Furthering Transgender Inclusion in the Workplace:
Advancing a New Model of Allyship Intentions & Perceptions

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THINK AMBITIOUS.

Welcome and Agenda

- LGBT+ and trans-specific definitions and terminology
- Why researching trans working lives is important?
- What is allyship?
- How can allyship be applied to trans workers?
- Overview of Study 1 – Facilitating allyship intentions at the individual level
- Overview of Study 2 – Psychological effects of allyship for trans workers
- Implications for Practice
- Q&A

What does LGBT+ stand for?

- L: Lesbian
- G: Gay
- B: Bisexual
- T: Transgender
- + all other non-heterosexual and/or non-cisgender identities

- Tends to lump sexual orientation and gender identity together, but the two are different
- Sexual orientation is about romantic/sexual attraction
- Gender identity is about the a person's innate sense of their own gender, whether male, female or something else, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth

Gender and sexuality: Complicated and multi-layered
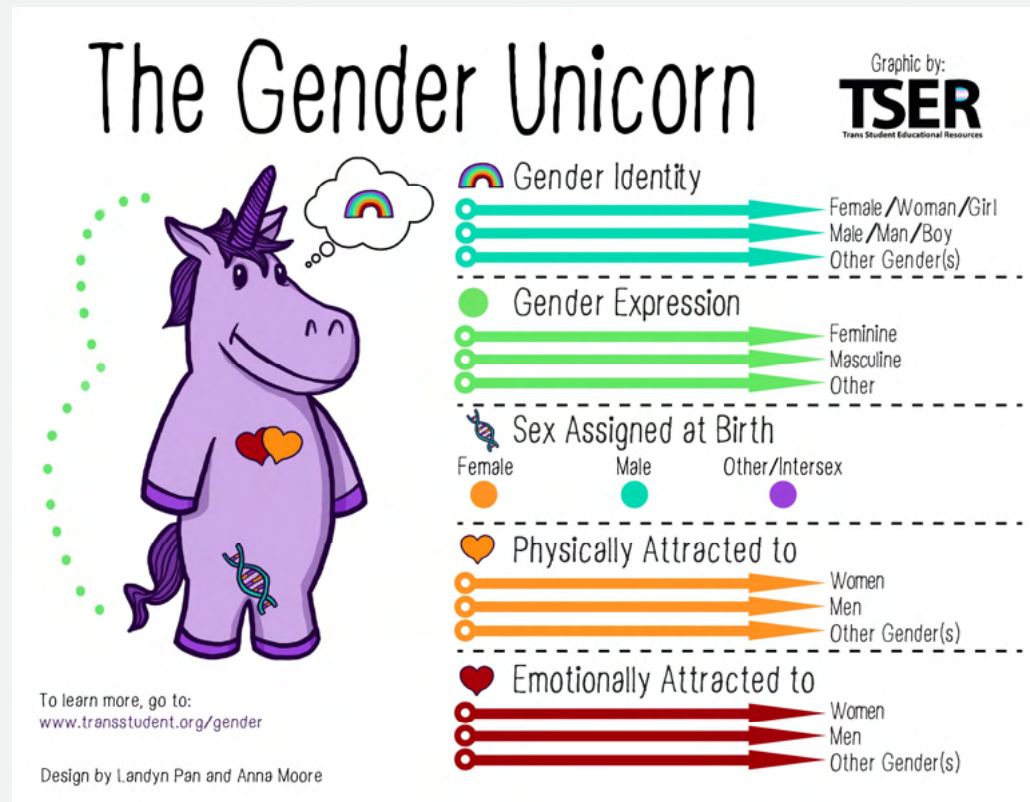
Gender identity terminology

- **Trans masculine** – A person who is generally assigned female at birth but who identify with masculinity to a greater extent than femininity.

- **Trans feminine** – A person who is generally assigned male at birth but who identify with femininity to a greater extent than masculinity.

- **Non-binary** - A person whose gender identity sits outside of the gender binary. They may be neither or both male and/or male and their gender identity may be fluid. - https://www.facebook.com/bbcthree/videos/1692938910914377/

- **Cisgender** - A person whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth

- The experience of transitioning is complex. **Each trans and non-binary person will have their own unique journey, and for many it involves a social, rather than medical, transition.**

Why is it important to research gender identity in the workplace?
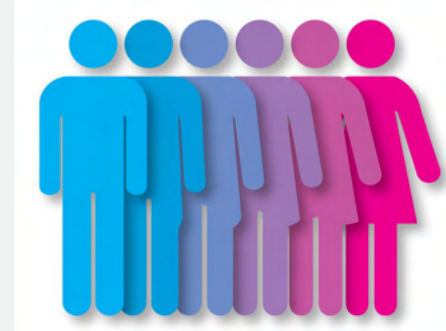
- **Heternormative culture** and variation/history of legal protection

- Think manager, think (straight white) male; **lack of role models**

- **Trans voices are often excluded or underrepresented** in academic literature on LGBT+ workers.

- **Many trans employees mask or conceal their gender identity** at work out of fear of harassment

- **Tensions have intensified** following rise in 'gender critical' voices and anti-trans media stories

- **Much greater gaps in policy-practice knowledge** within HR communities regarding trans inclusion

- But there is **growing appetite and awareness from HR-related professional bodies of need to change –** however need to be careful of tokenism and corporate fads

What is Allyship? Looking at the Landscape
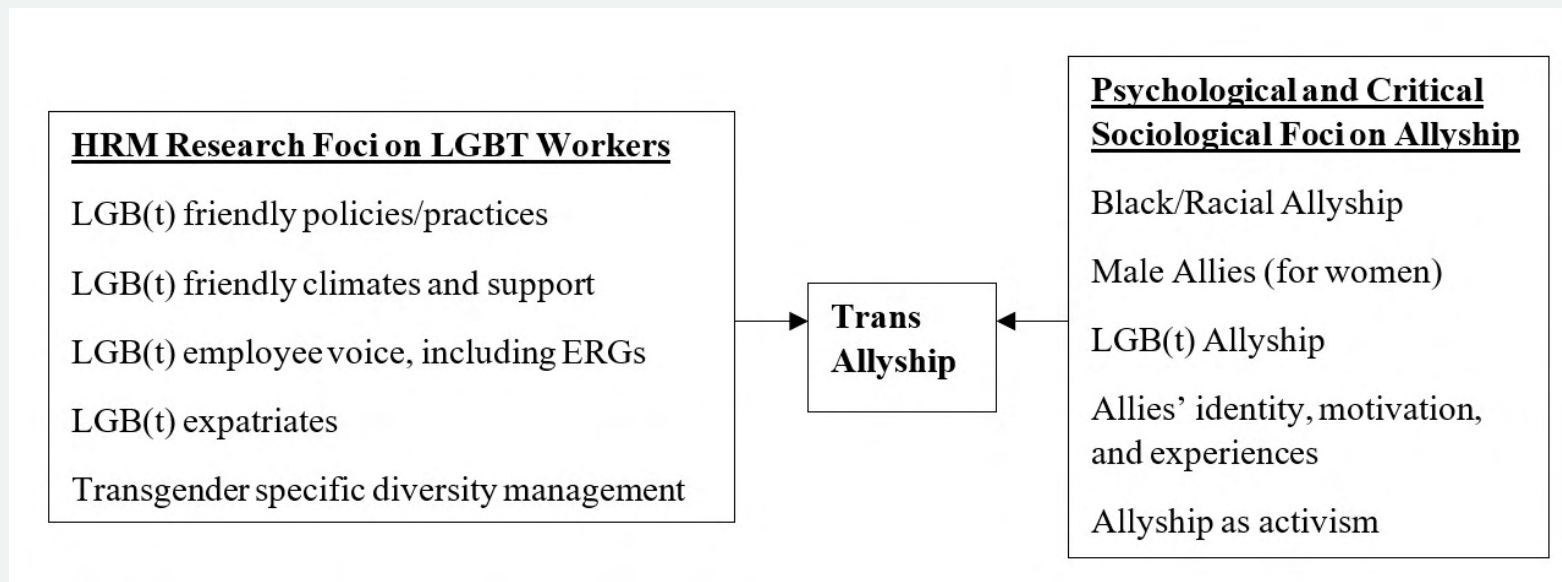
HRM Research Foci on LGBT Workers

LGB(t) friendly policies/practices

LGB(t) friendly climates and support

LGB(t) employee voice, including ERGs

LGB(t) expatriates

Transgender specific diversity management

Trans Allyship

Psychological and Critical Sociological Foci on Allyship

Black/Racial Allyship

Male Allies (for women)

LGB(t) Allyship

Allies' identity, motivation, and experiences

Allyship as activism
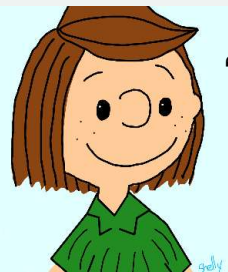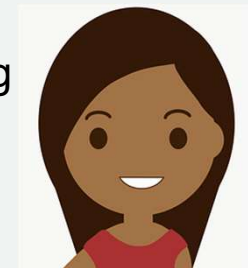
How can allyship be applied to trans workers?

- Trans individuals may want allyship to be focused on helping them feel psychologically safe at work.

- However, some may view allyship as being more attuned to 'everyday' interpersonal activism, whereas others focus more on institutional activism.

- In this research, **we focus on the everyday interpersonal dimension of allyship**, although we recognise that this is one part of the picture.

- We focus on allyship in the form of:
  - **providing active support to**,
  - **being willing to stand up for**, and
  - **being identified as an ally to trans workers.**

Our Project

Main issues we wanted to address:

- Lack of understanding about how allyship can be applied to trans workers

- Lack of frameworks that consider both how allyship can be facilitated and what effects it has on trans people themselves
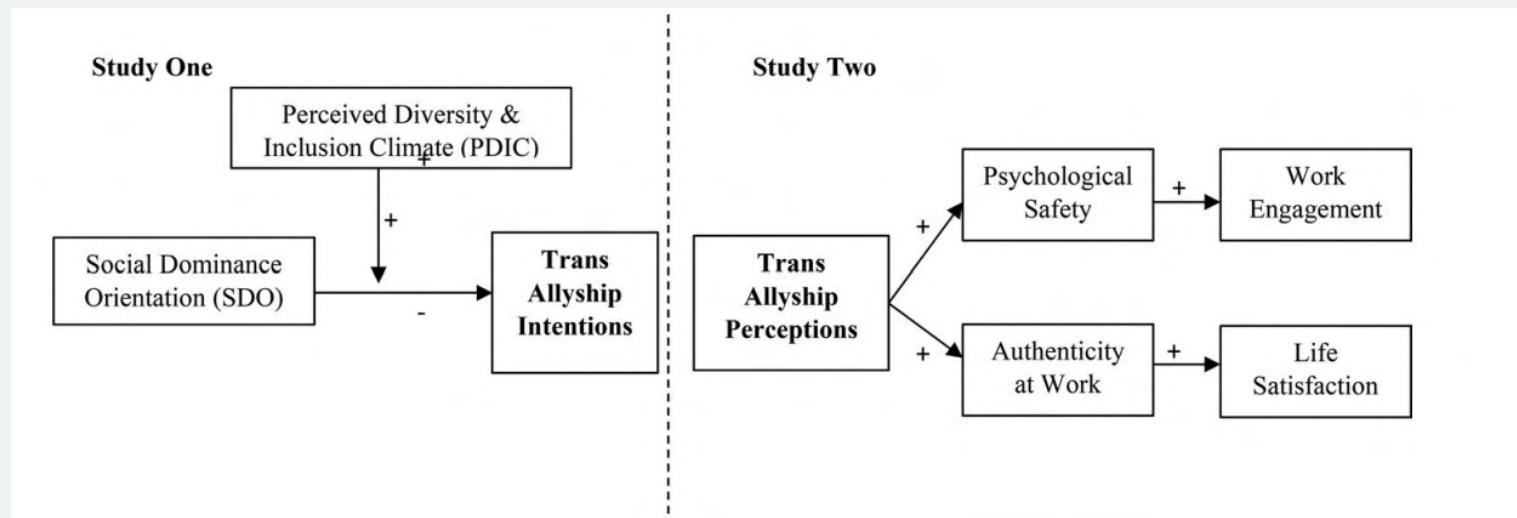
Study 1 – Facilitating Trans Allyship Intentions

- **Online survey** of 209 heterosexual, cisgender workers – UK based

- **Generally representative** of (binary) gender and ethnicity, average age = 35 years, 60% permanent full-time; good range of occupations/sectors.

- **Instructed that they would be shown a hypothetical but realistic workplace scenario** and should provide their honest and truthful reactions to this scenario.

- **After scenario, they were asked to rate** to what extent they disagree/agree (1-strongly disagree to 7-strongly agree) with the following statements:

    i) **I would stand up for this transgender person to others in my organisation;**
    ii) **At work, I would give my full support to this transgender person;**
    iii) **I would be a visible ally to this transgender person in my organisation.**

Scenario

'Last week your department manager emailed the whole department letting you all know that one of your colleagues will like others to know that they are transgender

This person is not a close colleague of yours…but you do exchange friendly and polite conversation now and again…

You have been notified that your work colleague will be undergoing a transition of their gender identity over the next few months…

You have started to notice that there is quite a mixed reaction in your department

You have a feeling that the next few months will be quite challenging for your colleague…as well as for some other members of the department...

In the next section please reflect on your honest and truthful reactions to this scenario'

Social Dominance Orientation

Dominance: Supports overt oppression and behaviours that act to subordinate some social groups

+

Anti-egalitarianism: A preference for strong social hierarchies and support ideologies/policies that maintain such hierarchies

→ **SDO**

An ideal society requires some groups to be on top and others to be on the bottom

Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups

It is unjust to try to make groups equal

Group equality should not be our primary goal

- We position social dominance orientation (SDO) as an inhibiting individual attitude.

Those high in SDO:

- **seek to maintain the status quo of a hierarchical society** (Ho et al., 2015).

- **tend to hold fixed binary sex-based assumptions and be less aware of their own socio-economic circumstances** (Ching et al., 2020; Puckett et al., 2020).

Therefore, those high in SDO are likely to view trans individuals as inferior and subordinate and consider efforts to support their inclusion unimportant.

Hypothesis 1: SDO will be negatively related with trans allyship intentions

The higher one's SDO score, the lower the intention to enact trans allyship

Trans Allyship Intentions
Weak ----- Moderate ---- Strong

Low SDO ---------- Moderate SDO ----------- High SDO
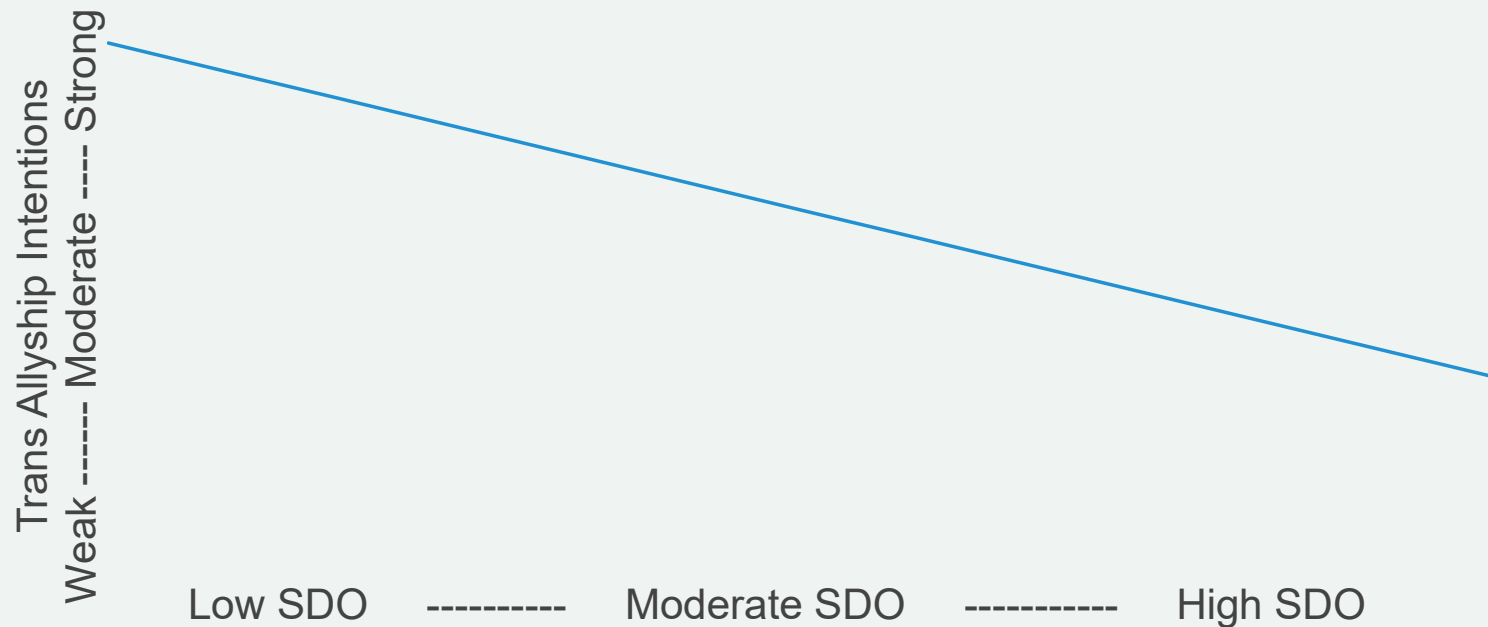
Perceived diversity and inclusion climate

Diversity:
Policies and practices that encourage a diverse workforce whilst eliminating discrimination

+

Inclusion:
Social integration of all employees, cultural practices that appreciate unique differences

→ **PDIC**

My organisation makes it easy for people from diverse backgrounds to fit in and be accepted

In my workplace, managers demonstrate through their actions that they want to hire and retain a diverse workforce

In my workplace, employees are valued for who they are as people, not just for the jobs that they fill

My organisation has a culture in which employees appreciate the differences that people bring to the workplace

- A strong PDIC provides incentives and social acceptance to employees when they engage in supportive, helping behaviours to those from marginalised groups.

- For those high in SDO, a perceived weak climate for diversity and inclusion could enable their inclinations to act on their intrinsic opposition to diversity.

- However, when such a climate is perceived as strong the social norms created and enforced will act to deter and reduce the likelihood of a high SDO person's opposition

Hypothesis 2: The negative relationship between SDO and trans allyship intentions is strongest when SDO is high and PDIC is low, yet is much weaker when PDIC is high.

A strong perceived diversity and inclusion climate buffers the negative impact of social dominance orientation
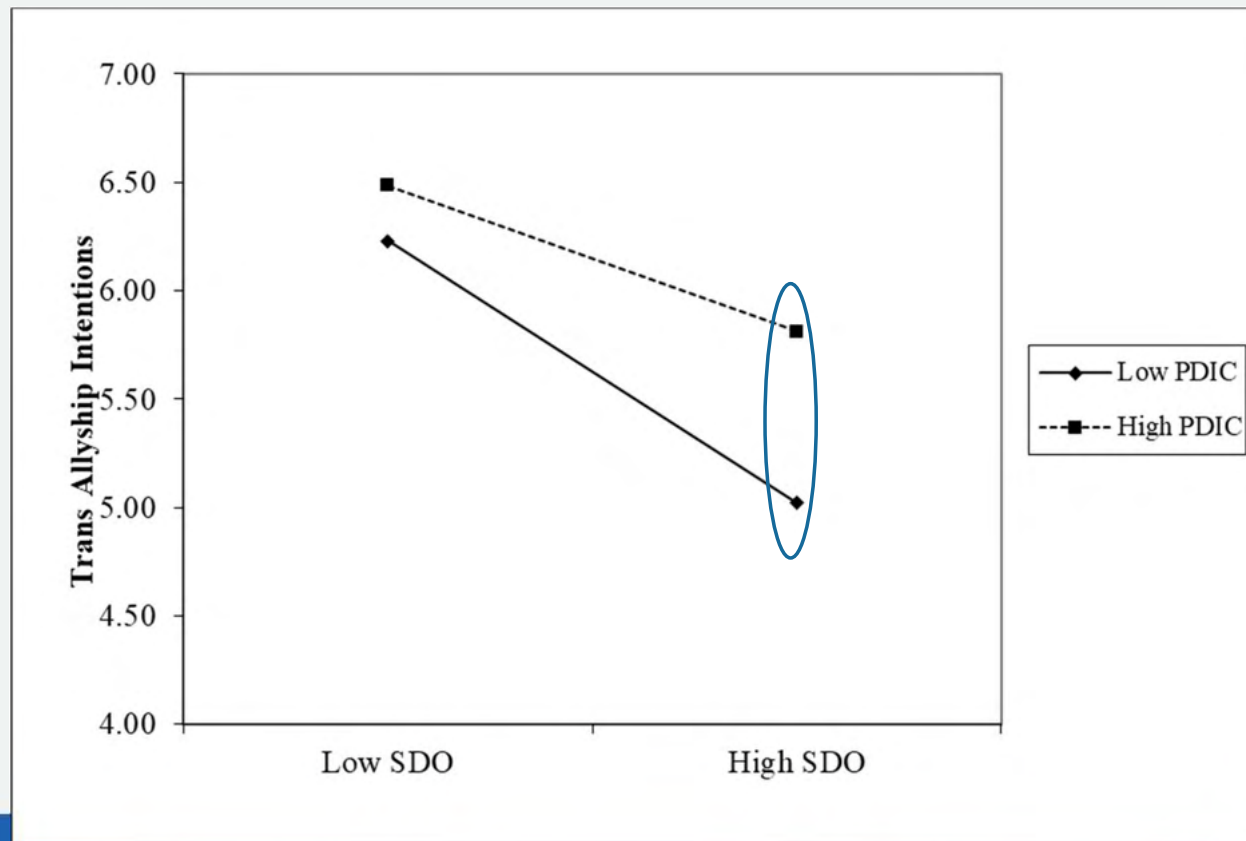
Study 2: Psychological Effects of Trans Allyship

- Online survey of 196 trans workers in the UK

- 35% = trans feminine, 23% = trans masculine, and 42%= non-binary.

- Average age = 36 years. 60% permanent full-time, good range of occupations/ sectors.

- **Perceived Trans Allyship** was captured with the following (1- strongly disagree to 7- strongly agree):

    i) **At work, I feel I have allies from my heterosexual/cisgender colleagues**'

    ii) **At work, I feel that my heterosexual/cisgender colleagues would stand up for me as a trans or non-binary person**

    iii) **At work, I feel I have the full support from heterosexual/cisgender people in the organisation**

- In analyses we also considered the extent to which individual was undergoing a transitionary journey; as well as overall quality of work relationships.

Psychological Safety

- **Perceived allyship focuses attention on the workplace relational context** whereby it enables trans workers to feel supported, valued, and respected.

- **This signals that they are in a psychologically safe environment** where they can take more interpersonal risks and feel able to voice their ideas and concerns to their co-workers and managers.
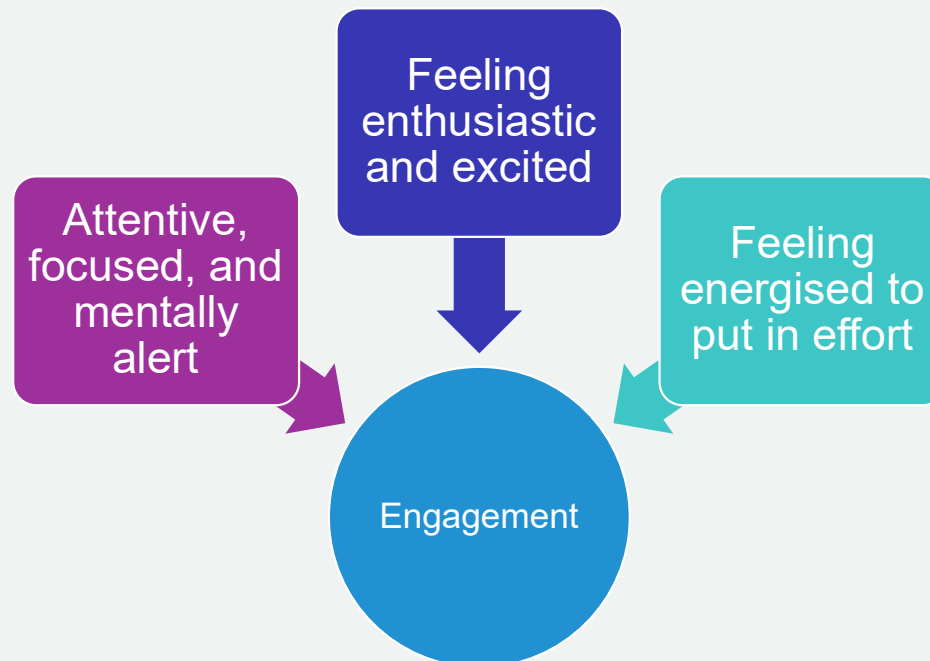
I can bring up problems and tough issues as well as voice my ideas and concerns with others in my organisation

I don't feel that people will deliberately undermine me, hold my mistakes against me, or reject me for being different.

Work Engagement

- Allyship helps trans workers better able to express their voice and their self in ways that express their full engagement

- Allyship reflects a work context that is rich in social resources which in turn facilitates reciprocation in the form of engaging with one's work.

Attentive, focused, and mentally alert

Feeling enthusiastic and excited

Feeling energised to put in effort

Engagement

Psychological safety does help translate the effect of allyship into higher levels of engagement

Perceived Trans Allyship	+.27*** →	Psychological Safety	+.13* →	Work Engagement

Linkage between perceived trans allyship and work engagement via psychological safety was statistically significant. Relatively modest effect size.

Hypothesis 3: Perceived trans allyship is indirectly related to work engagement via psychological safety

Going beyond disclosure: being 'authentic'?

- Allyship will help a trans worker will feel more comfortable in authentically expressing their gender identity

- Being authentic in the workplace is a subjective experience of feeling that one can behave and act within one's work environment in ways that are congruent with one's sense of true self

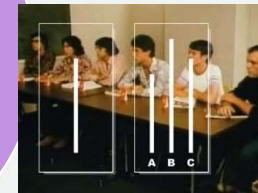I was true to myself at work in most situations

High Authentic Living

At work, I felt out of touch with the "real me"

Low Self-Alienation

At work, I felt the need to do what others expect me to do

Low External Influence

Life Satisfaction

- **Authenticity can facilitate higher levels of life satisfaction** because expressing important aspects of oneself is critical for optimal psychological functioning.

- Authenticity therefore **provides an important pathway through which the validation arising from allyship translates into better psychological functioning.**

In general, how satisfied are you with your life?

from 1 – very dissatisfied to 5 – very satisfied

Authenticity at work does help translate the effect of allyship into higher levels of life satisfaction

| Perceived Trans Allyship | +.19* → | Authenticity at Work | +.21** → | Life Satisfaction |

Linkage between perceived trans allyship and life satisfaction via authenticity at work was statistically significant. Relatively modest effect size.

Hypothesis 4: Perceived trans allyship is indirectly related to life satisfaction via authenticity at work

Summing Up

Trans people may face many inequalities within the workplace, but their experiences and strategies to improve equity have been under-researched.

People who tend to support or seek to maintain social hierarchies and anti-egalitarianism may be less predisposed to support trans colleagues.

However, policies/practices which encourage a diverse workforce, eliminate discrimination and promote social integration can create norms which undermine inclinations to act on these beliefs.

Whilst it is only one part of the picture – alongside changes to policy, practice and structures – interpersonal allyship may play an important role in enhancing outcomes for trans workers. This includes psychological safety, work engagement, authenticity and life satisfaction.

Implications for Practice

- **Create and sustain a strong diversity and inclusion climate**, focus on managers and teams

- **Evaluate all HRM policies against a set of inclusion criteria** and include more specific elements that cater for the needs of trans workers.

- **Involve and listen to trans workers and trans-specialist organisations,** and develop specific trans allyship initiatives where appropriate

- **Influence psychological safety and authenticity more directly:**
  - by enforcing anti-discrimination policies;
  - by ensuring all HR policies consider a range of gender identities and gender expressions;
  - by encouraging strong gender diverse role models in the organisation.

Resources

Advocacy and training organisations

Stonewall, Gendered Intelligence, Mermaids, GIRES, Press for Change, Scottish Trans Alliance, Inclusive Employers

Policies and practices

LGBT+ staff networks, workplace champions, diversity and line management training, anti-bullying policies, transition policies, professional development, data management, absence management, workplace dress codes, pronouns

Events

Pride, Transgender Day of Remembrance, Trans Day of Visibility, Transgender Awareness Week, Intersex Awareness Day, International Non-binary People's Day

Documentaries, films and podcasts

Disclosure, Seahorse, The Trans List, Passing, The Death and Life of Marsha P Johnson, Paris is Burning, NB, Gender Reveal, The GenderGP Podcast

Thank you for listening, open for questions