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Trans men doing gender at work

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Abstract

In this article we explore the practices of trans men in England, undertaken to accomplish gender in the workplace, recognizing the importance of a 'situated' analysis incorporating context and life history. We find trans men simultaneously to conform and challenge masculinity, informed both by preference and necessity in order to survive and progress at work, which in turn impacts the potential for any male advantage that may be enjoyed. We note that the more coherently masculine a trans man is, the less 'trouble' is caused by his gender (trans *masculinity*). We demonstrate that they often have to adjust their gender practices and/or workplace to secure or progress at work but also retain a capacity to trouble the gender binary (*trans* masculinity). We consider the implications for trans men at work.

KEYWORDS
doing gender, masculinity, trans men, transgender

1 | INTRODUCTION

This paper builds on two strands of research that pertain to transgender and trans men at work. Firstly, it builds on research exploring trans men's relationship with masculinity at work (Schilt, 2006) by exploring their gender identity practices. Secondly, it follows the call for more situated accounts of trans experiences 'in context' (Muhr et al., 2016). The study of trans men at work is under-explored and although trans men have received wider attention in queer and *trans*-studies around 'doing gender' (West & Zimmerman, 1987) it remains marginalized in the context of work (Thanem, 2011) and is often excluded in studies of masculinity (Green, 2005; Raun, 2016;

Gottzén & Straube, 2017, but see; Halberstam, 1998; Hoppe, 2008). Consequently, our understanding of how trans men can accomplish their gender at work, and how this informs our understanding of (trans) masculinity as well as workplace practices, is limited in a rapidly changing context with respect to transgender awareness in the workplace. Accordingly, the paper seeks to understand a) the nature of masculinities accomplished by trans men in a UK context and more specifically, b) how their previous experiences as well as immediate context shapes their doing of gender and ability to achieve 'liveable lives' (see O'Shea, 2018). It also considers c) whether the situations facilitate or enable their achieving the advantages associated with maleness in the workplace. This paper incorporates a life history approach to understand trans men's 'doing gender' at work that 'situates' the trans men in both their historic/formative and present contexts. This enables a richer contextualized understanding of the masculinities performed and the factors that influence them to inform our understanding of trans masculinities at work.

Despite key changes in legislation in England, which have provided some recognition and protection for transgender individuals (e.g., The Gender Recognition Act, 2004 and The Equality Act, 2010 [UK]), trans men's lives have operated against a background of risk, harassment and discrimination (see O'Shea, 2018, 2019, 2020 for personal accounts). UK-based studies on trans men and women show discrimination originating from colleagues, managers, and Trade Unions (Barclay & Scott, 2006) with nearly 29% of trans employees reporting harassment or unsupportive management (Whittle et al., 2007). A recent Stonewall report (Bachmann & Gooch, 2018) found 51% of transgender employees hid their trans-identity out of fear and 12% had been physically attacked during the last year. This discrimination is reflected elsewhere (Brewster et al., 2014; Miller & Grollman, 2015). The freedom to express one's gender identity should not, therefore, be overstated.

Gender accomplishment is situated; what might be a viable doing of gender in one situation may not be possible in another. This is not unique to trans men (or trans women) but being trans does entail a precariousness that others are unlikely to experience in doing gender as a consequence of transphobia, what we term 'transnaivety', and their own levels of confidence and body presentation to accomplish their gender in recognized ways. By focusing on trans men we are able to consider this more specifically in the context of the gender-congruent accomplishment of masculinity and the value placed on 'maleness' in organizations (it is also worth noting many in-depth studies focus on trans women who contrastingly suffer the double bind of being women and trans – see Yavorsky, 2016). By situating this in the workplace we can consider its role in the accomplishment of gender (how it is/is not inclusive). We focus on the conscious doing of gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987) and doing transgender (C. Connell, 2010; c. f. Muhr & Sullivan, 2013 for an overview of a queer theory perspective), where gender is produced through interactions with others.

This paper follows calls for more situated studies of transgender people (see Muhr et al., 2016). For example, studies on transgender experiences have considered economic impacts through life histories (Mizcock & Hopwood, 2018), specific organizational contexts (David, 2015), and an individual case history of a trans woman (Muhr & Sullivan, 2013). This paper differs by using life histories with a focus on careers that enable multiple but situated workplace accounts to be explored and capture how past experiences inform future choices, recognizing that the past shapes perceptions, interpretations and meaning making - how past experiences are enfolded into the choices made in the present day.

The workplace is often perceived as a site of masculinity (Berdahl et al., 2018) and trans men can benefit from the privilege associated with masculinity in the workplace (Abelson, 2014; C. Connell, 2010; Davidson, 2016; Geijtenbeek, 2018; Leppel, 2016; Schilt & Westbrook, 2009). Schilt (2006) found two-thirds of her (un/disclosed) trans men participants benefited from the 'patriarchal dividend' (R. W. Connell, 2005), namely: 'gaining competency and authority, gaining respect and recognition for hard work, gaining "body privilege," and gaining economic opportunities and status' (Schilt, 2006, p. 475). Yet we can also see from Abelson's (2014) study that safety concerns affected how trans men were able to 'do masculinity' and thus actualize this potential for male advantage. Accordingly, we look at trans men across organizational contexts.

The umbrella term 'trans' refers to 'anyone who does not feel comfortable in the gender role they were attributed at birth, or who has a gender identity at odds with the labels "man" or "woman" credited to them by formal authorities' (Whittle, 2006, p. xi), who may use labels such as transgender, transsexual, transvestite or

genderqueer (Bettcher, 2014; Thanem & Wallenberg , 2016; Whittle et al., 2007). We focus on trans as a movement 'away from' attributed gender (Stryker, 2008) recognizing that re-categorizing based on 'destination' fails to capture the multiplicity of trans men's identities. Our paper is concerned with the experiences of disclosed and undisclosed trans men, who were attributed a biological-based female sexed categorization but who identify as male. Our interviewees are in or have been through a process of medicalized transition, whereby they have had or plan to have some form of surgery or take hormones and have asked others to acknowledge their maleness/masculinity through a name and/or pronoun change.

The paper is structured as follows: we firstly situate the trans men's 'doing gender' (West & Zimmerman, 1987) in the context of the workplace through the lens of the body, masculine identity and its transgression at work. We then outline our methodology before presenting our findings. We outline what masculinity means to trans men, how it is enacted, contested or compromised, and 'what' masculinities are being produced. We set out the personal and contextual factors that impact the doing of gender. We find that the trans men perform, resist and challenge masculinity and enact more complex masculinities[1], that more coherently masculine identities are the least 'troubling' and that the masculine advantage is generally not secured by any trans men. This could be because they are overly *trans* masculine or because they choose not to risk greater exposure (and trouble). With this in mind we argue that organizations have much more to do to enable trans men to accomplish their gender and succeed at work.

2 | GENDER IDENTITY IN THE WORKPLACE: TRANS MEN AND MASCULINITIES

We all 'do' gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987) but this is particularly salient for trans men (and women). To be identified as a man one needs to act in ways that achieves and preserves this category – one that gives a 'convincing performance' (Goffman, 1959). But whereas Goffman considers the way we control our displays, West and Zimmerman point to the omnipresence of gender identity. Our gender identities (and thus how we are perceived, treated and so on) permeate all aspects of our daily lives.

Not everyone desires to 'do gender' in ways that conform to expectations, but trans men may also struggle with perceived incongruency between their identity and their body (see also Muhr & Sullivan, 2013), past life, and behaviors that will likely breach the boundaries of the gender binary. We consider the possibilities of gender in the workplace in relation to its embodiment, identity enactment and its contested nature at work.

3 | THE BODY, DISCLOSED

Trans gender identities expressed include those underpinned by 'a lifelong sense of gender nonconformity' (Halberstam, 2018, p. 70), those operating at the margins of 'prototype' gender identities, and those living in the wrong bodies and retaining a strong and consistent (binary) gender identity throughout their lives and thus a strong connection to the masculine gender identity (Bettcher, 2014; S. Stryker, 2006). These perspectives focus on the materiality of the trans body (e.g., Prosser, 1998), emphasize the 'felt' identity and remind us that the body can be marginalized and perceived to be incongruent with expectations (Muhr & Sullivan, 2013).

Some trans men, where possible, may not disclose their transition (Hansbury, 2005) (although managed (in) visibility is becoming a more frequent strategy of trans-employees (Rundall & Vecchietti, 2010)). Their body, their manner, their past – such as work or schooling, or their openness as authentically trans can undermine others' ability to recognize them as men. Visibility itself is not entirely a choice as it is moderated by the ability to 'pass' (i.e., be recognized in their gender) that in turn is linked to their body, the proximity of colleagues (and thus scrutiny) and trans status (how and to what extent they have medically transitioned) (Bettcher, 2007). In such a context doing gender is not just about gender accomplishment, it is about negotiating risk, deciding when and how to do certain aspects of gender, and what aspects of gender identity seem possible (or safe) at a given time. While everyone can

experience challenge to their gender identity, particularly when they don't 'conform', the stakes and hurdles for trans people are higher, the potential consequences more precarious and they have less control over how their gender is constructed as their bodies are often not fully 'legible' (Halberstam, 2018) leading to both an unspeak-ability and unreadability of the body (Prosser, 1998) as men.

4 | THE IDENTITY, CONSTRUCTED

In exploring masculinity it's necessary to understand the social construction of trans people. As Salamon (2006) puts it 'what social construction offers is a way to understand how that felt sense arises' (2006 p. 582). Any consideration of trans gender identity therefore needs to consider the social context and their felt sense of self as well as the body.

Trans men's doing of masculinity may range from transformative and feminist to complicit masculine practices. It can also be 'underdone', combining feminine, masculine and gender-neutral practices (Thanem, 2016). Masculinity itself is a diverse and fluid concept, one that is unlikely to be engaged in any 'ideal' form (Jackson & Dempster, 2009) and may be 'personalized' (Swain, 2006), and context specific (Batnitsky et al, 2009; Roberts, 2012; Ward, 2015). Recent scholarship has argued that we are witnessing 'inclusive masculinity' with a 'softening' of gender codes, more emotional expression, a reduction in hierarchy and greater diversity in valued masculinities (Anderson & McCor-mack, 2018). Similarly, 'hybrid masculinity' incorporates femininities and may even appropriate them - reinforcing rather than challenging masculinity (Arxer, 2011; Bridges & Pascoe, 2014; Heath, 2003) suggesting the shift to alternative masculinities should not be overstated (see also: Seeley, 2018).

Despite the complexity and shifting nature of masculinity, traditional forms are the most recognizably masculine practices and thus the most likely to 'do' the male gender, suggesting they would play a significant role in any convincing doing of gender. Trans men can be pushed into defensive masculinities (Abelson, 2014; see also: C. Connell, 2010; Schilt & Connell, 2007), which are practiced in the face of a perceived threat to their masculinity or personhood. Thus, based on the level of risk to self and identity, trans men may exhibit 'complicit' masculinities (R. W. Connell, 2005) even if prevented from accomplishing masculinity on the basis of their bodies or trans-status. They can also find themselves repatriated by co-workers into a gender binary (Halberstam, 2018; Schilt & Connell, 2007). These studies show the importance of bodies in producing maleness and masculinity, and the need to engage with the material reality of trans-lives (Raun, 2016; Thanem, 2011). They also set out that trans men's 'doing gender' has to be negotiated, and the rules by which they should (and can) play are uncertain, shifting and precarious.

5 | TRANS AT WORK

Despite greater trans awareness, trans identity is still contested and marginalized (see Sharpe, 2012) and othered by 'heteronormative understanding' (Lloyd, 2013). If trans people seek trans-invisibility they risk being seen as deceptive (Bettcher, 2007, 2014) and the consequences of exposure. If they announce themselves as trans they risk being seen as a pretender and thus not fully recognized as a wo/man. While being open at work may assist with the normative doing of gender (C. Connell, 2010), as any signified transgression becomes explicable, it is also associated with economic disadvantage (Leppel, 2016) and risk. Therefore the extent to which trans men can experience difficulties in gaining recognition as men and as masculine should not be not underestimated (Abelson, 2014; Schilt, 2006; Whittle et al., 2007). In other words, it's not clear what identity they are expected to perform regardless of what they may choose to perform.

Gender identity, and masculinities in particular, needs to be grounded in situated lived experiences that give salience to context (Abelson, 2019). This paper gives insight into trans men's experience of 'doing gender' (West & Zimmerman, 1987) at work in the UK, contextualising trans gendered work identity in light of increasing trans awareness, and diversity in what is understood as masculinity (Anderson & McCormack, 2018). Specifically, we

consider what gendered practices of trans men at work are desired and/or possible,how they experience this, and its consequences for their gender and work identities as well as male advantage/trans disadvantage.

6 | RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper draws on interviews with eight trans men, interviewed as part of a study on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender careers based in the South-West of the England. Several of the interviewees had lived abroad as well as elsewhere in the UK. Purposive snowballing was chosen as a method because of the relative difficulty in accessing this group (McFadden, 2015). Initial interviewees were drawn from adverts placed online using social media both with LGBT organizations and trans-specific support groups, as well as personal contacts through the interviewing author's LGBT-related community work. All participants identified as binary male trans men. They were at varying stages of transition although not all wanted to give details on the extent and manner of their change, so this is not reported. They were all open about their trans-status to some extent, although five of the eight were not 'out' as trans in their current workplace.

Interviewees ranged from under 20 to mid-50s and all identified as white. Interviewees ranged in terms of age at transition, type of occupation, and educational background (see Table 1; pseudonyms used) allowing us to demonstrate diversity in practices and experiences. The study aimed to improve understanding, not to achieve representation across all sectors. Although indicating different engagements with masculinity, there was consistency in their openness to its interpretation and enactment, and the need to consciously perform masculinity in the context of, and negotiated in, the workplace. The repetition of these accounts generated our themes (Ryan & Bertrand, 2003) leading us to conclude we had achieved a level of saturation in the data in terms of our themes (Guest et al., 2006) and had a valuable data set through which we could explore our questions.

The use of interviews enabled a breadth of events to be incorporated, and their experiences of them to be explored. By drawing on narrative and life-history approaches (Atkinson, 2001; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) we were able to probe their meaning-making and subject positioning, recognizing our own positioning as cis-gendered women academics writing about trans men, and thus studying the subject from the outside rather than within. To this end interviews were semi-structured in order to let interviewees tell their story. A small pilot was conducted on trans men and trans women enabling us to test the data collection procedure. They were asked to discuss their work history, the impact of their transition at work, and ability to express their identity at work. Prompts were used to ask what they needed to do to progress their career and/or 'stay safe' at work, and others' perceptions of them, their relationship with their employer and how it supported them, or otherwise, as they set out their life history as it pertained to their gender identity, transitioning and its relationship with work (reflecting our expectations derived from the extant literature regarding what was likely to be salient). Interviews were between 50–80 min, fully transcribed and mostly conducted in person at their chosen location to ensure anonymity (with by one telephone and another by Skype).

An inductive approach of re-reading interviews, coding and mapping key themes and practices was used, broadly taking a grounded approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) but within the context of a theoretically led inquiry into masculinity and trans gender identity which had influenced the questioning. The repetition of codes that underpin our themes was combined with exploration of similarities and differences in order to elucidate the participant's own navigation of their experiences and identity work (e.g., both being masculine and resisting masculinity) and those between participants (what external factors seem to influence the type of gender done). The extent to which organizations facilitate or inhibit the doing of gender were drawn from the data. The coding of ideas led to the grouping of themes that attended to types of gender done, external factors that enabled or challenged gender and the capacity of the individual to live their chosen gendered lives (see Figure 1). These were developed by the first author, by firstly identifying examples of gender practices, then grouping these into sub

T A B L E 1 Participant details

Name	Age	Age (Era of transition)	Current sector/Role	Open about transition to work colleagues
Max	Under 20	Under 20 (2010s)	Hotel/Bar worker	No – only to manager
Finn	20–24	20–24 (2010s)	Post-graduate student	No – but on application form
Nick	30–34	25–30 (2010s)	Public service administrator	No – only to manager/HR
Jason	35–39	25–30 (2000s)	Care worker	No – only to HR
Darren	35–39	20–24 (2000s)	Public sector administrator	Yes – transitioned at current employer
Andy	50–54	40–44 (2000s)	Transport administrator	Yes - transitioned at current employer
Jax	50–54	35–39 (1990s)	Archivist	No – aware manager may have guessed
Philip	50–54	30–34 (1990s)	Senior Engineer	Yes – involved in organisational equality work

themes based on shared characteristics before identifying four core constructs. These were checked and agreed by the second author to test validity. There were no disputes over the categorizations.

Barriers to liveable lives is used to capture accounts in the data that are beyond the embodiment and behavior of the trans men. For example 'actions perceived to be feminine' capture the interpretations made by others. The key themes were: risk of exposure, risk of identity challenge (either made by others or felt personally), trans-aggression (taking a broad definition of trans violence). Safe places are used to denote ideas in the data that capture the organizational factors that support gender accomplishments. These include: gender awareness of contexts (better levels of understanding, respect and safety), masculine contexts (such as culture and practices), and reduced visibility (contexts in which trans men could 'hide' or reduce likelihood of being noticed). Masculine identities captures the different nature of gender done in the workplace, used to capture gendered acts that are either true to self or enacted to conform, and relate to the body as well as self-presentation (including surgical and non-surgical body modification), discourse and behaviors. The gender done is either traditionally masculine, or enacted as masculinity, alternate (demonstrating some flexibility with regards what is understood as masculinity), or are practices designed to avoid gender.

Embodied limits captures self confidence in gendered accomplishment, levels of physical congruence with their gender identity and strength of identification with masculinity. Illustrative explanations of the accounts are given in Table 2.

7 | FINDINGS

The findings are set out as follows. First, we cover workplace factors that challenge and then enable gender in the workplace, before considering the different gender enactments and how they are accomplished and then the factors that give the trans men the capacity to live their gendered lives.

7.1 | Barriers to liveable lives

Challenges were experienced that heightened the risk of exposure, risked their identity or trans-aggression. All of these impacted the extent to which trans men could live their chosen gendered lives at work as they sought to navigate the perceptions and risks attached.

First Order Concepts	Second order themes	Aggregate Dimensions
• Masculine discourse (masculine-gendered language preferred) • Masculine presentation (masculine appearance preferred) • Use of gendered stereotypes	Hegemonic masculinity	
• Masculine behaviours (masculine behaviours demonstrated) • Behaviours enacted to appear masculine • Discourse enacted to appear masculine • Presentations enacted to appear masculine	Enacted hegemonic masculinity	
• Gender flexible behaviours (masculine and feminine behaviours demonstrated) • Gender flexible discourse (masculine and feminine discourse used) • Gender flexible presentation (masculine and feminine appearance demonstrated)	Alternate masculinity	Masculine identities
• Non-surgical body modification (e.g. binding) • Surgical body modification	Body-identity congruence	
• Gender neutral language • Diversionary rhetoric and avoidance (avoiding past history) • Task competence and focus	Gender avoidance strategies	
• Masculine appearance (e.g. having muscles)	Physical congruence with gender identity	
• Feminine appearance (e.g. having feminine hands) • Gender indeterminate body • Transitional status	Physical incongruence with gender identity	
• Lack of identification with womanhood • Strong identification with masculine tropes	Strong identification with hegemonic masculinity	Embodied limits
• Confidence with having trans status known • Fear of having trans status known • Shifting gender identification • Recognised gendered performances	Confidence in gendered performance	
• High stake situations, e.g. interviews • Transphobic reactions • Gender designated facilities • Trans naiveity • Perceived as gay • Gender sensitive work contexts	Heightened risk of trans-aggression	
• Trans status suspected • Questions about the past • Actions perceived to be feminine • High-visibility positions	Heightened risk of exposure	Barriers to liveable lives
• Trans status known: self disclosed • Trans status known: exposed	Heightened risk of identity challenge (self and other) of trans-aggression	
• Trans reminders • Trans curiosity • Misgendering	Heightened risk of identity challenge (self and other)	
• Masculine uniforms/attire • Masculine cultural practices • Avoiding feminised professions	Masculine context	
• Established HR practices and EDI focus • Education levels of colleagues • Sector/field of work "open" • Supportive line managers	Gender Awareness	Safe Places
• Working on your own / self employed • Avoiding managerial positions • Large organisations	Reduced visibility	

FIGURE 1 Coding

TABLE 2 Illustrative quotes from participant accounts

Aggregate/second order coding	First order coding	Illustrative Quote
Masculine identities/Hegemonic masculinity	Masculine presentation (masculine appearance preferred)	"Dressing 100% make, right haircut, right clothes." Philip
Masculine identities/Hegemonic masculinity	Use of gendered stereotypes	"I actually credit women with an awful lot of insight into what the role is going to contain and that a woman will make a very sensible decision as to whether it's going to be too much hassle, you know is it actually worth doing the job, whereas I think men are a lot more driven, you know, it doesn't matter what it takes. If they want to do it." Philip
Masculine identities/Hegemonic masculinity	Masculine behaviors (masculine behaviors demonstrated)	"There was a few calendars on the wall [laughs] and of course this was before I started the transitioning process so erm the managers some in and said 'if any women come in here that's going to be obscene' and I says 'well what's wrong with them?'. And he said 'well, you'll have to get your colleagues to take them down', I said 'they're not my colleagues, they're mine." Andy
Masculine identities/Enacted hegemonic masculinity	Behaviors enacted to appear masculine	"So it was interesting going to a construction site just me and her, because she was in that position and I was having to think how can I butch it up so that I'm not you know making anyone question what I'm doing there." Finn
Masculine identities/Enacted hegemonic masculinity	Discourse enacted to appear masculine	"[You ...have to change the way you banter...when I banter with my friends...I can joke about being effeminate...but there [at work] you kind of have to be a bit more laddish". Max
Masculine identities/Enacted hegemonic masculinity	Presentations enacted to appear masculine	"If I was chairing any meeting I would certainly do certain processes that trans guys do to try and hide themselves...I'd wear a suit more, it gave me the oomph" Andy
Masculine identities/Alternate masculinity	Gender flexible behaviors (masculine and feminine behaviors demonstrated)	"Different types of men and women all into different stuff and if someone judges me because I like the band Steps...and that I do ballroom dancing as well...it doesn't bother me what people think." Jason
Masculine identities/Alternate masculinity	Gender flexible discourse (masculine and feminine discourse used)	"There is a time I think where all guys go through this extra macho euww, especially where your voice hasn't gone yet, and they're a bit like make it as deep as possible, rrrrr. Yeah and making a point of not mentioning the things that people might see as feminine but mentioning, extra mentioning the things that people might see as macho just to kind of create a persona but I'm not comfortable doing that anymore." Nick

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Aggregate/second order coding	First order coding	Illustrative Quote
Masculine identities/Alternate masculinity	Gender flexible presentation (masculine and feminine appearance demonstrated)	"It doesn't stop me wearing little kitty. I might come across as gay!" Jax
Masculine Identities/Body-identity congruence	Non-surgical body modification (e.g. binding)	"I'd say that my gender identity has probably influenced the fact that I'm not about to do any heavy lifting any time soon, you know there's the physical characteristics, because like most tran smen I bind. That can affect my ability to do sort of physical labor." Max
Masculine Identities/Body-identity congruence	Surgical body modification	"I'm kind of moving in a different direction, because I'm finding, just settling into myself now I've had chest surgery and I feel like I want to do something else." Nick
Masculine identities/Gender avoidance strategies	Gender neutral language	"Usually I will not talk about it, if they are just chatting and talking about their past lives, I will always try to reframe it so that it's gender neutral." Finn
Masculine identities/Gender avoidance strategies	Diversionary rhetoric and avoidance (avoiding past history)	"And I'm like well I didn't get football I got tennis and field hockey and I never played rugby so I try and just. I don't like lying so I just generalize things and just be as vague as possible." Nick
Masculine identities/Gender avoidance strategies	Task competence and focus	"I do think there is institutionalized trans phobia, within workplace environments. Umm in fact I know there is, and so I think that I run a risk, but that if I can keep my head down and keep my academic work to a certain standard then you know I should be ok." Jax
Embodied limits/Physical congruence with gender identity	Masculine appearance (e.g. having muscles)	"Since my voice dropped, my hairlines receding a little but, I've got some muscle it's just like I don't even look back." Nick
Embodied limits/Physical incongruence with gender identity	Feminine appearance (e.g. having feminine hands)	"This guy's quite feminine" . Finn
Embodied limits/Physical incongruence with gender identity	Gender indeterminate body	"I got to the interview and I was being interviewed by 2 people, and one of them thought I was a man and one thought I was a woman erm, but and the reason that I know that is because one of them was referring to me as he and the other as she." Finn
Embodied limits/Physical incongruence with gender identity	Transitional status	"I am male I hope that's not a problem. And then on the phone, the woman said oh sorry for some reason I thought you were female. So there is that, she obviously, it was early days. And then when I got there I presented as male and introduced myself as that and there were no questions asked". Jason

(Continues)

T A B L E 2 (Continued)

Aggregate/second order coding	First order coding	Illustrative Quote
Embodied limits/Strong identification with hegemonic masculinity	Lack of identification with womanhood	"I wanted when I was a kid .. I was expecting to grow up into a big strapping man. Do you know what I mean? I had a he-man and I was telling my parents I'd have muscles like that one day." Nick
Embodied limits/Strong identification with hegemonic masculinity	Strong identification with masculine tropes	"I'm the pitbull .. If my boss needs things chasing up he leaves it to me to chase." Andy
Embodied limits/Confidence in gendered performance	Confidence with having trans status known	"Funnily enough it's not been confusing for any of the people I work with now. I can't say about my old department, umm but the guys I work with now I had a word with my boss and HR and explained the situation and they went 'pfft, no issue' umm to which I said 'well there will be an issue because obviously the toilet situation and one thing and another' and umm my boss just said well do you want to hold a meeting and I said 'if I could', and I had everybody, and I just told everybody all in one go." Andy
Embodied limits/Confidence in gendered performance	Fear of having trans status known	"She, [manager] ... would be fine with me in the job, but I would not be able to work there. I would lose my career again, you know." Jax
Embodied limits/Confidence in gendered performance	Shifting gender identification	"It was difficult for me too just to hear it. It still is a bit. When someone calls me sir or Mr, oh it makes me giggle inside, and I think oh God get over yourself!" Jason
Embodied limits/Confidence in gendered performance	Recognized gendered performances	"Well how I'm dressed now is how I dressed then and I always have done and I was quite lucky that my parents gave me a birth name that I could get away with as well, so all the guys at work just basically sat there and said 'what's new?', that's basically all they said 'what's new'." Andy
Barriers to liveable lives/Heightened risk of trans-aggression	High stake situations, e.g. interviews	"In interview I think there's so much unconscious bias still around which I'm obviously very aware of, I'm doing quite a lot in that. So I'm very very aware of it, and for an interview I feel very very much that you need to put as few blockers in your way as you possibly can and so therefore you know by accepting that and conforming for that instance is ok." Philip
Barriers to liveable lives/Heightened risk of trans-aggression	Transphobic reactions	"Whilst I was busy getting on with work she was asking me all kind of things about why I was causing so much trouble at work, why I wasn't fitting in with what she was asking me to do, progressing to other things which weren't necessarily appropriate to be speaking about there and then. Without saying it directly a lot of what she was saying I felt was driven by her unsettledness at what I was doing and the fact that she saw me as trouble as a whole." Darren

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Aggregate/second order coding	First order coding	Illustrative Quote
Barriers to liveable lives/Heightened risk of *trans*-aggression	Gender designated facilities	"And I was completely honest with them, umm they tried to understand, but it was not something they had come across before so they, so one of the comments they said was we can understand you want to change but why do you need to use the gents loos, which showed that they didn't understand." Darren
Barriers to liveable lives/Heightened risk of *trans*-aggression	Trans naivety	"I don't want to jump on them for my own thing because I don't wanna give it away but and I think it's fair enough to say look I know someone who is transgender and it's a bit offensive just watch what you're saying, maybe a better way to put it would be this, because a lot of it is about ignorance" Nick
Barriers to liveable lives/Heightened risk of *trans*-aggression	Perceived as gay	"Right now I have a girlfriend, so I guess to any passing casual observer I would be straight but umm that's also something I don't talk about at work and at work we have quite a lot of banter, like 'you're so gay' and stuff like that which is pretty hurtful but then again that is something that you have to look past." Max
Barriers to liveable lives/Heightened risk of *trans*-aggression	Gender sensitive work contexts	"You know I wouldn't want to be a police officer, I wouldn't want to be a security guard, just because you know I'm leaving myself open to discrimination there, you know, teaching I wouldn't be able to do that either because I would leave myself open to that sort of discrimination". Max
Barriers to liveable lives/Heightened risk of exposure	Trans status suspected	"I think they know there's something different, and they wonder about me and I know there's talk and they use words like character." Jax
Barriers to liveable lives/Heightened risk of exposure	Questions about the past	"I used to play for a ladies football team ….I'm still quite involved, I go to training and help them out and stuff, but I obviously never mentioned [at work] that I used to play, umm but you know 'I'm going training', 'what you training for' and I think oh shit I can't say it's a ladies football team." Nick
Barriers to liveable lives/Heightened risk of exposure	Actions perceived to be feminine	"I used to be very aware that I've got a high voice. If I did some painting, or sewed my trousers, the best one I've heard is 'ooh a bloke that irons, what a catch you are' and I was like do blokes not iron, do blokes not iron? I'm not a bloke!". Nick
Barriers to liveable lives/Heightened risk of exposure	High-visibility positions	"You don't want people to see you having a weakness when you're like a manager… so I'd want to learn the management skills that no matter what people found out about me and my home life, it doesn't matter because I'm the boss and I will have the skills to say 'no I'm the boss and this is what we're doing'." Nick

(Continues)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Aggregate/second order coding	First order coding	Illustrative Quote
Barriers to liveable lives/Heightened risk of identity challenge (self and other) of *trans*-aggression	Trans status known: Self-disclosed	"I hadn't changed my name but I was asking them to call me by male pronouns and then when they didn't and when the customers didn't and that was causing problems." Darren
Barriers to liveable lives/Heightened risk of identity challenge (self and other) of *trans*-aggression	Trans status known: Exposed	"I knew I had to tell him, just because I'd feel a lot more comfortable, because it means I'm...not hiding all the time, but it was always very difficult to find the right time to tell him. Then he got very cross that I hadn't told him at interview". "I don't know there was some issues with the car and it was all like what do you expect that's what women do, you know and starting to make a lot of comments like that, and you know he'd pick on me in front of the rest of the office and really lay into me and shout at me." Philip
Barriers to liveable lives/Heightened risk of identity challenge (self and other)	Trans reminders	"Oh by the way I've told your line manager about you and I sort of went 'you didn't need to do that' 'oh I thought if there were any issues they'd need to know', so I wasn't outraged but I was a bit annoyed about it, and I found out later on that they'd told them because they'd felt that it was relevant. I didn't feel it was." Nick
Barriers to liveable lives/Heightened risk of identity challenge (self and other)	Trans curiosity	"I think it was the women who were more curious shall we say, they asked more questions. Only a couple of guys ever did." Andy
Barriers to liveable lives/Heightened risk of identity challenge (self and other)	Mis-gendering	"I do wear earrings actually, they're very very small hoops, but I recently got ones that are too big and I'm thinking of downsizing, because there have been a couple of occasions where one or two people have thought that I was transitioning the other way" Finn
Safe places/Masculine context	Masculine uniforms/attire	"I think, I'm someone who finds uniforms, and I'll take them in a broader sense, as I haven't worked in a job that's required uniforms, but I have been in situations that require suits for me, so that's kind of the same. I'm someone who finds that useful because it helps me to give clearer signals, because if someone is questioning 'what is that' [rueful laugh] and if I'm in a suit as opposed to a dress then that helps them a lot". Finn
Safe places/Masculine context	Masculine cultural practices	"There was a few calendars on the wall [laughs] and of course this was before I started the transitioning process so erm the managers some in and said 'if any women come in here that's going to be obscene' and I says 'well what's wrong with them?'. And he said 'well, you'll have to get your colleagues to take them down', I said 'they're not my colleagues, they're mine." Andy

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Aggregate/second order coding	First order coding	Illustrative Quote
Safe places/Masculine context	Avoiding feminized professions	"Male nurses get enough stick, I don't really want to be in the firing line, oh that's not a very masculine job, because I don't really care, that's your opinion not mine, do you know what I mean, but on the other hand I sort of thought do I want to?" Nick
Safe places/Gender awareness	Established HR practices and EDI focus	"I think unofficially though my dealings with HR and having to have that one point of contact I've felt able to go to her and say what do I do about this, anything you know, even stuff about home life." Nick
Safe places/Gender awareness	Education levels of colleagues	"Well this is just a theory but because it's quite artsy and you have to go through quite a lot of education … they know about the equality and diversity legislation." Finn
Safe places/Gender awareness	Sector/field of work "open"	"The Asian women I was working with, … they were familiar with trans people, particularly from south-east Asian cultures such as Thailand. They were sexual workers as well as so as a consequence I could come out to a sex worker, … so I was in a safe queer environment." Jax
Safe places/Gender awareness	Supportive line managers	"I mentioned that they were very supportive when I needed time off for operations and things. That was quite good." Darren
Safe places/Reduced visibility	Working on your own/self employed	"Then [trans] people turn to things that are quite solitary so landscape gardeners and things like that where they can be by themselves and hide away and just do a manual task fastidiously and then go home" Jax
Safe places/Reduced visibility	Avoiding managerial positions	"I have to say it's not something I would necessarily want to do. As soon as you said it in the back of my head I had a moment of like uh [gasps], trying to put it into words..oh God, what if the people underneath me found it, what if 'you know Nick, oh yeah well I knew him…'" Nick
Safe places/Reduced visibility	Large organizations	"I just thought they are going to be perfect because they've got HR and they've got a clear line-management, it's perfect and they've got a big office you know, you're not going to be talking to one person all the time who's sussing you out, so I specifically did that and it would be my advice to anybody – get into a big company." Nick

7.1.1 | Risk of exposure

Risk of exposure was heightened when our respondents couldn't be readily categorized (see also Muhr & Sullivan, 2013) as they remained an "unknown quantity" (Darren). It could also occur by being "tripped up" into revealing a 'feminine' or 'female' aspect to their past as Nick cited when exposed as having been a member of a ladies' sports team. Exposure of trans status was also perceived to be a greater risk in more senior roles, often giving rise to more masculine expressions:

> If I was chairing any meeting I would certainly do certain processes that trans guys do to try and hide themselves...I'd wear a suit more, it gave me the oomph (Andy).

Seeking promotion was therefore something that some participants approached with caution - a self-imposed 'rejection' of any masculine privilege afforded. For some, such as Nick, it wasn't something to take on because of the constant worry of "what if the people underneath me found out" particularly if people didn't like the decisions made which would make you more vulnerable to criticism and "uncomfortable". For Nick trans status amounted to a "weakness" that could be used against you.

The doing of gender also became more masculine conformist in certain situations, such as conferences and interviews. Jax, for example, who often wore Little Kitty "toned it down" in order to, as Philip described it, "put as few blockers in your way as you possibly can". Conforming to masculine practice was therefore more likely at these crucial points of access or where there was greater exposure, and were about overcoming barriers (disadvantages) rather than gaining an advantage.

7.1.2 | Identity risk

To some extent their ability to be recognized as men was circumscribed by the extent to which they were visibly or known to be trans, which acted as an identity challenge with many wanting to move away from "Oh, I'm transgender" (Nick) to being 'men'. The need to reveal one's status – at least to HR – was often unavoidable and took away some of their capacity to present as a man and acted as a reminder of their trans status and the lack of control they had over who was being told (and thus their visibility). Some, such as Andy and Philip, chose to announce their decision to their department but in doing so confirmed their gender as 'trans'. However, the extent to which this caused trouble was noticeably related to their perceived masculinity – the more masculine the less trouble.

There was also the risk of mis-gendering, particularly before visible transition was evident, as Darren experienced by always being addressed by the wrong pronoun. Similar problems were found when working in a call center where you could be misrecognized if your voice did not match. These could be exacerbated by transnaivety exhibited by colleagues, such as inadvertent errors or overly curious questioning.

7.1.3 | Trans-aggression

Consequences could also be more serious, leading to various levels of aggression. Apparent difference (specifically in this case requesting colleagues to use a male pronoun before the physical transition) led to Darren experiencing an outburst from his manager who equated his difference with "causing so much trouble at work" and not "fitting in". Philip had a similar experience with a manager making "lots of comments...and pick (ing) on me in front of the rest of the office". For example, Nick who worked in a public service organization with "very good" equality and diversity policies still experienced "ignorance". Similarly, Max worked in a supportive environment but still

experienced banter such as "you're so gay". Darren, a public sector administrator in his thirties felt that whilst his previous employer "tried to understand" the precedent set by him wanting to use the gents' toilets proved challenging and limited his capacity to act like other men. Certain jobs such as working in the police or as a security guard were also perceived to be insecure, or risked cruelty, like teaching (Max). Roles that required a specific gender (e.g., some care work) were also challenging when mid-transition or not passing. Taking on a traditionally 'female' role was also problematic. This can be seen in Finn's employment as a male nanny:

> I think the challenges that I've come across have been in terms of expectations of gender roles and masculinity … I felt there was just this uncertainty and undercurrent there where I definitely wasn't meeting their expectations, in terms of how masculine I was … I was sure they knew at the time I was trans…and that was a source of underlying tension.

The context could lead to considerable challenges regarding the extent to which gender identity could be freely and safely expressed, leading to the exclusion of certain roles or promotions (to enable them to express their identity more safely), the reminder of their 'trans' status, the enactment of prescribed gender behavior to 'fit in' and – in extremis – the inability to express oneself at all without fear of reprisal (see O'Shea, 2018). The 'wrong' context not only took away any potential for male advantage, it risked the viability of any untroubled gender identity.

7.2 | Safe places

Certain workplaces were seen as 'safer' choices, and more likely to be inclusive of their gender identity. There was a consistent theme that employment was selected "for safety's sake" (Darren).

7.2.1 | Gender supportive environments

Some occupations or organizations were seen as safer and most were now in supportive – or 'gender aware' – environments. Many were explicit about choosing a field in which they would feel protected either because of its reputation for equality and diversity (particularly the public sector/service organizations), was more likely to have well-educated colleagues, or tolerance through high representation of other marginalized groups (see also David, 2015). The concern demonstrated by HR departments to protect participants and "trying to do the right thing" (Nick) was welcomed by participants, as it facilitated their gender expression. Many described their current workplace as tolerant and even the more anxious Jax, suspects his manager may know and is supportive.

7.2.2 | Masculine context

Whereas most avoided 'macho' or male dominated workplaces, some (such as Andy) actively sought them to affirm their identity. As Andy (playfully) suggested, his criteria was a uniform which was "male-orientated otherwise I am not joining!". Finn would have preferred not to be in "conservative or office male dominated" but noted it helped "give clearer signals". The gendering of the context was also accomplished through the avoidance of feminized workplaces (see also: Hall et al., 2007; Simpson, 2004). Nick stated he "didn't care" about being judged for not doing a masculine job but also suggested that he'd need a "passion" to take on a feminine role (in this case, nursing) to avoid being "in the firing line" and risk mis-gendering.

7.2.3 | Reduced visibility

Big organizations were considered safer– "I would never have done it in a smaller organization ... you don't want the guy who owns the company who signs your pay cheque being the guy you have to talk to about this" (Nick). Having other trans, or at least gay and lesbian colleagues was also more likely in a larger organization and some "felt more at home" (Darren) in these environments. Scale therefore afforded a degree of invisibility. Solitary work where you can be yourself "and hide away" (Jax) were also considered safer environments. Anonymity or spaces for freedom of gender expression (e.g., certain bars and clubs) also negated the need for unambiguously masculine enactments and were "safe queer environments" (Jax).

Contexts could therefore also be crucial in enabling the doing of gender, whether traditional masculinity or otherwise, by either appearing to be congruent with their gender, providing a safe space to 'be yourself' or by reducing visibility so that gender expression is less likely to receive scrutiny. Their need for supportive and 'open' contexts also hints at identities that challenge binary notions of masculinity and femininity.

7.3 | Masculine identities

"we're either invisible or we're freaks or we're performers" (Jax)

7.3.1 | Hegemonic masculinity

Only two participants seemed to identify straightforwardly with masculinity. Rhetorical strategies were used, sometimes in jest, such as Nick's joke "go bite the head off a kitten it'll make you tough" - a humorous device to perform masculinity. For Andy looking "butch" was important. More ambivalently masculine was Philip, who also dressed "100% male ... right haircut, right clothes..". Choice of clothes and image (e.g., shaved hair, muscles, binding) were important to the expression of their gender identity although some also described themselves as androgynous (or male androgynous). Andy exhibited the most pronounced masculine behaviors, as demonstrated by his choice of workplace calendar that he viewed as acceptable for a "male orientated domain", described by a male manager as "obscene" to women. Noticeably, those who expresses more straightforwardly masculine (even excessively macho) identities were also the less troubled by their identity at work.

7.3.2 | Physical identity

Post-physical transition was often a turning point for the participants, where suddenly "everything is possible" (Nick). This was often followed by a new career or role where they could start afresh in their new identity and enabled a more consistent and less troubled enactment. Although for Andy, his strong pre-transition workplace identity (both social and medical) was sufficiently masculine that his masculine presentation was more assured (as one of his colleagues said when he announced his transition: 'what's new?').

7.3.3 | Enacted hegemonic masculinity

Masculine 'performance' was sometimes required to fit in as Max found:

> [Y]ou …have to change the way you banter…when I banter with my friends…I can joke about being effeminate…but there you kind of have to be a bit more laddish…I also work behind the bar and…quite a lot of workmen will stay at the hotel…you…have to pull pints like a man, and it's you know all those manly things like, I'll be like uber macho about it.

For others, such as Finn, it was more about not "giving themselves away as an imposter" such as "playing dress up" or thinking how to "butch it up so that I'm not, you know, making anyone question what I'm doing there". In contrast to Andy, Finn and Max employed masculine performances to fit in and get on rather than 'buy in'.

7.3.4 | Gender avoidance

Rather than navigate the challenges of achieving the 'correct gender' many participants sought to avoid traditional gendered practices. For example, many avoided discussing themselves as it risked revealing their past and dealt with awkward moments with 'white lies' or rhetorical diversionary tactics, such as "generaliz (ing) things and just be (ing) as vague as possible" (Nick).

Gender expression was important at work, but they also stressed their non-gender identity, and its role in their workplace survival and progression, a strategy more commonly associated with women (trans and cis-gendered). Participants stressed reputation, expert knowledge, professionalism, volume of work produced and high standards, being a good team member and striving for acceptance at work (see also Muhr et al, 2016). Although not remarkable notions in themselves, they were clearly perceived as necessary to compensate for any trans penalty. Perhaps the most interesting case was that of Jax who, after losing his career through his transition, and consequently being under-employed (see also Davidson, 2016) for many years often in highly risky but trans-friendly contexts (see also David, 2015) felt most anxiously the need for these compensatory tactics:

> My strategy, because of my trans status with restriping my career is to be so overly engaged …, so busy doing so much work, creating such a profile for myself, just working myself into the absolute ground, because I think that's the only way I can compete as a trans man … it's exhausting … I feel like my portfolio needs to be fifty times bigger than everyone else's […] I have to be perfect at work (Jax).

In this context their maleness was not their advantage but the practices that enabled them to overcome their trans identity. They didn't perceive themselves to be benefitting from a male advantage even though they often referred to stereotypical views of men and women, such as Philip's assertion that "men are a lot more driven".

7.3.5 | Alternate masculinity

Part of this denial of the masculine advantage can be linked with the ambivalence felt toward masculinity itself. Even those with comparably masculine presentation argued in favor of "each to their own" (Andy) and there were different constructions of manliness. Max, who had to pretend to like beer and watch football, "play (ing) along" "to pass", also described himself as "manly as hell" but recognized that he might not be considered masculine. Concern regarding 'femininity' was about fear of exposure, not feminized aspects of their own identity, with most being comfortable with less than masculine identities.

> There is a time I think where all guys go through this extra macho euww, especially where your voice hasn't gone yet, and they're a bit like make it as deep as possible, rrrrr. Yeah and making a point of not

mentioning the things that people might see as feminine but mentioning, extra mentioning the things that people might see as macho just to kind of create a persona. But I'm not comfortable doing that anymore (Nick).

Even Jax, who was the most anxious about trans identity exposure would dress in ways that would 'trouble' his perceived identity as a man. Interestingly for many, being seen as gay was "far more acceptable than the notion of being transgendered" (Jax) as "people understand what it means to be gay" (Finn). In other words, there was a striking degree of non-conforming gender identity and some of this was made possible, and less risky, by their being re-coded as gay.

The challenges to masculinity often resulted from a lack of identification:

I don't really feel like I fit in with (straight white male) because … I don't like a lot of the things that straight white males like (Darren).

Finn was even mistaken for "transitioning the other way" because of his hooped earrings. They also made reference to practices they perceived as feminine, such as ballroom-dancing and sewing.

It is important to note that there was no case of a participant being masculine and/or feminine. Instead, there were instances and tendencies; moments of engaging with masculinity and then at other times subverting it. But as the previous section demonstrates, such gender expressions were often sandwiched between necessary masculine practice to secure positions and progress, and those who were more consistently masculine were the less troubled or fearful of their acceptance.

7.4 | Embodied limits

The capacity for gendered identity enactment was impacted by their ability to physically present as masculine and their self-confidence. The extent to which they identified with masculinity also impacted their capacity to perform it.

7.4.1 | Physical in/congruence

Physical congruence was more assured in the case of Nick, who always expected to grow into "a big strapping lad" and "have muscles like He-Man" and had achieved this look. Those who had fully medically transitioned were also more likely to accomplish convincing masculine identities. More typically bodies were at least partially incongruent and visible clues, such as the size of one's hands, meant there was a perpetual risk of being exposed or their masculinity questioned, as Jason found when his voice didn't 'match'. Finn was equally identified as a man as he was a woman (in one case he cited, both pronouns were used in the same interview). This limited the capacity for convincing masculine practices.

7.4.2 | Self-confidence and gender identification

Confidence in their identity also impacted their 'doing gender'. At times, the idea of being a man still remained alien to them:

It was difficult for me to just to hear it. It still is a bit. When someone calls me Sir or Mr, oh it makes me giggle inside, and I think oh god get over yourself! (Jason).

Whilst many were comfortable being known as trans, fewer sought that degree of visibility, and some (particularly Jax) were keen to remain undisclosed; this circumscribed the expression of their gender identity in order to stay safe. Jax, for example, felt he would be emotionally crushed by the thought of everyone knowing he was trans, even if his job was secure: "(my manager) would be fine with me in the job, but I would not be able to work here. I would lose my career again". Nick's identity was firmly grounded in his lack of identification with womanhood since childhood, giving him more confidence in his masculine identity. In both Jax's and Nick case they did not seek visibility as trans, but Jax's less masculine presentation (compared to Nick's assured masculinity) and prior experiences (underemployment, harassment) undermined his confidence.

Typically studies have referred to visibility as that which 'undoes' the male privilege of trans men (e.g., C. Connell, 2010), but this study also demonstrates that confidence similarly challenges the benefits (as best exemplified by the anxious Jax who was neither out, nor visibly trans). This is argued to be embodied because it is not only the immediate context (as in the case of Jason) that can impact confidence but experiences over time that embed themselves and inform gender identity. This lack of confidence can lead to longer term impacts on gender/identity and any male privilege.

8 | DISCUSSION

Our data demonstrates that masculinity was produced in diverse and even contradictory ways by the same individuals, as they engaged in both challenging and maintaining masculinity (C. Connell, 2010; Schilt & Connell, 2007); a constant 'mix' (Muhr & Sullivan, 2013) or 'performance of multiplicity' (Worst & O'Shea, 2020) rather than a movement between femininity and masculinity. Interviewees were self-aware of their gender identities and some actively sought to play with stereotypes although this involved more 'work' to achieve as it required more careful navigation around trans exposure and identity coherence (a notion we return to shortly). However, despite 'transformative' (Abelson, 2014) masculine aspirations – taking a broad view of their binary male identity – many felt there were times when they had to 'do gender' in particular ways so as to not draw attention to themselves, thus ending up complicit in reifying some masculine identities that they themselves would prefer to eschew.

Our data also suggests that masculinity matters: those who are the most consistently masculine have the more positive workplace experiences, although it is not clear to what extent this was their masculinity or also their consistency/credibility in gender identity that gave them this advantage. The more masculine they were the less 'trouble' they experienced. Interestingly, those who were explicitly out as trans (usually seen as risking a penalty – e.g., Leppel, 2016) and more settled in their trans roles, were also the most accepted as well as most able to live their preferred gender identity. Whether they were accepted as men or *trans* men cannot be known, but it suggests that the repetition of behavior and establishment of their masculine identity was possible, and that being 'out' may have given their identity more coherence than a non-disclosed trans man who remained somehow 'ambiguous' (see Worst & O'Shea, 2020, on 'readability'). The emphasis here being on trans *masculinity* (a 'doing gender' that evidence suggests does not have its equivalent in trans femininity (Geijtenbeek & Plug, 2018; Leppel, 2016)). For those who had to work harder at giving the correct 'performance' there was a trade-off between the male dividend and their own choice of expression (an identity cost). Further, this was not entirely a matter of choice as it was impacted by the embodied possibilities and workplace context for 'doing gender'.

Overall, we witnessed a 'flexitarian' approach to gender expression with their dominant gender expression supplemented or altered given situational requirements and similarly situations 'flexed' to enable preferred gender expressions. Masculinity is challenged in that a consistent coherent masculine identity is rarely achieved even if (sometimes) desired; it is flexed by choice, by embodied difference, and by circumstance such as when 'revealed' as trans. Although masculinity might be a preferred option for some it is not seen as higher status than other forms of inclusive (Anderson & McCormack, 2018), hybrid (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014) or otherwise 'alternative' masculinities through which they remained 'manly' despite their identification as binary trans men. Despite the flexibility there

was a sense of consistency in (their) manly identity. Their typically ambivalent engagement with masculinity suggests a *trans* masculinity. Its management is carefully honed over time through life experience; cumulative struggles that shape gender choices and what identity it affords. Accordingly, the male dividend is not always available to them, or the sacrifices required (i.e., to be the 'right type of masculine') are too great, undesired, or not achievable in context.

When theorizing trans men's identities we need to consider the complexity of this identity, and its situated enactment. Their masculinity needs to be understood as *trans* masculine and trans *masculine*. The former highlights their troubling of binary male identifiers (Halberstam, 2018), the latter highlights the privilege of the masculine (Schilt, 2006). The former challenges their capacity to benefit from the male privilege, the latter enhances it. But what matters is their masculinity. Their doing (masculine) gender – and its conformity to how we expect (male) gender to be accomplished– is only partially disrupted by their being trans (see also Halberstam, 2018; Schilt & Connell, 2007). In contrast, their flexitarian approach stresses the risks associated with incongruency in 'doing gender' (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Although how gender is 'done' may vary between contexts (Abelson, 2019), our study points to the enduring role of hegemonic masculinity. Indeed, the very nature of flexibility (in contrast to a coherent consistent expression) suggests a 'flex-penalty'.

Trans masculinity could be considered to have transformative possibilities for masculinity. But the performance of multiplicity is a situated negotiation of risk, recognition and identity expression. Firstly, there is a trans penalty that even the male advantage cannot always overcome particularly if their trans identity is more salient than their masculine one. Secondly there is a related flex-penalty if there is too much movement away from hegemonic masculine practices or unsettling 'shifts' in gender identity.

More practically our study stresses that organizational policies and procedures (particularly in relation to the LGBTQ community) as well as supportive and understanding line managers play an important but insufficient role in the workplace. The diversity of masculine practices draws attention to the need to be proactively inclusive of all masculinities at work, enabling a safe space for trans men's gender expression (in other words, not just being 'open' but proactively supportive, educating, and facilitating such possibilities). The emphasis on finding 'safe places' hints at trans-ghettoization (see also David, 2015), self-imposed glass ceilings (avoiding, rather than exposing oneself to the risk of progression – removing any male advantage) and enforced isolation that can only be overcome by positive action.

Our study is limited by its narrow range of ethnicity (white) and an intersectional life history analysis would greatly enhance our understanding as trans people face multiple binds over their life course. Our data also demonstrated some differences according to age, hinting at maturity as a factor in trans experience that could benefit from further exploration.

9 | CONCLUSION

This article explores the discursive practice of producing masculinity by trans men in the workplace, as mediated by social and physical factors. We found multiple relationships with masculinity: the performing of masculinity, the resistance to or subversion of masculinity and how these were moderated by their capacity to accomplish their gender identities, and the challenges and enabling factors in the workplace. We witness 'defensive masculinities' (Abelson, 2014) motivated by a need to fit in, and 'defensive choices' such as choosing certain occupations or organizations, as well as examples of assured masculinities that range from masculine to 'flexed' alternatives. We see evidence of the potential for male privilege within masculine identities but note that this is moderated by trans identity, visibility and (de)constructed by past experience and confidence that inform choices that might otherwise capitalize on it. In other words, being trans remains a risk.

Overall, we conclude that trans men's gender identities are negotiated in the context of the workplace and informed by past experience that influencing the doing of gender, and trans gender in particular, where previous

experiences retain their salience for recognizing the risk attached to their trans identity. We suggest that the penalty attached to the trans of trans masculinities undermines its transformative potential.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

This data was collected with the assurance to participants that it would not be shared with third parties. It is therefore not possible to share this data set even in an anonymized form.

ENDNOTE

[1] We use the term to 'masculinity' to refer to traits associated with manhood in the UK (e.g., strength, assertiveness) and add a prefix when we are considering alternate forms.

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