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Intersectional (in)visibility of transgender individuals with an ethnic minority background throughout a gender transition: Four longitudinal case studies

Sophie Hennekam¹  | Jean-Pierre Dumazert²

¹Organizational Behavior, Audencia Business School, Organization Studies and Ethics Department, Nantes, France

²HRM, Excecia Business School, La Rochelle, France

Correspondence

Sophie Hennekam.

Email: shennekam@audencia.com

Abstract

This study draws on four longitudinal case studies of transgender individuals with an ethnic minority background that undergo a gender transition while being in employment in the Netherlands. Four individuals were each interviewed four times over a period of 2 years. They were asked to make sense of their experience using a narrative approach. Using an intersectional lens, the findings reveal that non-White transgender individuals experience intersectional invisibility and intersectional hypervisibility in a dynamic and ongoing way, which influences their experiences and concurrently fosters and hinders their gender expression as they go through a gender transition while being in employment. More specifically, we build on the literature on managing (in)visibility by showing how transgender individuals with an ethnic minority background manage their (in)visibility in a dynamic and sometimes strategic way in which they reflect on the perceived consequences of their (in)visibility and then adjust their gender expression and/or strategy to elicit more positive outcomes for themselves. Practical and theoretical implications as well as suggestions to enhance our understanding of this understudied population at work and create a more inclusive work environment are presented.

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KEYWORDS

ethnic minority, gender transition, intersectionality, LGBTQ, transgender, visibility

1 | INTRODUCTION

Transgender individuals have received little attention in the management literature, although there is a recent increase in interest in this population (Alexandra Beauregard et al., 2018; Martinez et al., 2017; Schilt & Lagos, 2017). A transgender individual is someone whose gender identity does not correspond to the sex that he or she was assigned at birth (Thanem, 2011). The word transgender is an umbrella term that includes, among other groups, transgender individuals, who experience gender dysphoria and might wish to physically transition to the opposite sex; genderqueers, who identify with neither, both, or a combination of male and female genders; and agenderists, who identify as genderless or gender neutral (National Center for Transgender Equality, 2014). Gender identity refers to a person's intrinsic sense of being male or female, while gender expression is the social presentation and communication of one's gender to others. Finally, transition is the process of changing from the gender role associated with sex assigned at birth to a different gender role (World Professional Association for Transgender Health, 2012).

Most studies to date have focused on LGBT individuals as a group, without recognizing that the workplace experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexuals might be very different from transgender individuals (Collazo et al., 2013; Ozturk & Tatli, 2016). Estimating the prevalence of transgender individuals is difficult as few statistics assess gender identity or fail to differentiate between transgender individuals on the one hand and lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals on the other. As studies use different definitions to refer to transgender persons, often including only individuals who have undergone a medical transition, an underestimation of the size of this population is likely (Reed et al., 2009). The percentage of individuals who identify as transgender, genderfluid or non-binary is worldwide around 2%. In the Netherlands this is 1% (Statista, 2022). However, other sources indicate that around 3.9% of the Dutch population does not identify with the gender they got assigned at birth (Felten & Bos, 2018).

Although only a small percentage of the world's population identifies as transgender, this population experiences high rates of unemployment and homelessness and relative low earnings (Drydakis, 2017). Further, they face difficulties in maintaining employment and encounter many instances of discrimination and other forms of negative treatment at work (Kuyper, 2017). These negative experiences at work are associated with lower levels of well-being and higher rates of depression and suicide (Budge et al., 2010). While recent research has greatly advanced our knowledge on the workplace experiences of transgender individuals, there are also some gaps in the literature. In this article, we aim to address some of these gaps.

First, research on the LGBT population tends to focus on LGB individuals, despite claims that transgender persons occupy a particular difficult position in the labor market (Kuyper, 2017). The present study focuses exclusively on the experiences of transgender individuals, thereby avoiding the flaw in many studies that have conflated research findings to the LGBT community without distinguishing between possible differences within this heterogeneous population (Ozturk & Tatli, 2016). Relatedly, we answer a call for addressing neglected or harder to access diversity strands such as the LGBT+ population (Fletcher & Everly, 2021).

Second, transgender individuals face issues, such as gender transitions, that lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals do not face. This study specifically examines the process of a gender transition in the context of work. Transgender individuals who wish to express their gender identity may want to undergo a gender transition, which is a unique journey for each transgender individual (Budge et al., 2010; Schilt & Connell, 2007) and makes them more "visibly other" (Beauregard et al., 2018, p. 864). A gender transition at work is therefore a vulnerable period in which dynamics such as managing one's (in)visibility related to changing one's gender expression becomes visible. Yet, we have limited insights in this life-changing process for many transgender persons (Hennekam & Ladge, 2022; Marvell et al., 2017).

Third, little is known about transgender individuals who belong to multiple stigmatized groups (de Vries, 2015). Transgender individuals with an ethnic minority background reside at the intersection of two marginalized social categories at work. Consequently, they must contend with prevailing cisgender norms as well as racism. Non-White transgender individuals are intersectional minorities who experience a unique set of challenges compared to non-White cisgender individuals and White transgender individuals. Indeed, previous studies point to the difficult situation faced by transgender individuals of color (Grant et al., 2011; Singh, 2013). Building on this work, we explore the intersection of gender identity and ethnicity for transgender employees with an ethnic minority background as they undergo an identity transition at work. Our longitudinal design captures the lived experiences of transitioning individuals at work over a period of 2 years when they possess multiple stigmatized identities.

This article builds on three strands of research related to transgender individuals. One strand calls for more research on transgender individuals in the context of work (Jeanes & Janes, 2021) and especially the gender transition process (Marvell et al., 2017). A second stream of research calls for studying transgender individuals from an intersectionality perspective as most studies to date have focused on White transgender individuals (Fletcher & Beauregard, 2022). For example, Fletcher and Everly (2021) argue that more research is needed to understand intersectional identities such as LGBT people of color who may face multiple layers of stigma and have more complex views about their identities and the expression of them at work. Indeed, while many scholars stress the need to adopt an intersectionality perspective in organizations (Atewologun et al., 2016; Healy et al., 2011; Holvino, 2010), few have focused on the transgender population. Finally, we build on a third stream of research that calls for more situated accounts of transgender individuals (Muhr et al., 2016) as doing gender is a contextually sensitive performance (Connell, 2010; West & Zimmerman, 1987). More specifically, when theorizing transgender/ethnic minority intersectionality one needs to consider the complexity of this identity, and its situated enactment (Abelson, 2019).

We make a contribution by showing that non-White transgender individuals experience intersectional invisibility and intersectional hypervisibility in a dynamic and ongoing way, which influences their experiences and concurrently fosters and hinders their gender expression as they go through a gender transition while being in employment. Further, we expand the literatures on (in)visibility and intersectionality by showing that transgender individuals with an ethnic minority background dynamically and sometimes strategically use of both intersectional hypervisibility and invisibility as they navigate a gender transition.

Drawing on four case studies each consisting of four semi-structured in-depth interviews with four transgender individuals with an ethnic minority background as they undergo a gender transition while being in employment, we answer the following research question: *How does the intersection of gender identity and ethnic minority identity play out during a gender transition in the context of work?*

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 | Transgender individuals and gender transitions at work

An increasing number of organizations have policies in place to support transgender individuals (Byington et al., 2021; Pichler et al., 2017, 2018). These policies and practices tend to have positive effects on a range of individual level outcomes such as increased life satisfaction and positive work attitudes as well as reduced psychological strain and perceived discrimination (Fletcher & Everly, 2021). Yet, research on the workplace experiences of transgender individuals shows that this is a vulnerable population that encounters negative treatment, discrimination, physical and psychological aggression, loneliness as well as psychological problems (Budge et al., 2010; Dispenza et al., 2012; Grant et al., 2011; O'Shea, 2020). In addition, they face some unique organizational challenges such as policies that prevent them from accessing gendered spaces like changing rooms and bathrooms that align with their gender identity or restrictive gendered dress codes (Brewster et al., 2014). Further, many organizations do not know how to create a workplace that is inclusive of transgender employees (Gut et al., 2018) and some employers or colleagues

refuse to use their new names and pronouns (Bender-Baird, 2011; Connell, 2010; James et al., 2016; Schilt, 2010), gossip or make fun of them (Mizock et al., 2018; Priola et al., 2014). The lack of awareness of and knowledge about transgender individuals at work often leads to an unsupportive environment for transgender employees (Ozturk & Tatli, 2016). Consequently, transgender individuals tend to have lower performance evaluations, fewer career development opportunities, fewer job offers and are more likely to be made redundant (Bender-Baird, 2011; Grant et al., 2011; James et al., 2016). Dutch research presents a similar picture of the experiences of transgender individuals at work and highlights their lack of inclusion and well-being, negative treatment, discrimination and a strong lack of understanding from their environment (Keuzenkamp, 2012; Kuyper, 2016).

However, previous research also points to the positive work experiences of transgender individuals. For example, allyship, a specific form of active support and advocacy for minority groups, has been linked to enhanced well-being of transgender individuals (Fletcher & Marvell, 2021) and makes them feel supported, respected and valued (Thoroughgood et al., 2021). Further, the endorsement of allyship in organizations signals that the organization is a safe space for minority workers such as transgender employees (Johnson & Pietri, 2022). Similarly, Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) facilitate voice and representation of transgender individuals (McFadden & Crowley-Henry, 2018), enhances social support as well as one's satisfaction with life and one's career (Trau, 2015).

Some transgender individuals express the wish to undergo a gender transition while they are in employment. Gender transitions can be social in which a person expresses one's gender through dress, behaviors and manners, but can also be medical in which individuals opt for gender-conforming surgery. A transition has been found to be associated with positive emotions (Budge et al., 2013), such as happiness, relief, and empowerment (Brewster et al., 2014) as well as higher job satisfaction, mental well-being, and life satisfaction both during and after the transition (Drydak, 2017). Some transgender individuals even describe a gender transition as the most rewarding experience in their lives (Budge et al., 2013; Budge et al., 2015) as the psychological distress of the misalignment between their sense of self and gender expression is reduced (Johansson et al., 2010). Further, being able to show one's full self has also been linked to positive job outcomes such as higher productivity and more positive relationships with coworkers and supervisors (Brewster et al., 2012, 2014; Drydak, 2016). Yet, some emotional hardship during gender transitions has also been reported (Brewster et al., 2014) and this process may influence one's career development (Köllen, 2018).

In sum, while previous research has examined the work experiences of transgender employees, little is known about how the experiences of individuals at the intersection of transgender identity and ethnicity play out during an identity transition in the context of work.

2.2 | Transgenderism and ethnicity

Transgender individuals who simultaneously have an ethnic minority background may be even more vulnerable than transgender workers who are White or non-White cisgender individuals. For example, previous research has shown that transgender and non-binary individuals that identify as multiracial tend to be less positively perceived by others (Dray et al., 2020) and report significantly higher levels of depression and suicidal ideation compared to White cisgender individuals (Park et al., 2022). Further, transgender individuals that are Black or Hispanic tend to be more negatively perceived by others compared to cisgender or bisexual White persons as they face a double stigma (Feinstein et al., 2022) and are more likely to have been denied a job compared to White transgender individuals (Edelman et al., 2015). Similarly, Black and Indigenous women tend to face greater discrimination than White trans men (Suárez et al., 2020) and Hispanic and African American transgender individuals are more likely to be unemployed (Leppel, 2016). In sum, based on Meyer's theory of minority stress (2003), transgender individuals with multiple minority statuses tend to experience more psychological stress as well as more and more severe discrimination (Millar & Brooks, 2022).

Indeed, transgender individuals do not only face gender norms and expectations, but also racial norms in organizations (Acker, 2006; Ridgeway & Kricheli-Katz, 2013; Yavorsky, 2016). These norms and assumptions are

reflected in policies and practices in organizations and therefore shape the experiences of transgender individuals (Schilt & Connell, 2007). Ethnicity is known to influence one's experiences at work in the sense that individuals with an ethnic minority background are more likely to experience discrimination, bias and lower wages (Lang & Lehmann, 2012; Quillian et al., 2017). Further, research points to the intersection of ethnicity and gender identity in that non-White trans women are often perceived most negatively (Eaton et al., 2020) while White transgender employees tend to receive more workplace support and earn more (Schilt, 2010). It has been argued that the challenges non-White transgender individuals encounter are exacerbated by their hypervisibility and exaggerated stereotypes (Rosette et al., 2018). Thus, intersecting identities shape experiences of oppression, social exclusion, and discrimination (Rosette et al., 2018) as organizations are structured along interacting and intersecting axes of inequality (Acker, 2006; Healy et al., 2011; Ridgeway & Kricheli-Katz, 2013).

2.3 | Managing intersectional (in)visibility

The extant literature has studied how individuals with multiple, stigmatized identities manage (in)visibility in the workplace (Buchanan & Settles, 2019; McCluney & Rabelo, 2018). Invisibility designates the experience of marginalized group members who are overlooked or dismissed by the dominant group (Smith et al., 2019). Relatedly, intersectional invisibility refers to the notion that "possessing multiple subordinate-group identities can render people 'invisible' relative to those with a single [subordinate]-group identity because the former are perceived as non-prototypical members of their respective identity groups" (Rosette et al., 2016, p. 6). More specifically, non-White transgender individuals experience intersectional invisibility because of prevailing dominant (cis)gender norms and racism. They deviate from both norms by being transgender and by being non-White and may therefore struggle to belong to the social group of either transgender individuals or of individuals with an ethnic minority background leading to feelings of isolation and exclusion (McCormick & Barthelemy, 2021). Their exclusion from both groups renders them invisible which may hinder their needs to be met (Wagner & Kitzie, 2021) and which has been found to have a negative influence on one's psychological well-being (Rabelo & Mahalingam, 2019).

Simultaneously, however, transgender individuals with an ethnic minority status may experience increased visibility. While their ethnic minority identity is obviously visible to others, their transgender status also becomes visible during a gender transition. Non-White transgender individuals thus become hypervisible, which could lead them to be scrutinized and more prone to discrimination as is the case for Black women for example, (Holder et al., 2015; McCluney & Rabelo, 2018).

Thus, possessing multiple disadvantaged social identities makes the experience of (in)visibility more complex (Buchanan & Settles, 2019). Indeed, navigating intersectional visibility and invisibility concurrently at work can present both challenges and opportunities (Smith et al., 2019). It has been argued that the challenges of being a non-White transgender person are amplified in the context of work (McCluney & Rabelo, 2018). More specifically, while non-White transgender individuals' specific needs may be easily overlooked by an organization, their doubly disadvantaged social identity may make them simultaneously hypervisible such that they are scrutinized more than White transgender individuals (McCluney & Rabelo, 2018; Settles et al., 2018). However, individuals with multiple minority statuses may also strategically play with the notions of (in)visibility as they navigate the workplace (Wasserman & Frenkel, 2020). Thus, the intersection of being transgender and having an ethnic minority background is likely to simultaneously facilitate and hinder the process of a gender transition at work.

3 | INTERSECTIONALITY THEORY

Intersectionality highlights how the interaction between multiple non-dominant social categories leads to exclusion and oppression as social identities are "inextricably interconnected in the production of social practices of exclusion"

(Crenshaw, 1997, p. 237). Intersectionality theory posits that social inequalities and exclusionary categories are interdependent and interrelated (Healy et al., 2011). Further, intersectionality understands gender identity and ethnicity as socially constructed categories that reflect evolving social meanings (Holvino, 2010). It considers experiences and knowledge as situated, contextual, relational, and reflective of social power structures (Atewologun, 2018). Indeed, the experiences of transgender individuals with an ethnic minority background are embedded in wider interpersonal, organizational, and societal contexts, asking for a situated analysis (Hwang & Beauregard, 2022). Thus, intersectionality captures “the structural and dynamic consequences of the interaction between two or more forms of discrimination or systems of subordination. (Intersectionality) specifically addresses the manner in which racism, patriarchy, economic disadvantages and other discriminatory systems contribute to create layers of inequality that structure the relative positions of women and men, races and other groups” (United Nations, 2020).

It has been argued that having an ethnic minority background and being transgender leads to a “double jeopardy” (Berdahl & Moore, 2006) putting them in a particular precarious situation as they contend with racism and (cis)sexism. They thus face greater challenges than either non-White cisgender individuals as well as White transgender persons. However, research has concomitantly shown that belonging to multiple disadvantaged groups does not necessarily imply adding up oppressions (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Rather, their (in)visibility related to their multiple marginalized identities can be managed in such a way that it presents opportunities as well (Smith et al., 2019). However, we do not know how the experiences of evolving (in)visibility of non-White transgender individuals during a gender transition can be understood using an intersectional lens, which is where the present study aims to make a contribution. Intersectionality theory captures the unique experiences of individuals having multiple social identities (Collins, 1998; Crenshaw, 1989) and is relevant to examine how transgender individuals with an ethnic minority background negotiate the simultaneous visibility and invisibility related to these identities as they navigate a gender transition while being in employment.

4 | METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a multiple qualitative case study methodology to understand the differences and similarities between four cases (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Cases were studied longitudinally to track changes over time, which is especially relevant when studying transgender individuals during gender transitions (Cler et al., 2020). Further, four cases were used to be able to analyze each case within its unique context and the data across various contexts to build a conceptual model (Volmar & Eisenhardt, 2020). In sum, it has been argued that multiple case studies allow a wider exploration of theoretical insights (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

The choice of longitudinal case studies as the preferred research method reflects my epistemological stance. This study uses an interpretivist research paradigm. This paradigm posits that there is no objective reality that can be captured, but that observation, understanding and perception are socially constructed and therefore subjective. Consequently, interpretivist research examines how individuals come to understand the world around them from their subjective point of view. As the aim of this study is to learn more about the lived experiences of transgender individuals with an ethnic minority background during a gender transition, an interpretive approach seems most appropriate. Consequently, the value of studies embedded in this paradigm should be judged by the degree to which they represent the perspectives of participants (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Further, to assess the trustworthiness of qualitative research, including case studies, one can evaluate dependability, credibility, confirmability, and transferability (Creswell, 2009) and add tables with additional data (Cloutier & Ravasi, 2020), which can be found in Appendix D. First, in terms of credibility, referring to how well the perceptions of participants are represented by the researcher, the first author asked the participants repeatedly throughout the interviews whether she had properly interpreted what they had just said. Second, regarding dependability, referring to ensuring that one studies what one claims to study, the aim of the research has been clearly exposed at the outset of the study. Third, confirmability requires being transparent about how the data have been coded, which is shown in Figure 1. Finally, transferability

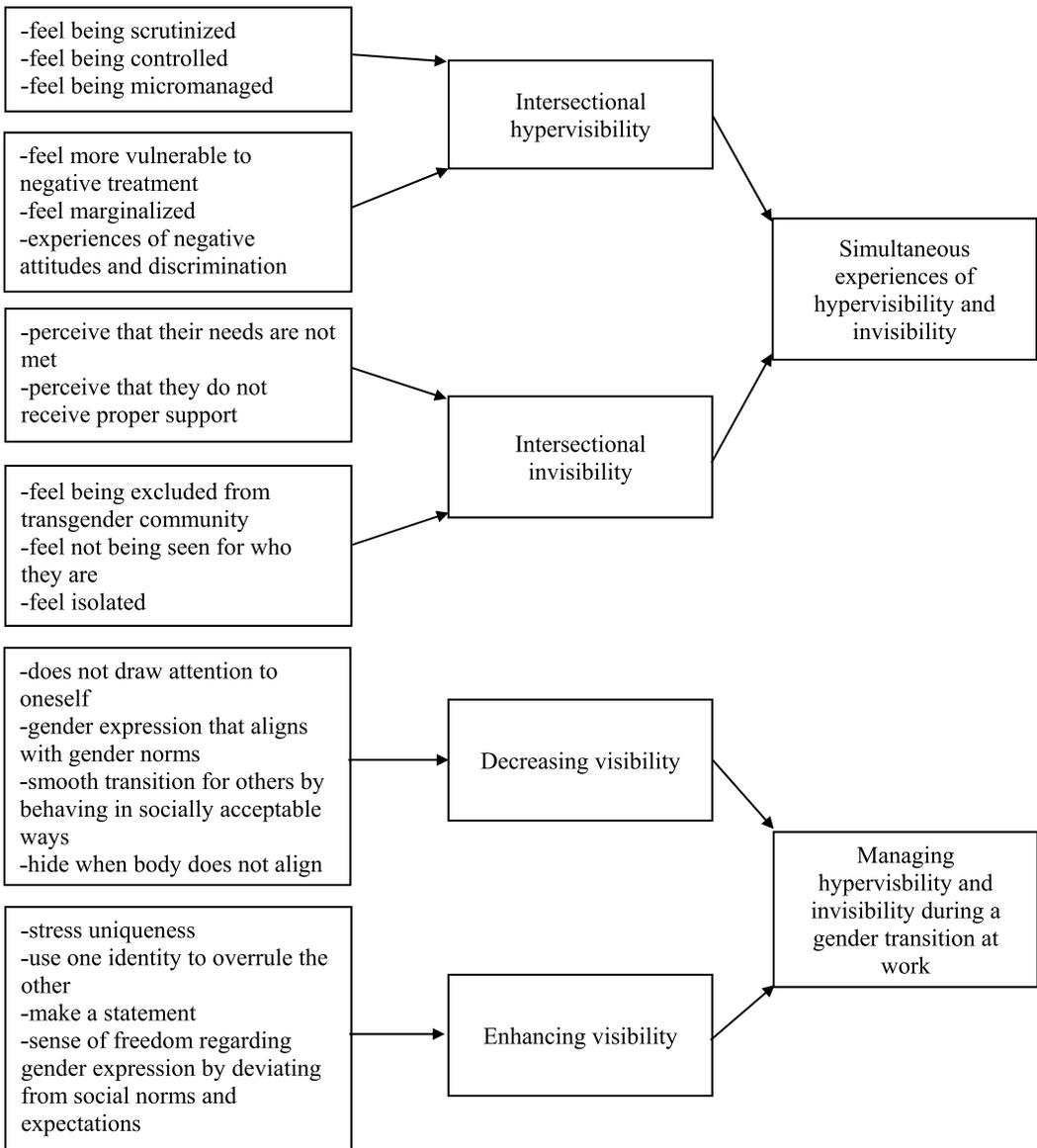


FIGURE 1 Data analysis structure.

referring to the extent to which the findings can be applied in similar situations, was dealt with by providing multiple quotes and contextual information about the participants as outlined in the vignettes in Appendix C.

4.1 | Recruitment and sample

Potential participants were approached online, often after moderators of closed groups on social media had accepted the request to post an invitation to participate in the study. Ethical guidelines regarding researching vulnerable populations were followed (Hennekam, 2019). Other calls for participation were posted on forums related to the transgender community. When an individual was interested, he/she contacted the researcher, and an individual

interview was scheduled. Apart from this purposive sampling technique, each participant was also asked if he/she knew other transgender individuals who would potentially be interested to participate. This snowball technique led to the identification of additional participants. These sampling methods were adopted because of the relative difficulty to access transgender individuals and aligns with other studies (Martinez et al., 2017; McFadden, 2015; Ozturk & Tatli, 2016; Thoroughgood et al., 2021). Purposive and snowball sampling are considered appropriate as these sampling techniques allow for the selection of cases that are relevant to the aim of the study and will provide rich data (Patton, 2002). This study reports on four longitudinal case studies. Case 1 reports on a trans man of 20 years old. He is a singer in the creative industries and is of East African origin. We use the pseudonym Tim. The second case self-identifies as a gender-fluid trans woman of 38 years old. She works as an air steward and is of West African origin. We call her Emma. Case 3 refers to herself as "woman". She's a 40 years-old journalist from South-East Asia. We use the pseudonym Emily to refer to this participant. Finally, the fourth case is a 36-year-old North African pharmacist that identifies as genderqueer. We call him Mark.

This study was conducted in the Netherlands. Appendix A provides an overview of the rights and experiences of transgender individuals in this country. In sum, since 2014 it has become easier for transgender individuals to change their gender on official documents which has led to an increase in the number of transitions. However, despite legislation that prohibits discrimination (Keuzenkamp, 2015), transgender individuals experience a lack of acceptance, negative treatment, threats to their well-being and a disadvantaged position in the labor market (see Appendix A).

4.2 | Procedures

Four individuals were followed over a period of 2 years and were interviewed four times: once every 6 months. A gender transition takes on average 2–3 years, but we also aimed to minimize the constraints for participants and increase the chance of sustained engagement from their side. Therefore, it was decided to opt for a period of 2 years in which an interview was scheduled once every 6 months. We thus report on a total of 16 interviews.

The interviews were in-depth and exploratory in nature. The average length of the interviews was 75 min, ranging from 45 to 110 min. An interview guide was used (see Appendix B), but the researcher was open to explore other themes brought up by the participants. The semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted either face-to-face or through Skype, depending on the preferences of the participants. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Each participant was informed about the aim of the study and signed an informed consent form. They were also informed that they could withdraw from the research project at any time and that they did not have to answer all questions. In addition, anonymity and confidentiality were ensured. Pseudonyms were used and any information that might identify the participants were omitted. Further, it was stressed that a long-term engagement with the research would be appreciated. Given the longitudinal nature of the study as well as the sensitivity of the topic, specific attention was paid to building trust and rapport. Although the researcher was not part of the transgender community herself, she was mindful to start the interview with some small talk to put the participant at ease and always be respectful, polite, accommodating, and open by stressing that she was simply there to listen to their story and that there were no right or wrong answers. Further, she made sure that the participant had time to ask questions, share information that went beyond the focus of the study and provide additional information either through email or by scheduling another short interview if needed.

This study used a narrative approach to gain a more nuanced understanding of how these four non-White transgender individuals made sense of their experiences as they underwent a gender identity transition while being in employment. The participants were asked to "tell their story". The participants were thus asked to create a narrative and make sense of their own experiences. In line with Marques (2019), transgender individuals are perceived as agentic subjects and not as passive recipients of cultural normativities. As narrating is an essential part of the sensemaking process, a narrative approach provides a novel perspective from which to gain in-depth understanding of these transgender individuals' experiences during their transition. Previous studies have shown that narratives are useful in

making sense of challenging transitions in life (Hennekam, 2016; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). The researcher is part of this sense-making process. As she collected and analyzed the data, she has a fundamentally interpretative role that needs to be acknowledged. The researcher self-identifies as a cisgender White woman, and thus studies the subject from the outside rather than within, which can arguably be considered a limitation to the analysis and understanding of transgender and racial issues. The researcher describes her positionality in this study as well-intended ignorance. She does not pretend to know what the participants are going through and engages in active listening. Further, her initial understanding of the data was shared with the transgender community to ensure that her interpretation of the data made sense. The interviews were conducted in Dutch and translated into English using parallel translation by two native English–Dutch speakers.

4.3 | Analysis

A bottom-up qualitative approach was used to analyze the data. The analysis was inductive in nature and was done manually. First, all transcripts were read to become familiar with the data. Afterwards, all interviews were coded allowing themes to emerge. To capture the transitional experience, each participant's interviews were analyzed as part of a case occurring across four different times. By analyzing each case this way, their changing experiences could be captured. However, cross-case patterns were also noted in the process to identify both similarities and differences. The analysis was iterative in nature and the researcher went back and forth between the transcripts and coding book. The codebook was constantly modified, as the codes identified in earlier cases were tested in the later ones using a process of analytic induction. The iterative process moved towards the identification of broader themes, distilling the main findings while also being careful to represent all the cases in their unique context. Short vignettes of each participant are provided in Appendix C. The data analysis structure is depicted in Figure 1 below.

5 | FINDINGS

The findings reveal that the intersection of gender identity and ethnicity lead transgender individuals with an ethnic minority background to manage both intersectional hypervisibility and intersectional invisibility. While this hypervisibility tended to make them more vulnerable to negative treatment at work as they felt scrutinized, being controlled and micro-managed at work, their perceived intersectional invisibility resulted in the issue that they felt their needs were not being met, that they felt they did not receive adequate support during their transition and struggled to bond with and find support within the transgender community, leading to feelings of isolation and exclusion. The four case studies jointly show that non-White transgender individuals play with their (in)visibility as they undergo a gender transition while being in employment, which influenced the way they expressed their gender as well as their transition experience. Further, this is a dynamic process that changed over time as their transition evolved. More specifically, when the participants perceived negative outcomes related to being visibly transgender and having an ethnic minority identity at the start of their transition, they decreased their visibility by either expressing their gender in a gender-conforming way, or by emphasizing their ethnic identity to overrule their transgender identity. However, their strategies to decrease the visibility of their transgender status often made them invisible leading to a perceived lack of support, unmet needs as well as feelings of exclusion and isolation. Consequently, the participants increased their visibility by either claiming their transgender identity or felt that their intersecting marginalized identities freed them from all norms and expectations, giving them space to express their gender in ways that defied gendered norms. When they felt this made them hypervisible, resulting in feeling scrutinized, controlled, micro-managed and vulnerable to negative treatment they tended to decrease their visibility. This process seemed to be dynamic and ongoing until they found a balance that worked for them. This process model is depicted in Figure 2 and is explained in more detail below through a range of illustrative quotes.

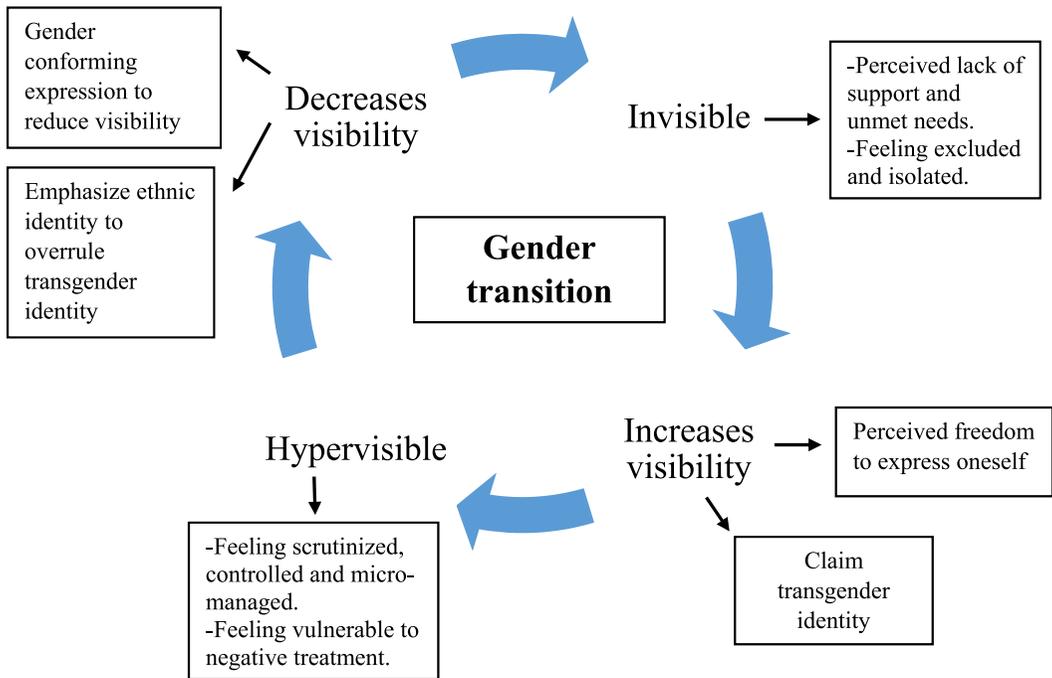


FIGURE 2 Conceptual model of managing (in)visibility during a gender transition. [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/gps.12992)]

5.1 | Intersectional hypervisibility

At the beginning of their transition, the visibility of the participants increased as they disclosed their transgender identity. While this is true for all transgender individuals who wish to undergo a transition at work, all four participants reported that their ethnic minority status made them more, or even extremely visible. This heightened visibility made them feel more vulnerable and scrutinized, leading to feelings of being controlled and micro-managed as Emma explains below:

It makes you even more visible during the transition... so I'm an object to be controlled or something. I understand they are a little frightened and feel uncertain about how to manage my transition properly, but they seem to forget that I'm just a human being. If we all stay cool and communicate, it'll be all fine! Now it feels like I'm a threat that needs to be controlled, micro-managed, in order to avoid any possible damage. It's weird. They ask all kind of personal questions about my genitals, probably with good intentions, to make sure I use the right bathroom and stuff but it makes me feel I'm an alien, an unwelcome alien.

(Emma)

Emma felt micro-managed as she was asked for updates about her transition several times per week. She perceived these questions to be intrusive and unnecessary. Further, Emma felt that HR wanted to know everything about her transition, even when this was not relevant to her job. She perceived this management style to be inhuman, in which she was not seen as a full individual, but as an "alien". Similarly, Emily reported on how her transgender and ethnic minority identities made her more visible than transgender individuals without an ethnic minority status.

Being both trans and foreign puts you in the spotlights.

(Emily)

This hypervisibility also made them feel more prone to negative treatment at work. The participants reported that their ethnic minority identity tended to be negatively perceived in their organizations and that they experienced negative beliefs, attitudes, marginalization, and discrimination. This added on to their already stigmatized identity as a transgender employee. As Tim highlighted:

I remember my manager started a conversation with an attitude of 'what do you want again'? I had brought up issues related to my ethnicity earlier that year and I could feel he thought I was a pain, that being foreign was already enough to handle and that this trans question was too much. It's scary as he has power. If he's sick of me he could get rid of me.

(Tim)

5.2 | Decreasing visibility

Because of the negative outcomes related to being hypervisible, the participants often engaged in strategies to decrease their visibility. More specifically, some participants, like Tim and Mark, aimed to decrease their visibility by expressing their gender in rather gender-conforming ways:

I'm already very visible, so I'm trying to make it less visible by playing it cool, by downplaying the way I express myself. I'm appearing like a typical man so I don't draw attention to myself.

(Tim)

Thus, participants who perceived that both their gender identity and their ethnic origins were negatively perceived at work tended to reduce their visibility and the negative outcomes flowing out from this visibility by smoothening their transition and by expressing their gender in socially acceptable, rather stereotypical ways. This strategy thus changed the course of their gender transition by expressing themselves in gender-conforming ways in order to fit in and stand out less. However, Mark used the intersection of his ethnic and gender identity to his advantage as he highlighted his ethnic minority background to overrule the stigmatizing nature of his transgender identity. He thus drew on the social identity category that he considered to be least stigmatizing, in Mark's case his ethnic identity, as he navigated his transition.

At times being African can be a good thing, not often, but sometimes, so when that's the case I'm presenting myself as such and I really don't talk about being trans. We all play with this constantly, about showing this side of ourselves that others like best.

(Mark)

Both Tim's gender-conforming expression and Mark's strategy to emphasize his ethnic origins to reduce the salience of his transgender identity seemed to have the intended effect of reducing their visibility. However, their intersectional invisibility also led to negative outcomes to which we turn next.

5.3 | Intersectional invisibility

While the participants reported feeling satisfied being less scrutinized and vulnerable, they simultaneously reported that their double stigma rendered them invisible which resulted in not receiving the support they felt they needed:

Trying to make yourself invisible helps to avoid trouble. The only problem is that it also means you don't get the support I would have liked. I'm now playing it safe, like a stereotypical man, which is fine, because people like it, but by doing so I'm not necessarily going for what feels best to me. For example, I'm a man, but I could see myself dressing a little more gender neutral. I won't do it, because I don't

want to make waves, but in an ideal world I would have asked for some more accommodations at work to truly reflect who I feel I am.

(Tim)

Tim felt he had to choose between being hypervisible which would make him vulnerable to negative treatment at work and rendering himself invisible which would imply he would express himself in a way that didn't feel right to him and would also deprive him from the support he needed during his gender transition. Similarly, Mark felt that behaving low profile and making himself as invisible as possible would be the best option despite not receiving proper support.

The moment I announced that I wanted to transition, they saw me as a burden. They made me understand that they had been kind enough to hire me and I should now follow the rules and norms. Transitioning was clearly not within the rules of how I should behave and fit in.

(Mark)

Another participant, Emily, explained that her perceived lack of support at work was not only related to her transgender status but also to her ethnic minority identity.

I discuss a lot with other people who're transitioning online and I do get the impression that those who are trans and of color are receiving less support. I may be wrong of course, but the non-white community seems to experience more hostility on all levels.

(Emily)

Belonging to two subordinated social groups seemed to make it more difficult to find support and generated a greater sense of isolation at work. The participants reported feeling doubly disadvantaged:

I feel I really have this double jeopardy. I've got it all against me: black, transgender, and homosexual. People like to put you in a box or else it makes them uncomfortable. Well, I've got everything that makes them freak out and therefore they just avoid me which makes me feel sad and lonely.

(Tim)

It's even harder for people of color. We don't fit in anywhere, so I feel very much rejected and lonely.

(Emma)

As Emily alluded to, the participants mentioned not only that they did not get proper workplace support related to their transition, but also felt excluded from the transgender community as if their added layer of ethnicity rendered them invisible in this space, giving them once more an outsider-status. This was perceived to be very painful as they expected the transgender community to be an inclusive and safe place.

Even within those LGBT or whatever name support groups, we can still feel some norms. It's not as accepting or tolerant or open as I had expected. I'm truly disappointed because I so had not imagined it. I really thought this would be my safe base, but clearly it's not. Even within those groups I feel like an outsider, I feel like the odd one out and that's painful.

(Emma)

It's a real bummer that even in the trans community I'm excluded. You need their support, share your experiences, be with like-minded people and then they treat you like a weirdo.

(Emily)

6 | INCREASING VISIBILITY

Given the perceived lack of support from their organizations and their feelings of exclusion and isolation, the dynamic process of playing with their intersectional invisibility and hypervisibility continued throughout their transitions. For instance, as their transitions evolved, expressing oneself in a way that complied with stereotypical gender norms did not always feel right to the participants, leading them to finally change the way they expressed themselves, which rendered them again more visible. For example, Mark who had expressed his gender in conforming ways at the early stages of his transition, started expressing his gender in less-conforming ways later on. Mark increased his visibility as he realized that he could not comply with the prevailing gender norms and that he was often perceived to be different based on his ethnicity too, making him visible anyway.

I'm a bit of everything and although people don't like it, don't get it, I can only be myself. People cannot not notice me, but it's ok, it's who I am, I am queer.

(Mark)

For Mark, being non-White in addition to being transgender facilitated his transition in that his uniqueness set him free of all norms. He therefore strategically used his intersectional visibility as a way to highlight his uniqueness, as he explained:

I'm an outsider on all levels, which can be an inconvenience at times, but it can also be an advantage. As a queer people can't categorize me, as I'm Tunisian I'm not like the others either. It gives me some leeway to just be myself, some extreme freedom to just be Mark that Dutch transgenders may not have.

(Mark)

Other participants used their extreme visibility and tried to make a point with their transition. For example, Emily claimed her transgender identity and explained strongly and eloquently what her transition was going to look like to her colleagues, what it would involve and what people at work could expect. By clearly positioning her transition to others at work she elicited rather positive reactions. Thus, by strongly positioning herself as transgender, she reduced the salience of her Asian origins.

I don't care what others think. I want to do this transition and because you can see that I'm transitioning, I cannot hide it. Thus, I may as well make a statement, show the world what it's like. I'm no longer seen as Asian, I'm trans.

(Emily)

This same person, however, tried to become less visible at a later stage of her transition. Rather than highlighting her transition, she hid herself from others when her voice did not fully align with how she felt, highlighting the processual, ongoing, and dynamic nature of how participants played with the notions of intersectional hypervisibility and intersectional invisibility throughout their transition.

I'm pretty happy with my body now, it's all going well. The thing that bothers me most is my voice, it just isn't right yet, it's not feminine, it really gives me away sometimes so I'm avoiding the phone and use email a lot. Right now I'm trying to be invisible to the outside world.

(Emily)

In sum, the narratives of the four participants show that individuals who self-identify as transgender and who are of foreign origin navigate both intersectional hypervisibility and intersectional invisibility during a gender transition

while being in employment. This is a dynamic process as their transition unfolds and influences their experiences and gender expression throughout their transition.

7 | DISCUSSION

Drawing on four longitudinal case studies, this study examines how transgender individuals with an ethnic minority background manage their intersectional hypervisibility and invisibility related to their gender identity and ethnic minority status in a dynamic and ongoing way and make sense of their experiences as they undergo a gender identity transition while being in employment. The narratives reveal that playing with this (in)visibility presents both the difficulties and opportunities to non-White transgender individuals. Below we discuss the theoretical and practical implications of the findings.

7.1 | Theoretical implications

Our research highlights the complexity of those who live at the intersection of multiple stigmatized social identities. We find that our participants concurrently experienced intersectional invisibility and hypervisibility, which both fostered and hindered their transition and their authentic gender expression. More specifically, the narratives reveal that both intersectional hypervisibility and invisibility could lead to additive or interactive inequalities as well as opportunities based on their belongingness to two minority groups.

First, the findings show that the participants experienced intersecting disadvantages associated with the double disadvantage hypothesis (Crenshaw, 1989). Their intersectional hypervisibility took the form of being more vulnerable to negative treatment and hostile attitudes during their gender transition as well as feeling controlled, micro-managed or scrutinized. Concurrently, the participants experienced intersectional invisibility which led to feelings of exclusion, isolation, marginalization, and a perceived lack of support during their gender transition.

Yet, we show that the intersection of gender identity and ethnicity is not just a double burden. Like the Black women in executive roles in Smith and colleagues' article (2019), the participants dynamically played with this notion of intersectional (in)visibility to elicit positive outcomes as well. They engaged in intersectional identity work (Atewologun et al., 2016) and showed agency as they seemed aware of how their different social identities were perceived by others and highlighted those that put them in the most positive light. They sometimes strategically used positive stereotypes about their social group (Dobai & Hopkins, 2021), overriding in some cases more stigmatizing identities they possessed or focused on their ethnic minority identity when this helped them to pass in today's cisgender society (O'Shea, 2020). Others emphasized their professional identity to draw the attention away from the marginalized transgender and ethnic identity which aligns with earlier research in which transgender individuals stressed reputation, expert knowledge, professionalism, volume of work produced or being a good team member (Jeanes & Janes, 2021; Muhr et al., 2016). Moreover, intersectional (in)visibility was used as a tactic to neutralize the effect of one stigmatized identity on the other. This is called the intersectional canceling effect whereby gender identity and race weaken each other's impact. Mark, for example, perceived having more freedom to express himself authentically as both his gender identity and ethnic minority status made him deviate from social norms and expectations. Finally, some participants decreased their visibility by complying with prevailing gender norms in the way they expressed themselves. However, this often did not work out in the long run as that gender expression did not feel right to them, inciting them to change their gender expression which in turn increased their visibility, pointing to the dynamic nature of managing their (in)visibility during a gender transition. They thus crafted rather than performed gender to reduce "gender trouble" at work (Schilt & Connell, 2007).

Second, we build on the literature on managing (in)visibility (Buchanan & Settles, 2019; McCluney & Rabelo, 2018) by showing how this plays out over time as a dynamic process in which individuals reflect on the

perceived consequences of their (in)visibility and then adjust their gender expression and/or strategy to elicit more positive outcomes for themselves. This was an ongoing process as they were going through their gender transition. The participants contended with both intersectional hypervisibility and invisibility as they sought to maximize the benefits and reduce the constraints. In sum, the findings reveal how both the canceling and double disadvantage hypothesis related to intersectionality seem to operate in a dynamic way as non-White transgender individuals navigate a gender transition in the workplace.

7.2 | Practical implications

A gender identity transition is a process that is psychologically straining. Research has found that transgender individuals who have a network of other transgender persons or who are part of a transgender community experience fewer psychological problems (Barr et al., 2016; Kuyper, 2017; Miller & Grollman, 2015) and cope better with negative treatment from others (Bradford et al., 2013). However, our findings highlight that the transgender community is not always open to transgender individuals with an ethnic minority background, further marginalizing this sub-group within the transgender population. Online forums, videos and websites are particularly valuable resources for transgender individuals who do not have access to support groups or other resources in their community (Collazo et al., 2013), which is therefore something that should be developed further.

In accordance with earlier studies that found that trans men of color experience more harassment (Schilt, 2010) and are more likely to be unemployed (Kuyper, 2017), our findings highlight that non-White transgender individuals feel disadvantaged on several grounds. They experience more marginalization and exclusion throughout their gender identity transition in their organizations as they seem even more visible and vulnerable than transgender employees without an ethnic minority background. Further, the negative treatment and discrimination some of the participants experienced throughout their transitions impact both their professional and personal lives. For example, it puts them in greater risk of job loss, may hinder their earning potential and can thus lead to poverty (Keuzenkamp, 2012; Kuyper, 2017). Countries in which there are measures in place based on the principles of positive discrimination, such as quota systems, could not only include transgender individuals but should account for intersectional disadvantages and actively attract and hire individuals with multiple marginalized identities such as transgender employees with an ethnic minority background. On a personal level, aversive workplace experiences may have negative repercussions on the mental well-being of non-White transgender individuals and might result in depressive symptoms or even suicidal ideation (Bradford et al., 2013). Psychological support at work should be available and people should be made aware of it. Given the permeability of these live domains, the hostile attitudes towards non-White transgender individuals are likely to influence other areas of life such as housing and healthcare. Consequently, support should be provided on multiple levels to account for the interrelated and intersecting inequalities this population faces across contexts (Cech & Rothwell, 2019).

Previous research has pointed to lack of knowledge on transgenderism at work (Ozturk & Tatli, 2016). This sometimes leads to negative experiences for transgender employees such as feeling embarrassed, excluded, or misunderstood (McPhail et al., 2016; Ozturk & Tatli, 2016). Therefore, it is important for organizations to prepare line managers and HR departments to be able to support transgender individuals during a gender transition (Marvell et al., 2017; Ozturk & Tatli, 2016). Information packages that are developed in collaboration with the transgender community could be widely distributed and be used as a starting point for organizations.

Further, HR policies and practices should be evaluated against inclusion criteria to ensure that the needs of transgender employees are met. Organizations can do so by seeking expertise from trans-specific organizations and carefully listen to advice and ideas for improvement from transgender employees themselves.

Moreover, recent reports stress that transgender individuals with an ethnic minority background find it especially challenging to be open about their gender identity (McKinsey, 2020; Stonewall, 2018), while disclosing one's gender identity has been found to be beneficial for transgender individuals as it strengthens relationships at work (Wax

et al., 2018) and enhances feelings of authenticity (Cha et al., 2019). Consequently, policies and practices need to signal an inclusive culture to transgender workers as such policies shape the way transgender issues are approached and handled (Marvell et al., 2017). A work environment in which minorities feel safe and can express their identities fosters the engagement in extra-role behaviors and is therefore related to enhanced performance (Singh et al., 2013). However, given the individual nature of gender identity and the unique needs of each transgender employee, it is important to be flexible and have a tailored approach to meet the unique and evolving needs of each transgender person in an organization. Further, it is important to communicate clearly and proactively about existing policies so that individuals do not have to ask for them but are aware of their rights and available support (Marvell et al., 2017).

7.3 | Limitations and suggestions for future research

One limitation of this study is that it only accounts for two social identities individuals may possess: gender identity and ethnicity. Although this study sheds light on the intersection of gender identity and ethnicity, other aspects of one's identity such as age, class and sexual orientation are likely to intersect with one's gender identity (Muhr et al., 2016). We need more qualitative research that investigates the experiences of transgender individuals that belong to multiple disadvantaged social groups simultaneously (Schilt & Lagos, 2017).

Further, we know from previous research that especially Black trans women are likely to be exposed to sex work and experiences of abuse or violence (Nemoto et al., 2011). The participants in this study all worked in the formal sector which is a limitation as work in the informal sector exacerbates the challenges transgender individuals may encounter. This needs to be explored in more depth by future research endeavors.

Finally, another limitation is related to the Dutch context in which this study was conducted. Given the situated nature of the experiences reported on, other cultural contexts should be studied to examine the role of cultural beliefs as well as legislation on the experiences of transgender individuals. Relatedly, our findings provide initial support for the idea that Black ethnic minorities seem to fare worse than the Asian and North African participants. In conservative cultures, where heteronormativity prevails, the perception towards transgenderism tends to be more negative. Religiosity might also play a role, especially in North Africa or other Muslim-majority countries where transgenderism tends to be rejected (Barmania & Aljunid, 2017). We believe that the influence of cultural norms and religious beliefs on the transition experience of non-White transgender individuals is another ripe area for future research.

8 | CONCLUSION

Drawing on four longitudinal case studies of transgender individuals with an ethnic minority background who undergo a gender transition while being in employment, we expand our knowledge on this understudied population by showing that non-White transgender individuals experience a dynamic process of intersectional invisibility and intersectional hypervisibility. More specifically, building on the literatures on (in)visibility and intersectionality, the findings reveal that transgender individuals with an ethnic minority background manage their intersectional hypervisibility and invisibility in an ongoing and sometimes strategic manner, which influences their experiences and concurrently fosters and hinders their gender expression as they navigate a gender transition in the context of work. We hope that these insights will spur additional research and helps practitioners to create a more inclusive workplace for all.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

There is no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

ORCID

Sophie Hennekam  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8974-9653>

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Sophie Hennekam is a Professor in Organizational Behavior at Audencia Business School, in France. Her research revolves around inclusion, diversity and stigmatized and/or invisible populations at work. She has published in journals such as *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Applied Psychology* and *Human Relations*.

Jean-Pierre Dumazert is an Associate Professor in Human Resource Management and Diversity Manager at Excecia in France. He leads a Chair on Diversity Management and Talent Management and studies the Dark Side of Organizations. He has published in journals such as *Gender, Work and Organization*, *Employee Relations* and *International Journal of Human Resource Management*.

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APPENDIX A: INFORMATION SHEET TRANSGENDER RIGHTS AND LABOR MARKET EXPERIENCES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NETHERLANDS

Number of transgender individuals

Around 3.9% of the total population in the Netherlands does not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth (Felten & Bos, 2018). For individuals of working age, this percentage drops to 0.6%–0.7% which is lower than the worldwide average of around 2% (Statista, 2022).

Legislation regarding gender transitions

Individuals can change their gender at the civil registry. However, since 2014 a new law called the "Transgender law" has made it easier for individuals to officially change their gender. Under this law, there are no longer any medical-physical conditions for changing gender registration on one's birth certificate. Previous requirements such as having undergone gender reassignment treatment and going to court are thus eliminated. Only an expert statement from socio-medical specialists is requested. The minimum age is 16. This law has led to an increase in the number of people who have changed their gender. To illustrate, 1960 individuals changed their gender between 1995 and 2014, while there has been a strong increase since the law changed with 770 registered changes in 2015 (Kuyper, 2017).

Acceptation

In terms of the acceptance of transgender individuals, we can observe an increase in acceptance (Felten & Bos, 2018). 57% of the Dutch population has a positive attitude towards transgender individuals, 34% is neutral and 9% report a negative attitude. Further, 13% of the Dutch population reports being against gender affirmative surgery and hormone treatment for transgender individuals and one out of five individuals believe that "something is wrong" with transgender individuals (Kuyper, 2017).

Negative treatment

Almost 40% of transgender individuals have encountered negative treatment in the public space (Keuzenkamp, 2012). Similarly, a survey conducted by Transgender Network the Netherlands reveals that around one-third of transgender individuals have experienced offenses and 43% has experienced a violent incident because they are transgender (Oosterhout & Allink, 2015). This population is also more likely to be victims of sexual violence (Rutgers wPF, 2013). 87% of the transgender population that have encountered serious incidents did not report it (Keuzenkamp, 2012).

Disclosure

Not all transgender individuals have disclosed their gender identity. It is estimated that at least 10% does not show their gender identity (Keuzekamp, 2012). 45% hides being transgender to colleagues (Keuzekamp, 2012) and around 80% adapt their behavior by for example, avoiding social events because they feel unsafe (Oosterhout & Allink, 2015).

Wellbeing

Two-third of the adult transgender individuals report to be lonely, while this is the case for around 10% of the overall population (Keuzenkamp, 2012). Further, they are more likely to experience mental health issues, with individuals who are unemployed, single and/or have lower incomes being most vulnerable (Keuzenkamp, 2012). However, individuals who have finished their gender transition report fewer mental health issues (Keuzenkamp, 2012). 21% of individuals have tried to commit suicide and 69% has had suicidal thoughts (Keuzekamp, 2012).

Socioeconomic position

Statistics from 2015 show that transgender individuals are more likely to be unemployed (35% vs. 55% in the general population) and have lower incomes (Kuyper, 2017). One third of transgender individuals have an income below the poverty line. They are also less likely to be self-employed (5% vs. 7% in the general population). Further, they are much more likely to receive disability benefits (12% vs. 4%), welfare benefits (11% vs. 4%) or other benefits (10% vs. 2%). The differences in income and labor market position cannot be explained by differences in education, as the education levels of trans persons and the general population are similar.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

General questions

How do you self-identify?
What do you do for a living?
What is your age?
Where do you live?
Where are you from?

Before transition

When and how did you find out you are transgender?
When and how did you tell your family?
How did they react?
Did you tell your organization? Why or why not?

If you did, when and how did you tell your organization?
If not, how does that make you feel?

What is it like to be transgender?

Can you tell me why you want to undergo an identity transition?

Has this been a gradual process or were there any particular events that pushed you to take this decision?

What kind of transition do you have in mind? (Medical, social, clear endpoint or not...)

How do you feel about yourself?

How do colleagues perceive you at work?

How is your direct manager/supervisor?

How would you describe the ambiance regarding LGBTQ/diversity in your organization?

Are there other transgender employees in your organization?

Has the organization dealt with gender identity transitions before?

How did the organization react when you told them you wanted to undergo a transition?

During transition

Can you tell about where you are in your transition?

How are things going?

How are you feeling about yourself?

Is your gender identity transition visible?

How do colleagues at work react?

What is the reaction of your direct manager/supervisor?

Do you experience any practical difficulties at work? Can you explain? How are they handled? How does that make you feel?

How does your organization handle your transition? How does that make you feel?

How do you affirm your gender identity right now? How is this perceived by others? How does that make you feel?

Where do you find support? Friends/family/partner/LGBTQ community?

Do you have any negative experiences? If so, how do you cope with them?

After transition

How do you self-identity?

Does this align with what you had in mind before the transition?

How do you feel about your transition overall?

Why do you feel about it this way?

How do others perceive you? How does that make you feel?

APPENDIX C: VIGNETTES

Case 1

Tim is a 20 years-old trans man from East Africa. He is aware of the stigma related to his transgender, sexual orientation, and ethnic minority status. Tim talks about a range of negative experiences he has faced in the past which influences how he approaches a gender transition. All he wants is to avoid any additional negative experiences and therefore reflects for a long time on how to initiate the transition and prepares for it. When he finally informs his employer and colleagues about his intention to transition, this is not well-received which Tim feels is not only related to his gender identity, but also to his African origin which makes him feel sad. Despite the hostile reactions, Tim decides to pursue his gender transition but tries to be as invisible as possible by expressing himself in a stereotypical masculine manner. He feels good about his transition but reports feeling lonely and uses invisibility to avoid drawing attention to himself as he believes this will lead to trouble.

Case 2

Emma is a 38-years old gender-fluid trans woman. She is from Western Africa and works as an air steward. Emma moved to the Netherlands when she was 19 to study as her mother realized she was transgender and sent her away as transgenderism is not accepted in the country Emma is from. Emma searched for information about transgenderism and gender transitions before deciding to undergo a social and medical transition. Emma feels that her workplace is rather supportive at the onset of her transition but this support decreases when the transition turns out to be less straightforward and she expresses her gender in an increasingly fluid manner. Over time she increasingly focuses on herself and what feels good for her. Emma tries to gain support from and share experiences with the LGBTQ community, but feels excluded as a Black trans. In order to move the attention away from her skin color and her transgender status, she emphasizes her professional identity.

Case 3

Emily self-identifies as a woman. She is from South-East Asia and she is 40 years-old. Emily works as a freelance journalist allowing her to work a lot from home and giving her freedom as to who she wants to work with. Emily undergoes a social and medical transition. Emily knows what she wants and isn't afraid to inform others about her decision to undergo a gender transition. Although Emily is aware of the stigma associated with transgenderism, she does not let others influence her transition journey but is very confident and focused on her own feelings. She explains that being from South-East Asia is often seen as exotic and she experiences no negative stereotypes or treatment based on her foreign origins. Thus, while her ethnic minority status increases her visibility, she perceives this as something positive. In addition, she feels that most of the time her transgender identity overrules her ethnic minority identity. While Emily enjoys being visible in the early stages of her transition in order to advocate for the transgender community, she tries to be less visible when she feels her appearance does not match her feelings during the transition. During this period, she hides from others and tries to be invisible by working a lot from home.

Case 4

Mark is a genderqueer of North African origin. He is 36 years old and undergoes a social transition during which he increasingly expresses his feminine side. Mark feels that a gender expression that goes beyond the gender binary transgresses gender norms and is not well-perceived. He feels hypervisible at work and in society at large. Consequently, Mark tries to reduce his visibility by expressing himself in a rather typical feminine way for a while before ultimately reconnecting with his strongly non-binary queer identity. Mark also plays strategically with his outsider status related to his North African origins when stressing this identity when he wants to downplay his trans identity to be seen in a positive way. As his transition progresses, Mark turns his uniqueness related to both his ethnicity and his gender identity into an asset. As Mark feels being visible anyway, he explains that he may as well express himself the way he wants without trying to comply with any norms.

APPENDIX D: TABLE WITH ADDITIONAL QUOTES

Theme	Additional quotes
Intersectional hypervisibility leading to feeling scrutinized and vulnerable	<p><i>I've experienced discrimination, based on my skin color and based on my trans identity (Emma).</i></p> <p><i>Compared to other trans people, I feel even more vulnerable, because I'm not only trans but also black (Tim).</i></p>

(Continues)

Theme	Additional quotes
Decreases visibility through a gender expression that complies with gender norms	<p><i>It's reassuring for people when your gender expression aligns with the norms. They're more comfortable because they can put you in a neat category. You blend in better, you fit in and therefore you stand out less (Mark).</i></p> <p><i>I'm being the perfect trans man, just as people expect, because I want to go under the radar, I don't want to make waves (Tim).</i></p>
Decreases visibility by emphasizing ethnic/other identity	<p><i>I'm downplaying my transness by being very professional. Like that the see me as a professional, without anything else (Emma).</i></p> <p><i>I feel my appearance doesn't fully match how I feel, so I'm hiding a little at home, I avoid seeing people, right now I don't want others to see all aspects of my but my changing gender (Emily).</i></p>
Invisibility leading to lack of support and exclusion	<p><i>It's even harder for people of color. We don't fit in anywhere, so I feel very much rejected and lonely (Emma).</i></p> <p><i>It's important to have this feeling of belonging, that there are points you can connect with people. Hobbies, sports, whatever. I have the impression that because both my skin color and my gender change are visible to others, all the rest, my interests, passions etc, are no longer relevant. It makes me stand alone, be apart (Mark).</i></p>
Increases visibility by stressing one's uniqueness	<p><i>People notice me, I stand out. Instead of trying to play the part, to be like others, I'm just myself and that's a great feeling (Mark).</i></p> <p><i>I'm not afraid to show myself as this is who I am (Emily).</i></p>
Increases visibility by claiming one's transgender identity	<p><i>I had a chat with a black trans and it seems even harder for him as he experiences a lot of racism too. I think that being Asian is not as bad. People see it as exotic, not necessarily negative, so that helps for me. At work, I'm trans, not Asian. Being increasingly visibly trans overshadows the rest (Emily).</i></p>