for them with their consent. A brief participant profile is supplied in Table 1 below. A more detailed personal profile of each participant will be supplied in Chapter 4: Analysis and findings, interviews with gender diverse skilled professionals.

Table 1. Summary of interviewee attributes (individual employees)

	<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender identity</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Age</b>
1	T	Non-binary Transmasculine	Marketing data analyst	23
2	Ash	Gender fluid	Technical support engineer	25
3	Leslie	Transgender woman	Manufacturing systems specialist	47

The semi-structured interviews consisted of open-ended questions guided by interview topics such as how participants understood, expressed and communicated their gender identities in and outside of the workplace; how they navigated gendered organisational cultures and requirements; types of difficulties encountered, as well as strategies used to overcome these difficulties (see Appendix D: Employees - interview topics, for a list of topics covered).

To ensure participants' privacy and comfort, I offered and subsequently booked meeting rooms at the Sydney State Library and Macquarie University for two of the interviews, while one other was conducted via Skype.<sup>13</sup> The interviews lasted between 60 and 105 minutes. Before commencing the interview, participants were given the opportunity to self-identify their gender (describing their gender rather than asking for their sex-assigned-at-birth, commonly referred to as "asking etiquette" among gender diverse people). With both written and verbal consent, all interviews were digitally recorded, and hand-written notes were taken. Interviews were conducted in a safe public space agreed to by both the interviewees and myself.

In addition to the interview, I was invited to and attended a tour of the manufacturing facility where one participant, Leslie, was employed. With Leslie's permission, I took handwritten notes of the experience and used this to supplement the interview data I later gathered from her.

---

<sup>13</sup> One interview was arranged via Skype for the convenience of the participant. Their 'Project Information and Consent form' was filled out and returned via email prior to the interview. The Skype meeting was recorded using a digital software program designed specifically to record Skype interactions. However, before beginning to record, I again asked for the participants' verbal consent to record the interview.



## **Semi-structured interviews with representatives of LGBT+ workplace support mechanisms**

These interviews aimed to understand the role played by key LGBT+ workplace support mechanisms<sup>14</sup> in advocating for and representing gender diverse, as well as more specifically gender non-binary employees, in corporate workplaces. I interviewed individuals representing an intra-firm LGBT+ employee network and an LGBT+ employer support program run by a non-profit organisation. Both intra-firm and non-profit run LGBT+ workplace inclusion programs are considered platforms of resistance (Colgan and McKearney 2012), particularly in terms of bringing forth the difficulties LGBT+ employees face as well as connecting the wider LGBT+ community to the corporate realm (Githens and Aragon 2009).

Following ethics approval as well as written and verbal consent, both interviews were conducted between July and August of 2018. I was invited by both representatives to conduct the interview at their workplace offices, where the interviews subsequently took place, lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. Representatives were given the opportunity to choose a pseudonym. Both declined and agreed that I could assign one to them one. A brief profile of the representatives is given in Table 2 below. A more detailed personal profile of each representative and a description of each support mechanism are found in Chapter 5: Analysis and findings, interviews with representatives of LGBT+ workplace support mechanisms.

---

<sup>14</sup> ‘Support mechanisms’ refers to various forms of organised groups/collectives/programs aimed at addressing the issues and needs pertinent to supporting LGBT+ employees and their employers in the workplace.

Table 2. Summary of interviewee attributes (representatives of support mechanisms)

	<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Position title</b>	<b>Organisation name (pseudonym)</b>	<b>Organisation type</b>
1	Alex	Chairperson	McKinney Pride	LGBT+ Intra-firm employee network within a law firm
2	Steve	Chief of Operations <sup>15</sup>	The ‘Rainbow Program’	LGBT+ Employer support program

The semi-structured interviews consisted of open-ended questions about current organisational policies and practices relating to gender identity; approaches to supporting gender diverse/gender non-binary employees; main achievements and challenges to date; and future directions in their activism for this employee population (for a full list of topics, see Appendix E: Support mechanisms - interview topics).

### **Researcher positionality**

Throughout this project, I was mindful of the power dynamics between myself as a researcher, and the individuals who shared their narratives with me (Moore 2018; Catalano 2017). The commencement of this research project coincided with my coming to terms with my own identity as gender non-binary. Because of this, I felt a deep compassion and familiarity with the stories each participant shared. My insider status as a gender diverse person afforded me connections to the community that was not only wonderful on a personal level, but also vital to this project. I posted the recruitment flyer on the wall of one LGBT+ Facebook group and nervously made the decision to mention this project was part of “my own personal journey of self-discovery”. This was

---

<sup>15</sup> This position title was changed to a chosen, but similarly ranked, position to ensure confidentiality

one of the first times I ‘came out’. In the space of one week, I had received two emails from individuals who had seen my post. What struck me was the immediate openness of the stories they shared in these first interactions, and how excited they were to be part of research on the topic of gender diverse workers. My insider status was a clear factor contributing to the ease both the participants and the researcher felt during interviewing about personal and potentially sensitive issues.

At the same time, I was keenly aware of the possibility that Moore (2018: 178) highlights, with a caution that familiarity and empathy might tempt the researcher to “minimise the power differentials that exist” between myself and research participants. In relation to the individual employees, I occupied an insider status as a gender diverse person, but also an outsider status as a researcher. With the awareness of this dual positioning (Catalano 2017) I was mindful of preconceived assumptions I brought from my own personal gender journey while exploring the unique journeys of T, Ash and Leslie. There is no perfect ‘insider’, and the insider/outsider status is contextual and constantly shifting (Moore 2018; Catalano 2017). However, as a marginalised community that tends to be researched by those who they consider outsiders, it is also important to have their gender identity represented among researchers.

Finally, it is also important to mention my insider/outsider status in relation to interviews with the representatives. My status as an insider within the LGBT+ community, which became apparent when I mentioned my preferred pronouns ‘they/them’ and that I identified as non-binary, also had an impact on interactions during the interview. Alex, from the intra-firm network, would often stop and ask for clarification on certain terms relating to gender identity, perceiving that I was

knowledgeable in the area. At the time I was worried this perception may make him less inclined to engage in specific topics, but it is my belief that Alex was relieved to discuss an area he was interested in but lacked the knowledge around, and this was evidenced in his candidness throughout the interview.

### **Methods of analysis**

The data analysis was shaped by inductive qualitative approaches (Choo and Ferree 2010; Windsong 2018) that aligned broadly with an intersectional focus grounded in the works of Crenshaw (1998), Collins (1998) and Acker (2006). I considered social identities, such as gender, as socially constructed, and not based upon biological or essentialist notions of identity (Windsong 2018: 137). During data collection and analysis, I paid close attention to how identity markers and social positions such as gender and occupational status intersected to create qualitatively different workplace experiences for each of the employees (Choo and Ferree 2010: 132; Windsong 2018: 136). This is relevant to my findings that employees experienced both ‘privilege’ and ‘oppression’ in qualitatively different ways depending on their social identities and social positions, which interacted and determined their positions within organisational hierarchies (Dietert and Dentice 2009; Schilt and Connell 2007).

Data analysis of all interviews commenced while data collection was still on-going. I used a personal journal to reflect and record any initial insights immediately after conducting the interviews. To supplement the digitally recorded interviews, I also took handwritten notes during the interviews to record any observations and thoughts. Each interview was carefully listened to at least twice to ensure reliability of the transcription,

which I conducted myself. Transcriptions were printed and closely read multiple times. Data was then categorised according to emergent themes and this process was iterative throughout the analysis. Data from interviews with employees were further analysed according to different phases of their career trajectories. Overarching themes emerged over time, such as ‘personal history’, ‘navigating recruitment’ ‘disclosure and transitioning’, ‘daily workplace experiences’ and ‘evolving gender and professional identities’. Within these themes, I paid particular attention to subtle differences, similarities and patterns within and across employee interview narratives. Data from interviews with representatives of LGBT+ workplace support mechanisms were also thematically categorised, and this process was similarly iterative. Overarching themes that emerged included ‘understanding gender identity’, ‘existing strategies’, ‘policies and practices’ and ‘barriers to advocacy’. Within these themes, I paid particular attention to differences, similarities and patterns within and across each support mechanism.

## **Project scope**

The small-scale of this project meant it has inherent limitations. As acknowledged in other similar research, access to the gender diverse population is difficult, as this population is small, diverse and under-represented in LGBT+ associations, social groups and others sites where researchers may attempt to locate potential participants (Moore 2018: 169). The issue of access affected this project and made it impossible to select interviewees using more detailed criteria such as occupation or industry types, racial backgrounds, and finer distinctions among gender diverse identities. This limitation was exacerbated by the short-term nature of my research as part of the

Masters of Research degree. Despite these limitations, the small sample size also meant that an in-depth and contextual analysis of a largely invisible employee group became possible (Moore 2018).

In addition, the two-pronged approach to investigating both individual employees' experiences and LGBT+ support mechanisms, further limited the number of participants for each part of the project. Similarly, I would have preferred to interview representatives from a variety of other support mechanisms in Sydney, to gain a more nuanced understanding of current trends to supporting gender non binary employees more widely adopted in the corporate sector and community. However, this two-pronged approach was chosen to gain an initial insight into the state of LGBT+ activism in terms of its advocacy of gender diverse workers in Sydney, which is a largely under-researched area.

In the following chapter, I will explore the analysis and findings derived from interviews with the three gender diverse employees, T, Ash and Leslie.

## **Chapter 4: Analysis and findings**

### **Interviews with gender diverse skilled professionals**

This chapter explores the centrality of the workplace in the on-going process of identity formation, a site where the participants' gender and professional identities were connected and moulded simultaneously. This section traces the unique experiences of three gender diverse individuals as they navigated the complicated process of discovering and coming to terms with their gender identities, while also trying to

traverse the challenges of becoming highly skilled professionals in corporate Australia. In the following chapter, I explore the difficulties they faced throughout their careers, as employees whose gender identity did not fit within gender binary expectations attached to the assumption of cisnormativity. This section also attempts to provide some insight into the way the workplace experiences of Leslie, as a transwoman, may diverge or overlap, with those of T and Ash, as gender non-binary employees. Throughout this chapter, participants narratives highlight the creative and resilient strategies they used to overcome these challenges, however, they did so largely in isolation from support mechanisms. Before moving on to the analysis and findings, a more detailed personal profile of each participant is supplied below.

### **Interviewee profiles**

These profiles were developed using information provided by the participants themselves during the interviews, including their educational and employment history, how they self-identified their gender identity, how they understood aspects of their gender identity (in terms of expressing and presenting their gender), as well as details of their transitioning/self-affirmation journey. Two participants', T and Ash, chose their own pseudonyms, while one participant, Leslie, requested I choose one on their behalf. Personal profiles are supplied below:

'T' (23 years old, marketing data analyst) – Self-identifies as 'non-binary transmasculine'

Before migrating to Australia from another English-speaking country over a year ago, T completed a three-year engineering degree. Soon after, their natural aptitude for mathematics led them to find work as a data analyst in a small consultancy firm, where they were employed for 1.5 years. When T moved to Australia with their partner one year ago, they started work as an 'insight analyst' for a global marketing firm, where they are currently employed. Their main responsibilities there include data analysis and the development of marketing strategies on behalf of clients. T identifies as non-binary transmasculine and uses they/them pronouns, meaning they were assigned-female-at-birth, but don't identify as female, or within the gender binary of male/female. Their 'transitioning/self-affirmation' journey has so far included 'top surgery' (mastectomy and chest reconstruction) and hormone treatments. Outside of the workplace, T presents in an androgynous/non-binary manner that may fluctuate between masculine/feminine depending on how they felt on any given day. At work, T dons a typical masculine smart casual attire of 'chinos' and a 'business shirt' to align with the workplace norm for their cisgender male colleagues. They have not 'come out' in the workplace, and 'pass' as a cisgendered male, although they have disclosed their identity to a handful of close colleagues

Ash (25 years old, technical support engineer) – Self-identifies as 'gender fluid':

Ash has a double degree in actuarial studies and finance. Following completion of their degree, they landed a position as a software engineer at an Information Technology (IT) consultancy firm. Outside of the workplace, Ash also invested up to 20 hours a week of their personal time in studying to develop their specialisation in IT. This hard work paid off when, only one year into their first job, they were headhunted by a global IT firm for their specialised expertise and skills as a technical engineer. Ash provides technical support and guidance to clients internationally. Ash uses they/them pronouns and identifies as gender fluid, meaning their gender may fluctuate between masculine, feminine and non-binary on a day-to-day, and sometimes hour-to-hour, basis. Ash commenced their 'transitioning/self-affirmation' journey several years ago, including hormone treatment and physically experimenting with different ways of expressing



their gender (such as different dress styles and haircuts). They are now fully ‘out’ as gender fluid both within and outside of the workplace. As Ash is openly out and sometimes presents androgynously at work, they feel they are perceived by others as gender fluid.

Leslie (47 years old, manufacturing systems specialist) – Self-identifies as a ‘transwoman’:

While Leslie started two degrees in both mechanical and chemical engineering after high school, she did not complete either. Rather, her professional career began when her aptitude for chemical engineering caught the attention of specialists in the Australian chemical manufacturing industry. Building off practical experience, Leslie has occupied a number of positions within the chemical manufacturing industry spanning over two decades, including consultancy and contracting work for chemical manufacturing corporations across Australia. With this experience, Leslie gained a full-time position at a chemical manufacturing plant, where she currently works. Leslie is now a senior member of the management team as well as fulfilling her role as a systems specialist, spending a majority of her time at the manufacturing facility, but has spent some time at the company’s corporate headquarters. Leslie identifies as a transwoman and uses she/her pronouns. Although she has always known she felt feminine, she has only recently begun her transitioning/self-affirmation journey over the past year. Leslie has socially transitioned outside of the workplace and more recently began physically transitioning, undergoing medical processes such as hormone treatments. Although Leslie has not yet ‘come out’ in her workplace, and therefore works under her male-assigned-at-birth identity, she has started putting out clues, such as incrementally presenting more ambiguously (increasingly adopting feminine traits). Leslie feels others perceive her as gender non-binary. She plans to officially ‘come out’ in her affirmed identity once she has started showing more feminine physical attributes.

## **From applying for a job to commencing employment**

The recruitment process has been identified as a complex and difficult time for gender diverse individuals to navigate. This is due to the complexities involved in gaining consistent legal identification documents<sup>16</sup> (Davis 2017:235; Clucas and Whittle 2017) as well as often having to engage in strategic identity management so as not to ‘out’ themselves as gender diverse to avoid negative employment outcomes and discriminatory hiring practices (Dietert and Dentice 2009, Davidson 2016; Richards et al. 2016; Ozturk and Tatli 2016: 789). Participants discussed the difficulties of navigating the gender binary nature of identification documents when applying for work at different points in their careers, and in ways that extend on the findings discussed above.

T had to engage in strategic identity management on two occasions when navigating the recruitment process for work. When applying for their first job while still overseas, they had to use their female-assigned-birth identity, having not yet legally changed their identity markers. T was also experimenting with a variety of gender-affirming processes, such as ‘binding’ (flattening ones’ breasts with material) and beginning hormone treatment but was still unsure about what their gender meant to them. Despite this, being able to work as their authentic self in the workplace was important for T, leading them to email their new employer and request they be referred to in their affirmed name, T, and pronouns, they/them. Although this disclosure made T feel anxious, the supportive response from their employer led them to feel more accepted

---

<sup>16</sup> More detailed information on the legal identification change process can be found in Chapter 2: Literature review

and included in the workplace. Their experience of looking for work in Australia differed because they had by then obtained legal documents, which included their preferred name. Despite not identifying as such, T also chose to legally change their gender marker to 'male' as it was a truer reflection of their identity than their female-sex-assigned-at-birth. This highlights the dilemma facing gender non-binary individuals who often have to choose between the two binary options of male/female when applying for jobs. T navigated this recruitment stage appearing more masculine/androgynous, after having spent the prior year engaging in self-affirmation processes (such as taking hormones and undergoing top surgery). With their amended legal identification documents and their physical appearance, they were able to pass as a 'cisgendered male' and were 'read' as such during the recruitment process for their current job. Commencing their employment being perceived as a "cisgendered dude basically" significantly influenced T's subsequent workplace experiences, which will be further explored in later sections of this chapter.

In contrast, Ash discussed the difficulties faced by gender diverse employees in general when navigating recruitment, explaining that it can be terrifying ordeal if an individual visibly transgresses the gender binary, regardless of what identification documents they have because "there is a constant fear that I am either going to be rejected when it comes apparent that I am gender diverse". These findings highlight the complexities involved in navigating the early stages of a career for gender non-binary individuals while also beginning to experiment and understand their own unique gender identities. Going through hiring and recruitment can be a nerve-wracking experience for gender diverse individuals especially at a young age, and for T and Ash, these experiences stayed with them and helped inform their decisions when navigating the recruitment and hiring

phase at later stages. These findings highlight that the importance of gaining a more nuanced of the complex and unique journeys gender diverse employees may take to become skilled professionals.

### **Processes of disclosure**

The ability for gender diverse employees to live without having to disguise their gender identity in the workplace has been found to have a range of benefits, including being able to build close relationship with supportive colleagues, being socially recognised in their affirmed identity as well as increased personal authenticity (Sawyer et al. 2016: 26; Brewster et al. 2014: 164; Law et al. 2011; Bell et al. 2011: 133). However, disclosure, whether before or after commencing a job, can expose employees to potential discrimination and disadvantage they may not have experienced had they not disclosed their stigmatised identity (Ozturk and Tatli 2016: 792; Brewster et al. 2014: 167; Dietert and Dentice 2009: 132; Bell et al. 2011: 133). Even without disclosure, simply being visibly gender transgressive can lead to negative employment outcomes (Ozturk and Tatli 2016: 789; Brewster et al. 2014: 165; Dietert and Dentice 2009: 133). As such, gender diverse employees may strategically choose to ‘go stealth’, meaning pass as cisgender if they can, or postpone transitioning within and outside of the workplace in order to access employment opportunities or to maintain secure employment.

Participants’ disclosure processes were influenced by cisnormative assumptions within the workplace and the pressure to conform to normative gender expressions throughout their careers. For instance, although Leslie identified as a transwoman, and had

disclosed this to family and a close circle of friends, she decided, at the beginning of medical transitioning, to postpone officially ‘coming out’ within the workplace until starting to physically appear more feminine. As stated in the profile above, in Leslie’s case, this occurred later in her professional career. As part of her strategic identity management plan, Leslie had started presenting her gender identity more ambiguously, going from presenting stereotypically masculine at work, to presenting more feminine by wearing her long hair down, wearing jewellery and nail polish. She hoped that this incremental change would lessen the ‘shock’ for her co-workers and give them time to adjust. Leslie’s strategy is widely shared by other transgender employees who incrementally adopt differently gendered appearances and mannerisms to ‘prepare’ colleagues for their imminent ‘full transition’ (Brewster et al. 2014; Schilt and Connell 2007; Dentice and Dietert 2015). Transgender men and women who strongly identify as masculine or feminine are able to adopt a normative gender presentation even if they may be visibly gender non-conforming (Dentice and Dietert 2015). As Connell (2010, p.40-41) argues, the ability to “present correctly” and to establish a “legitimate” gender identity within the binary, may allow these employees “to be read as more gender normative”, which in turns increases the chance of greater acceptance from co-workers and employers. Seen in this light, Leslie’s meticulous plan to smoothly slide into her affirmed gender identity at work is as much about her creative, on-going experiment with public gender expressions as the necessity for professional survival.

In comparison, T and Ash discussed the difficulties of coming to terms with navigating the journey of gender identity formation with no clear destination. In coming to understand their identities as fluid and non-binary over the last several years, they both had to traverse the gender binary and cisnormative nature of workplaces during the

early stages of their career. Like Leslie, they too felt the pressure to present their gender identity in ways that were legible to their cisgender colleagues with limited knowledge of non-binary, fluid gender identities. Despite realising they were not cisgendered, Ash entered their first professional job as software engineer under their male-assigned-at-birth identity. It took them a year to inform the human resources office that they now identified as a transwoman, a decision they considered at the time a safer one than disclosing their gender fluid identity. T followed a similar, staged approach to disclosure. Despite identifying as non-binary transmasculine, T had disclosed their identity as a transgender man in their previous workplace. T explained this choice as follows:

I think people are willing to try to understand but they have a bit of difficulty with the ‘how’ and the ‘why’ someone would identify as something other than a binary gender. It’s a bit easier for people to get their heads around either being ‘trans’ but I think I ran into a lot of misunderstanding around the whole non-binary thing [...] I guess I’d say I feel like I have two levels of being out. I can be out as ‘trans’ or I can be *completely* out as ‘non-binary’ and um yeah, so when I say I prefer to be ‘out’, I can imagine being out as trans in the workplace and not having to really talk about it much. But I feel like with being out as non-binary, you’ve got to have all these complicated conversations about what that means.

A considerable amount of emotional labour is involved in how gender diverse employees manage co-worker’s reactions to their gender expressions. Ash’s comment below highlights the invisible nature of this labour, and the emotional toll it may take:

[It] was awful because...I just remember coming out and I called up HR and the head of the LGBT network to kind of coordinate things and I remember getting an email from the HR person kind of saying like ‘Hey, could you just hold off on this for two weeks while we deal with some stuff?’. I was just like ‘I emotionally worked myself up to coming out, this is my life’ and you are just like ‘hey can you just wait two weeks?’

Participants' narratives highlight that, whether employees identify within the binary or not, the assumptions of cisnormativity and the pressure to conform to a socially accepted way of 'doing gender', is often felt by all gender diverse employees (Connell 2010). These findings align with a significant amount of research exploring the transitioning and disclosure processes these employees engage in within the workplace (Connell 2010; Schilt and Connell 2007; Ozturk and Tatli 2016; Dietert and Dentice 2009). Moreover, T and Ash's experiences highlighted the complexities associated with the processes of transitioning and disclosure as fluid and non-binary employees, because the nature of their gender identity formation was on-going, fluid and breached stereotypical gendered ways of presenting in the workplace (Dentice and Dietert 2015; Connell 2010, p.40-41).

The term 'disclosure' implies that one's gender identity is formed in the private, and one merely decides to make an announcement about this set identity in the public space of workplaces. While this was how the interviewees did feel at certain points of their careers, such a conceptualisation of identity expression misses another important aspect of being a gender diverse professional: that the workplace is central to the on-going process of gender identity formation itself, and their gender and professional identities are moulded simultaneously. Before I further discuss this issue, however, I will examine their everyday experience of workplaces whose organising principle is gender binarism.

## **Everyday experiences of gender binary workplaces**

In this section, I will investigate how research participants navigated their professional experiences once they became part of a particular workplace. All of their workplaces were organised around gender binarism, in particular, uses of pronouns, sex-segregated facilities, dress codes and informal and social interactions with colleagues commonly posed everyday challenges to gender diverse employees. I will discuss each of these below.

### ***Pronouns and names***

Most research exploring the experiences of transgender and gender diverse workers have highlighted the importance of social recognition of employees affirmed identity including others using their correct pronouns, titles and names (Ozturk and Tatli 2016; Brewster et al 2014; Davidson 2016; Harrison et al. 2012; Dietert and Dentice 2009). However, as discussed in Chapter 2: Literature review, colleagues, upper management and human resource officers frequently use incorrect pronouns, misgender and sometimes refer to gender diverse employees by their 'dead-name'<sup>17</sup>. Where comprehensive policies and practices relating to workplace diversity and inclusion are absent, employees are forced to actively request, and thus disclose their gender diverse status in order to have their affirmed gender identity recognised (Ozturk and Tatli 2016; Brewster et al 2014; Davidson 2016; Harrison et al. 2012; Dietert and Dentice 2009). This exposes employees to risk and tends to cause immense anxiety.

---

<sup>17</sup> A dead-name refers to the name a person is assigned-at-birth that they no longer use.



All three interviewees reported being regularly and repeatedly misgendered. For example, as T had not disclosed their identity as non-binary transmasculine, their colleagues often mistook them for a cis-gendered male, referring to T as he/him. This caused mild but regular disorientation: “[...] like I don't mind but there's always a bit of a ‘oh that's weird... why are you talking about me like that’ kind of moment, just very slightly, even though I'm used to it now.” Ash, whose affirmed identity was known in the workplace, found the process of being socially recognised was “...always a painful process...the pain of being in a company especially when you switch names is ah a nightmare... people are going to denigrate you a whole bunch...”. Similarly, Leslie was exasperated by the processes that would be involved in changing identification documents in her company: “‘No, you can't complete the form’ and it's worse in the online environment than it is in the paper-based form. [...] it just doesn't work, does it?”.

### ***Gender binary facilities***

Being able to access facilities that align with employees affirmed identity has been found to increase feelings of personal authenticity, acceptance and increased inclusion in the workplace (Connell 2010; Dietert and Dentice 2009; Brewtser et al. 2014, Shilt and Connell 2007).<sup>18</sup> However, gender diverse employees, regardless of whether they identify in the gender binary, face significant difficulties navigating gendered facilities, including exposure to verbal and physical harassment (Dietert and Dentice 2009; Davidson 2016).

---

<sup>18</sup> Such situations can include transmen and women feeling safe using toilets that align with their gender, engaging in ‘gendered’ banter in environments such as lockers rooms or in toilets and being included a variety of other “gender rituals” (Schilt and Connell 2007, p. 612).

Participants reported that the gendered nature of their workplace facilities caused them anxiety. Leslie has not yet disclosed her identity as a transwoman, and presents her gender in an ambiguous way, because of this she felt uncomfortable using gendered toilets, instead preferring gender-neutral toilets. However, the masculinised nature of the chemical manufacturing industry meant that even female toilets are hard to come by, let alone gender-neutral ones. One concerning finding was that Leslie has to walk at least half a kilometre to use the gender-neutral toilet every day. Collecting her uniform proved to be a similarly stressful situation for her, as the “high vis uniforms get washed and dropped at the male locker change room [...] I really don’t like that”.

The gendered nature of workplace facilities was even more complicated for Ash and T, who do not identify within the gender binary. As T ‘passes’ as a cisgender male, they may have to use the male toilets. Ash discussed the complexity of having a fluctuating identity, where, at any given moment, their gender may oscillate between male, female and fluid. Thus, using facilities that align with how they feel is a continuously difficult situation to navigate, particularly as these forms of gender identities are not widely understood by others in the workplace. In this context, a lack of policies relating to toilet usage for gender diverse employees was a source of anxiety generally:

It would be nice to have [those policies], it’s just nice to have it in writing so you don’t have to stress about it [...] At my prior employer, it was a nightmare [...] (Ash: Gender fluid)

Ash found it particularly stressful visiting other workplace sites without being aware of their toilet policies because:

[...] when you have to pick and you're feeling nervous is the worst thing in the world...and having nothing in writing so at the very least you know you're protected is awful!

### *Dress codes*

For participants, being able to express and experiment with their gender identity within professional environments had an important impact on how they experienced the workplace. However, the level of identity experimentation one is able to undergo in the workplace is constrained by norms attached to how a 'professional' should appear (Schilt and Connell 2007). For instance, dress codes enforced via workplace policies ensure that each employee fits within the dominant corporate expectations of what a 'professional' should look like in each environment. All too often, notions of how a professional should present are underpinned by gender binary norms (Schilt and Connell 2007). One need only glance in major department stores such as David Jones or Myers to see the significantly gendered nature of clothing available to corporate employees.

Two participants discussed how difficult it has been to craft their professional identity in a way that would allow them to present their authentic selves in terms of their gender identity. They expressed frustration when shopping for professional clothing as someone who has a fluid and non-binary gender identity:

I think it's kind of tricky [...] there isn't a lot of non-binary space in terms of professional clothing and I guess that's cos' the men's side of it is very rigid and narrow... you've got trousers, button up shirts, you got your jackets... [...] most women's professional clothing is kind of quite body shape dependent [...] (T: Non-binary transmasculine)

[...] It's hard enough feeling accepted dressing one particular way. Trying to find clothing in a way to style yourself so you feel accepted and comfortable in all of those situations is really hard. That's the nightmare I constantly go through [...]" (Ash: Gender fluid)

Although Ash and T wanted to experiment with their gender expression more within the workplace, they felt uncomfortable presenting in a way that was too non-conforming or non-binary. This resulted in both of them, especially T who passes for a cisgender male in their current job, tending to adopt a more masculine gender presentation to feel comfortable in the workplace:

When I started, I asked the recruiter to ask the guy that's now my manager [about the dress code] just so that I would know like what the level of formality is, and he was like 'basically some smart Chinos or trousers and a shirt, but no ties or suit jackets or anything like that'. And I was like 'ok at least I know what I'm getting ready for', but yeah, I mean I very much stick within that...um, which is not really my ideal I guess but... [frustrated sigh] (T: Non-binary Transmasculine)

I kind of notice I prefer to be more masculine when I am at work. Which I assume is largely because, like...suddenly over time, you adjust to the fact you're treated better within a workplace where you appear as a guy so, like, part of that reinforcement or negative reinforcement is going to make you have certain feelings associated with that so [...] (Ash: Gender fluid)

Leslie, who had begun experimenting with ambiguous gender presentation at work felt limited by the protective gear she must wear, such as a helmet and safety boots, as well as the strongly masculine workplace culture in general. When Leslie was in a corporate office environment, she felt the need to:

put on my male façade to interact in those environments at the moment, and that makes me feel uncomfortable. It makes me feel a little sad it has to be like that...in time I have to make it change.

At various times, all participants felt they had to conform to gender norms in their professional identity presentation to avoid discrimination and negative employment outcomes, whether they were ‘out’ in the workplace or not. For instance, Leslie recounted that since appearing more ambiguously she had been “treated differently”, encountering teasing from other teams who would poke fun at her for “looking like a ‘sissy’”. This aligns with research from Ozturk and Tatli (2016, p. 789), Barclay and Scott (2006) and Brewster et al. (2014) who found that employees who were visibly gender non-conforming were exposed to higher degrees of discrimination often across a variety of contexts within the workplace. T, who is currently passing as a cisgender male, did not feel able to express their gender identity in a transgressive way. For Ash, the freedom to express their fluid gender identity was further complicated by the fact they felt their gender identity could change from day-to-day or even hour-to-hour, within and outside of the workplace. While dress codes may constrain all employees’ ability to express their authentic gender identities, gender diverse employees may feel these restrictions more keenly and in more complex ways (Schilt and Connell 2007).

### ***Informal and social interactions with colleagues***

Findings from the interview data suggest that informal and social interactions were extremely complex for participants to traverse. Occasionally, they were exposed to overt comments of a transphobic nature. Although Ash regularly described their workplace as being quite LGBT inclusive, they had still been exposed to transphobic discussions on a number of occasions. For instance, one colleague discussed how transwomen should be banned from the female toilets because ‘it will be used by guys to sexually assault young women’ and that ‘trans people shouldn’t be able to participate

in Olympic sports because ...they're different'. Ash also felt that being openly gender fluid created an expectation to educate others on matters concerning gender diversity, which they found frustrating, offensive and draining. Leslie also spoke about overhearing a number of transphobic, homophobic and sexist comments from colleagues throughout her career, and felt this was part of the misogynistic, overly masculine culture of the industry in which she found herself. This directly impacted her ability to socialise with colleagues.

Leslie offered to take me on a site tour of her facility so I could witness first-hand the difficulties she faces as gender diverse employee in the workplace. Before visiting, Leslie requested I address her under her male identity, which she is known as in her workplace. From the moment I entered her premises, the effects of gender binary norms became evident. As a visitor, I was required to sign in and write down who I was there to meet. I could sense that even this process made Leslie feel uneasy, and at one point she looked over my shoulder to ensure I had put her 'dead-name' on the sign in sheet. She engaged in this strategic identity management throughout the tour, often whispering when discussing the topic of her gender identity and ensuring she wasn't overheard. I was also fortunate enough to see how Leslie interacted with colleagues as someone who is in upper management. She seemed to have a good relationship, particularly with the younger staff, and others appeared to show her a great deal of respect. I spoke to Leslie about how these interactions looked quite friendly yet professional. Her response, however, highlighted a more nuanced picture of how she tends to interact with others throughout the day in the workplace:

[...] there was a time where I would have lunch with the group around the common lunch table, but the conversations were often misogynistic, sexist,

denigrating for women [...] The atmosphere is such that I have pulled back socially from some aspects and tend to engage as a professional on a professional level.

These findings show that casual, overt or indirect comments that are discriminatory and denigrating to the wider LGBT+ community can lead employees to engage in strategic identity management (Brewster et al. 2014: 165), including removing themselves from casual interactions and socialising outside of work (Dietert and Dentice 2009: 130). These findings also demonstrate the harms caused by misogyny in the workplace on gender diverse employees workplace experiences (Ozturk and Tatli 2016: 790-791).

Moreover, it was not always overt discrimination that made participants feel uncomfortable during informal interactions (Dietert and Dentice 2009). For instance, as T had not disclosed their gender identity in the workplace, they had to censor the amount of personal information they shared with others to avoid outing themselves. This included topics such as their past relationships and attending particular schools. They also felt left out of certain interactions with their cis-female colleagues, because:

I think the types of conversations that they're willing to have with a female colleague are different from with a male colleague, and they have the occasional 'girls nights out' and stuff like that and I'm like 'oh that's fine'.... sometimes they'll be having like a conversation about like pregnancy or something and I'll just sit there uncomfortably.... I'm never quite sure what the right reaction to that type of conversation is...(laughing)... cuz' they're all sitting there thinking I just have no idea and I'm never going to have to deal with any of this.

While T's decision to 'pass' as a cisgender man during recruitment for their current job was to ensure secure employment in a new country, they acknowledged that continuing to pass as a cisgender man had its own benefit of male privilege:

[...] if I'm in a meeting or something then I speak out, I think people are more likely to listen then they were before or...um... maybe look to me for answers over my female colleagues [...] I think there's an expectation when you're being viewed as a man that you're more confident about what you're saying and the answers that you're giving....

These findings show that overt and covert forms of transphobia continue to be experienced by gender diverse employees despite the existence of anti-discrimination legislation and the emergence of diversity training and education focused on gender diverse identities, issues and needs in the workplace. Because of this, the burden of educating others on gender identity may be laid squarely on the shoulders of employees who are openly gender diverse, which can be frustrating, upsetting and offensive. Even engaging in casual conversation can be difficult, particularly for gender diverse employees who are not out in the workplace, and who need to constantly censor what they say as not to mistakenly disclose their identity. Significantly, findings reveal that social interactions are embedded with gender binary assumptions that privilege certain social identities over others. T benefitted from their newly found privileged status as a man and was able to move up in the organisational hierarchy, while Leslie perceived her status would be lowered once she officially transitioned to a woman, based off her experiences in a workplace culture that was often misogynistic.



## **The simultaneous development of gender and professional identities**

Research participants' gender diverse identity formed in their (young) adulthood in an on-going fashion. One significant influence on this process was incremental experiments in gender expressions at work. In this final section, I will discuss how gender and professional identities developed simultaneously and influenced each other.

Because participants' gender identities shifted over time, it opened up a space to deliberately and tentatively adopt new expressions as they incorporated 'lessons' learnt from new experiences at work, as well as outside of it. The trajectory Ash had taken is illustrative of this process. While still at university and also working at a nightclub, Ash became engrossed in bodybuilding to develop a masculine body for four years. They explained this as a typical phenomenon, where transgender people attempt to present in a way that aligns with their sex-assigned-at-birth (eg. a transgender man dressing in a stereotypically feminine style) prior to commencing transition, before finally reaching a point where they feel "'no, I can't do this anymore' and then flip". In their first full time, post-education job, they came out to their employer as a transwoman, despite knowing deep down that they had a gender fluid identity. Soon after, Ash went on leave for six months in order to "[process] everything", grappling with whether to embrace their identity as fluid or as a transwoman. They reflected on the process of 'becoming':

I started transitioning and then...straight from the get-go, I kind of suspected I was gender fluid, but I kind of um fought against that a bit...I think we all fight against these things we know are going to be scary, there's going to be negative questions about us and who we are. It has been more of a recent development, kind of I guess, this year coming to terms with being non-binary and living authentically as a gender fluid person.

Ash's complicated experience of disclosing *within* the workplace in their previous job gave them a chance to appreciate the impact of the workplace on their ability to live as their authentic self in all aspects of their life. This led to the decision to become open about their gender identity when they subsequently interviewed for their current job. As Ash's physical transition is continual, this also interacts with their gender expressions, as discussed earlier. This shows that their transition journey does not come with a pre-determined destination but is a process that they may navigate throughout their lives both within and outside of the workplace. Therefore, 'disclosure' of their identity was less about 'coming out' with a distinct and rigid gender identity. Rather, disclosure in the workplace may mean asking for the freedom to express one's shifting gender identity in unique, unpredictable ways that may or may not align within the gender binary at any given time.

The intertwined nature of both gender and professional identities was most visible in the ways in which participants sought to gain professional credentials and recognition as a highly skilled corporate employee. To them, becoming a skilled professional meant more than just getting a well-paid job, social status or the love of one's vocation. It was also a way to gain the confidence to become who they wanted to be in terms of gender identity as well. For Ash, their confidence level increased dramatically when they were headhunted by a start-up company for their technical skills in the specialised field of big data. During the job interview, Ash disclosed their gender fluid identity to assess how LGBT+ inclusive the company was. Since starting their first professional job using male-sex-assigned-at birth identity, they had grown into a person who dared to test their potential employer to see whether it was good enough for them. Ash stated that it was important, because the employer's attitude towards gender diversity and inclusion

would “define my experience at that workplace. So, if I get a red flag at an interview...I’m out [...] I am very open with who I am”. Although Ash grew in personal confidence over this time, it did not stop them from agonising about whether they could ‘make it’ as both a skilled professional and an openly gender diverse person. This fear led them to seek out and contact role models in the IT industry who were also gender diverse. Ash described “this huge relief” they experienced when connecting with them stating:

I suspected and hoped I could make it in this industry with being trans and non-binary and have a successful career that wasn't going to be impeded by this but seeing people who have made it, are very well respected, have achieved their goals in the exact same industry...it was this kind of big relief like ‘it’s a thing! I can do it!’

Leslie also experienced similar worries and fears about her future career as a gender diverse person. Ultimately, Leslie made the decision to postpone a full exploration of her gender identity in order to build her career over the last twenty years. She had felt a strong pressure to conform to the highly masculinised culture within the chemical manufacturing industry by pushing down the feeling of femininity. Leslie recounted this long period as follows: “[...] yeah, it just got to the point where...there came this weight of maintaining like a façade...”. These findings suggest that gender diverse employees may have to sacrifice aspects of their gender formation in the workplace to pursue their career aspirations and develop their professional identities (Dietert and Dentice 2009; Law et al. 2011; Bell et al. 2011: 133). While this may be true, such ‘sacrifice’ may also be temporary, and a way to increase one’s chance to express gender identity more freely in the future, as Leslie’s story attests. After cementing herself as a highly skilled professional and an invaluable part of the upper management in her workplace, she was only then comfortable in starting to plan how to ‘come out’ as a

transwoman. She felt that her professional identity was central to her being able to even think about transitioning in the workplace:

I believe strongly in my own professional abilities and I have a lot of experience behind me, so I think I am generally well respected for my abilities...

Nonetheless, compared to T who was able to gain a more privileged status attached to their masculine gender presentation, Leslie felt her opinions had become less respected and rather devalued, now that she visibly appeared more feminine or ambiguous (i.e. less than masculine). She discussed how during a:

[...] robust exchange of ideas, that my input is not given the same weight as it used to...so I have to provide more rationale and logic to get that credence back to a point I'm putting across.

Her prognosis about the impact of living as a transgender woman at the male-dominated workplace of hers was not rosy: "I expect transitioning in the workplace will be a career limiting move". In contrast, T was more hopeful. They talked about their future plan to complete a master's degree, where they could become further specialised and find work in a more LGBT+ inclusive tech company to allow freer self-expression. These findings also extend on previous research that found gender diverse employees who transition from one gender to another become embedded in workplace 'inequality regimes' (Acker 2006) that privilege masculinity while devaluing femininity or gender non-conformity (Law et al. 2011: 719; Connell 2010).

It is also important to note that in terms of exploring gender identity at work, the characteristics attached to particular industries matter. While they may have felt the pressure to conform to stereotypical ways of presenting their gender in certain contexts, both T and Ash felt more comfortable exploring their gender diverse identity in the workplace at times. Ash explained this was because they felt the IT sector was generally

more inclusive of gender diverse identities, based on their experiences working within this industry. However, they also discussed the benefit of not being exposed to daily face-to-face contact with external clients and others in the workplace as making them feel more comfortable dressing in line with their gender fluid identity (as they primarily work ‘behind the scenes’ as in a technical operation room). Comparatively, Leslie explained that the dominant masculine culture embedded within the manufacturing industry generally, makes these workplaces difficult even for women, let alone transwomen.

### **Gender diverse employees and their access to LGBT+ support mechanisms**

Throughout Chapter 4: Analysis and findings, interviews with gender diverse skilled professionals, participants described the difficulties of navigating the workplace as employees who were gender diverse; in particular, those who identified as gender fluid and non-binary. Their narratives showed that gender diverse employees might have to engage in complex identity management strategies creatively and resiliently to avoid negative employment outcomes. Significantly, these processes spanned over their careers but were done so predominantly in isolation from forms of LGBT+ workplace support mechanisms.

T, Ash, and Leslie all had difficulties locating comprehensive LGBT+ policies in their workplace, which sometimes led them to feel unprotected and anxious when navigating difficult situations. Because of the inadequacy of their workplace policies, they were often forced to work towards their own inclusion and protection in the workplace. For instance, Leslie discussed her plan to develop relevant policies on behalf of her employer:

I also intend on providing them with some options for delivering um gender diversity and inclusion training um in the workplace... I see it as a policy vacuum. [When I transition, I expect ] the immediate response will be 'well what do we do?'...so rather than have HR scrambling, scratching their heads...I essentially want to present them with a business plan with 'here's what you do, it's actually what I want you to do'... so that weakness can potentially be an opportunity for me

Even where workplace inclusion policies and practices existed, employees interviewed often felt these did not adequately support their unique needs. They expressed a desire for more comprehensive policies and practices pertaining to areas such disclosure and transitioning, names and pronouns, identification documents, dress codes, anti-discrimination, facility accessibility and increased education for staff around gender diverse issues and needs.

There is some evidence that the absence of policies specifically addressing the unique needs of gender diverse employees correlates to the level of organisational preparedness to support this group (Barclay and Scott 2006; Brewster et al. 2014; Davidson 2016). The lack of knowledge and awareness around the needs of gender diverse employees is a significant contributor to organisations' failure to be proactive in this area. This results in the often haphazard and reactionary implementation of diversity policies and inclusive practices regarding gender diverse employees (Brewster et al. 2014: 165). Ash felt this was certainly the case when they tried and failed to find policies and practices aimed at supporting gender diverse employees in their various workplaces:

The whole point in having these policies is so they are there when you need them, and the thing is most companies don't have recurring trans people. So, if you're only implementing the policies after the fact you're doing it too late...it's not good enough to be reactive especially when it comes to policies that are only going to affect a very small number of people.

When asked whether they were aware of other support mechanisms that could have assisted them, they reported being either unaware or felt isolated from them. For instance, none of their workplaces had existing LGBT+ employee networks, although Ash had previously been involved in one at their prior workplace. T and Leslie were also unaware of LGBT+ workplace support mechanisms that are well known in the Australian corporate community, such as Out for Australia and Pride in Diversity. All three participants felt isolated from current support mechanisms but recognised the importance of having access to these as potentially making their workplace experiences more positive. T and Leslie were particularly excited upon learning about the existence of support mechanisms when I referred them to several during the interview. This finding indicates that these support mechanisms may not have enough visibility among gender diverse corporate workers and are currently limited in widely reaching certain corporate organisations.

The findings in this chapter highlight that navigating the process of becoming a skilled professional employee who is gender diverse requires immense courage, resilience and creativity. Significantly, participants' narratives underline how their professional identity formation and personal gender identity formation are not separate processes. Although participants may have relied on presenting in a cisnormative way to further their careers at various points, this strategic identity management was also enacted to carve out a future career where they could express themselves more fully as their gender identity continues to form, and even keep shifting. For Ash and Leslie, the need to express their affirmed gender identity more fully at work eventually became greater than their fear of negative repercussions and impacts on their professional standing.

While T was strategically conforming to cisgender norms to develop their professional identity, this too, was part of their process towards entering a career where they could embrace their non-binary transmasculine identity.

It is also important to note that T, Ash and Leslie may occupy a relatively privileged position compared to further marginalised members of the gender diverse community. Being skilled professionals with full-time employment, especially in the case of Leslie, who has both seniority as a worker and occupies an upper management position in her company, as well as their various education and training backgrounds certainly set them apart from those in the gender diverse community who are unemployed or in precarious part-time/casual employment, and who often face barriers to accessing the education and training necessary to develop a highly skilled professional career.

Finally, these findings also indicate that LGBT+ workplace support mechanisms may not be easily accessible nor visible to all gender diverse employees, indicating that the growing corporate interest of LGBT+ workplace inclusion, and the subsequent increase in LGBT+ workplace support mechanisms, has not occurred widely across the organisations in this sector. In light of this, the following chapter explores two LGBT+ workplace support mechanisms, highlighting what current strategies, achievements and challenges they face when advocating for gender diverse employees.



## **Chapter 5: Analysis and findings**

### **Interviews with representatives of LGBT+ workplace support mechanisms**

In Chapter 4: Analysis and findings, interviews with gender diverse skilled professionals, research participants described the difficulties of navigating the workplace as employees who were gender diverse, often doing so in isolation from LGBT+ support mechanisms. In this chapter, I explore the analysis and findings derived from interviews with representatives from two such LGBT+ workplace support mechanisms. The following sections highlight that while both representatives were eager to advocate for the needs of gender diverse, including gender non-binary employees, they faced a number of barriers in doing so, including advocating within a corporatised model to LGBT+ workplace activism. Additionally, the embedded homonormative and cisnormative nature underpinning past LGBT+ workplace activism and the leadership structures within meant they lacked the know-how. In addition to this, representatives' interviews highlight that LGBT+ workplace support mechanisms more readily reached already highly skilled professionals at large well-resourced companies, indicating there exists an unequal distribution of support that may exclude gender diverse employees in other areas of the corporate sector.

#### **LGBT+ workplace activism**

From the ground-breaking contribution of the Feminist and Civil Rights movements in identifying the workplace as central to fully achieving equality for women and people of colour, the importance of economic equality and workplace rights for sexual

minorities has also formed a central pillar to the lesbian and gay rights activist agenda (Hetland and Goodwin 2014; Scully and Segal 2002). LGBT+ workplace support mechanisms extend from the original and evolving Gay Liberation movement by bringing to light the issues and needs of the wider LGBT+ community within the workplace (Duggan 2002: 181). These have been vital in giving voice, visibility, and representation to gender diverse and sexual minorities previously silenced and rendered invisible in workplaces of the past (Bell et al. 2011). Support mechanisms go beyond simply promoting anti-discrimination and equal employment legislation. This is important because consistent evidence suggests that protective legislative policies and practices have often been inadequate in supporting the workplace inclusion of sexual minorities, but particularly gender diverse employees (Barclay and Scott 2006; Brewster et al 2014; Dietert and Dentice 2009).

As discussed in Chapter 2: Literature review, support mechanisms refer to various forms of organised groups/collectives/programs that aim to address the issues and needs pertinent to supporting LGBT+ employees and their employers in the workplace. These support mechanisms can be located within a corporation, such as LGBT+ intra-firm employee networks, or in the form of non-profit organisations which work in the area of LGBT+ workplace inclusion. Research has begun to recognise the corporate sector as reflecting a new frontier to social activism (Briscoe and Gupta 2016; Pettinicchio 2012; Scully and Segal in Lounsbury and Ventresca 2002). ‘Insider activism’ refers to employees advocating for change *within* organisations, commonly taking the form of employee networks (Briscoe and Gupta 2016: 674; Scully and Segal in Lounsbury and Ventresca 2002). ‘Outsider activism’ reflects individuals or collectives who are

"members of an independent social movement organization" and advocate for social justice change in the broader workplace equality debate (Briscoe and Gupta 2016: 671).

### **Interviews with representatives of LGBT+ workplace support mechanisms**

A close examination of insider and outsider LGBT+ support mechanisms in this study explores the extent to which gender diverse employees are supported, as well as current gaps in LGBT+ workplace inclusion policies and practices within the context of the corporate sector. In line with the insider/outsider concept, interviews were conducted with a representative, Alex, from the insider support mechanism 'McKinney Pride' an employee network within an international law firm, and Steve, from an outsider support mechanism, called the 'Rainbow Program', a non-profit employer support program that assists organisations in developing their LGBT+ inclusion and diversity policies and practices. Representative profiles and a description of each support mechanism are provided below.

### **Representative profiles**

Steve, a representative of the 'Rainbow Program', Self-identifies as a gay cisgender man

Steve is a representative of the 'Rainbow Program', a non-profit employer support program that assists organisations in developing their LGBT+ inclusion and diversity policies and practices. It seeks much of its funding from a range of sponsors, many of which are large corporations. Additionally, many of these organisations become formal 'members' of the Rainbow Program, and some sit on the advisory/steering committee in the program. Steve is primarily responsible for attracting and recruiting this membership base and advising the existing member on best practices in

workplace diversity and inclusion. His role as a representative in the ‘Rainbow Program’ comes off the back of a lifelong career spent working within an international IT corporation where he was also responsible for leading its workplace LGBT+ inclusion initiatives.

Alex, a representative of ‘McKinney Pride’ - self-identifies as a gay cisgender man:

Alex is a representative of McKinney Pride, an LGBT+ intra-firm employee network situated within an international law firm, where he has worked for over five years. As an employee who identifies as gay, supporting LGBT+ workplace inclusion has always been important to him. Alex was part of the original committee that pushed to have McKinney Pride formally recognised and funded as part of his firm’s diversity and inclusion program several years ago. Since then, Alex has been responsible for spearheading a number of initiatives for McKinney Pride. This has included collaborating with McKinney Pride’s counterparts’ overseas and other LGBT+ networks in Australia, developing and promoting LGBT+ workplace inclusion initiatives within the firm<sup>19</sup>, as well as making connections within, and supporting the wider LGBT+ community.

### **The ‘business case’ vs. the ‘social justice case’ for gender diverse inclusion**

Both Alex and Steve discussed the tension between advocating on the basis of a ‘social justice case’ versus the ‘business case’ as a barrier to their focus on gender diverse and

---

<sup>19</sup> Such as conducting internal employee surveys, hosting/proposing LGBT+ awareness events within and outside of his workplace and suggesting policy and practice change.

non-binary employees. For instance, they were both eager to address the needs of this employee group for social justice reasons, particularly by mentioning their awareness of the immense struggles facing the gender diverse community, and their barriers to gaining secure employment. However, they discussed the challenges of advocating within a corporatised model of LGBT+ workplace activism, where presenting a convincing 'business case' for gender diverse and especially non-binary employees was difficult. The business case, like all strategic business plans, means justifying the implementation of certain policies, programs, and practices in terms of a 'Return on Investment' that is informed by evidence-based strategies (Mananzala and Spade 2008: 58; Gotsis and Kortezi 2015: 17). For instance, the overarching rationale for any employee inclusion initiative is focused on supporting the recruitment and retention of workers from all backgrounds, by investing resources towards developing strategies for their inclusion (Gotsis and Kortezi 2015: 17; Berrey 2014)<sup>20</sup>. However, in order to do so requires the identification and measurement of what issues and needs particular groups in the workplace face, and this data can then be used to design evidenced-based pragmatic strategies that are also financially viable for corporate organisations (Mananzala and Spade 2008).

In terms of LGBT+ workers, the measurement and identification of their needs as captured in large-scale LGBT+ workplace inclusion indexes<sup>21</sup>, or internal employee surveys within workplaces have played a particularly significant role in guiding the inclusion agenda for both corporate organisations and non-profits in the area of LGBT+ workplace inclusion. Both Alex and Steve discussed the need to present a convincing

---

<sup>20</sup> These may include the introduction of flexible working hours for parents, health and well-being facilities etc.

<sup>21</sup> Pride in Diversity Australian workplace equality index 2018: Employee survey analysis, an annual survey benchmarking employer practices and scaffolding the needs of LGBT+ employees.

business case to justify a specific focus on certain LGBT+ issues. Steve explained that if corporate organisations:

[are going] to invest in something, they are going to measure it...if you can't measure it, you can't manage it [...] our focus has been very much on data-based justification for change because, at the end of the day, organisations will do something where there's a business case, you've [got to] have some measurement on a business case, you know an ROI for want of a better word...the return is obviously talent..."

Similarly, Alex discussed having to juggle the social justice and business cases when proposing McKinney Prides' agenda:

[The first reason we do it is] because it's the right thing to do, and the second one because it makes economic sense. You know, there's the business case, and there's all the data there that if people don't bring their whole selves to work, then they're not going to perform. So, unfortunately, those are the things that we need to be able to push these, um, initiatives forward but, you know, at the end of the day, we are in it because it's the right thing to do but sometimes you've [got to] get those stats and figures and things.

The 'business case' for the inclusion of lesbian and gay employees is now well established in the corporate sector. This is both because of their growing visibility and representation as an employee group, and the recognition that these employees make up an increasing percentage of the workforce (Mananzala and Spade 2008). As Alex mentioned, "obviously we spent a lot of time in the early, early years on the 'L' and the 'G' [...] I guess we're kind of working our way through the alphabet at the moment (laughing)". Lesbian and gay employees are well researched by organisational studies scholars and activist organisations alike. While this progress has led to the development of strategies, both within and outside of the workplace, specifically focused on

increasing the inclusion of sexual minorities<sup>22</sup>, gender diverse employees have long remained in the shadow of this success.

Recent years saw awareness of transgender people in the workplace increase, and organisational research specifically focused on this employee population has emerged. Interview findings indicate that representatives had a clear awareness of the importance of transgender issues but lacked comprehension of those concerning gender non-binary employees. However, Alex and Steve did offer some insights into areas they have worked on concerning transgender employees, and some of these can be extended towards supporting gender non-binary employees. Both representatives were aware of the accessibility of facilities as an important inclusion area for the gender diverse employees, particularly non-binary employees. For instance, Steve discussed how the issue of bathrooms tends to arise when consulting with the corporate community and provided an example of one large corporate organisation that had non-gendered bathrooms “seven stories away”,<sup>23</sup> while Alex noted his success at advocating for a non-gendered bathroom to be installed at his workplace during building renovations. Dress code policies and acknowledgement of the need to amend these was also important to the representatives<sup>24</sup>, as was flexibility around employee self-identification<sup>25</sup>. Steve discussed gaining identity documents and legal recognition of affirmed gender identity as a difficult process for gender diverse employees to navigate

---

<sup>22</sup> Companies supporting lesbian and gay employees by sponsoring lesbian and gay events (for example the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras), business networks specifically focused on lesbian or gay business networking/socialising (Such as the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Business Association), greater level of awareness of sexual minority workplace issues during awareness and diversity training.

<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, Steve drew parallels between lack of facility accessibility for trans and gender non-binary employees and the racial segregation of people of colour in the movie ‘Hidden Figure’s’ where “...the woman [of colour] had to walk like three kilometres to ... [go to the bathroom].

<sup>24</sup> Steve recounted one particular company that has designated a specific clothing allowance to support gender diverse employees transitioning from one gender to the other.

<sup>25</sup> For example, giving the option for gender diverse employees to self-identify in their affirmed gender during the recruitment process, or having systems in place to support them doing so within the workplace.

in the workplace. He made reference to the impact of workplaces predominantly having administrative systems that only offer binary choices of gender identification, such as on online job applications and internal human resource forms. He mentioned a need for processes whereby employees can request how they wish to be addressed during hiring, recruitment, and employment. Increasing awareness and development of inclusion strategies to support transgender workers is a positive development, and this focus may be able to be extended towards supporting gender non-binary employees.

Notably, even with their awareness regarding common challenges transgender employees face, Alex and Steve were frequently confused about the difference between transgender and gender non-binary people, and mostly lacked knowledge about the latter. Alex acknowledged his limited level of understanding around the issues and needs of gender diverse employees, including gender non-binary employees. This was a concern for him as someone leading LGBT+ workplace inclusion within the corporate sector:

I'm still learning about that, and I'm the leader of the network so, you know it's, it's a big piece of work too, um, kind of get your head around and how do you get that into the business and then...it's a tough space, it's a tough space... I still can't wrap my head around it, you know, even pronouns and you know, how people want to be addressed...things like that I struggle with and I'm kind of pushing this!

These findings reveal that even those assuming leadership roles in LGBT+ corporate activism still struggle to educate themselves about gender non-binarism. Due to this knowledge deficit, LGBT+ support organisations may be ill-prepared to support gender non-binary employees in their workplace. There also is some evidence that organisations faced with supporting gender diverse employees without the knowledge and practical guidance may also simply overlook this workplace inclusion area as too



complex, and instead push it to the periphery of the inclusion agenda (Dietert and Dentice 2009; Hill 2009; Ozturk and Tatli 2016). Both men consciously referred to their ignorance, but also reiterated their view that this employee group would inevitably become a more central aspect of the future agenda within their respective organisation, which they considered a natural evolution of the LGBT+ workplace inclusion focus.

### **A corporatised model of LGBT+ workplace activism**

Just like presenting a convincing ‘business case’, outsider support mechanisms, such as the non-profit run ‘Rainbow Program’, may have to advocate for LGBT+ workplace inclusion in a way that appeals to corporate organisations, in particular for the purpose of attracting funding and sponsorships (Richardson 2005; Duggan 2002; Spade 2015; Mananzala and Spade 2008). However, in doing so, these non-profits become accountable to their corporate sponsors. This is especially the case when these sponsors are also the members of the advisory or steering board, of which many are in the ‘Rainbow Program’. Steve noted that the ‘Rainbow Program’ has an “advisory group of senior executives, gay and straight, from our [membership base] who give us advice and guidance [and] is the most hands-on”. The advisory group meets four times a year, members set the agenda for these meeting by providing Steve with feedback on the ‘Rainbow Programs’ initiatives/guidance, discussing areas they feel should be included in the program, as well as providing their insights on LGBT+ issues that have come up in their organisation.

Research has shown that to secure funding, many of these organisations and programs strive to obtain legitimacy and authority by reflecting the norms of corporate

organisations. This is evidenced by Steve, who spoke about the importance of establishing the respectability, legitimacy, and authority of the ‘Rainbow Program’ in order to secure a membership base to fund its initiatives. He emphasised that the ‘Rainbow Program’ is “quite business-like in targeting organisations [...] with high worth employers [...] on the share market” and explained that it has established legitimacy in the corporate sector because of the “deep expertise” of its professional staff in areas such as LGBT+ workplace policy and practice development as well as auditing, research, advice on building successful LGBT+ employee networks, training and education. This reflects a ‘top-down’ approach to LGBT+ workplace activism, where experts in the field, who are both highly educated and skilled professionals, develop initiatives. Additionally, Steve’s comments may help explain why support mechanisms have not been visible or easily accessible to all corporate organisations and their LGBT+ employees, highlighting that initiatives like ‘Rainbow Program’ are likely to be aimed towards large, well-resourced corporations who are more likely to have funding potential. This was evidenced in the employees interviewed who felt isolated from LGBT+ support mechanisms, potentially because their companies were not as well-resourced in comparison to larger corporate entities.

This top-down-approach, often influenced by corporate themselves, is concerning particularly when considering the significant knowledge deficit that exists across the corporate sector around even a basic understanding of gender diverse identities and associated issues. As Steve explicitly noted:

I mean not just the organisations but management have a very low comprehension of the ‘T’ and ‘I’ and ‘non-binary’ [...] they see, they know,

and they think they get ‘G’ and ‘L’, and potentially ‘B’ [but they] don’t know trans, they think potentially trans are drag queens on Oxford Street<sup>26</sup>

Some research has criticised this corporatised model to LGBT+ workplace activism as primarily focused upon top-down strategies for LGBT+ inclusion, and neglecting the issues and needs of those most marginalised in the workforce. For instance, Mananzala and Spade (2008: 56) have argued that this approach:

Often leads to concentrating decision-making power in the hands of people with race, education and class privilege rather than in the hands of those bearing the brunt of oppression. Consequently, the priorities and implementation methods of organisations frequently do not reflect the perspective or approach that would be taken by the people most directly affected by oppression.

### **Gender diverse representation in the workplace and workplace activism**

There has been a growing interest in increasing the visibility of gender diverse, particularly transgender professionals, within the corporate sector and this representation is vital in filling current knowledge gaps and promoting their rights to be addressed by corporate LGBT+ activism. Moreover, increasing representation of gender diverse voices in non-profit programs and initiatives, such as the ‘Rainbow Program’, has also gained more interest. For example, the ‘Rainbow Program’ has emphasised the need to include transgender voices in their initiatives particularly as Steve felt that:

One of the realities of the trans population is, I think and again I don’t have true data...is that many trans individuals end up in community workplaces. [...] Why? Because of [the] hidden biases, unconscious biases [and] not feeling they

---

<sup>26</sup> A street in Sydney famous for being the site of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, as well as it’s lively LGBT+ nightlife.

can fit into a normal organisational culture. [...] There's few role models in the trans community that are what I call 'organisationally savvy...having some grounded role models in the [...] in the trans space...I think is critical..."

This finding reveals that the better representation of gender diverse employees within forms of LGBT+ corporate activism may be conditional and based on their level of assimilation to 'normal' gendered expectations within corporate cultures. Specifically, non-profits, such as the 'Rainbow Program', focus their support on LGBT+ employees who most closely resemble cisnormative professionals, or identities that fit within dominant corporate cultures. This was further emphasised in Steve's discussion about who the 'Rainbow Program' was most likely to consult with when planning their future gender diverse inclusion initiatives:

there's...two distinct groups in trans. I think those two are [both] in the community... 'Activists'...and frankly um, they're vocal and sensitive. But there is a smaller group, visible group that are focused on career progression, in traditional organisations and I want to hear more from them.

Such a finding highlights that the 'Rainbow Program' is primarily focused upon reaching a small group of already highly skilled gender diverse professionals. This makes sense, given the program's accountability to large corporations who form its membership base, particularly as part of its responsibility is to assist organisations in attracting and retaining skilled LGBT+ professionals.

Steve's comments may reveal the privileging of certain minority groups over others in the 'Rainbow Programs' inclusion agenda. That is, those employees who reflect the professional ideals underpinning corporate culture are considered 'deserving' (Mananzala and Spade 2008; Spade 2015). This creates an environment in which minorities are only conditionally accepted as worthy of institutional support (Spade

2015). Such uneven prioritisation reflects class privilege, whereby certain segments in the LGBT+ population are more likely to be the policy focus thus largely excluding those who are most marginalised and underrepresented (Vitulli 2010), such as gender non-binary employees who remain an invisible minority within the workplace. In Steve's narrative, it was clear who he felt most sympathetic to. In recounting an occasion where a community activist group requested affirmative action planning be included in the 'Rainbow Programs' LGBT+ workplace inclusion agenda, he recited his response:

we have to be realistic here [...] that sort of quota-based [approach doesn't work] if one of those affirmed people come off the rails and you know, not perform, and, you know, it does cause some damage in some ways. So, you [have got to] realise what you wish for...at the end of the day, we're trusted advisors ... and we would like to understand what better practice is, [and] what the employee, i.e. the talent we're targeting [...] want, and then counselling our membership which are *employers*.

As discussed in Chapter 4: Analysis and findings, interviews with gender diverse skilled professionals, many gender diverse individuals often hide their stigmatised gender identity to avoid negative employment outcomes during recruitment, as well as after becoming integrated into the workplace. Moreover, these employees often engage in strategic identity management in order to develop a professional identity and career within highly cisnormative work environments. For the employees interviewed in this research, becoming a skilled professional was, in some ways, a process they had to go through before feeling able to comfortably and authentically express their unique gender identities in the workplace. As already discussed in the literature review, many gender diverse individuals are doubly marginalised, first because they tend to hide their stigmatised identity, and second because being visibly gender transgressive exposes them significant barriers in gaining secure employment. Therefore, a more nuanced

focus on the variety of difficult processes gender diverse employees navigate over their careers in order to gain access to professional opportunities is necessary to planning for their inclusion, rather than only a focus on supporting those already integrated within workplaces. This can be best met by more critically examining the effects of cisnormativity attached to professional identities and embedded within corporate cultures, that leads to narrowly targeted LGBT+ support primarily towards gender diverse individuals considered ‘deserving’.

Interview findings suggest that forms of LGBT+ workplace activism, both inside and outside of the corporate workplaces, need to revise their top-down approach to planning for gender diverse inclusion. This can be achieved by focusing on the lived experiences of gender diverse individuals. This sentiment was echoed by Alex, who felt that a number of non-profit organisations and programs that McKinney Pride has collaborated with had excluded the voices of gender diverse as well as intersex individuals. Alex candidly shared his view regarding the level of support provided to gender diverse people by a non-profit responsible for developing best-practice LGBT+ inclusion initiatives to assist organisations across all sectors, and which he had previously collaborated with:

[The trans and um, intersex community organisations [...] don’t get on with [the non-profit]. Which to me [is] disconcerting because [that organisation] is the one telling the corporates what to do, and if they’re not getting the right information, or they’re not engaged with the organisations that are at the grassroots of these things, then that’s worrying...” [ It’s important ] that we get it right.

The representation and visibility of transgender skilled professionals in the corporate sector, particularly those who are active in LGBT+ workplace activism, is important in

making gender diverse employees feel greater acceptance, as well as in highlighting that it is possible to openly be gender diverse and have a successful high-profile career. This was particularly important for Ash's, one of the employees interviewed, perceptions of their future career as a person who is gender diverse. Additionally, this visibility and representation is also central to bringing gender diverse employee issues and needs on the LGBT+ workplace activism agenda, as currently, these have been largely excluded.

However, the underlying rhetoric of 'deservingness' underpinning LGBT+ workplace activism may reinforce cisnormative and gender binary norms that are embedded in both corporate cultures and notions of what a 'normal' professional should look like. Such rhetoric overlooks a number of important factors. Firstly, professional identities are largely based on conformity to gender binary expectations (how male and female professional should appear), attached to cisnormative assumptions. This discourse essentially stigmatises and pre-emptively devalues non-conforming gender diverse employees status as 'professionals' compared to their conforming cisgendered and transgender counterparts. Finally, the focus on targeting initiatives towards a small group of gender diverse employees who are already skilled professionals working within the corporate sector shifts the attention away from critically analysing what organisational barriers stop most likely a significant percentage of gender diverse individuals from even accessing employment opportunities and becoming highly skilled professionals. These findings suggest that access to LGBT+ workplace support mechanisms is unequally distributed towards certain members of the LGBT+ workforce.

### **Homonormativity, cisnormativity, and mainstream acceptance**

A growing body of research, particularly from transgender studies, have criticised the corporatisation of the wider LGBT+ social movement (Spade 2015; Duggan 2002; Mananzala and Spade 2008; David 2017; Vitulli 2010). Specifically, it has been argued that corporate LGBT+ inclusion and diversity is based on assimilation and normalisation of certain groups within in the LGBT+ community while excluding others (Duggan 2002: 4; David 2017; Vitulli 2010; Mananzala and Spade 2008; Richardson 2005). That is, those groups most predominantly represented in wider LGBT+ social activism both within and outside the workplace, are those who most closely resemble the social norms and traditional values underpinned by cisgenderism and ‘heteronormativity’ (Duggan 2002; Rosenfeld 2009; David 2017; Vitulli 2010; Richardson 2005). Arguably, sexual minorities’, particularly lesbian and gay individuals, demands for greater recognition in areas such as same-sex marriage and same-sex adoption, have been addressed more widely because they align with the same ideals as their heterosexual and cisgendered counterparts (Vitulli 2010; Rumens 2018: 4; Duggan 2002: 176). Some scholars have identified a growing acceptance of these identities, issues and needs as reflecting a “new homonormativity” that largely excludes the gender diverse community whose issues and needs remain stigmatised (Duggan 2002: 179; Vitulli 2010).

Moreover, Spade (2015), Duggan (2002), David (2017) and Vitulli (2010) have discussed the way in which the wider LGBT+ rights movement has been co-opted by



neoliberal ideals of individual-based rights connected to consumerism and traditional family values. Specifically, most recent LGBT+ activism has revolved around gaining the same rights, recognition, and social status as ‘mainstream’ heterosexual people. This is evidenced in the predominant focus of LGBT+ advocacy in areas such as same-sex marriage, same-sex adoption, family benefits, and equal access to employment (McKeown 2018; David 2017; Spade 2015; Duggan 2002). The Same Sex Marriage (SSM) debate that took place in Australia during 2017 is a good example of the effects of mainstreaming in the wider LGBT+ social movement. Research on marriage equality in other countries has highlighted that the principal focus on same-sex marriage reflects the partial inclusion of some within the LGBT+ umbrella, while further marginalising those considered non-homonormative. This conditional inclusion into mainstream LGBT+ activism has been a source of disappointment and alienation for transgender and gender non-binary community members whose voices were largely excluded in the Australian SSM debate.

Some research has made the link between the normalisation and mainstream acceptance of certain sexual minorities and an increased uptake of organisational focus on inclusion and diversity, which has been particularly aimed at supporting lesbian and gay workers (David 2017: 29; Duggan 2002:179; Hill 2009:40). Richardson (2005) argued that the rising interest in the inclusion of sexual minorities is largely motivated by economic rationality rather than social justice, where business strategies for minority inclusion tend to selectively spotlight those who reflect the dominant social norms and values of stakeholders and the consumer base.

Some scholars have questioned the effectiveness of contemporary forms of LGBT+ activism, as it too narrowly focuses on obtaining these individual mainstream rights, rather than addressing the systemic and structural inequalities facing many individuals within the LGBT+ community (Ozturk and Tatli 2016; Spade 2015; Vitulli 2010, p.159; Richardson 2005). This is particularly important to consider in relation to those further marginalised in the gender diverse community who face significant inequality and disadvantage in all aspect of their lives including barriers to education, health and well-being services, employment and even legal and social recognition. The normalisation and mainstreaming of certain groups and their issues/needs, particularly lesbian and gay individuals, within the LGBT+ community has meant that they are able to more easily access basic rights enjoyed by all. Duggan (2002: 179) critiques this mainstreaming of the LGBT+ equality activism:

It does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption.

Alex and Steve discussed how the achievement of marriage equality through the mainstream acceptance of same-sex couples played an important role in the promotion of their LGBT+ workplace inclusion agenda. For instance, Alex explained the importance of alliance with the dominant majorities for his activism:

It's literally, you know, the [heterosexual and cisgender] allies are so important to what we do... and you know, we saw that during the marriage equality campaign. It's like they're the ones who will tell the stories and, you know, have those conversations that will change hearts and minds... the firm took a position and were very vocal, well, they took their position and we were allowed to have firm events and things like that, it was obviously in the 'yes' side of the [marriage equality] campaign.

Similarly, Steve discussed the rapid uptake of corporate sponsorship of the ‘Rainbow Programs’ LGBT+ inclusion program following the SSM debate. In fact, he discussed how many companies showed more interest in their inclusion program following the debate:

There’s no other way to look at this acceleration in [interest] apart from saying that the conversation went to every house in Australia and again the community didn’t like the process, I understand that um, but, um, it was a silver lining.

These findings indicate that the gender diverse community remains on the periphery of LGBT+ activism generally. Moreover, these findings show that this group’s position on the periphery is caused by more than just a lack of visibility, representation and awareness of the issues and needs of the gender diverse community. Their position there may also be a consequence of the ‘conditional acceptance’ granted to those within the LGBT+ community, particularly lesbian and gay individuals, who strive to achieve the same rights in areas that most reflect the ideals of their cisgender and heterosexual counterparts. These findings suggest that this conditional acceptance extends to the realm of the workplace, whereby the focus on particular issues of LGBT+ inclusion may be determined by which groups have obtained wider mainstream social acceptance. Ultimately, corporate organisations may be more likely to pursue certain LGBT+ initiatives that support the ‘bottom line’. That is, their business practices need to align with the morals of their consumer base and stakeholders, which is heavily influenced by cisgender and heterosexual norms. This was evident in Steve and Alex’s discussion around the mainstream social acceptance of same-sex marriage in Australia and the immediate uptake of corporate interest and membership in the area of LGBT+ workplace inclusion.

Although social awareness about the difficulties facing the gender diverse community has grown recently, there is still a long way to go before this community gains the same level of recognition as their lesbian and gay counterparts. In acknowledging this, corporate organisations and the support mechanisms that guide them, may need to grasp the pivotal role they play in breaking down the barriers facing gender diverse employees both within and outside of the workplace. This can be achieved by taking a more proactive stance in promoting and developing workplace strategies for gender diverse employee inclusion, whether or not wider social acceptance has occurred. In the following closing section to this thesis, a brief overview of the main findings is discussed as are recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

With a focus on highly skilled professionals, this thesis sought to contribute to the growing literature on the experiences of gender diverse employees, an employee population who face some of the most severe forms of workplace disadvantage and discrimination. While both corporate and scholarly interest is beginning to concentrate its attention towards exploring the experiences of gender diverse individuals in broad social areas such as health and well-being, education and *barriers* to employment, to date, a specific focus on gender diverse employees' unique experiences *within* the workplace has received relatively scarce scholarly attention. Additionally, gender non-binary employee issues and needs remain largely unexplored in both organisational policy and practice as well as in sociological and other fields of research generally. Therefore, this thesis also paid attention to the way the workplace experiences of gender non-binary employees, may overlap or diverge from that of their transgender

counterparts. Through the use of semi-structured interviews, this research examined the lived experiences of individual gender diverse skilled professionals, as well as the role LGBT+ workplace support mechanisms play in their advocacy and representation.

Chapter 4: Analysis and findings, interviews with gender diverse skilled professionals, endeavoured to answer several question areas including how being gender diverse can impact skilled professionals' experiences in corporate workplaces, how these experiences diverged or overlapped between the transgender and gender non-binary employees interviewed, as well as how employees gender identity intersected with factors such as their educational backgrounds and occupational statuses to shape employees' experiences in terms of both oppression and privilege. Findings suggest that the embedded cisnormativity and gender binarism was prevalent in every facet of the workplace, both as a system and a culture. Because of this, participants faced considerable difficulties navigating areas such as hiring and recruitment, being socially and legally recognised in their affirmed identity, the gendered nature of the workplace environment, expressing and communicating their authentic identity and even when having casual conversations with colleagues in the workplace. The findings also suggest that experiences of both overt and covert discrimination may continue to be a reality for some gender diverse workers, even if occupying a relatively privileged position as highly skilled full-time workers. Moreover, throughout Chapter 4: Analysis and findings, interviews with gender diverse skilled professionals, findings indicated that the workplace experiences of the employees who identified as gender non-binary both differed and overlapped in some ways to that of the employee who identified as a transgender woman across a number of contexts.

Most significantly, a finding in this thesis and an area that has received little attention to date, was the expansion around the understandings and assumptions underpinning transitioning and disclosure processes for gender diverse employees in the workplace. Specifically, this thesis found that the gender non-binary employees' disclosure and transitioning processes were experienced in a somewhat qualitatively different way to the transgender employee. That is, their transitioning was a journey without a distinct end. Rather, this excursion was ongoing, fluid and shifted even on a day-to-day basis. Moreover, because of the complexities of coming to terms with such fluid identity formation, gender non-binary employees often felt pressure to conform to comprehensible ways of doing gender, or ways that fit within the gender binary expectations attached to cisnormativity, at various times throughout their careers. However, complex and confusing as this may have been, doing so seemed to be a necessary part of their journey towards understanding how to embrace their identity in a way that made sense to them.

Most significantly, my findings point to the need to expand the concept of 'disclosure'. Currently, this concept implies that gender diverse employees gender formation occurs only in private and is then announced publicly once an employee has reached their distinct affirmation journey. While this was certainly felt by participants at various points in their careers, such a conceptualisation overlooks an important aspect of being a gender diverse professional. That is, experiences within the workplace are intertwined with the on-going process of each employee's gender identity formation itself, where their gender and professional identities were moulded simultaneously and throughout their careers.

In Chapter 5: Analysis and findings, interviews with representatives of LGBT+ workplace support mechanisms, I endeavoured to answer what achievements and challenges faced support mechanisms in advocating for the needs of gender diverse employees in the corporate sector, including how these areas are considered in terms of support for gender non-binary employees. Through interviews with representatives of two support mechanisms, one intra-firm employee network and one non-profit run employer support program, findings revealed they were eager to expand their understanding around how best to advocate for gender diverse employees, but they faced a number of barriers in being able to do so.

They highlighted the challenges encountered when advocating within a corporatised model of LGBT+ workplace activism, including the pressure to present a convincing ‘business case’, however, lack of understanding and data, particularly on gender non-binary employee issues and needs, made doing so quite hard. Gender non-binary participants’ narratives particularly highlight that a more nuanced understanding in areas such as disclosure and transitioning/self-affirmation in contexts that ranged from hiring to integration in the workplace, requires urgent attention from both research and LGBT+ support mechanisms themselves to inform the development of both the pragmatic and effective strategies to gender diverse employee workplace inclusion. Significantly, these findings also show that the cisnormative and homonormative nature underpinning past LGBT+ activism and leaders within it, meant both representatives and their respective support mechanisms, lacked the practical know-how around how to best support gender diverse employees, or even where to start, particularly in relation to gender non-binary inclusion.

It became evident that there may be an unequal distribution of support, as these support mechanisms most readily reached large, well-resourced organisations where the LGBT+ employees most likely to be the target of inclusion initiatives were a small group of already highly skilled professionals. This inclusion may have been based on their level of conformity to cisgender and gender binary expectation of what a professional should look like. Underpinning this, findings revealed a broader social issue exists, that significantly influenced who and what areas of LGBT+ inclusion were focused upon within support mechanisms. Specifically, there seemed to be a connection between the level of mainstream social acceptance of certain sub-group within the LGBT+ community, those who most closely resembled cisgendered and heterosexual norms and ideals, and the level of corporate interest in advocating on their behalf.

Gender diverse individuals occupy a stigmatised status within and outside of the workplace, and as such, mainstream social acceptance still has a long way to go. These findings suggest that including the voices and insights sought directly from the gender diverse community itself can provide much-needed guidance to support mechanisms, who have the potential to lead the way in advocating for this group both within and beyond the workplace. This thesis suggests that support mechanisms hoping to pursue gender diverse inclusion should collaborate directly with gender diverse employees themselves as well as the wider community when designing policies and practices. Support mechanisms should place particular attention on ensuring their hiring and recruitment process are more accommodating to gender diverse applicants by implementing systems where prospective employees are able to self-identify and request being referred to in the workplace while they are going through the process of obtaining consistent legal documentation, or even despite obtaining it. Other areas that



can be incorporated into policies and practices include flexible dress codes, protection and accessibility when using workplace facilities and gender diverse awareness and education training, as some examples.

### **Recommendations for future research**

In light of the findings presented in this thesis, directions for future research could include a longitudinal study that focuses upon tracing gender diverse individuals career trajectories from education, entering their first job to integration within the workforce. Such research could provide much needed additional insight into the diversity of issues and needs facing this population across industries and workplaces, and across a longer period of time. This is particularly important to consider as the findings in this thesis show that gender formation and the development of professional identities spanning an employee's entire career, may be intrinsically linked, shaping both how one comes to understand their identity as well as how they subsequently experience their workplaces. Additionally, it was beyond the scope to include a greater focus on the intersection of a greater array of different social identities, such as race and physical ability, with social positions, such as occupational status at different levels within an organisation, and these may shape the experiences of a wider variety of gender diverse employees. Therefore, a longitudinal study incorporating these areas is vital in developing a greater understanding of how best to support gender diverse community within and beyond the workplace.

There are many exciting and new directions on the horizon for research focused on gender diverse employment, and organisations themselves are recognising the

important role they play in their advocacy. The findings collected through narratives from representatives of support mechanisms and the stories from gender diverse employees themselves show that a new frontier to workplace gender equality may be about to emerge.

## Appendix A: Employee recruitment flyer



### **Research Project: ‘Non-Binary Trans\* Skilled Professionals in Corporate Workplaces’**

- Are you employed full-time in a corporate private sector company?
- Do you identify as gender diverse or with a gender that fluctuates along or outside the continuum of male/masculine or female/feminine (e.g. hybrid, fluid, non-binary)?
- Are 18+?

You are invited to participate in an interview as part of a study exploring the unique workplace experiences of Non-Binary Trans\* skilled professionals in Australian corporate sector workplaces. The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of NBT\* professionals in their daily working lives. It is hoped that the research findings will contribute to creating more inclusive workplaces for NBT\* employees across Australia. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to take part in an interview of approximately 1-1.5 hours. If you would like further details or wish to participate in this project, please contact the research team on the information supplied below.

We hope you able to take part in this study.

Yours,  
Elizabeth Bennett  
Department of Sociology  
Macquarie University

## Appendix B: Participant information and consent form

Faculty of the Arts  
Department of Sociology  
Macquarie University NSW 2109



**Co- Investigator:** Elizabeth Bennett  
Contact email: [elizabeth.bennett@hdr.mq.edu.au](mailto:elizabeth.bennett@hdr.mq.edu.au)  
**Chief Investigator/ Supervisor:** Dr Kumiko Kawashima  
Contact Email: [kumiko.kawashima@mq.edu.au](mailto:kumiko.kawashima@mq.edu.au)

### Participant Information and Consent Form

Name title: 'Non-Binary Trans\* Skilled Professionals in Corporate Workplaces'

Thank you for your interest in participating in the research project 'Non-Binary Trans\* Skilled Professionals in Corporate Workplaces'. The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of NBT\* professionals in their daily working lives. It is hoped that the research findings will contribute to creating more inclusive workplaces for NBT\* employees across Australia. This research project is being conducted by Elizabeth Bennett to meet the requirements of a Master of Research under the supervision of Dr Kumiko Kawashima of the Department of Sociology (+61-2-9850-7943; [kumiko.kawashima@mq.edu.au](mailto:kumiko.kawashima@mq.edu.au)).

You are invited to participate in an interview, which will last approximately 1-1.5 hours. With your consent, interviews will be recorded using a digital voice recorder or handwritten notes. The interview will take place in a location agreed with you. A range of topics will be explored including your workplace experiences, challenges faced as well as broader discussion of policies and practices aimed toward supporting NBT\* employees within your workplace. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence. If you decide to withdraw, any information you have provided may also be withdrawn. Any information that can identify you will remain confidential. The interview data will only be accessible to Elizabeth Bennett and Dr Kawashima. The data will be securely stored and only disclosed as required by law. An executive summary of the results of the data can be made available to you on request. You may feel that some of the questions asked are stressful or upsetting. If you do not wish to answer a question, you may skip it, go to the next question, or you may stop immediately. If you become upset or distressed as a result of your participation in the research project, the research team will be able to arrange for counseling or other appropriate support. Any counseling or support will be provided by qualified staff who are not members of the research team.

While there will be no direct benefit to you from your participation in this research, your participation may help inform the development workplace support systems for other Non-Binary Trans\* skilled professionals in the future. The result of this project may be published or presented in a variety of forums.

### **Interview Consent Form**

I, *(participant's name)* have read *(or, where appropriate, have had read to me)* and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Block letters)

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Block letters)

Investigator's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics & Integrity (telephone (02) 9850 7854; email [ethics@mq.edu.au](mailto:ethics@mq.edu.au)). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

**(INVESTIGATOR'S [OR PARTICIPANT'S] COPY)**

## Appendix C: Project information and consent form

Department of Sociology

Faculty of Arts

Macquarie University NSW 2109

**Co- Investigator:** Elizabeth Bennett

Contact email: [elizabeth.bennett@hdr.mq.edu.au](mailto:elizabeth.bennett@hdr.mq.edu.au)

**Chief Investigator/ Supervisor:** Dr Kumiko Kawashima

Contact Email: [kumiko.kawashima@mq.edu.au](mailto:kumiko.kawashima@mq.edu.au)



### Project Information and Consent Form

Project Title: 'Non-Binary Trans\* Skilled Professionals in Corporate Workplaces'

Dear ([representative](#)),

Thank you for your interest in participating in the research project 'Non-Binary Trans\* Skilled Professionals in Corporate Workplaces'. The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of NBT\* skilled professionals in their daily working lives as well as the current strategies LGBT+ Employee Support Networks use to assist NBT\* and other gender variant employees. It is hoped that the research findings will contribute to creating more inclusive workplaces for NBT\* employees across Australia.

This research project is being conducted by Elizabeth Bennett to meet the requirements of a Master of Research under the supervision of Dr Kumiko Kawashima of the Department of Sociology (+61-2-9850-7943 ; [kumiko.kawashima@mq.edu.au](mailto:kumiko.kawashima@mq.edu.au)).

As a representative of ([name of the organisation](#)) you are invited to participate in an interview, which will last approximately 1-1.5 hours. With your consent, interviews will be recorded using a digital voice recorder, or hand written notes. The interview will take place in a location agreed with you. It will explore the following aspects of your organisations:

- Current policies & practices relating to gender identity
- Activities to supporting NBT\* employees
- Achievements & challenges
- Future goals

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence. If you decide to withdraw, any information you have provided may also be withdrawn. Any information that can identify you or your organisation will remain confidential. You will not be asked about commercially sensitive information relating to your organisation. The

interview data will only be accessible to Elizabeth Bennett and Dr Kawashima. The data will be securely stored and only disclosed as required by law. While there will be no direct benefit to you and your organisation from your participation in this research, your participation may help inform the development workplace support systems for other Non-Binary Trans\* skilled professionals in the future. The results of this project may be published or presented in a variety of forums.

### Interview Consent Form

I, *(representatives/participant's name)* at *(network/organisations name)* have read and understood the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Block letters)

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Block letters)

Investigator's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics & Integrity (telephone (02) 9850 7854; email [ethics@mq.edu.au](mailto:ethics@mq.edu.au)). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

**(INVESTIGATOR'S [OR PARTICIPANT'S] COPY)**

## Appendix D: Macquarie University Ethics Committee approval letter

Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor  
(Research)

Research Services  
Research Hub, Building C5C East  
Macquarie University NSW 2109  
Australia T: +61 (2) 9850 4459  
<http://www.research.mq.edu.au/> ABN 90 952  
801 237



30 April 2018

Dear Dr Kawashima

**Reference No:** 5201800311

**Title:** “Non-Binary Trans\* Skilled Professionals in Corporate Workplaces”

Thank you for submitting the above application for ethical and scientific review. Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) (Human Sciences & Humanities) considered your application.

I am pleased to advise that ethical and scientific approval has been granted for this project to be conducted by Ms Elizabeth Bennett under the supervision of Dr Kumiko Kawashima.

**Approval Date:** 27 April 2018

This research meets the requirements set out in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007 – Updated May 2015) (the *National Statement*).

### Standard Conditions of Approval:

1. Continuing compliance with the requirements of the *National Statement*, which is available at the following website:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/book/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research>

2. This approval is valid for five (5) years, subject to the submission of annual reports. Please submit your reports on the anniversary of the approval for this protocol.

3. All adverse events, including events which might affect the continued ethical and scientific acceptability of the project, must be reported to the HREC within 72 hours.

4. Proposed changes to the protocol and associated documents must be submitted to the Committee for approval before implementation.



It is the responsibility of the Chief investigator to retain a copy of all documentation related to this project and to forward a copy of this approval letter to all personnel listed on the project.

Should you have any queries regarding your project, please contact the Ethics Secretariat on

98504194 or by email  
[ethics.secretariat@mq.edu.au](mailto:ethics.secretariat@mq.edu.au)

The HREC (Human Sciences and Humanities) Terms of Reference and Standard Operating

Procedures are available from the Research Office website at:

<https://www.mq.edu.au/research/ethics-integrity-and-policies/ethics/human-ethics>

The HREC (Human Sciences and Humanities) wishes you every success in your

research. Yours sincerely



**Dr Karolyn White**

Director, Research Ethics & Integrity,

Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee (Human Sciences and Humanities)

This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007) and the *CPMP/ICH Note for Guidance*

## **Appendix E: Employees - interview topics**

### **Personal Profile**

- Asking Etiquette – (option to self-identify)
- Pseudonym/s
- Age
- Educational background

### **Career Trajectory**

- Past employment (What industries, length of time employed, mode of employment, position title)
- Current employment status
  - o type of company
  - o international/national
  - o start date/length of time employed
  - o mode of employment (FT,PT,C)
  - o qualifications needed
  - o position, main roles and responsibilities

### **Gender Identity, Expression and Communication**

- transition/self-affirmation journey
- How participants understood/explained their gender
- Gender formation processes outside of the workplace
- Communication of gender identity to others outside of the workplace
- Level of disclosure of identity in previous employment

### **Workplace Experiences**

- Hiring & Recruitment processes
- Awareness of gender diverse related policies and practices in the workplace
- Factors underpinning disclosure, transitioning/self-affirmation
- Day-to-day difficulties in the workplace
- Positive and/or negative experiences in the workplace

### **Support Accessed**

- Personal strategies navigating difficulties in the workplace
- Level of support in the workplace (colleagues, upper management, human resources)
- Support outside of the workplace
- Access/awareness of LGBT+ workplace support mechanisms

### **Career Opportunities**

- Perceptions of future career
- Industry/profession

## **Appendix F: Support mechanisms - interview topics**

Role as a representative:

- Position
- Length of time in network/program
- Main roles and responsibilities

### **Network/program profile**

- Background (establishment, original goals, target population)
- Governance structure
- Guidelines/code of conduct etc.
- How is the agenda/focus determined?
- Number of members/individuals part of program/network
- Funding

### **Network/program objectives**

- Aims, philosophy and goals
- Priorities in LGBT+ workplace inclusion planning
- Issues and needs identified for LGBT+ workers (how they were determined)
- Current broad strategies to LGBT+ workplace inclusion

### **Assessment of activities so far and lesson learnt/what's coming next in terms of gender diverse inclusion**

- Level of awareness/ knowledge around gender diverse employee identities, issues and needs
- Level of awareness/ knowledge around gender non-binary employee identities, issues and needs
- Awareness of gender diverse related legislation, policies and practice
- Strategies to supporting gender diverse employee inclusion
- Areas of focus for gender diverse/non-binary employee inclusion
- Examples of success
- Future plans for gender diverse/non-binary workplace inclusion
- Challenges and difficulties faced advocating for gender diverse employees

### **Collaboration and support**

- LGBT+ workplace inclusion non-profits
- LGBT+ intra-firm networks
- Support within mechanism
- Connecting with the LGBT+ community
- What support is needed

## References

- Acker, J. (2006) 'Inequality Regimes: Gender, class, and race in organizations'. *Gender & Society* 20(4): 441-464.
- Austin, A. (2016) "'There I am": A grounded theory study of young adults navigating a transgender or gender nonconforming identity within a context of oppression and invisibility'. *Sex Roles* 75(5): 215-230.
- Australian Human Rights Commission. (2014) Face the Facts: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people.
- Badgett, M.V.L., Lau, H., Sears, B. and Ho, D. (2007) Bias in the workplace: Consistent evidence of sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination. University of California: The Williams Institute, 1-27.
- Barclay, J.M. and Scott, L.J. (2006) 'Transsexuals and workplace diversity: A case of "change" management'. *Personnel Review* 35(4): 487-502.
- Barratt, M.J., Ferris, J.A. and Lenton, S. (2015) 'Hidden populations, online purposive sampling, and external validity: Taking off the blindfold'. *Field Methods* 27(1): 3-21.
- Bassett-Jones, N. (2005) 'The paradox of diversity management, creativity and innovation'. *Creativity and Innovation Management* 14(2): 169-175.
- Bell, M.P., Özbilgin, M.F., Beauregard, T.A. and Sürgevil, O. (2011) 'Voice, silence, and diversity in 21st century organizations: Strategies for inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender employees'. *Human Resource Management* 50(1): 131-146.
- Bendl, R., Fleischmann, A. and Walenta, C. (2008) 'Diversity management discourse meets queer theory'. *Gender in Management: An International Journal* 23(6): 382-394.
- Bergen, C.W.V., Soper, B. and Foster, T. (2002) 'Unintended negative effects of diversity management'. *Public Personnel Management* 31(2): 239-251.
- Berrey, E. (2014) 'Breaking glass ceilings, ignoring dirty floors: The culture and class bias of diversity management'. *American Behavioral Scientist* 58(2): 347-370.
- Brewster, M.E., Velez, B.L., Mennicke, A. and Tebbe, E. (2014) 'Voices from beyond: A thematic content analysis of transgender employees' workplace experiences'. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity* 1(2): 159-169.
- Briscoe, F. and Gupta, A. (2016) 'Social activism in and around organizations'. *The Academy of Management Annals* 10(1): 1-57.

- Catalano, D.C.J. (2017) 'Resisting coherence: Trans men's experiences and the use of grounded theory methods'. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education (QSE)* 30(3): 234-244.
- Choo, H.Y. and Ferree, M.M. (2010) 'Practicing intersectionality in sociological research: A critical analysis of inclusions, interactions, and institutions in the study of inequalities\*'. *Sociological Theory* 28(2): 129-149.
- Clucas, R. and Whittle, S. (2017) 'Law'. In C. Richards, W.P. Bouman and M.-J. Barker (eds) *Genderqueer and Non-Binary Genders*. London: Palgrave Macmillan Limited, 73-99.
- Colgan, F., Creegan, C., McKearney, A. and Wright, T. (2007) 'Equality and diversity policies and practices at work: Lesbian, gay and bisexual workers'. *Equal Opportunities International* 26(6): 590-609.
- Colgan, F. and McKearney, A. (2012) 'Visibility and voice in organisations: Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered employee networks'. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal* 31(4): 359-378.
- Collins, P.H. (1998) 'It's all in the family: Intersections of gender, race, and nation'. *Hypatia* 13(3): 62-82.
- Connell, C. (2010) 'Doing, undoing, or redoing gender?: Learning from the workplace experiences of transpeople'. *Gender & Society* 24(1): 31-55.
- Crenshaw, K. (1998) 'Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics'. *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989(1): 139-167.
- David, E. (2017) 'Capital T: Trans visibility, corporate capitalism, and commodity culture'. *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 4(1): 28-44.
- Davidson, S. (2016) 'Gender inequality: Nonbinary transgender people in the workplace'. *Cogent Social Sciences* 2(1): 1-12.
- Davis, D.A. (2017) 'The normativity of recognition: Non-binary gender markers in Australian law and policy'. In V.P. Demos and M.T. Segal (eds) *Gender Panic, Gender Policy*. Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing Limited, 227-250.
- Dentice, D. and Dietert, M. (2015) 'Liminal spaces and the transgender experience'. *Theory in Action* 8(2): 69-96.
- Denzin, N.K. (2001) 'The reflexive interview and a performative social science'. *Qualitative Research* 1(1): 23-46.

- Dietert, M. and Dentice, D. (2009) 'Gender identity issues and workplace discrimination: The transgender experience'. *Journal of Workplace Rights* 14(1): 121-140.
- Dobbin, F. and Kalev, A. (2016) 'Why diversity programs fail: and what works better. (Spotlight on building a diverse organization)'. *Harvard Business Review* 94(7): 52-60.
- Duggan, L. (2002) The new homonormativity: The sexual politics of neoliberalism. In: R. Castronovo and D.D. Nelson (eds) *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics*. North Carolina: Duke University Press, 175-194.
- Feather, N.T. and Boeckmann, R.J. (2007) 'Beliefs about gender discrimination in the workplace in the context of Affirmative Action: Effects of gender and ambivalent attitudes in an Australian sample'. *Sex Roles* 57(1): 31-42.
- Fiani, C.N. and Han, H.J. (2018) 'Navigating identity: Experiences of binary and non-binary transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) adults'. *International Journal of Transgenderism* 1-14.
- Gedro, J., Mizzi, R.C., Rocco, T.S. and van Loo, J. (2013) 'Going global: Professional mobility and concerns for LGBT workers'. *Human Resource Development International* 16(3): 282-297.
- Ghumman, S., Ryan, A., Barclay, L. and Markel, K. (2013) 'Religious discrimination in the workplace: A review and examination of current and future trends'. *Journal of Business and Psychology* 28(4): 439-454.
- Gilbert, J., Stead, B. and Ivancevich, J. (1999) 'Diversity management: A new organizational paradigm'. *Journal of Business Ethics* 21(1): 61-76.
- Githens, R.P. and Aragon, S.R. (2009) 'LGBT employee groups: Goals and organizational structures'. *Advances in Developing Human Resources* 11(1): 121-135.
- Gotsis, G. and Kortezi, Z. (2015) *Critical studies in diversity management literature: A review and synthesis*, Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
- Grant, J.M., Mottet, L.A., Tanis, J., Harrison, J., Herman, J.L. and Keisling, M. (2011) *Injustice at every turn: A report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*. Washington: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.
- Harrison, J., Grant, J. and Herman, J.L. (2012) 'A gender not listed here: Genderqueers, gender rebels, and OtherWise in the National Transgender Discrimination Survey'. *LGBTQ Public Policy Journal at the Harvard Kennedy School* 2(1): 13-24.

- Hetland, G. and Goodwin, J. (2014) The strange disappearance of capitalism from social movement studies. In: C. Barker, L. Cox, J. Krinsky and A.G. Nilsen (eds) *Marxism and Social Movements* Leiden: BRILL, 83-102.
- Hill, R.J. (2009) 'Incorporating queers: Blowback, backlash, and other forms of resistance to workplace diversity initiatives that support sexual minorities'. *Advances in Developing Human Resources* 11(1): 37-53.
- Hyde, Z., Doherty, M., Tilley, P.J.M., McCaul, K.A., Rooney, R. and Jancey, J. (2014) The First Australian National Trans Mental Health Study: Summary of results. Perth, Australia: School of Public Health, Curtin University.
- Irwin, J. (2002) 'Discrimination against gay men, lesbians, and transgender people working in education'. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services* 14(2): 65-77.
- Köllen, T. (2016) 'Intersexuality and trans-identities within the diversity management discourse'. In T. Köllen (ed) *Sexual Orientation and Transgender Issues in Organizations: Global Perspectives on LGBT Workforce Diversity*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 1-20.
- Law, C.L., Martinez, L.R., Ruggs, E.N., Hebl, M.R. and Akers, E. (2011) 'Transparency in the workplace: How the experiences of transsexual employees can be improved'. *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 79(3): 710-723.
- Leonard, W., Lyons, A. and Bariola, E. (2015) A closer look at private lives 2: Addressing the mental health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Australians. *Monograph Series* Melbourne: La Trobe University.
- MacDonnell, J.A. and Grigorovich, A. (2012) 'Gender, work, and health for trans health providers: A focus on transmen'. *ISRN Nursing* 2012:1-11.
- Mananzala, R. and Spade, D. (2008) 'The nonprofit industrial complex and trans resistance'. *Sexuality Research & Social Policy* 5(1): 53-71.
- Mathers, L.A.B. (2017) 'Bathrooms, boundaries, and emotional burdens: Cisgendering interactions through the interpretation of transgender experience'. *Symbolic Interaction* 40(3): 295-316.
- McFadden, C. (2015) 'Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender careers and human resource development: A systematic literature review'. *Human Resource Development Review* 14(2): 125-162.
- McKeown, D. (2018) Chronology of same-sex marriage bills introduced into the federal parliament: A quick guide. *Research Paper Series, 2017-2018*. Parliament of Australia.



- Miller, L.R. and Grollman, E.A. (2015) 'The social costs of gender nonconformity for transgender adults: Implications for discrimination and health'. *Sociological Forum* 30(3): 809-831.
- Moore, M.R. (2018) 'Challenges, triumphs, and praxis: Collecting qualitative data on less visible and marginalized populations'. In D.L.M. Compton, Tey; Schilt, Kristen (eds) *Other, please specify: Queer methods in sociology*. 1 ed. Oakland, California: University of California Press, 169-184.
- Nicolazzo, Z. (2016) "'Just go in looking good": The resilience, resistance, and kinship-building of trans\* college students'. *Journal of College Student Development* 57(5): 538-556.
- Ozeren, E. (2014) 'Sexual orientation discrimination in the workplace: A systematic review of literature'. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 109:1203-1215.
- Ozturk, M.B. and Tatli, A. (2016) 'Gender identity inclusion in the workplace: Broadening diversity management research and practice through the case of transgender employees in the UK'. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 27(8): 781-802.
- Pettinicchio, D. (2012) 'Institutional Activism: Reconsidering the insider/outsider dichotomy'. *Sociology Compass* 6(6): 499-510.
- Pizer, J.C., Sears, B., Mallory, C. and Hunter, N.D. (2012) 'Evidence of persistent and pervasive workplace discrimination against LGBT people: The need for federal legislation prohibiting discrimination and providing for equal employment benefits'. *Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review* 45(3): 715-779.
- Pride in Diversity (2018) Australian workplace equality index 2018: Employee survey analysis. *Australian Workplace Equality Index (AWEI) National Benchmarking Publication* ACON's Pride Inclusion Programs.
- Pringle, J.K. and Strachan, G. (2015) 'Duelling dualisms: A history of diversity management'. In R. Bendl, I. Bleijenbergh, E. Henttonen and A.J. Mills (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Diversity in Organizations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Priola, V., Lasio, D., De Simone, S. and Serri, F. (2014) 'The sound of silence. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender discrimination in 'inclusive organizations''. *British Journal of Management* 25(3): 488-502.
- Ragins, B.R. (2004) 'Sexual orientation in the workplace: The unique work and career experiences of gay, lesbian and bisexual workers'. *Research in personnel and human resources management* 23:35-129.
- Richards, C., Bouman, W.P., Seal, L., Barker, M.J., Nieder, T.O. and T'Sjoen, G. (2016) 'Non-binary or genderqueer genders'. *International Review of Psychiatry* 28(1): 95-102.

- Richardson, D. (2005) 'Desiring sameness? The rise of a neoliberal politics of normalisation'. *Antipode* 37(3): 515-535.
- Richardson, D. and Monro, S. (2012) *Sexuality, equality and diversity*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Roen, K. (2002) '"Either/or" and "both/neither": Discursive tensions in transgender politics'. *Signs* 27(2): 501-522.
- Rosenfeld, D. (2009) 'Heteronormativity and homonormativity as practical and moral resources: The case of lesbian and gay elders'. *Gender & Society* 23(5): 617-638.
- Rumens, N. (2018) Introduction. In: N. Rumens (ed) *Queer business: Queering organization sexualities*. 1 ed. New York: Routledge, 1-14.
- Sawyer, K., Thoroughgood, C. and Webster, J. (2016) 'Queering the gender binary: Understanding transgender workplace experiences'. In T. Köllen (ed) *Sexual Orientation and Transgender Issues in Organizations: Global Perspectives on LGBT Workforce Diversity*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 21-42.
- Schilt, K. (2006) 'Just one of the guys?: How transmen make gender visible at work'. *Gender & Society* 20(4): 465-490.
- Schilt, K. and Connell, C. (2007) 'Do workplace gender transitions make gender trouble?'. *Gender, Work and Organization* 14(6): 596-618.
- Scully, M. and Segal, A. (2002) Passion with an umbrella: Grassroots activists in the workplace. In: M. Lounsbury and M.J. Ventresca (eds) *Social Structure and Organizations Revisited*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 125 - 168.
- Sears, B. and Mallory, C. (2011) Documented evidence of employment discrimination & its effects on LGBT people. University of California: The Williams Institute, 1-20.
- Smith, N.G. and Ingram, K.M. (2004) 'Workplace heterosexism and adjustment among lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals: The role of unsupportive social interactions'. *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 51(1): 57-67.
- Spade, D. (2015) *Normal life: Administrative violence, critical Trans politics, and the limits of law*, North Carolina: Duke University Press.
- Strachan, G., Burgess, J. and Henderson, L. (2007) 'Equal employment opportunity legislation and policies: the Australian experience'. *Equal Opportunities International* 26(06): 525-540.
- Vitulli, E. (2010) 'A defining moment in Civil Rights history? The Employment Non-Discrimination Act, trans-inclusion, and homonormativity'. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 7(3): 155-167.

- Williams, C. and Giuffre, P. (2011) 'From organizational sexuality to queer organizations: Research on homosexuality and the workplace'. *Sociology Compass* 5(7): 551-563.
- Willis, P. (2011) 'Laboring in silence: Young lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer-identifying workers' negotiations of the workplace closet in Australian organizations'. *Youth & Society* 43(3): 957-981.
- Windsong, E.A. (2018) 'Incorporating intersectionality into research design: An example using qualitative interviews'. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 21(2): 135-147.
- Workplace Gender Equality Agency. (2017) Australia's gender equality scorecard. In: Workplace Gender Equality Agency (ed). Canberra: Australian Government, 1-20.