Transgender Inclusion in Online Job Application Forms at Forbes 450 Largest Companies

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The researchers applied for jobs at U.S. public and private businesses (N = 450), collecting computer screenshots of gender options. Results showed three firms offered transgender options, 12 had a third gender option, and 92 avoided the gender question completely. Ten organizations required applicants to select male or female.

INTRODUCTION

Transgender voices have become increasingly heard in popular culture (Glaad.org, 2017). In 2014, trans actress Laverne Cox was nominated for an Emmy for her portrayal of a transgender woman in the television series "Orange is the New Black." The popularity of transgender teenager and LGBTQ activist Jazz Jennings' YouTube channel, in which she discusses her gender identity and answers questions from viewers, has led to her becoming a spokes model for Johnson & Johnson's Clean & Clear line products and her own show "I am Jazz". The Kardashians have also helped familiarize society with the transgender topic. Audiences around the world closely watched former Olympian and current reality television star Bruce Jenner transition to Caitlyn Jenner in 2015. Finally, Jared Leto as a transgender woman in the movie "Dallas Buyers Club", and a 2016 television drama on Hulu called "Transparent", have been recent

attempts to educate viewers on transgender issues. It has also provided some new acting work opportunities for the trans community (Vogue, 2015).

For decades, transgender people were prohibited from serving openly in the U.S. military until President Obama's administration lifted the ban on June 30, 2016. However, President Trump posted a series of tweets announcing that, "The United States Government will not accept or allow transgender individuals to serve in any capacity in the U.S. Military" (Twitter.com, 2017). A formal memorandum clarified that the military would not allow accessions for transgender individuals and halted some transition-related healthcare by March 23, 2018 (Human Rights Campaign, 2011; 2017). Currently there are between 1,320 and 6,630 transgender troops in the active-duty force of 1.3 million, according to the RAND Corp. which conducted a study for the Pentagon on the issue (Jackson & Brook, 2017).

The transgender policy changes can be seen on the state level as well. For example, Oregon judicial system's ruling, that its citizens have a right to identify themselves as non-binary on state documents (Mele, 2016). California is now the first state in America to recognize a third gender on driver's licenses and birth certificates. Beginning January 2018, the California Department of Public Health issued new birth certificates reflecting a gender of female, male, or non-binary (National Center for Transgender Equality, 2017). A bill that passed the California state senate and is now moving through the Assembly could threaten those who "willfully and repeatedly" refuse "to use a transgender resident's preferred name or pronouns" with a $1000 fine and up to one year in prison. (The California Health and Safety code, 2017). Lastly, New York City's Metropolitan Transportation Authority is retiring its use of "ladies and gentlemen" in announcements in favor of gender-neutral terminology such as "passengers", "riders" and "everyone" (Vagianos, 2017). As government agencies make significant positive moves toward gender equality, the current study researched which of the largest U.S. businesses do not yet allow or encourage transgender job applicants to identify themselves while applying.

DEFINING TRANSGENDER

The term *transgender* is an adjective that describes someone whose current gender identity differs "transiently or persistently" (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), from the gender or sex they were assigned at birth. C*isgender* is an adjective that describes someone whose current gender identity is the same as the gender or sex they were assigned at birth (Robinson, Van Esch & Bilimoria, 2017). *Non-binary* refers to a person identifying as either having a gender which is in-between or beyond the two categories "man" and "woman", or as having no gender, either permanently or some of the time (Valentine, 2015). Other related terms include intersexual – those who are born with indeterminate biological sex markers; third genderists- those who are categorized as neither male nor female; genderqueers- those who identify with neither, both, or a combination of male and female genders; and agenderists- those who identify as genderless or gender neutral (National Center for Transgender Equality, 2014). In addition, the term transgender is used to encompass other related identities, such as transsexual, cross-dresser, transvestite, gender queer, drag queen/drag king, trans-man, trans-woman, female-to-male (FTM), and male-to-female (MTF) (Dispenz, Watson, Chung & Brack, 2012).

The main difference between "LGB" (lesbians, gay, and bisexual) and "T" (transgender) is that the former represents sexual preferences an individual has, while the latter represents the gender identity an individual has. Gender is a social construction created to define and reinforce social roles, and is identified in early childhood (Bem, 1975). Biological sex is a social construction created to define and reinforce social roles based specifically on physiological characteristics, and sexuality refers to the sexual habits and identity of a person (Robinson, Van Esch & Bilimoria, 2017).

TRANSGENDER EMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY ISSUES

Conservative estimates put the proportion of transgender people at 0.3% of the population of the U.S., or roughly 956,700 of the estimated population of 319 million (Gates, 2011; Population Clock, 2015). According to Grant, Mottet, and Tanis (2011), 90% of the 6,456 transgender participants surveyed had

experienced harassment or mistreatment at work. Nearly half of the transgender population experienced direct discrimination because of their gender identity. There is also a lack of legal protection across the U.S., with thirty-three states failing to protect individuals that are discriminated against because of their gender identity (Employment Non-Discrimination Act, 2013).

Due to their perceived gender incongruity, transgender and non-binary individuals face significant discrimination in the workplace (Dietert, 2007; Dietert & Dentice, 2013). A study conducted in Scotland, U.K. with a sample of non-binary participants revealed that only 4% of respondents always felt comfortable sharing their non-binary identity at work, compared to 52% who never felt comfortable (Valentine, 2015). In the same study, 90% worried their identity would not be respected, 88% worried it would make their work environment more difficult, 55% worried it would impact their career progression, and 32% avoided work places and work opportunities.

An American who is transgender is four times more likely to have a household income below $10,000 compared to the average American. Moreover, one in five transgender Americans reported being homeless at some point in their lives by a study released in 2011 by the National Center for Transgender Equality. The research included more than 6,000 transgender participants who revealed a jobless rate of 14% for white participants and 28% for black respondents. Out of desperation, some resorted to prostitution and drug dealing for income (Robinson, 2015). Budge and Howard (2010) revealed that half of their participants described experiences such as being fired, physically threatened, or emotionally abused due to gender identity. Many not only experienced unemployment due to their gender change, but also had difficulty in regaining employment after experiencing job loss. One survey of transgender Americans found that 41% answered "yes" to the question "have you ever attempted suicide?" compared to only 1.6% of the general population (National Center for Transgender Equality, 2014).

THE PRESENT RESEARCH

Beauregard, Arevshatian, Booth and Whittle (2016) tried to illustrate the extent to which transgender individuals are unheard in the workplace in UK. This was accomplished by looking for direct references to transgender individuals on websites of FTSE 100 companies. The authors in the present study applied to jobs and recorded whether or not the companies offered applicants a transgender option when self-identifying their gender. Inclusiveness is said to be the degree to which most marginalized groups are taken into consideration, valued and safeguarded in the organization (Ozturk & Tatli, 2016). Therefore, if a transgender job applicant does not see an option to identify as transmale, transfemale, non-binary, or even transgender, it is logical to assume they will not feel immediately included.

STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of the present study was to determine whether or not the largest public and private U.S corporations listed by ForbesMagazine.com provided online transgender or non-binary options to their online job applicants.

METHOD

Phase 1
A transgender and non-binary focus group was set up at a college in New York City with the purpose of collecting qualitative data specifically pertaining to the participant's workplace issues and experiences. The focus group participants were invited to attend via an email request sent to a New York Transgender Online Community. Eleven participants opted to participate in the study, and eight (who identified as either: transmale, transfemale, or non-binary) arrived on the day of the event. Since they self-selected into this focus group and thus were not randomly selected from a transgender pool, the researchers acknowledge that a convenience sampling method was used. Compensation included an $11 metro card

and pizza. Participants were guaranteed anonymity by the researchers, and subsequently no real names were recorded in the transcript of the focus group.

Multiple issues and experiences were introduced by the participants. The topics discussed ranged from a constant misuse of pronouns by co-workers, to sexual harassment from supervisors. The data collected during the focus group was recorded by the researchers and measured for themes after the event. The researchers in the present study focused on one particular theme that most participants found important, namely a lack of feeling included at the very beginning of their work life when applying for a job online.

Phase 2
Sample

The sample of organizations selected for the current study was taken from Forbes.com, "America's largest companies" list (Forbes.com, 2017; 2018). Other lists reviewed in the selection process included Forbes, "Global 2000", and Forbes, "America's Best Employers". The researchers unanimously selected the American largest company lists, due to their objective measurements of revenue and number of employees.

The gender options presented to job applicants at all 450 organizations were captured by computer screenshots. The first organization was coded in a test environment by three researchers. Any differences in coding were discussed by the researchers. In the second test organization the researchers found interrater agreement (Armstrong, Gosling, Weinman, & Marteau, 1997; Barbour, 2001). The authors of the present study then worked independently applying for jobs and taking screenshots. Those organizations highlighted in Tables 1, 2 and 4 were double-checked for accuracy since these represent the most critical findings.

Design and Materials

The current study is a descriptive analysis with categorical data and is not experimental in design. Each of the three researchers logged into the internet and applied for the first full-time position available on each organization's website. Access to a strong internet connection was important so that the application process did not "time-out" leading to the website page crashing. The researchers updated a shared spreadsheet using Google Sheets.

Measures

Variables of interest to the researchers specifically related to the gender options presented to the job applicant. The following gender options were grouped into one categorical measure: I choose not to disclose; Prefer not to say; No selection; Opt Out; I do not wish to provide this information; I choose not to self-identify; Do not wish to disclose; Decline to answer; Not Specified; Not Applicable. All of the above options were deemed to refer to the applicant not wishing to reveal their gender, or not having the option to reveal their gender.

The researchers also agreed to group together options including: Non-Binary; 3rd Gender; and Other. These three options were deemed by the researchers to represent a gender option other than male or female. Finally, transsexual and transgender options were grouped together since transgender research points to an overlap in understanding by the public of these terms, even though transsexual may imply a sexual preference and transgender may imply a gender identity choice (Drop the T, 2015).

For all of the gender variable options, each organization was awarded a "Yes" or "No" categorical response for whether or not the options were presented to the job applicant.

RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis

Frequency data for the 225 public and private largest companies (N = 450) revealed just one private and two public companies offered Transgender and Transexual gender options (see Table 1 and Appendix B).

TABLE 1
CATEGORICAL YES/NO STATISTICS OF FORBES PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FIRMS
OFFERING TRANSGENDER OPTIONS TO APPLICANTS

Company	Public or Private	Transgender or Transexual Option
Bain & Co	Private	Yes
Freddie Mac	Public	Yes
Goldman Sachs Group	Public	Yes

Eight public and four private companies offered a non-binary, 3rd gender, or unknown option to applicants (see Table 2).

TABLE 2
CATEGORICAL YES/NO STATISTICS OF NON-BINARY, UNKNOWN OR 3RD GENDER
OPTIONS AT 450 FORBES ORGANIZATIONS

Company	Public or Private	Non-Binary, 3rd Gender, Other, or Unknown Option
Becton Dickinson	Public	Yes
Bain & Co	Private	Yes
Ben E Keith	Private	Yes
Capital One Financial	Public	Yes
Consolidated Edison	Public	Yes
Constellation Brands	Public	Yes
Eversource Energy	Public	Yes
McKinsey & Co	Private	Yes
G-I Holdings	Private	Yes
Parker-Hannifin	Public	Yes
S&P Global	Public	Yes
Stryker	Public	Yes

Twenty-six public and 66 private companies removed gender options completely from their online application form (see Table 3 in Appendix A). Finally, five public and five private companies offered only male or female gender options to job applicants and required applicants to select one of the two (See Table 4 and Appendix B).

TABLE 4
CATEGORICAL YES/NO STATISTICS OF MALE OR FEMALE GENDER OPTIONS AS A REQUIREMENT AT 225 FORBES FIRMS

Company	Public or Private	Male or Female Requirement
Andeavor	Public	Yes
Giant Eagle	Private	Yes
HP Hood	Private	Yes
Hy-Vee	Private	Yes
Hensel Phelps	Private	Yes
Humana	Public	Yes
Las Vegas Sands	Public	Yes
Regions Financial	Public	Yes
Tauber Oil	Private	Yes
United Health Group	Public	Yes

The remaining 334 organizations on these public and private lists had the following gender options: I choose not to disclose; I prefer not to say; No selection; Opt out; I do not wish to provide this information; I choose not to self-identify; I do not wish to disclose; I decline to answer; Not specified; and finally, not applicable. It should also be noted that five organizations were either not offering jobs at this time or had no online job application form.

DISCUSSION

The main findings of the study showed that only 15 of 450 organizations actually offered transgender or third gender options to job applicants, while 92 organizations removed the question of gender completely, and 10 forced applicants to identify as male or female. As an example of the possible disconnect between public messaging on LGBTQ issues and actual internal hiring procedure, Humana (one of the companies forcing a male or female identification on Table 4) displays a diversity score of 100 (the maximum score achievable) on their website. The "Human Rights Campaign Corporate Equality Index" specifically measures "policies and practices pertinent to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender associates" (Humana.com, 2018). The present research confirms however, that Humana (among nine other companies) required job applicants to identify as male or female, had no option to identify as transgender, and did not even provide an option to the applicant to avoid this question.

IMPLICATIONS

For job applicants and more specifically the diversity and inclusion community, these results indicate that U.S. organizations are not consistent in their inclusion of transgender workers during talent acquisition. The results also raise questions about the importance of identifying gender during the application process, and the degree to which public companies should be held accountable in their actions toward minority groups. Finally, a question should also be raised of whether the lack of gender inclusion was intentional or not. Many of the 450 companies reviewed had similar job application portals, indicating they outsourced the application process to a third-party software provider. A simple request from the organization to the provider could add these additional transgender options, and perhaps even a preferred pronoun option with answer choices that include: He; She; They; or My Name Only. It is also possible that many of these application forms have not been updated since the company launched its online job application process.

A few changes that organizations can do to encourage transgender people to feel more included in the workplace involve: updating job application forms to include transgender and non-binary options; decide

whether or not to remove gender completely from job application forms; transgender awareness and pronoun training, all-gender bathroom structures; and health benefits that allow for counseling and treatment in relation to gender identity issues (Robinson, 2015; Transgender at Work, 2001). Organizations that include the option for a gender-neutral title such as Mx. (instead/or in addition to Mr. and Ms.) would also be more inclusive to gender groups who do not identify as male or female (Merriam-Webster.com, 2015). A survey study with non-binary participants indicated that 73% of participants would prefer a third gender category recorded (such as "other" or "non-binary"), 57% of participants prefer that recording gender on these documents should be optional, and 41% said that nobody should have gender recorded (Valentine, 2015).

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The researchers were limited by reviewing only the online job applications of the 450 organizations. A comprehensive study of the diversity and inclusion initiatives contained within these organizations may show that the organizations have been actively inclusive and that the job application form was just an outlier in their overall action plan. The job application form however, is the first point of contact with an applicant, and may leave transgender workers feeling less included by that organization. An extension of the present research would be to study how organizations educate their workforce on diversity issues relating to transgender employees. A study of employee attitudes towards transgender workers may help to raise awareness of a need for diversity and inclusion education in that organization, rather than issuing such training in response to an incident or complaint. One final suggestion for a future study could include transgender options on online job application forms and then measure whether or not cisgender applicants were more or less attracted to working at that organization.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study was to review the largest 450 public and private companies in the U.S. to establish whether or not they included transgender workers in their online job applications. Findings revealed the vast majority of organizations sampled did not include an option to identify as "transgender", "non-binary", or even "other". Ten organizations forced a binary gender choice and 92 avoided gender completely.

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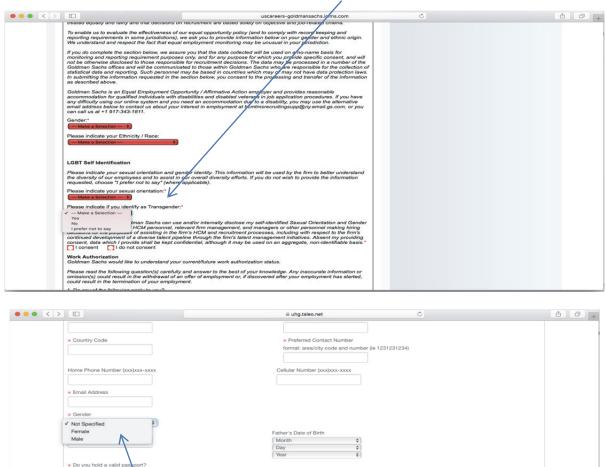   http://glaad.org/files/WWAT/WWAT_GLAAD_2017-2018.pdf

APPENDIX A

TABLE 3
CATEGORICAL YES/NO STATISTICS OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FIRMS AVOIDING
GENDER OPTIONS TO ONLINE APPLICANTS

Company	Public or Private	Avoids Gender Options
ABC Supply	Private	Yes
Academy Sports and Outdoors	Private	Yes
Air Products and Chemicals	Public	Yes
Alex Lee	Private	Yes
Allegis Group	Private	Yes
America Tire Distributors	Private	Yes
Ameriprise Financial	Public	Yes
Apex Oil	Private	Yes
Armada	Private	Yes
Ashley Furniture	Private	Yes
Automatic Data Processing	Public	Yes
Bartlett & Co	Private	Yes
Bass Pro Shop	Private	Yes
Booking Holdings	Public	Yes
Brightview	Private	Yes
Brookshire Grocery	Private	Yes
CarahSoft	Private	Yes
Carpenter Co	Private	Yes
Capital Group	Private	Yes
Chevron	Public	Yes
Citigroup	Public	Yes
Demoulas	Private	Yes
Deloitte	Private	Yes
Deere & Company	Public	Yes
Discount Tire	Private	Yes
Dollar Tree	Public	Yes
Dpr	Private	Yes
Drummond Co	Private	Yes
DR Horton	Public	Yes
EOG Resources	Public	Yes
Exxon Mobil	Public	Yes
Fertita Entertainment	Private	Yes
Fifth Third Bancorp	Public	Yes
Fry's Electronics	Private	Yes
Golub Capital	Private	Yes
Gulf States Toyota	Private	Yes
Guttman Energy	Private	Yes
Hilmar Cheese Co.	Private	Yes
HCA Holdings	Public	Yes
Hobby Lobby	Private	Yes
Holding Construction	Private	Yes
Houchens Industries	Private	Yes
HT Hackney	Private	Yes

J Crew	Private	Yes
JD Heiskell	Private	Yes
Jones Day	Private	Yes
Kingston Technologies	Private	Yes
Lam Research	Public	Yes
Leprino Foods	Private	Yes
Lennar	Public	Yes
Love's Travel	Private	Yes
Ma Labs	Private	Yes
Mary Kay	Private	Yes
Menards	Private	Yes
Micron Technology	Public	Yes
Neiman Marcus	Private	Yes
New Balance	Private	Yes
Nike	Public	Yes
Oxbow	Private	Yes
PepsiCo	Public	Yes
Panda Restaurant	Private	Yes
Pilot Flying J	Private	Yes
Plastipak Holding	Private	Yes
PPG	Public	Yes
QuikTrip	Private	Yes
Racetrav Petroleum	Private	Yes
Red Apple	Private	Yes
Renco Group	Private	Yes
Rock Ventures (Quicken Loans)	Private	Yes
Rooms to go	Private	Yes
Rosen Diversified	Private	Yes
SAS	Private	Yes
Schlumberger	Public	Yes
Schnuck Markets	Private	Yes
Services Group Of America	Private	Yes
Sigma Plastics Group	Private	Yes
Simon Property Group	Public	Yes
Skadden	Private	Yes
South Eastern Grocers	Private	Yes
Starbucks	Public	Yes
Structure Tone	Private	Yes
Taylor	Private	Yes
Thorntons	Private	Yes
Time Warner	Public	Yes
TJX Cos (TJ MAXX etc)	Public	Yes
TMS International	Private	Yes
Turner Industries Group	Private	Yes
United Pacific	Public	Yes
United Parcel Service	Public	Yes
Wegman Food Market	Private	Yes
Whiting-Turner Contracting	Private	Yes
World-Wide Technology	Private	Yes

APPENDIX B

The example below with transgender options is Goldman Sachs.

The example above is United Health that requires male or female identification. The example below is

Tauber Oil that requires male or female identification.

To enable us to meet government reporting requirements, we request that you complete this personal data form. Any information that you choose to provide will not be considered by us for employment purposes and will be treated as personal and confidential. We request this information in order to measure the effectiveness of outreach and recruitment efforts.

Provision of this information is VOLUNTARY and refusal to provide it will not subject you to any adverse treatment. This information will be kept in a CONFIDENTIAL file, separate from other hiring credentials. It will only be used in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. Your cooperation is appreciated.

Sex: *

○ Male   ○ Female

This field is required.

What is your race/ethnicity? You may mark only one box.

☐ **Hispanic or Latino** A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race.

☑ **White** (not Hispanic or Latino) A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

☐ **Black or African-American** (not Hispanic or Latino) A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.