Que(e)rying Leadership on a LGBTQ+ Leadership Development Programme for UK Higher Education staff

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I, Alex Baird, confirm that the work presented in my thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

The connections between LGBTQ+ lives and leadership are not always explicitly made by LGBTQ+ individuals nor is LGBTQ+ leaders' capital always recognised by others. Reflecting upon one's lived experiences is essential for leadership if it is to prioritise purposes and values. Despite LGBTQ+ leaders navigating a rather distinct leadership path, often without LGBTQ+ mentorship, there is currently no LGBTQ+ leadership development programme offered by organisations that provide training in aspects of Higher Education (HE) leadership. This highlights the significance of a leadership development programme for LGBTQ+ academic and professional staff in one post-1992 university that ran from Sept 2022 to May 2023 and which is the focus of this thesis. Recognising the potential to query leadership in UK Higher Education, I accessed the programme as an 'insider' of the LGBTQ+ population, an 'outsider' of the host university, and a 'participating observer'. The in-depth study involved observations and repeated interviews with attendees who held various roles within the programme. I came to understand my research as (post-)qualitative, recognising the blurred edges of the programme and institution, the entanglement of my investment in the programme, my growing relationships with participants, and their evolving connections to one another. Reflexive thematic analysis allowed me to engage with queer theory and become aware of three interwoven themes: the distinctiveness and potential of LGBTQ+ leadership; the portrayal, solidarity, and collaboration of trailblazers; and the possibility, precarity, and rupture of queer space. By reframing leadership in these ways, this research helps to make LGBTQ+ leaders' leadership intelligible and makes leadership more accessible and pertinent to LGBTQ+ staff. Significantly, it offers an alternative conceptualisation of leadership emphasising relationalities and communities in specific contexts, one which appears to be relevant to the challenging landscape of UK HE and offers some resistance to the negative pressures and bearings of neoliberalism. This research may also guide future leadership development programmes in order to attract, retain, and progress LGBTQ+ talent.

Impact Statement

This research aims to contribute both to theorising leadership and to developing how leadership is practised and encouraged. It specifically considers leadership and leadership development in the distinctive context of Higher Education (HE) rather than following the tendency of duplicating models from elsewhere, notably the corporate world. Previous leadership literature has rarely considered LGBTQ+ leadership. It enriches scarce LGBTQ+ leadership research by exploring and challenging former assumptions and by moving beyond a visibility of LGBTQ+ leaders to research that challenges current paradigms of leadership itself.

The (post-)qualitative research design for this research, owing to my positionality, role on the programme, and mode of analysis, is unusual in leadership research. The research draws attention to the importance of one rare LGBTQ+ leadership development programme in UK HE and the significance of the community of LGBTQ+ attendees (which included both academic and professional staff) who came together in this space, enabling them to trouble, reframe and re-envision leadership and leadership development. My research findings help to make LGBTQ+ leadership intelligible and leadership more pertinent and accessible to LGBTQ+ staff talent. It presents an alternative form of educational leadership, one which is more egalitarian and collective, and seems relevant to LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ leaders alike given the current challenges and needs of UK HE. This includes the need to address systematic inequalities in UK HE so as to improve the health and wellbeing and social cohesion of staff and students. This is particularly significant at a time when LGBTQ+ staff and students may be feeling less safe given the backdrop of a 'culture war' in the UK and a global 'moral panic' surrounding trans people. HE should be at the forefront of leading the way to positive societal change rather than lagging behind. The leadership described in the research findings also appears to offer some resistance to the negative pressures of neoliberalism which is currently permeating the leadership of UK HE institutions.

I plan to publish this research in UK academic leadership journals. I intend to disseminate my work at UK academic educational research conferences and I will continue to present my work at wider academic and non-academic community events (to highlight the pertinence of

LGBTQ+ leadership and the value of the LGBTQ+ leadership development programme that was accessed). I hope this may help secure the funding for and stimulate future versions of LGBTQ+ leadership development programmes in HE. I also hope this research makes a valuable contribution in guiding future LGBTQ+ leadership development programmes and accompanying research. I am currently writing and sharing my reflections of carrying out this LGBTQ+ research as an 'inside' 'outside' researcher in a collaborative book written with other LGBTQ+ education researchers and crafted for an anticipated audience of LGBTQ+ researchers.

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My LGBTQ+ friends and queer theorists, for supporting me on that path and teaching me so much about myself along the way.

"It is only in our darkest hours that we may discover the true strength of the brilliant light within ourselves that can never, ever, be dimmed." Doe Zantamata

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis seeks to open up new directions and possibilities to conventional leadership by bridging the gap between leadership and queer theory. My research set about que(e)rying educational leadership, leadership models, and leadership development within UK Higher Education (HE) by accessing a rare LGBTQ+ leadership development programme delivered in one post-1992 university, attended by professional and academic LGBTQ+ staff.

LGBTQ+ leadership has often been excluded from UK HE, HE leadership research and wider leadership research, meaning it is narrowly understood. Even answering the question 'is there proportionate representation of LGBTQ+ staff at senior levels in UK HE?' is difficult, given that LGBTQ+ leaders may not always be identified/identifiable and the fact that data which do exist are inaccurate (HESA, 2022). These elements conceal the issue and add to the complexities of addressing it. I would suggest my own and other's difficulty in naming LGBTQ+ senior leaders across the sector (and the fact that the LGBTQ+ leadership development programme which I will come to was only in a position to provide mentors for lower/middle management attendees) is symptomatic of wider complex issues of inequality.

Marginalisation and stigma can affect all stages of leadership development for LGBTQ+ people, including a reluctance to assume certain leadership roles, obstacles that may hinder LGBTQ+ individuals from becoming leaders, and present challenges if and when they become leaders (Fassinger et al., 2010). The current absence of an LGBTQ+ leadership programme offered by Advance HE (a member-owned, sector-led charity that works with institutions to improve HE) may be felt by some to reflect a broader silencing and devaluing of LGBTQ+ leadership potential. This accentuates the responsibility I feel as a member of the LGBTQ+ population working in UK HE to draw attention to LGBTQ+ leadership, the corresponding need to undertake this research and in so doing highlight the significance of one rare LGBTQ+ staff leadership development programme in UK HE.

Increasing the diversity of staff at senior levels (and expanding diversity in the leadership pipeline) has been argued by some (Browne, 2014; Beer, 2015; Crossman, 2022) to be

essential to ensure those who make prominent strategic decisions do so considering a breadth of perspectives and is reflective of and empowering to a diverse staff and student body (and their futures). However, according to others (Calvard, 2020; Guyan, 2022; Wilkinson et al., 2021), focusing upon the underrepresentation of LGBTQ+ staff can be short-sighted; it may not necessarily lead to an organisation becoming more inclusive if institutional structures and processes are not similarly challenged and may deflect from asking 'why are particular voices and ways of leading privileged in UK HE?'.

In this thesis, I assert the importance of que(e)rying leadership itself beyond simply increasing the number of visible LGBTQ+ leaders, as this overlooks the intersection of other characteristics and places a risk and responsibility on the individual. It is also problematic to see identity as fixed or indeed to assume that declaring being LGBTQ+ to others is necessarily liberating, given that it can be seen to reaffirm heteronormativity, as heterosexuals make no equivalent statement of their sexuality. The often-assumed positive effects of coming out at work (Hewlett & Sumberg, 2011) are in fact uncertain and should be critiqued (Benozzo et al., 2015). Que(e)rying leadership reflects upon heterosexist ideas of leadership itself and asks questions and adopts strategies to disrupt oppressive structures embedded in an institution. I recognise the distinct vantage point that LGBTQ+ leaders offer to question and open up conventional 'straight' leadership as well as challenging the prevailing cisnormative and heteronormative conventions of UK HE culture. By obtaining unique access to a LGBTQ+ leadership development programme and conducting an in-depth multilayered study, my research reframes leadership, offering an alternative leadership, a queer leadership which is not stranded between nihilism or positive futurity (Halberstam, 2011). Halberstam reminds us that capitalism brings winners and (hidden) losers. That perhaps instead of two equally unbearable options of either constantly looking to the future or viewing any action as bleakly futile. There might be something powerful in being wrong, losing, failing and that combining all our failures together might just be enough.

UK universities are presently in the midst of a myriad of challenges, including the legacy of industrial action with staff, stirred by pay and pension disputes, and austerity measures, while many students (both home and international) are struggling with a cost of living and student accommodation crisis. Some have argued that crisis management during the Covid-

19 pandemic exposed the ruthlessness of neoliberal values in HE and provided a rationale for cuts to some in its wake (Morley & Leyton, 2023). The financial pressures and uncertainty continue as the country and the HE sector try to adapt post-Brexit. Hostility and violence towards the LGBTQ+ community and particularly the trans community has surged in the UK (Home Office, 2023), due to a combination of a right-leaning government, surging media attention on trans lives, disinformation contained within this media, and 'bad actors' on social media (Lopez, 2023; Mackay & Hayfield, 2023). This has included heated and polarising debates surrounding trans participation in sport, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE), specifically LGBT content in schools, trans guidance to schools, and failures to include positive reforms to conversion practices, gender recognition, and gender-affirming health care. Historic and ongoing societal issues permeate their way into HE. Some evidence suggests that UK HE has been becoming, at least until recently, a more welcome setting for LGBTQ+ individuals compared to US universities and many other employment sectors (Coley & Das, 2020; Ellis, 2009). The recent campaign against and disassociation by some universities from the LGBTQ+ charity Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index (an external benchmark for LGBTQ+ rights) is an indicator of the current milieu and is particularly concerning given the input of gender critical voices in HE, which is making HE culture feel less safe for LGBTQ+ staff and students (Shaw, 2023).

The Freedom of Speech Paper (2021) clarifies and strengthens the legal requirements of universities to 'actively promote' freedom of speech. While this seeks to protect staff and students and avoids the dangers of silence, taboos, and boundaries, it lays emphasis on debate rather than dialogue and discussion. This embodies an idea that certain topics can be scrutinised and battled by dominant voices with the potential that some people may not be present or may feel unsafe to voice an alternative position. In reconciling the practice of 'no platforming', i.e. denying a voice on campus, Simpson and Scrinivasan (2018) highlight the importance of distinguishing between academic freedom and free speech. Academic freedoms support a university culture that maintains standards by denying attention and credibility to speakers who fall below those standards. Arguing for the rights of trans and non-binary people on campus and highlighting the responsibility/position of universities to uphold this, Lavery (2021) argues that deadnaming and misgendering are not scholarly practices nor covered by the principles of academic freedom. Lopez (2023) moves beyond

protecting trans and non-binary people from these attacks on the basis of a human right because this only places such discrimination within the limits of a legislative system which is biased /privileged. Instead, Lopez moves towards a liberatory approach which calls for a collective humanity. In the instance of a gender critical feminist speaking at Oxford University in May 2023 (Guardian, 2023) and the showing in November 2023 of a gender critical film at the University of Edinburgh (BBC News, 2023), protest and disagreement was deemed acceptable legally (under Article 11 of the European Convention of Legal Rights), so long as it was non-violent. The UK has fallen in an ILGA (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association) ranking of LGBTQ+ rights across 49 countries in Europe from 1st in 2015 to 16th in 2024. Sixteen-year-old Brianna Ghey, a trans girl, was fatally stabbed in a park in February 2023; the two killers were both aged 15 at the time. Candle-lit vigils were held across the UK for Brianna, including one I attended alongside members of the LGBTQ+ programme I attended for this research and university students on their campus. As I looked into the eyes of these young LGBTQ+ students, I thought that at least my research was doing something. Nonetheless, I have not stopped questioning whether my research was perhaps presenting a cruel optimism, "the change that is not going to come" in relation to social and political equity (Berlant, 2011, p.1). In 'cruel optimism' Berlant names the promise of an attachment to an object, which is problematic due to the compromised conditions of possibility and the risks that are entailed. An attachment is a natural desire and all attachments are optimistic, in so far as some risks are known to us and some are cruelly not. Investment in these attachments are less about the objects themselves and more about the (often unconscious) desires we manage to remain magnetised to the attachment, muffling the risks involved.

As Ahmed (2016) conveys, we come to query the world and generate ideas when we are in question but we also experience a simultaneous 'chipping away' of our being, by being asked to justify our existence. I write from a position of white, able-bodied, middle-class privilege but I do remember explicitly questioning my gender at the age of four when I shared with my nan that I could be a boy. I didn't feel I fitted into the gender norms prescribed to me and tried to convey this to her but the conversation was quickly shut down. As a child, it was acceptable for me to be a tomboy; I expressed myself in the sporting activities I engaged in and the clothes I chose to wear, including changing into my football

kit or my brother's school uniform when I was reluctantly taken to ballet lessons. I wore a dress on occasions when it was presented as the only option though I often experienced an added discomfort (in addition to the clothes I was wearing) from those I wanted to please, commenting upon what I was wearing. With long blonde hair and of small stature I was reminded regularly of the fact that I was a little girl. I was allowed to cut my hair short at the age of 13 although both my mum and nan shared with me at some length their disappointment. No one discussed sexuality and the little I heard only referred to the presumption of heterosexuality or the aversion to homosexuality. I was left feeling different and alone. The majority of my schooling was during the period when Section 28 was in force. Section 28 prohibited Local Authorities rather than schools from promoting homosexuality, although headteachers erred on the side of caution (LGA, 1988). At that time, legislation and accompanying societal attitudes in Britain towards homosexuality were less liberal than they are currently; however, progressive viewpoints are not universally held today and attitudes do remain conflicted for example, when children are involved (National Centre for Social Research, 2023).

I was hesitant at first to continue researching LGBTQ+ lives for my EdD due to the impact that undertaking my previous piece of research, 'Observations on the implementation of Relationships, Sex and Health Education (specifically LGBT content) in an English primary school' had on my personal life. Engaging with parents, carers, and staff in my role as researcher I was exposed in that research, not unexpectedly, to homophobic and transphobic views. While I reminded myself that these views only represented a small minority, voices of those in support of the curriculum content were not often expressed. Oppositional and hateful opinions towards the LGBTQ+ community triggered a visceral pain which did not leave me when I finished the working day. However, I subsequently took particular interest in a LGBTQ+ leadership development programme I saw mentioned by one of the programme co-leaders on their social media feed. I reached out to them in hope and I assured them of my commitment to programme attendees and the care I would take if I did undertake the research. As I progressed in undertaking this research, my own understanding of the importance of the work has only grown. I have developed as a LGBTQ+ researcher (identifying as part of the LGBTQ+ population and carrying out LGBTQ+ research) by

reflecting upon my own experience and hearing the experience of and reaching out to other LGBTQ+ researchers.

I want to speak calmly, powerfully and articulately so that I am heard. I am often made to feel the cause of the 'inflammation' (Ahmed, 2016) by raising something that those without affinity believe is not there. I have experienced my viewpoint being trivialised when I know something important is going on. I have been accused of silencing reasonable debate when defending myself and my community. I have received aggressive responses from those with gender critical views who falsely dichotomise and pit women's rights against trans rights. I experience a deep visceral sensitivity when hearing the same arguments repeated against the trans community that have been previously voiced towards the gay community, namely that we are a threat, dangerous predators, and groomers, who should hide our identity, at least in public. I will continue engaging in LGBTQ+ research to highlight and improve issues. I will carry on finding my allies and looking ahead for myself, my community, and other marginalised communities to reimagine and create an alternative, more inclusive future for us all. Progress for all is about disrupting binary gender norms using queer theory, rather than setting labels and boundaries which as Ahmed (2016) highlights are constantly changed and sharpened at those they (the majority) wish to exclude. Queering is not only about including queer individuals but also about deconstructing binaries, procedures, and hierarchical power relations – a deconstruction that comes with benefits to everyone (Guyan, 2022).

My EdD thesis extends previous leadership literature where LGBTQ+ leadership has often been overlooked (Ferry, 2017; Lumby and Moorosi, 2022) and it critiques the scarce LGBTQ+ leadership literature. To help create a reality that values LGBTQ+ leadership and in response to systematic and inequitable power relations in UK HE, my research challenges conventional notions and models of leadership and leadership development in UK HE by my attendance on a rare LGBTQ+ leadership development programme and by employing a queer theoretical framework in data analysis. This research prioritises the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ staff through repeated interviews with programme attendees and via observations on the LGBTQ+ leadership development programme's days. The research critically analyses how leadership and LGBTQ identities are understood by LGBTQ+ attendees in relation to their experiences in their institution, HE, and the development of the LGBTQ+ leadership

programme; it explores the practices engaged in on the programme; and seeks to understand how the programme was experienced. The (post-)qualitative research design is unusual in leadership research and offers an added methodological contribution to the field (Thomson, 2017).

The LGBTQ+ leadership development programme which was accessed ran between September 2022 and May 2023 in one post-1992 university and consisted of three formalised session days and individual mentorship. Programme associates (shown in the table below) included both academic and professional staff: ten mentees who applied to the programme, seven mentors (including one of the programme co-leaders), a second programme co-leader and a guest who attended day 3. Sessions were supported by four external facilitators.

Table 1.1 Programme associates (23)

Role on Programme	**Working role**	**Relationship to University**	**Included in Interview data**
2 Programme co-leaders	1 Academic 1 Professional	Both current members of staff	2
10 Mentees	5 Academic 5 Professional	All current members of staff	8
7* Mentors (*included one Programme co-leader)	4 Academic 3 Professional	5 current members of staff 2 former members of staff	6*
1 Guest	1 Professional	1 current member of staff	1
4 External facilitators	1 Academic 3 Professional (not in HE)	External to University	0

In the chapters that follows I disrupt, deconstruct, and challenge leadership in UK HE. In Chapter 2, I review the sparse literature concerning LGBTQ+ leadership, especially in UK HE,

the shortcomings of this literature, and the ways in which this literature has developed in more recent times, which helped me to shape and refine my research questions. In Chapter 3, I outline my research design, I critique my positionality, and I explain how I came to understand my research in post-qualitative terms. I explain how my research is queer in terms of the participants, space, framework, and analysis. Using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) and engaging with queer theory I identified three themes which explain the significance of the programme's temporary queer space and the attendees who came together in it: 1. The distinctiveness and potential of LGBTQ+ leadership, 2. The portrayal, solidarity and collaboration of trailblazers, 3. The possibility, precarity and rupture of queer space. In Chapter 4, I explore these themes, I describe the effects of the programme's attendees coming together in the queer space which challenged and shifted conventional notions and enactments of leadership and mentorship in UK HE. It was the entanglement of bodies, discourse, and space which presented an alternative way of thinking, seeing, and enacting leadership. Contesting norms, noticing and voicing an alternative seemed more feasible collectively in the programme's shared queer space rather than individually in the wider university where attendees felt more isolated and did not always want to raise their difference and cause conflict. In Chapter 5, issues of power, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), and violence in UK HE are revisited and expanded upon. I explain how LGBTQ+ leadership, leadership models, and leadership development were specifically reconceptualised and how my research builds upon the existing literature. In the final chapter, I discuss how my research questions were answered and how my research may contribute to future LGBTQ+ leadership development programmes. LGBTQ+ lives were connected to leadership with increasing confidence, openness, and resilience but, perhaps more significantly, the programme offered an alternative version of leadership that not only makes leadership more pertinent to LGBTQ+ staff but appears to be relevant to the challenging landscape of UK HE, one which is relational, collective, creative, temporal, and offers some resistance to the negative pressures and bearings of neoliberalism.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter I will begin by reviewing the arguments put forward for an LGBTQ+ leadership development programme for UK HE staff. I explore the decisions and meanings of coming out, representing, and role modelling. I note an assumption in much of the literature that 'outness' is a singular thing and that being out at work is necessarily positive, something I will explore and challenge. I examine previous research regarding LGBTQ+ leadership and explain how the focus and methodology in more recent times has developed, reflecting some legislative progress, increased societal acceptance, and a greater awareness of the diversity of the LGBTQ+ community. Next, I look at the critical questions asked in more recent literature to challenge the heteronormativity, homonormativity, cisnormativity, and 'LGBTQ+ friendliness' of organisations. The chapter moves on to look at the current landscape of UK Higher Education and explains why leadership, leadership models, and mentorship in HE needs to be reframed. I selected literature using key word searches and I also discovered relevant cited literature within these sources. I followed recommendations from my supervisors and academic colleagues. I also remained alert to new publications.

I use the term LGBTQ+ to define an all-inclusive group, with the initials L—Lesbian; G—Gay; B—Bisexual; T— Trans; Q—Queer; +—All Other Sexual Minorities. This is the term which was also used to advertise and denote the LGBTQ+ Leadership Development Programme I accessed. At other times I have incorporated the terms used by the authors themselves, which emphasises the participants included in their studies and the language of the time. I understand the term queer coming from the German word 'quer' meaning to cross (Heckert, 2010). I identify with queer myself as something always in process rather than a fixed identity. A queering of leadership and organisations refers to thought or actions which question and resist prevailing normative ways of understanding gender and sexuality (Rumens et al., 2019). 'Coming out' is acknowledged as an important, transformative element and ongoing process in the lives of people within the LGBTQ+ community. It is also recognised that the meaning of coming out varies for each individual and may shift from affirmation of a non-heterosexual sexuality and/or non-cisgender identity to oneself, to disclosing to friends and family, to disclosing to anyone (Guittar, 2013). Cisgender refers to

people whose gender identity and expression matches the biological sex they were assigned at birth.

An LGBTQ+ Leadership Development Programme for HE

Arguing for the provision of an LGBTQ+ leadership programme within HE, Lee (2021) asserts that the leadership path for LGBTQ+ staff is distinct. Lee (2021) draws upon a psychological model of LGBT leadership (Fassinger et al., 2010) to highlight how marginalisation and stigma affect all stages of leadership development. Fassinger et al.'s (2010) model incorporates: 1 sexual orientation, particularly identity disclosure; 2 gender orientation (including leader gender and gender transgression) and 3 the situation (conceptualised as group composition, i.e. exclusively LGBT or heterosexual/mixed, followers' identities and needs, organisation and work environment). The model is embedded in context, acknowledging stigma and marginalisation which may be experienced differently due to the possibility of identity concealment. Lee (2021) recognises Fassinger et al.'s (2010) model does not capture overlapping intersectional identities and acknowledges that the LGBTQ+ community is not homogenous and thus experiences will not be identical. While psychological models may examine the individual life histories of leaders to show connections between context, biography and location, this is different to my own research, which asks why social relations and structures make the job of leading the way it is and how we might respond to systematic and inequitable power relations (Thomson & Heffernan, 2021).

In further support of a LGBTQ+ leadership programme, Lee (2021) argues that the qualities LGBTQ+ prospective leaders frequently possess are ideal for HE leadership. These qualities often include sensitivity to the inclusion of others, connecting with others, emotional intelligence, managing uncertainty and stressful situations, and courage and risk taking. Snyder (2006), though, points out that these attributes may not be exclusive to the LGBTQ+ community, while Syed (2021) emphasises that complex problems cannot be solved by any one person but rather necessitate a diverse group of people. It appears from the literature reviewed that the distinct perspective offered by a LGBTQ+ leader is speaking from a vantage point to challenge the status quo offering an alternative, specifically critiquing heteronormative and cisgendered assumptions whilst encouraging other LGBTQ+ individuals and allies to do the same (Andreas, 2005; Christos, 2014; Coon, 2001; Courtney, 2014;

Pennell, 2016). However, of particular significance to LGBTQ+ leadership development, it would appear that the connections between LGBTQ+ experiences, which Brown (1989) argues is multiple but commonly intertwined with biculturalism, marginality and normative creativity, and the value these experiences offer leadership have not always been explicitly made by LGBTQ+ individuals (Andreas, 2005; Christos, 2014) or recognised by others (Coon, 2001; Pryor, 2021); nor has LGBTQ+ mentorship always been accessible (Arwood, 2006).

Lee (2021) suggests, drawing upon a Butlerian post-structural paradigm, that an LGBTQ+ leadership programme for HE staff would allow attendees to come together in a space to share personal and professional narratives and to make explicit connections between these experiences and leadership. George et al. (2007) suggest effective leadership is not determined by a definitive style, characteristic or personality but rather from being authentic. Authentic leadership is explained as drawing upon specific behaviours, being genuine, reliable, trustworthy, real, and veritable (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Avolio et al. (2004) define authentic leaders as those who are deeply aware of: how they think and behave; their own and others' values; the context in which they operate. They are also resilient, they respect the rights of others, are future-orientated, and give priority to developing associates to be leaders (equal to the accomplishment of a task). The authentic leader reflects their true self (values, beliefs and behaviours) which serves to model to associates ways of developing into leaders themselves. Authentic leadership stems from a continuous self-awareness of life experiences (particularly trigger events) to articulate values by identifying inspirations as well as a willingness to integrate all elements of one's life to build a supportive team. Comparable attributes, including openness, honesty and acting as a role model, are cited as essential for effective leadership within UK HE (Spendlove, 2007). Integrity was the one aspect of behaviour mentioned by one third of interviewees in Bryman & Lilley's (2009) research as being especially important for effective leadership in UK HE.

Quantitative analysis has shown that authentic leadership is especially relevant to LGBT leaders' role engagement and career satisfaction and particularly for those with low core self-evaluations, in comparison to those who are not LGBT (Fletcher et al., 2004). Fletcher et al.'s research concluded that LGBT leaders should be aware of and trained in authentic leadership given such training supports positive outcomes for their wellbeing and leadership potential. While authentic leadership moves from earlier 'trait and style' leadership theories

and could be the basis of a number of leadership models, it is still focused upon an individual leader with the assumptions that followers are passive and subordinate. More recent theories of leadership, e.g. distributed leadership, take a more holistic view, looking towards relational processes (eschewing hierarchical levels) and the complexity and variability of how context influences how leadership is enacted and understood (Avolio et al., 2008).

Norms and binary assumptions seep into leadership theories and this is highlighted within the scarce trans leadership literature (Jourian & Simmons, 2017). Gender and Sexual Minorities (GSM) persons may face three obstacles to enacting authentic leadership if authentic leadership itself is not critically troubled and re-envisioned (Fine, 2017). Firstly, the risk of exercising authentic leadership within a heteronormative status quo. Secondly, being perceived by others as inauthentic or unintelligible if they do not conform to the established norms of gender presentation and the embodiment of leadership. Thirdly, the contested concept of authentic leadership which depends upon not only self-understanding but also on others' interpretation and the social context. Lee (2022b) confirms the additional pressures that LGBT teacher leaders face, trying to achieve a sense of authenticity, whilst simultaneously experiencing a diminished sense of belonging which heterosexual cisgendered leaders take for granted; this may equally be true for LGBTQ+ HE leaders. The 23 LGBT teacher leaders in Lee's (2000b) research rated themselves more negatively than heterosexual cisgendered counterparts in all dimensions of George et al. (2007)'s authentic leadership tool except behaviour, which corresponds with previous findings relating to overperforming as a means of defence. Whilst authenticity for LGBT teacher leaders was not just about coming out, they could remain private and perform well, a continual silence about their private lives could generate a lack of trust from colleagues. Where LGBT teacher leaders were out in the study, they rated themselves as having more authentic relationships with colleagues. Fine (2017) concurs that that there are some advantages to coming out but highlights that coming out may also potentially hinder authentic leadership due to the heightened level of risk and the response of others towards this group.

LGBTQ+ leadership: Beyond coming out, representing, and role modelling

The literature on LGBTQ+ leadership mainly features LGBTQ+ employees who have come out in the workplace as opposed to those who have not, due to the difficulties in locating this

hidden population. This means research disproportionately reflects the experiences and needs of members of the community who may be in a privileged position to be more open and/or feel they are already read by others as LGBTQ+ and/or do not wish to conceal this part of their identity. The six openly gay and lesbian individuals who held presidential roles in US HE institutions in Bullard's (2015) research held a strong desire to be visible which influenced their values, leadership and practice. However, Wright (2011) shows that the decision to disclose minority sexuality at work is affected by a variety of factors, including ethnicity, class, age and workplace culture.

The assumptions, reasons, and notions that may inform a person's decision to 'come out' using a declarative statement such as 'I am a lesbian', should be questioned. Khayatt (1997) raises the problematic nature of stating both 'I' and 'lesbian' as fixed rather than ambivalent and changing, the varying degrees of outness, whether we can choose to be a role model or assume how we are read by others, and whether coming out is a liberating act, given that it reaffirms the existence of heterosexism, as heterosexuals make no equivalent statement. Courtney (2014) also highlights the problematic nature of the essentialist fixed stable identity of the role model LGB leader to their pupil, reaffirming the idea of an identity which is constructed. This only redefines identity categorisation rather than problematising their creation. Though Courtney (2014) also writes identification is never with oneself but rather partial and relational with another, which elevates the importance of providing a necessary alternative. Courtney (2014) goes on to show in his research that whilst participants pragmatically took up fixed identity labels their meanings of these changed across time and space. Khayatt and Iskander (2022) also extend the decision of coming out to consider doing so in the current climate as well as recognising the anxieties which still exist. They also consider how this might be further shifted to consider queer, transgender, non-binary, gender non-conforming experience and intersectionality. The closet for queer black colleagues for instance may be in some ways enabling. The choice from a trans teacher's perspective in 2018 was whether or not they remained a teacher with their identity marked, questioned, and discussed. For a non-binary teacher, though they wanted to assert their identity and be understood and recognised as such, their outness did not stick. I agree with Khayatt (1997) that the decision rests with the individual, though I have also experienced being outed in school, when my sexuality was confirmed by others, including at times by

those within the LGBTQ+ community. I would also add that 'not coming out' is a decision in itself, one that in my case subsequently exposed me to hearing homophobic, lesbophobic, biphobic, and transphobic comments.

Guittar (2013) adds that research involving the concept of coming out is often based on the assumption that this phrase has only one shared meaning. Too often, it lacks a definition or relies upon the researcher's own experiences, since they often identify as LGBTQ+ themselves. Guittar's (2013) study reveals the variety of meanings LGBQ individuals attribute to what coming out entails, from self-acceptance, disclosure to a close friend or family to full disclosure, among others. Guittar (2013) did not consider those who do not wish to come out, the privilege of passing or that people may still be read without any declarative statement. There is a notable absence of participants who are trans-, a term which includes transgender, non-binary, androgynous, a third gender, gender fluid, agender, gender queer, or people who have a gender identity which we do not yet have words to describe. This open-ended term has guided aspects of my own research because it resists the foreclosure of a category, isolation, or a distinction from man or woman; and allows the linking of trans-, i.e. the movement to other suffixes (Stryker et al., 2018). The participants Guittar (2013) interviewed viewed coming out as a full disclosure even when they refrained from coming out in the workplace due to a lack of employment protection. Whilst it initially appears participants in Christos' (2014), Andreas' (2005) and Coon's (2001) research were open about their sexual orientation with anyone and everyone they worked with, which may be interpreted as full disclosure, on closer analysis it appears this was not always the case.

Moving from normalising and affirming LGBTQ+ leadership

Early research focused upon understanding gay and lesbian leaders' experiences in the workplace, predominantly reflecting middle-class professionals within the US. It highlighted the shared discrimination, hostility and unfairness that gay and lesbian employees faced coming out during this period despite the qualities they offered to leadership. However in doing so, it categorised the community in experiencing only one reality, overlooking intersex, asexual, bisexual or trans leaders or intersectionality with other characteristics. This flattening and homogenising of the community may have also been due in part to an assumed superiority of the insider status that the majority of researchers, being LGBTQ+, held. Arwood (2006) posited the existence of a 'pink ceiling' for gay men and lesbian women

trying to access the next level of leadership in a range of professions including education. The pink ceiling is a metaphor for a barrier stopping gay and lesbian employees moving up the hierarchical structure (vertical mobility). Perhaps it is a barrier only encountered and therefore recognised by gay and lesbian employees, a barrier that is not necessarily just above but also one that stops gay and lesbian employees from being, feeling at home, or finding their way. Whilst noting that a half of his respondents believed being out at work would have a negative impact on promotion, many still chose to be out. Perhaps surprisingly, 39% knew someone in the senior ranks who identified as gay or lesbian but there was little or no mentorship offered by gay and lesbian senior personnel for gay and lesbian colleagues. Arwood (2006) argued that mentorship by gay and lesbian senior staff could be one way of 'shattering' the pink ceiling alongside establishing diverse steering/advisory groups to critique workplace policy and practice, thus enabling employees to be open about their sexual orientation, along with regularly auditing the hiring and promotion of lesbian and gay employees. While recognising the value that LGBTQ+ mentorship might provide, to ensure such mentorship shatters any obstacle, the provision of mentorship itself needs to be critiqued. The process of mentorship can be understood and enacted differently and could reinforce existing power structures of the organization (cf. Crow, 2012).

The interrelationship of a lesbian identity to leadership has also been examined. Andreas (2005) argued that the five lesbian community college senior leaders in her study exhibited distinct leadership qualities while they navigated distinct issues. Daily decisions relating to disclosing their sexual orientation absorbed emotional and mental time away from leadership goals. This was in addition to the oppression and discrimination they experienced, holding double minority status, thus hindering them from accessing the top leadership positions, 'the lavender ceiling'. While their lived experience as lesbians shaped their skill to build good relationships, they kept this part of their identity back and only disclosed it, in their own individual way, once relationships could be trusted. Whilst the community college context had not been previously researched, the specific context was not explained or fully critiqued. Whilst leaders expressed feeling stifled and held back, there was also an opportunity for leaders to leverage their lived experiences, which may not have been possible in other contexts. There was also an explicit need during this time, in this context, for a new generation of leaders.

The existence of a glass ceiling for lesbian and gay leaders reaching the most senior levels was also reflected in Coon's (2001) study of fifty openly gay and lesbian senior administrators, who were in high-profile leadership roles, in a range of professions including education. Through a survey and leadership inventory, Coon (2001) showed that gay and lesbian leaders from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, as a result of their unique personal and leadership journeys, had developed values which informed their leadership, notably honesty, integrity and valuing others. Though the research only relied upon participants' self-assessment, participants reported that their leadership practices most often engaged in challenging the status quo and empowering others to act. These senior leaders demonstrated competency and drive (often originating from a need to overperform to compensate for being lesbian or gay). In addition, Coon (2001) argues that, as members of a minority, they offered a gift to leadership; they were able to identify with those outside the majority, bringing a high degree of sensitivity to their leadership as well as challenging conventional wisdom. Coon (2001) advises that gay and lesbian employees should have access to leadership development that supports them in acknowledging and embracing the qualities they bring to leadership and better equips them to tackle homophobia and heterosexism in the workplace. At the same time, he also draws attention to the limited development material concerning lesbian and gay leadership from which lesbian and gay employees can draw upon, which further elevates the significance of my current research.

The next wave of research reflects this access to lesbian and gay lives lived, a development of language, the legislative progress (domestic and employment) within some states in the US and the UK (Equality Act, 2010; Equal Marriage Act, 2015) and an accompanying shift in societal acceptance for LGBTQ+ employees. Though some barriers still remain for LGBTQ+ leaders, researchers have moved from a 'normalising' view of LGBTQ+ leaders, through surveys and interviews with them, to one which now uses critical and post-structural approaches which is reflective of LBTQ+ leaders offering specific 'capital' to challenge the status quo. Latterly, research also challenges the heteronormativity and cisnormativity of cultures and structures and notions of 'LGBTQ+ friendliness' of organisations. Research considers workplace culture and engages with leaders' colleagues to offer a more nuanced appreciation of LGBTQ+ visibility and there is recognition of the wider and heterogeneous composition of people within the LGBTQ+ community. Wright (2011), for example,

questioned the advantages lesbian and bisexual women (some of whom held managerial roles) might experience in comparison to heterosexual women in the heavily male dominated sectors of transport and construction. She concluded that lesbian and bisexual women may equally be disadvantaged, though this is more complicated than simply double or triple oppression; instead, it is influenced by the intersections of gender, class and sexual orientation. Race was not mentioned.

Creating a reality that values collective queer leadership

To create a reality that values queer leadership capital: LGBTQ+ leaders need to be aware of their distinct capital; contexts need to be critiqued; and the prevailing notions of leadership need to be challenged. Whilst the eight out L/G HE senior administrators, second in line to the president/provost/chancellor, in Christo's (2014) study may have intuitively appreciated that their effectiveness as a leader rested upon successfully integrating their lesbian/gay experiences within their leadership role, it was only when asked during interviews that they came explicitly to recognise this connection. This would appear to highlight the value of self-reflection for LGBTQ+ staff, helping them to make this explicit connection earlier in their careers. The majority of participants acknowledged that being a change agent was a notable accomplishment feature of their leadership, as well as being sensitive, open, and accepting of others. Being a lesbian or gay leader also raised specific obstacles for them to overcome in their leadership roles, including a lack of guidance, an unexpected lack of diversity within their institution, challenging stereotypes of lesbian and gay individuals which were held by others and a lack of networking opportunities with other lesbian and gay colleagues in HE or within the local community. The fifteen LGBTQ (current and former) university presidents that Crossman (2022) engaged with, also spoke about the skills they required to successfully navigate their role as a LGBT leader including a deep understanding of the culture of HE. In shaping, changing and transforming the organisations they led, these presidents had come to embrace the specific vulnerability they faced rather than focusing upon working non-hierarchically and utilising the power of working collectively with others to challenge dominant perspectives held within the institution. My own research aims to address some of these barriers by specifically considering attendees' perspectives of the guidance/mentoring/networking offered within the LGBTQ+ leadership programme accessed.

A considerable amount of the growing literature on LGBTQ+ leadership is based within the business context. Snyder (2006) identifies the effectiveness of 'G Quotient' leadership embodied by non-closeted gay executives (a privileged group within the LGBT community) who are doing leadership differently and taking advantage of their learnt skills at a more affirmative time in the US. The principles of 'G Quotient' are shown to promote employee engagement, satisfaction and morale, and include inclusion, creativity, adaptability, connectivity, communication, intuition, and collaboration. Browne (2014) engaged primarily with LGBT business leaders across the US and Europe. He argues that getting the best talent (including LGBT employees) to the top is of strategic importance for enhancing the creativity, productivity, innovation, and profitability of businesses. In my view, this emphasises rather than challenges the neoliberal politics and structures present. The 2000/10s were a period in which late capitalism operated with ever-increasing vigour in the US, and while the country grew to its wealthiest, whole sectors fell behind.

Browne (2014) prioritises the importance of LGBT people coming out of the closet with organisations building an inclusive culture to facilitate this. Browne (2014) comes from the position of having had a successful executive career at the highest level and the regret of remaining silent, though he recognises the real (and perceived) fears involved in grappling with this decision and the individual journey involved for those finding confidence to come out. He highlights that 41% of LGBT employees in the US and 34% of their counterparts in the UK remain in the closet at work, which he attributes to the lack of LGBT representation at senior levels in both countries. This seems a weak argument. Perhaps there are disproportionately fewer (open or concealed) LGBTQ+ individuals in senior/high profile leadership positions, which is symptomatic of larger complex issues of inequality, or they don't need to or want to come out, or perhaps the numbers of LGBTQ+ people choosing not to come out might signify continued mistreatment, harassment and microaggressions towards the LGBTQ+ community (Ng & Rumens, 2017; Sears & Mallory, 2011). Calvard (2020) and Guyan (2022) would also challenge whether simply increasing the number of LGBTQ+ people in senior positions necessarily leads to an organisation becoming more inclusive. Focusing upon under-representation and constructing LGBTQ+ employees as the problem to be solved ignores how particular voices and ways of leading are privileged within the organisation (Wilkinson et al., 2021).

Supporting my argument that institutional structures need to be critiqued, Rumens (2016) highlights that workplace diversity may actually reproduce normative regimes by packaging LGBTQ+ people as making a positive contribution to diverse organisation but remaining unintelligible in Butler's terms, when they do not or choose not to fit in to the heteronormative binary gender and sexual order. Williams et al. (2009) refers to the 'gay-friendly closet', highlighting that being out resolved very little for LGB participants who regarded themselves as working in 'gay-friendly' organisations in a variety of sectors. Though they lived beyond the former notions of the closet they were still constrained to perform in a certain normalising way, not display their sexuality, in order to be(come) accepted. Williams et al. (2009) also interviewed LGB employees working in organisations which provided goods or services to LGB clientele. Whilst these participants were visible in ways the aforementioned were not, they felt compelled to look, act and work in ways that were not always of their own choosing. Their heightened visibility also exposed them to increased vulnerability.

Queer leadership, according to (Parker, 2002), requires, beyond centring queer experiences, reflecting upon existing heterosexist ideas, asking questions and adopting strategies to disrupt oppressive structures embedded in an institution (relating to gender and sexuality and beyond). Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011), uses the concept of failure to critique capitalism and heteronormativity and explores queer as an alternative style to individualism and conformity. They look at the butch lesbian as a core of queer culture, a masculinity which is unattainable, arranged to make male masculinity viable and at the same time keeping queer femininity invisible. They look at (what they paradoxically term) the beauty of films such as 'Babe', 'Shrek', 'Chicken Run' and 'Finding Nemo', which are often dismissed as trivial children's culture, noting how they neither fear failure nor favour success but present an alternative to a 'queerness' stranded between two options: nihilism or positive futurity. Reading this helped me to reflect upon essential questions: should queer leaders conform to fit in, in the hope of reaching higher levels of the organisation in order to address the problem? Can the majority afford to fail at work? If not, perhaps collectively, binaries can be dismantled to open up more ways of knowing and doing instead.

LGBTQ+ leadership in the Education landscape

There is significant opposition to the 'business case' for workplace diversity from those leading and writing about diversity work in HE and this is highly relevant for my study, given the current climate of UK HE (discussed below) as it is remodelled along corporate lines (even though still arguably a public service) and associated with administrative leadership which is increasingly segregated from the academic space (Beattie, 2020). Ahmed (2012) draws attention to how diversity might be used to market or rebrand the university and yet obscure systematic inequalities. This arises from claims of a global demographic, links which are made between university and diversity mission statements to maintain what is already valued rather than critiquing the institution, rearranging the organisation to present a 'best view', positioning inclusion as the work of an individual specialist rather than an ongoing organisational commitment and prioritising policy writing to adhere to legal compliance rather than actually improving what is happening. Ahmed (2017) describes violence not only as physical or sexual harm but violation caused by speech acts and oblique institutional structures and discrimination.

Violence is directed to some bodies more than others, as substantiated by research which highlights the varied and nuanced experiences of LGBTQ+ students and staff in HE. English & Fenby 's (2019) research captures the experiences of LGBTQ+ doctoral researchers, specifically how their identities impacted upon their experiences of their working environment including instances of macroaggressions and harassment, how they navigated relationships with their supervisors, presented their anxieties in working internationally, and the lack of LGBTQ+ visibility. Glazzard et al's (2020) study explores the experiences of five undergraduate LGBTQ+ students over the three years of their course. Negative experiences were reported but transitions during their time at university were mainly positive, challenging the tragic narrative. The professional boundaries of faculty staff with students were explored which revealed patterns of discomfort across different demographic groups of students, most notably women, LGBTQ+ students, and Black and Asian students (Bull et al., 2023). An anonymous survey and focus groups with LGBTQ+ staff (Lee, 2022a) found that staff were relatively comfortably coming out to their peer group in their workplace but less comfortable coming out to students. Signs and symbols of LGBTQ+ visibility were important to LGBTQ+ staff's safety and ambitions in the university.

Equality accreditation schemes can be used by an institution as a performance of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) rather than creating any meaningful change, though even such EDI work does still have a value (Ryan-Flood, 2023). The disparity been the portrayal of legislative, policy and EDI claims made by universities and the lived experiences of UK HE staff is expressed in Richards et al.'s (2023) research and supports the merits of my own research in engaging with LGBTQ+ staff's lived realities.

More recent queer HE leadership research within the US reflects the gradual but growing support for LGBTQ communities on campus. Pryor (2021) attributes this to college student groups advocating for inclusion but argues that it also necessitates the leadership of LGBTQ professional and academic staff who are uniquely placed to campaign for this minority student community. Adapting Kezar and Lester's (2011) grass roots leadership in HE model and applying a queer lens to the individual, group and organisation areas of the original model, Pryor (2021) adds three additional considerations and complexities: the queer activist, queer leadership and queer policy and practice. Drawing upon further literature, Pryor shows how campus leaders at one Midwest rural university campus, centred their identities (and personal experiences) to influence their queer leadership strategy (non-hierarchical and collective) to push for meaningful institutional change (challenging policy and practice) which came with personal risk and challenge (including breaking 'glass closets') for these leaders.

LGBTQ+ leadership within the UK includes research in school settings which also typically remain heteronormative (DePalma & Atkinson, 2009; Henderson, 2017). Courtney (2014) emphasises the importance of queering leadership over and above the visibility of queer leaders. Though he argues that the visibility of LGB leaders does allow heteronormativity to be challenged by embodying an alternative sexualised form of leadership, one which cannot be ignored. Courtney (2014) shows LGB school leaders queering leadership, drawing from their marginalised experiences and perspectives to question heteronormative and cisgendered assumptions, in ways, he argues, heterosexual leaders mostly do not. Brett (2022) concurs, highlighting how this may be embodied at all hierarchical levels, with LGBTQ+ teachers carrying examples of queer cultural capital (Pennell, 2016). It is notable that he uses the verb 'carry', which could imply a weight of internal and external pressure to do so. Pennell (2016) builds upon Yosso's (2005) five forms of cultural capital in communities

of colour – aspirational, familial, navigational, resistant and linguistic – to add transgressive (action to disrupt boundaries). Brett (2022) shows teachers offering queer cultural capital in terms of being a LGBTQ+ role model to their students, developing stronger relationships with their classes and encouraging some students to express empathy and allyship. While Brett (2022) wishes to draw attention to the power and possibilities that LGBTQ+ teachers hold, by being visibly LGBTQ+, this does not necessarily equate to being authentic, in the way he describes. While being visibly LGBTQ+ could be considered an act of leadership (transgressive cultural capital (Pennell (2016)), authenticity should not be limited or defined by disclosing an invisible identity whether or not one is coerced to do so. Nor does leadership be(come) pertinent or reflective of diverse talent solely by examples of visible representation. Brett (2022) highlights the complexity of the term 'visibility', showing how LGBTQ+ teachers constantly negotiate and navigate decisions around this. In the same way, there are only relative levels of authenticity; you can neither be completely authentic nor inauthentic. Authenticity is about acting in ways that we know to be true for ourselves at that time, a reflection of our inner thoughts and feelings, regarding our strengths and the limits of the context we find ourselves in. When the focus moves to authentic leadership, however, it shifts to the relationship the leader has with others (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Despite perceptions that being open is authentic, I am not sure that the way we see ourselves is necessarily read or understood by others in the same way. I also think we are entitled to hold something in.

The new landscape of UK Higher Education is outlined by Scott (2014, p.xiv) in terms of Massification, Marketization and Managerialism, the recruitment of an increased number of globally diverse students, within a competitive 'privatised' neoliberal market, controlled by corporate management as opposed to academic governance. This change has been led by political and economic ideologies and means for those who work in HE: a decline in public funding; greater public accountability; a dissonance between vocational and academic work; a shift in cultural values from inclusion to individualism, competitiveness and hierarchy; considerable fragmentation between working teams holding different functions and a managerial imperative placed upon the efficiency of working practices. These observations were detailed twenty years ago in Blackmore and Sachs (2003), an article that still appears pertinent in the context of UK HE today (Heffernan et al., 2022). The 'performative'

university is reinforced by traditional top-down educational leadership which is more typically associated with (white, able-bodied, higher/middle-class, heterosexual) male values and traits (competitiveness, assertiveness and individuality). Women face the double bind that they are not deemed to possess these qualities and, if they do exhibit them, they are differently construed from male counterparts who display them (Wilkinson et al., 2021). While I recognise gender may influence how people feel positioned themselves and by other people and is inextricably linked to LGBTQ+ leadership given beliefs and attitudes around sexual orientation which are gendered (Fassinger, 2010), I do not wish to present a binary, essentialising or fixed understanding of gender, which may be divisive, reinforce stereotyped views, disregard the heterogeneity/intersectionality of any group and silence people who are between or beyond the binary. Nor do I wish to view the influence of gender on the accessibility/agency of leadership as greater than that of race, ethnicity, religion, age, sexuality, disability, or class. I also recognise that queer theory has been criticised for overlooking the complexity of gender (Harris et al., 2023) and thus I aim to challenge cisnormativity as well as heteronormativity in this research study.

Given the changing political and economic landscape of HE, Cunningham (2014) identifies the challenges universities need to meet to manage expectations of choice, support and entitlement arising from the very substantial financial investment UK students now make to obtain HE qualifications. The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) is claimed to be a parallel measure to the established Research Excellence Framework (REF). The TEF is based upon metrics and measurements which include students' experience, continuation, completion and progression outcomes. These are deemed to evaluate teaching and learning and hence categorises HE institutions so students can make choices about the university they attend (Lebihan et al., 2018). The logic of choice and competition (re)produces advantages for students from middle-class families (Thomson & Heffernan, 2021; Perry, 2022). University league tables (including the National Student Survey and ones published in *The Guardian* and *The Times*) also position universities with regard to student satisfaction, value for money and graduate outcomes. Improving university rankings and thus the recruitment of students in a competitive market appears increasingly relevant to those in positions of responsibility for sustaining the financial security of their institution. Low numbers of students would be untenable for any institution. In terms of the research agenda, academic leaders are also

expected to seize the strategic potential of research with government and industry to enhance income as well as the university's academic reputation, thus changing the meaning of academic autonomy (Henkel, 2005).

The current field of HE requires effective leaders to navigate what Beattie (2018) describes as a 'battlefield' of power struggles (the state disguised by neoliberal forces, the administration, academic (teaching and research), and students). She reminds us that the agenda for education is set by those with political power sustaining their own interests rather than recognising those outside the majority. This creates a new regime of leadership in HE. Those in charge feeling powerless, only fulfilling their administrative role of performativity and marketisation. In the current neoliberal climate, Beattie (2020) continues, HE leaders no longer exercise leadership as an activity of identifying goals based upon an educational philosophy and the interests of their institution, colleagues and students, as these are invalidated by agendas of the state. However, Beattie (2020) highlights the ways in which these power collisions may also open up opportunities for resistance.

Some argue that the current multiple demands on university leadership may not necessarily suit those with extensive research experience who have traditionally been promoted but instead require additional leadership acumen (Spendlove, 2007). Equally, I would argue that those with management experience but no academic experience or understanding of how academics' work may not always be appropriate either. Reframing what is desired within senior leadership roles in HE may also make leadership accessible and consequently leadership development pertinent to existing diverse talent within the university, including those staff arriving in HE from a broad range of sectors (Lee, 2021) and those on non-permanent contracts (Vicary & Jones, 2017). This includes an appreciation of and commitment to enriching the experience of all students and those students who may be marginalised not only in the university but within the context of TEF narratives (Moody, 2017). This should embrace the needs of a growing number of students identifying as LGBTQ+, a consequence of living in a more affirmative UK society, recognising many students come to identify as LGBT during their time at university (Formby, 2015; Taulke-Johnson, 2010). It should also acknowledge that the student body is becoming more globally, racially and culturally diverse and many LGBTQ+ students will have multiple marginalised identities, including students of colour, and/or language minority students, and/or dis/abled, and/or

poor. LGBTQ+ UK HE staff (both academic and professional) expressed that visible signs and symbols (rainbow flags, badges, lanyards and LGBT+ kitemarks) were important in making the workplace safer for them and reassuring in terms of coming out, particularly coming out to students (Lee, 2022a). However, signs and symbols of visibility are equally at risk of tokenism if not fully embedded in policy and deeper culture (Calvard, 2020) and this needs to also be reflected online given the changing working environment post COVID-19 (Lee, 2022a). The visibility of 'out' LGBTQ+ senior leaders was also found by Lee (2022a) to be empowering to other LGBTQ+ staff who consequently felt safe and interpreted this to mean they could also progress in the university.

Reframing leadership and mentorship in UK HE

Research on leadership has been constrained by fixed and binary categorisations. Ferry (2017) discusses how leadership is often viewed objectively and scientifically which ignores the biases inherent in leadership discourse and fails to consider the ways in which leadership is imbued with power relations. Ferry specifically illustrates, using queer theory, how leadership serves as a technology of heteronormativity through inherent notions of the family, inheritance and reproduction. Bowring (2004) highlights the binary divisions in terms of leaders and followers (non-leaders), the male (leader) viewed as the superior against the inferior female (non-leader) and the splitting of leaders' lives into public and private domains. Bowring (2004) offers a more complex analysis of the fluidity of Janeway's leadership in Voyager, subverting the heterosexual/heterosexist matrix, to offer infinite possibilities. She also points out how our understandings of gender identity and taken-for-granted assumptions surrounding gender strongly influence performances of gender and leadership in organisations. Bowring (2004) calls for the need to 'queer' leadership, not because queer leaders are superior or to develop an ideal queer leader, but to challenge the ways in which leadership is caught within the heterosexual matrix, and thus present a fluid reading of both gender and leadership. Muhr and Sullivan (2013) also demonstrate how our understandings of leadership are regulated by the heterosexual matrix through a case study of a transwoman leader who transitioned in her place of work. The experiences of this trans woman leader illustrate how her body, presumed gender and gendered appearance shape her own performances and the perceptions and expectations of her leadership by those around her. Muhr and Sullivan (2013) argue we need to move from a position of tolerance of

queer bodies, which reaffirms boundaries and is exclusionary, to queering leadership, which necessitates a vision of gender fluidity and a constant challenging of boundaries. Given the notable absence of a distinct LGBTQ+ leadership development programme within Advance HE's current provision, the opportunity to que(e)ry leadership with UK HE staff has not previously presented itself, in the way in it has for my own research. In fact, both Bryman (2007) and Dopson et al. (2019) highlight the limited quantity of reliable, theoretically informed research regarding leadership development within the specific context of Higher Education. Lumby and Moorosi (2022) discuss blind spots in the *Educational Management Administration and Leadership* journal, including the limited number of articles exploring the relevance of sexuality to leadership.

Does queering leadership require someone to see LGBTQ+ as a core facet of their identity, which can overlook the intersection of other characteristics and experiences (Guyan, 2022) or disregard the distinctiveness of bisexuality (Calvard, 2020) or trans leadership (Jourian & Simons, 2017)? Does queering leadership require someone to take up the individualised risk (Ragins et al., 2007) or responsibility of being visible or create a considerable burden for the few visible senior LGBTQ+ leaders? Though the importance of visibility and representation over silence and shame remains, remaining silent is not synonymous with failure nor a desertion of responsibilities (Lee, 2023). Reasons for not putting one's head above the parapet, including fear of rejection, real or assumed, are related to one's profession and perceived to be justified in education (Andreas, 2005; Fine, 2017; Snyder, 2006; Renn & Bilodeau, 2005). Whilst LGBTQ+ individuals may demonstrate courage of conviction in terms of negotiating on a daily basis how, when, where and to whom to 'come out' to, the feasibility of such risk taking and additional risk taking required in work/leadership, particularly for those with multiple marginalised identities (Pastrana, 2006; Vasquez & Comas-Diaz, 2007), remains reliant upon workplace culture (Andreas, 2005; Christos, 2014; Fassinger et al., 2010; Johnson, 2009) and past experiences of discrimination that led to great fears but to greater disclosure (Ragins et al. 2007). Furthermore, visible LGBTQ+ leaders' voices may still not be necessarily fully heard (Courtney, 2014; Rumens, 2016; Williams, 2009).

Leadership theory is a contested terrain; while early theories took an individualistic perspective by focusing on the characteristics of successful leaders, later theories considered

followers and wider situational circumstances. The literature suggests a shift towards distributed leadership, that works through and within relationships rather than individual actions. Accordingly, a broader reconceptualisation is needed of what leadership and leadership development involves in HE (Dopson et al., 2019). There is a need to move beyond a historical focus on individual leaders (and narrow career outcomes) to consider wider leadership processes as inherently distributed, relational, and contextually influenced (Bolden et al., 2008; Bryman, 2007). A growing body of critical leadership studies (Collinson, 2011) highlights this need, critiquing the power relations through which leadership dynamics are often reproduced. Instead of replicating a normalised view that leaders have influence on others, critical leadership researchers illustrate the complexities of power that are left underexplored from leadership research, for example informal leadership and followers' resistance.

As argued earlier in this chapter, the concept of authentic leadership may further marginalise GSM persons and therefore requires the concept itself to be interrogated for all people. Authentic leadership may look different amongst GSM people from how it would amongst non-GSM people (Fine, 2017). The emergence and development of authentic leadership requires a disposition towards its self-transcendent values that embrace social justice (Avolio & Gardner, 2005) rather than an inclination towards performativity or self-promotion. The differences between authentic and transformational leadership are that although authentic leadership can encompass change it is not essential to its operational definition; leaders can be highly authentic and not charismatic at all and ethical leadership theories (which guide something more important than self-interest along with a belief that each individual has something positive to contribute). Lee (2021) stresses that the changing landscape of HE necessitates leaders leading positive transformation, and that que(e)rying leadership beyond any LGBTQ+ Leadership programme may require transformational capacity.

The qualities of LGBTQ+ people, highlighted by Lee (2021), are shown to support a transformational leadership style (Burns, 1978; Spendlove, 2007), which is argued to be of particular value, given HE's changing culture. Transformational leadership, however, continues to be critiqued. What may be presented as a romantic notion of leadership, new and innovative, could be viewed as re-establishing central control and authority (Gunter,

2001). Gunter engages with critical studies, Bourdieu's theory of practice, education management and school effectiveness to show how so-called transformational leadership may not in reality be transformational but instead enable, maintain, and develop existing power structures. Transformational leadership is based on a problematic separation and elevation of leaders from followers. Weight and agency are bestowed on the leader, a role performed by superior individuals over other 'inferior' people. With leaders influencing how others think in a hegemonic fashion (ideologies originating from the dominant group) and leaders reinforcing a commitment to the organisation. Thus, transformational leadership can sometimes be viewed as serving bureaucracy rather than enacting social change.

Gunter argues that complex educational problems cannot be reduced merely to leadership issues or solved by hero leaders. An alternative position would suggest that leadership should not be hierarchical and reflective of the attitudes and performance of one person but rather democratic, collective and collaborative, a leadership that is concerned with relationships and enables discussions between individuals. Hierarchies in organisations reinforce gendered, racialised and class inequalities, especially when it comes to leadership (Acker, 2006). Greater competition and increasingly complex issues within HE calls for engagement with a diverse staff and student body, and for alliances and networks with a flatter, lateral leadership style and structure.

Leadership in HE should be concerned with the values, beliefs and purposes underpinning education. Biesta (2015) argues that the fundamental purpose of education is illustrated by three domains: qualifications, socialisation, and subjectification. Biesta (2010) outlines the case that educational practice should be constituted upon values as an alternative to the prominence of evidence. Not only does Biesta frame the deficits of knowledge, democracy, efficiency, and application to an evidence informed approach but he highlights that only with values (what we hope to achieve), do questions about evidence and effectiveness (what works) have any meaning. The focus should be on providing good education to all rather than on questions of effective education (which is only establishes the degree) or excellent education (which makes it competitive and available to only a few) (Biesta, 2015). Educators' professional judgements are essential and central to the role of good education because these judgements are made pragmatically in new and unique situations, requiring the oversight and balance of the three purposes of education. While Biesta (2015) stresses the

importance of democratic and accountable ways of working, treating students as consumers undermines what education is about and bureaucratic accountability leads to its own aim rather than an expression of good education.

In this thesis, I take up Gunter's call to problematise leadership in education rather than accepting it as given. Gunter (2005) argues that conceptualising research around educational leadership is *"*unsettled and unsettling … desirable and necessary*"* (p.165). This is because many assumptions about educational leadership remain, given an ongoing desire to secure public sector reform with heavy investment coming from the taxpayer. Rooted cultural acceptance around what is taken for granted and an unwillingness to question this is also sustained by hierarchical remuneration packages. Gunter calls for researchers to reflect upon and critically evaluate what is shaping educational leadership, what are the knowledge claims and how these are produced in relation to structure (policy processes) and agency (professional practice) within the field that may be perpetuating inequality. This research will require me to understand the experiences of LGBTQ+ attendees and ask questions about power relationships, actively engaging with and describing the meanings and possibilities given to LGBTQ+ leadership on the programme, in order to secure and sustain changes and improvements to HE and leadership development.

Leadership researchers in Bryman and Lilley's (2009) research concerning leadership in UK HE were sceptical of leadership competency frameworks, given their underestimation of contextual factors. It would appear any LGBTQ+ Leadership Development Programme for HE needs to be contextually based upon comprehensive understanding of effective leadership specific to HE rather than borrowed wholesale from the corporate world (Spendlove, 2007). It also needs to recognise the varying experiences, career stages and advancement needs of professional and academic staff and those working in hybrid roles (Lee, 2022a). Bryman's (2007) review of literature concerning effective leadership in HE at the academic departmental level in the UK and USA summarises thirteen behaviours (some of which could be applied to any setting), including providing, communicating and executing a clear strategic vision. However, there are other striking features which are connected to the specific environment of academic departments, suggesting that effective department leaders should offer their staff a more covert form of leadership, granting autonomy, collegiality and mutual decision making and enabling staff to pursue research interests.

Bolden et al.'s (2008) five dimensions of leadership in HE consider personal attributes but also significantly include social, structural, contextual, and developmental features. The particular context and purpose of the HE setting in which the programme is situated may call for a specific approach to leadership development. In encouraging LGBTQ+ leaders, the leadership development programme needs to allow individuals to draw upon their own and shared reflections, to appreciate the specific skills they may need to navigate their own identities in their operational roles and offer a deep understanding of global and political influences and the governance, economies and policies of the setting (Crossman, 2022). This in turn might support LGBTQ+ leaders move from an individual affirmative position to one which is collective, utilises existing organisational expectations to continually advance inclusion for both colleagues and students at all levels of the institution (Pryor, 2021), as well as maintaining a strategic distance from these structures to challenge these very boundaries and mechanisms (Ahmed, 2012; Rumens, 2016; Fine, 2017).

Mentorship research is organised around three primary theoretical frameworks: developmental theories; learning theories; and social theories (Dominquez & Hager, 2013). Singh et al.'s (2009) longitudinal study differentiated the impact that informal mentoring had for their 236 participants from other forms of career capital (human, agentic, and social networks). Their study confirmed that informal mentoring mattered more to career success, shown objectively in terms of promotion and subjectively in terms of advancement expectations and turn over intentions, than the three other forms of career capital. However, it also showed that mentoring was not only a required component of career success but a necessary part of an assemblage of resources for the employee. Mentoring mattered less than other forms of career capital in either predicting salary (only human capital predicted salary) or career satisfaction (where human and agentic capital mattered more). However, Ragins et al. (2007a) highlight the restrictive perspective from which effective mentoring has been measured, which often only includes mentees' perspectives. While career outcomes in terms of salary, promotion and job attitudes may be of importance to organisations and individuals, these outcomes may not capture the full meaning and value of mentorship which may extend beyond the organisation, and particularly between non-dominant (including the intersections of LGBTQ+, female, black and minority ethnic, disabled, lower socioeconomic status) mentors and their non-dominant

protégés. This underlines the significance of my research, which will include mentees' and mentors' perspectives of non-dominant mentorship provided by the LGBTQ+ leadership development programme, to query mentorship.

Resisting heteronormative time and space, Halberstam (2005) argues there is such a thing as a queer time, which leaves the frame of reproduction, family, longevity, risk/safety and inheritance, and a queer space, where queer people engage or where space is reimagined. Ahmed (2006) examines how we 'orientate' ourselves through space and temporalities, from our own starting point. She is deeply interested in lived experiences and emotions, and engages in phenomenology to analyse how bodies inhabit space, take shape within it and are directed towards or away from objects. Ahmed also raises the point that whether a setting is familiar of not, not only guides how we find our way but also whether or not we feel at home. In a familiar room, there is certainty, we know which way we are facing and we recognise the contours of the room, which makes it easier to reach out and know which way to turn. In a just about familiar setting or an unfamiliar setting, we may reach out to what is just about familiar or not, we might still find our way, but we may get lost or at times be unable to reach our destination. The body provides a perspective, a response to its surroundings, which may include goose bumps on the skin, from which we proceed. The individual follows a direction which is conceivable; direction is explained as a relationship between the body and space. Relatedly, Halberstam (2003) explores how a queer line may oppose the heterosexual direction and timing of adolescence, marriage, reproduction, and nuclear family structure. The longer a person is committed to a path, the harder it may be to turn back, even in the face of adversity, as long as hope exists. Ahmed also talks about chance encounters which are off course or risk departure from the straight and narrow, even though these may generate new possibilities and directions. Being a member of a community may also mean following a particular direction or being asked to follow a line and is in this way performative.

Space and time feel significant to my research, both in terms of how LGBTQ+ employees may feel positioned in the institution but also with regards to how they may inhabit a queer-only space to critically reflect on these non-identical experiences together, in order to open up new ways of thinking about and being practitioners in the field of leadership in UK HE, to stimulate a queerer future. LGBTQ+ lived experiences have not tended to be addressed in

traditional generic leadership development programmes (Lugg & Roscigno, 2021). Lefebvre, as cited in (Schmid, 2022) developed a theory which understands space as a process of social production (relational to time). Space is not concrete; it cannot be held. The starting point is the body (the five senses). The theory brings together three-dimensional concepts of physical (nature, the cosmos, materiality), mental (logic and formal abstraction), and social space (exists only in imagination). The production of space (it is not universal) unites three 'moments' or 'formants': the production of goods, the production of knowledge, and the production of meaning.

In sharing the difficulty and tensions of retelling Mariam al-Khawli's story, Page (2017) discusses her responsibility in her research to remain open and resistant to linear narratives or single causes. Page's engagement with vulnerable writing involved returning to the analysis after reflections had been made and with the interlude of time, and by 'stressing the lesser beats' (p.23).

Engaging with and critiquing the literature which is detailed in this chapter has enabled me to clarify my research aims and refine my research questions.

Research Aims

This research aims to add to the small literature relating to LGBTQ+ staff who work in UK HE and uniquely those on a LGBTQ+ leadership development programme. It will seek to obtain a deep understanding of LGBTQ+ attendees' own experiences of working in the current context of UK HE and specifically within one post-1992 university. It will offer perspectives from a diverse group of academic and professional LGBTQ+ staff, working in different roles, and at varying levels. It will include reflections from those who engage with the programme in multiple ways, offering varying versions of LGBTQ+ identities and leadership. It will also consider how views on LGBTQ+ leadership have been influenced by the university and the programme itself.

Research questions

1. How do attendees feel LGBTQ+ identities shape leadership in HE and how do they feel LGBTQ+ leadership is shaped by HE?
2. How is leadership understood and constructed in the context of a programme which promotes LGBTQ+ leadership in HE?

3. How do LGBTQ+ attendees on this programme anticipate using what they have learnt?
4. How could leadership and leadership development in HE be que(e)ried beyond this research study?

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter discusses how my research was planned and conducted, including some of the ethical challenges I encountered. Initially I understood I was taking a conventional qualitative approach, using observations of the programme's day sessions and interviews with participants. I gradually came to understand my research as (post-)qualitative as I began to recognise the blurred lines around what conventionally might be seen as a case study, the entanglement of my investment in the programme, my growing relationships with attendees, and their evolving connections with one another. In the final section of this chapter I elaborate on how queer theory informed my methodology and how I grappled and reflected upon methodological and ethical decisions during data generation.

Research Design

I used interviews to explore attendees' reflections of working in HE and their experience of the LGBTQ+ leadership development programme. I also recognised that having access to programme days would allow me to observe how LGBTQ+ leadership was conceptualised on the programme and allow me to build rapport with attendees to support their engagement in this research. Observations and interviews are common in leadership development research (Eacott & Riveros, 2021). I viewed these methods as feasible and adjustable given my position, not being in charge of the programme and not knowing the university, nor having a detailed understanding of the programme's structure, nor aware (with the exception of one programme co-leader) of who the attendees were from the outset.

The LGBTQ+ Leadership Development Programme was delivered for the first time within one university (Sept 2022 – May 2023). However, participants' experiences extended beyond the setting, and they also offered perceptions gleaned from talking to those working in other HE settings. Therefore, this is more than a single-sited case study. I was in the university for brief, intense periods of time and I draw on ethnographic methods and insights in my approach, although I cannot claim this research is an ethnography. By attending three face-to-face leadership development programme days, I developed an appreciation of the setting in which the programme was being delivered and a thorough understanding of the programme, the programme's delivery and its development. It felt unsettling to interrogate a

programme presented as an opportunity to support LGBTQ+ leadership; however, I drew from Gunter (2005) to problematise the knowledge production of leadership rather than accepting it as given.

Prior to starting this research, I was not connected to the programme nor associated with the university in which the programme ran. Before day one, I simply held an overview of the programme's aims and structure. I knew the programme aimed to support and develop the leadership skills of LGBTQ+ staff. I also knew the pre-requisites for applying, the number of programme days involved, the session themes, and the fact that mentorship was offered. This came from speaking to the person whom I assumed, at the time, was the sole programme leader. This programme leader also shared the programme's promotional flyer with me. I had initially met her at my first research conference in 2018 where she was presenting some of her LGBTQ+ education research. Given my personal connection to her research, I spoke to her at the end of the presentation and was invited to dinner with her and others on the second night of the conference. Since then, I had followed her research and recognised the opportunity that researching within the leadership development programme might offer to query leadership in UK HE. I sought her permission to conduct this research. A lack of deep knowledge about the programme's structure meant that circumstances arose which were not always foreseen and necessitated ongoing decisions to be considered and reflected upon including the fact that during day 2, it emerged that there was another programme leader, co-leader (b).

Having gained agreement from all individuals who engaged with the LGBTQ+ leadership development programme, I knew I would be able to attend the programme's three face-to-face days. However, I had not anticipated the further (five) socials (two of which occurred immediately after days two and three) and the LGBTQ+ staff network events (three) that I would be invited to and subsequently attended. These occasions were well supported by those who attended programme days. The LGBTQ+ staff network events were closely connected to programme co-leader (a)'s personal and professional life (with a strong affinity to my own) and offered further opportunities alongside the socials to speak to attendees more freely outside of the programme. Attending these socials and other events indicated my growing relationships with attendees which came to be something I understood in (post-)qualitative terms. I did not include anything from the socials or events in my field notes but

they did allow me to have a greater appreciation and awareness of participants' perceptions and life stories.

The LGBTQ+ Leadership Development Programme

I use the following terms to describe particular groups of people within the LGBTQ+ leadership development programme. I considered these terms carefully in order to explain people's roles in the programme without compromising their anonymity or constructing a hierarchy/binary between mentors and mentees. 'Associates' refer to (23) people who engaged with the programme as mentees, mentors (including programme co-leader (a)), programme co-leader (b), a guest (who joined on day 3), and facilitators. 'Attendees' (18) were (nine) mentees, (seven) mentors (three of whom led sessions), programme co-leader (b), and a guest on day 3. Attendees were present on one, two, or all three of the programme days. One mentee did not attend any of the programme days. 'Mentees' refers to the (ten) associates who were assigned to one of (seven) 'mentors'. 'Facilitators' refers to (four) session leaders who were external to the university and present on one of the programme days. 'Participants' refers to (17) associates who gave consent for their oral contributions on programme days they attended to be included in my research; (16) of these associates agreed to be interviewed.

I analyse the programme in the next chapter but for clarity here I will outline the programme's structure. The programme was advertised by the programme co-leaders to members of the LGBTQ+ community, both academic and professional staff, at one post-1992 university (formerly a polytechnic granted university status in 1992), in a city in England, in the summer of 2022. LGBTQ+ staff who were interested and willing to attend three face-to-face days in September 2022, January 2023 and May 2023 (taking place across two campuses attached to their university) were asked to complete a one-page application form, identifying the next step that they wished to achieve on their career ladder. The programme reached close to full capacity with ten mentees enrolled along with seven mentors (including programme co-leader (a)), programme co-leader (b) and four facilitators. Nine mentees, six mentors including programme co-leader (a), and programme co-leader (b) were present on day 1. Six mentees, three mentors including programme co-leader (a), programme co-leader (b), and one facilitator were present during the sessions on day 2, with two further mentors joining the later social. Seven mentees, four mentors including programme co-leader (a),

programme co-leader (b), three facilitators and an additional 'participating observer' guest attended day 3. The majority of attendees were present for the whole duration of programme days but at times (one or two) attendees or facilitators joined or left.

Everyone who attended the programme days engaged in the sessions together in one room. On day 1, attendees were welcomed by programme co-leader (a). Programme co-leader (a) spoke about the attributes that LGBTQ+ people might offer to leadership. Attendees were asked to consider their preferred style of leadership, and the programme was presented by programme co-leader (a) as an opportunity for mentees to reflect upon the direction they wanted for their careers and ways in which they might accomplish it (drawing upon support from their allocated mentor). Before being assigned to their mentors, attendees listened to two further mentors (as co-leader (a) was also a mentor) speak about their lives and careers. On day 2, attendees engaged in a communication skills session led by a facilitator (and former actor). The facilitator emphasised the importance of body language and use of voice, over words spoken, as a way of achieving (higher) status and connecting with the audience. Day 3 included sessions from three further facilitators. The first, a social media expert, talked about the power of labels, difficult conversations, and the six types of power. The second, an academic, spoke about her identity, her work, and her own understanding of leadership. The third, a business psychologist, asked attendees to consider their 'why', specifically what underpinned their own motivation for the work they did which was seen as essential to know and articulate to others in leadership. Attendees were then asked to engage with a cognitive behavioural therapy model in order to redress their irrational beliefs stemming from adverse experiences. The third facilitator on day 3 also explained the situational leadership model (Hershey & Blanchard, 1969); attendees were asked to adopt this model to consider how they might flex their leadership to consider those with differing levels of competency and motivation, and to consider who was in one's system and how to engage with them. Time was also set aside on each of the programme days for mentors and mentees, who were present, to speak to one another.

Participants

I was not involved with the enrolment of staff onto the LGBTQ+ leadership development programme, from which participants were recruited for this research. The flyer which advertised the programme to staff at the university explicitly stated that they must identify

as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary or queer plus. Whilst some participants may claim fixed identities, it still offered possibilities to trouble and redefine leadership. I was also aware of two participants and one facilitator who changed their pronouns on their email signature during/shortly after the programme, indicating a fluidity – a growing self-awareness and/or a change in their openness regarding their gender identity. The programme was accessible to both academic and professional LGBTQ+ university staff and at varying levels, though programme co-leader (a) made it clear to me that this only extended for mentees up to middle management levels.

I was aware attendees identified with one or multiple parts but collectively (possibly) not all parts of the LGBTQ+ initials and were to varying degrees 'out' or at least (for current staff in the university) comfortable accessing the programme in their work setting. Being a member of the university LGBTQ+ staff network was not a pre-requisite for becoming part of the programme, and though the majority were (and the programme co-leaders were leading the LGBTQ+ staff network), some had not engaged with LGBTQ+ staff network events. Engagement in the programme (at least in theory) also obliged a yearlong commitment and attendance at three face-to-face days. Those participants who were also mentees were curious about leadership, though the programme was not able to support mentees moving into the most senior levels. These factors may have unintentionally discouraged some members of the LGBTQ+ community at the institution from engaging with the programme and consequently this research.

I aimed to recruit all those involved in the programme (23). Seventeen associates (all of whom were attendees) gave consent for their oral contributions on attended programme days to be included in field notes. My research also includes the multiple views and experiences of sixteen associates who agreed to be interviewed. I followed up a couple of times with those associates who did not respond presenting the opportunity as remaining available to those who felt too busy to be interviewed. One facilitator offered their responses to several questions (taken from the interview schedule) that I posed via email regarding the basis for their involvement in the programme, the workshop session they delivered, what they had hoped attendees might gain from their session, and anything that surprised them about how their session was received or surprised them generally about the programme.

The attendees whom I interviewed (eight academic and eight professional staff) held differing levels of seniority, roles, and contracts and thus had a varying amount of experience in leadership roles across various areas within and beyond the institution. The research also offers viewpoints from those with varying levels of time spent working in HE in general (from 5 months to 20+ years), the institution itself (again 5 months to 20+ years) and within their current role (commenced during data collection to 6 years). Some of the academics had a greater research focus in their assigned role; others had a greater teaching focus. Some participants had experience of working outside of higher education, some had only worked in their present institution. Some participants were currently studying and some were alumni.

Field notes and interview data include perspectives from those who engaged with the programme in multiple ways, involving mentees (nine), mentors (six) (including programme co-leader (a)), programme co-leader (b), and a guest. Mentees were all current university staff. Mentors had previously or were currently working in Higher Education and included some people who were former employees of the institution. All participants were LGBTQ+ as were all programme associates apart from one facilitator (discussed further below). Participants offered a variety of genders and ages from (20s to 50+); the majority were white British (13); Asian and European nationalities and cultural heritage beyond the UK were also represented (four) (though not proportionate to the UK or the institutional population). Underrepresentation of LGBTQ+ people with multiple minority identities often occurs in LGBTQ+ network groups and spaces. Most participants held at least undergraduate degree level qualifications. One participant mentioned being neurodivergent.

Data generation

I gathered interview and observation data over the period Sept 2022 – August 2023 (illustrated in figure 3.1). I also accessed the host university website and accompanying (publicly accessible) documents from it including the University's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Statement & Objectives, staff profile data, and the Equal Pay Review. This allowed me to form a reference point of where the university was in relation to EDI alongside participants' own perceptions (including one participant who held an EDI working role) though I knew the website presented a 'best view'.

I experienced all LGBTQ+ leadership development days and sessions as a 'participating observer'. I recognise that I did not experience the days or sessions in the same way as the majority of attendees, those around me were not colleagues, neither did I experience these sessions in my own place of work and I was not allocated a mentor or mentee. Equally I may have felt more immersed in the group and the programme than (many) others as a result of the (23) individual participant interviews conducted and the field notes and personal reflections I wrote. The dynamics of the whole group, specifically the closeness between all group members due to its size, led to smaller subgroups emerging. This was accentuated to me when I felt a sense of responsibility to reach out and extend a personal invitation to attendees whom I realised had not been invited to a social event in March 2023. I did not experience the same feeling of responsibility when I was invited out again for the third social. This time the event was announced on Teams (which was accessible to all attendees) and the notice encouraged everyone to attend.

I kept field notes of observations which included material content, how it was delivered, how it was received, and oral contributions which I felt were pertinent in sessions (provided participants had given consent). I could only partially capture the messiness of this space. On day 1, responding to the programme leader's wish (discussed further below), I gathered the materials which were distributed to attendees and wrote up my recollections on the train on the way home. On day 2 and day 3, I wrote field notes during the sessions, and I added to these subsequently.

Interview questions (see Appendix I-V) were checked in advance during a pilot interview and posed as 'how' questions to reduce defensiveness (Yin, 2018). Interviewees offered convenient times for interviews, which allowed them sufficient time and space for reflection. The majority of interviewees (15) chose to be interviewed online though one participant took up my offer of a face-to-face interview before one of the LGBTQ+ staff network events. Interviews lasted from 30 minutes to 70 minutes. Mentee participants (with the exception of one who did not respond after day 3) were interviewed twice, once after day 1 (for one mentee after day 2) (November 2022 to January 2023) and a second time after the end of the programme (May to June 2023). This was to acknowledge that identities (Heckert, 2010) and perceptions might change, sometimes in unexpected ways, over the course of the programme. It also allowed me to ask follow-up questions resulting from the first interview. I

only had access to associates after the start of the programme; this meant I could not gather participants' perceptions prior to day 1. Mentors and programme co-leader (b) were interviewed once, between February and March 2023. The guest on day 3 was interviewed once in July 2023. Programme co-leader (a) was interviewed once, at the end of the programme in August 2023.

Figure 3.1 Timeline of data generation

Sept 2022	Day 1 field notes.
Oct 2022	Accessed host university website.
Nov-Dec 2022	Interviews with 7 mentees.
Jan 2023	Day 2 field notes. Interview with 1 mentee.
Feb-Mar 2023	Reflexive thematic analysis began. Interviews with 5 mentors and co-leader (b).
May-Jun 2023	Day 3 field notes. 2nd interviews with 7 mentees.
Jul 2023	Interview with guest on day 3.
Aug 2023	Interview with co-leader (a) (also a mentor).

Analysis

Interviews were video-recorded and our conversations were transcribed, initially using online Teams. These transcripts were checked for accuracy against the original recording. Each transcript was then shared by email with the relevant interviewee to allow them to check for accuracy. Most participants responded directly to this email to indicate that they had read it and were happy with it. A couple of participants requested slight amendments. Clarity was also checked by me and communicated to me informally when I met with participants during programme days and LGBTQ+ network events. I then added Jeffersons annotation to the transcripts (Hepbern & Bolden, 2012) to convey intonation, emphasis, volume, speed, pauses, and other features e.g. body gestures and laughter. Annotations in the Findings chapter adhere to the following conventions:

… extra or unnecessary words omitted

, slight pause

? strongly rising intonation

! strongly rising pitch

_ stress or emphasis/volume

◦ softer/quieter

< slower

> faster

Other features in square brackets, e.g. [laughter, crossing arms etc.].

This process helped me to engage with the energies and rhythm of the voice as part of the meaning-making process (Chadwick, 2020). It acknowledged voice as emerging and embodied, entangled with the reality of the world, rather than assuming it to be individual and stable (Jackson & Mazzei, 2009). Interview transcripts and recordings were retained as narratives to appreciate each individual participant's voice. I conducted most interviews online on the kitchen table at home, and I engaged with the transcripts, audio recordings, and field notes in the same place. I felt transported back and forth in place and time to intense moments and I felt the blurred edges of the field (Rooke, 2010).

Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) was chosen for the rich interviews and field notes as it facilitated an active, organic, creative, and coherent working process of a single reflexive researcher with the added flexibility of allowing me to think with queer theory to work with and against interpretivism (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). This reflexive process started as soon I entered the room on day 1 of the programme but I began undertaking reflexive thematic analysis from February 2023 after my first set of attendee participant interviews. This entailed familiarising myself with the data, listening to the interviews several times, followed by complete coding (single facet), starting with anything and everything relevant to the research questions across the complete data set (using NVivo 12). Codes focused upon semantic (overt) material, for example the interactions that took place between attendees on programme days, and latent (concealed) meanings, for example the relational and temporal aspects of mentorship, but also related to interrogating aspects, for example how mentors were depicted during the programme.

Initially, I undertook coding deductively, drawing from themes in the literature and theory, which allowed me to organise and focus my analysis. I elicited participants' perception of the institution, the LGBTQ+ leadership programme, and LGBTQ+ leadership. Following on from

this, my analysis took an inductive analytical approach, thinking with queer theory. As I looked at each complete interview more closely, I became aware of each individual's unique history/position and I made notes of how this intertwined with perceptions of leadership in HE, the structure of the programme, and mentorship. I recognised that presenting and following a narrative analysis would have compromised the anonymity of my participants. I immersed myself in the data to reflect upon and question it, but I also distanced myself from it, returning to the data again and again to allow inspiration to develop (Braun & Clarke, 2022). I recognised data were partial, incomplete, and situated. I became more entangled and immersed within my data, paying attention to data which did not make easy sense to me and to things I came to realise were not said or recalled; this allowed me to go beyond the already known. I took note from Maclure (2013) that I needed to be 'attentive' and 'open to surprise'. I took reassurance from 'wonder' that I was allowed as a researcher to let things (entanglements, intra-action) (Barad, 2007) in interviews and field notes 'grab me', perhaps even things that in the original research design I did not set out to collect. Things 'glowed' into significance and became increasingly significant, around which I thought and wrote. For example, the Pride bags bearing the university logo reconfigured with the rainbow flag colours laid out on the tables on day one and the specific words spoken (sometimes a quip) that stayed with me.

I engaged in a recursive process of generating initial themes (multiple facets of a particular meaning or experience), intersections which drew together data that might otherwise appear disparate (central organising concepts to data and outcome of the analysis). I then reviewed the themes and sub-themes, defined and named the themes and finally wrote the final analysis (using data extracts and analytical commentary). Some of the themes are not particularly new, not to me anyway, but folding these diffractively into the poem (at the end of the findings chapter), I have invited the reader into the assemblage. The quotations used in the poem had struck me as 'hot spots' (Maclure, 2013) when I first heard them but I was not sure at the time why. Following analysis, these 'hot spots' had remained with me. I wrote the poem knowing these glowing quotations/moments and the order in which they seemed to flow.

The direct quotations included in the findings chapter have all been taken from the interviews conducted with attendees. I have also integrated field notes, and, where relevant,

included journal extracts to add verbal and nonverbal content to the analysis of space and formation of leadership on programme days. To protect individual identities in the findings chapter I have used pseudonyms or, at times, provided no name at all, though I recognise that this reproduces the hierarchy of a named author and unnamed informants (Dahl, 2010). The intersectionality (e.g. race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, ability, and class) of my participants at times clashed with also preserving anonymity when reporting data and is why at times I use broader categories (Roffee & Walling, 2016). Given the small number of programme associates, I was careful to remove any identifiable details and I sometimes label particular quotes with a broad role rather than using a specific pseudonym. I could not assume that perspectives shared with me in interviews had necessarily been communicated by participants to all associates. I shared the pseudonyms that I had used for participants with individuals at the end of interviews, to check they were happy with my choice. I tried to protect the anonymity of the programme itself though I recognised that the programme was becoming more widely known as the programme co-leaders wrote about it.

I attempted to remain highly attuned to presumptions, assumptions and interpretations I made in data analysis and my supervisors helped to challenge those I made unconsciously (cf. Ademolu, 2023). I reflected upon the age, gendered, cultural, race, ability, and class differences in lived experience between myself and my participants.

Creating queer space in practice and research

There is firstly a queerness in being. Twenty-two people who identified as LGBTQ+ (including attendees, facilitators, and myself as researcher) came together in a queer space for the programme's three days to make explicit connections between intersectional LGBTQ+ lives and leadership and thus reframe leadership.

This research is also queer in so far as it is positioned within a framework which highlights the instability of assumed meanings and ensuing power relations. The reclaimed term queer cannot be defined with precision; it should remain unclear, fluid, and multiple (Browne and Nash, 2010). Browne and Nash (2010) expand upon this by arguing that a refusal to specify and thereby limit queer is queer in itself. What queer theory does, in taking up a poststructural approach, is challenge, disrupt, flip and question, to shift perspectives so as to open up new directions and possibilities. It deconstructs static binary categories of gender and sexuality, considers the intersections of race, class inter alia as well as expose

hierarchical power relations of heteronormativity (assumption of heterosexuality and cisnormativity), homonormativity (norms of heterosexuality projected onto LGBTQ+ people), and capitalism (political and economic systems motivated by making a profit).

I have learnt from Heckert (2010) to relax traditional disciplinary boundaries, that neither I nor my research need rigid borders. In order to develop a more nuanced appreciation of sexual orientation, Heckert's (2010) research engaged with individuals who had complex and fluid queer relationships with sexual orientation. His research design was guided by his own intuition; by listening closely to his participants' stories he offered a transformative space where connections were made, queering the borders between himself and others, and reading what he liked. Queerness only known in the present is not quite here, always in process. The here and now is a 'prison house' (Munoz, 2019, p.1) which must propel us (the collective group) forward towards a utopia, that may be reached by different paths and timings. Munoz draws upon the philosopher Ernst Bloch to argue that educated hope does encompass fear which comes from memories recalled. Hope can be disappointed, but that disappointment is no reason to abandon a queer utopia. Disappointment needs to be risked if certain impasses are to be challenged. I am learning in becoming queer to cross borders and be comfortable with uncertainty (Heckert, 2010).

There is no single queer method; queer lives can be addressed through a range of methods. However, I became aware that my queer methodological approach did not fit neatly into traditional research territories and structures and thus I needed to question expected concerns regarding coherence, reliability, and generalisation. In the following paragraphs I illustrate how a number of research binaries are challenged, including 'insider'/'outsider', the researcher/researched, objectivity/subjectivity, and the fluidity of the field itself and how I grappled and reflected upon this.

I had previously engaged in research for the LGBTQ+ population (my Institutional Focused Study, and my prior piece of EdD work to this thesis, entitled 'Observations on the implementation of Relationships, Sex and Health Education in an English Primary School') but had never engaged in research within a LGBTQ+ group. From reading Tooth Murphy's (2020) account, I recognised the potential of being an insider of the LGBTQ+ community (and working in HE in an academic role) yet an outsider of the host HE institution. In my email shared with associates by programme co-leader (a) prior to day 1, I had offered information

about myself (including identifying as part of the LGBTQ+ population, my working role, and my research).

Ademolu (2023) similarly writes that his deemed 'insider' status offered access, an immediate seal of approval from participants, and an awareness to ask intuitive questions of interviewees. Simultaneously, as Ahmed (2012) points out, being an outsider of the institution enabled me to be(come) aware of elements of institutional life that may have passed unnoticed to someone researching within their own workplace. It may have also paved the way for participants to speak more candidly and at length about their careers, experiences at the institution, and the programme itself. A pilot interview which I conducted with a member of the LGBTQ+ staff network within my own place of work highlighted for me the sensitivity in asking questions surrounding a colleague's career. I recognised, though, that being viewed by participants as an outsider to the institution could also make participants protective of their place of work and the programme. I reassured all participants at the start of interviews that I was not critiquing or evaluating the programme or their institution.

Ademolu's (2023) critique of his positionality when researching Nigerian communities also helped me to challenge the duality and the totality of insider/outsider status. I did possess a shared identity with those engaged in the programme; there were knowing nods, laughs, eye rolls, flirtation and cultural references, which also helped my insider status within the programme grow. However, the gestures I observed and mirrored and the intimacy I felt varied between individuals and with individual participants across different points in times. I felt this was influenced by their multiplicity and their role on the programme. Unlike Tooth Murphy (2020), I recognise that I was interviewing participants mainly about their working lives and I felt at times during interviews that participants wanted to preserve the positions they had obtained or hoped to achieve, along with explaining the efforts involved in accomplishing these priorities. I also identified with Ademolu's analysis that my insider/outsider status to all parts of the LGBTQ+ population and my status to and between the programme and the institution moved back and forth, requiring an 'in the moment' reaction and post-field reflection and unpacking. There were times I felt some participants who held a strong female identity wanted me to indicate the same and though I did not actively take up this identity I did not overtly refuse it or question it, in case it influenced our

relationship and/or the reflections they shared with me. As my insider status to the programme grew there were occasions, I gently reminded participants (some of whom worked in the host university) that I did not currently work there. On 'nights out' with (some) participants my outsider status did not seem relevant at all.

I was introduced by co-leader (a) to the group on day 1 (after the icebreaker activity) as a researcher and humorously labelled as someone from another university. I worried whether I had been marked by others as an intruder or rival. I felt similarly marked as an outsider on day 2 as I waited for a security pass (albeit with another attendee who was also a visitor). On days 1 and 3 (at another campus) I was allowed to find my own way to the room. As an outsider to the institution, I was not the only stranger; not all associates of the programme had known one another before it started. The space provided by the programme was also fluid. Gradually I felt I began to blend and became more familiar with the programme and the group. I noted this on day 2 in terms of picking up on the rhythm of the people and the place, beyond just hearing gossip (Leigh et al., 2021). At this point, being neutral felt less comfortable and given that I was not evaluating the programme and that I was queering the distinction between myself and my informants, a positive impact at times or at least subtly felt more honest and appropriate. I offered some of my own positive reflections of the programme during conversations with associates between sessions and in interviews when interviewees playfully flipped questions back to me.

I had anticipated experiencing the sessions as a non-participant, since one of the pre-requisites of being enrolled on the programme was being employed at the host university. It became clear that associates wanted to draw me into the group and their lives during session activities, Teams chats, emails and texts. I tried to offer a reciprocal openness about my personal and professional experiences, while balancing my role of observer, being interested without becoming too active. I learnt to wait a while and let other attendees ask a question before I did. Sometimes, I chose to hold back from asking a particular question publicly which I felt might have been viewed by some as critical. I noted that as a researcher I was not 'backstage' but instead always 'front of stage' (Goffman, 1959). I could not drop my performance during programme sessions; I tried to always be approachable and there were also times when I was under the spotlight (Leigh et al., 2021) and when I tussled with whether or not I should take the spotlight. As a fourth year EdD student researcher I

deliberated carefully over my actions. During day 2 I was encouraged by co-leader (a) to join the communication sessions led by a facilitator, with 7 other attendees. I felt that had I not accepted the invitation, this would have had a more negative impact than any likely to result from my accepting. I knew that in taking this decision I would have a more direct influence on the session. In fact, at several points I was in the spotlight, standing up and presenting on my own in front of the rest of the group. Focusing upon preparing for and offering these individual presentations not only influenced my perception of the session but also understandably distracted me from being able to observe other things going on in the room. During day 3 we listened to three facilitators, in two of these sessions we were asked to engage in several reflective activities, sharing our reflections with other attendees. I tried to prioritise listening to attendees which meant I needed later to 'unpack' in my reflective journal a lot of thoughts and emotions that these activities created for me. I was able to present an even more relaxed and informal persona during socials and LGBTQ+ network events. I noted that participants during these times also raised points not shared in interviews.

I was faced with one particular ethical issue when I became aware that the facilitator who joined the programme for day 2 was not part of the LGBTQ+ population as they offered this information to me (during the morning break) when the two of us discussed my research. I suspected that this information was probably unknown at that stage to the majority of attendees but might be highly significant to them (as it had been for me participating in the seemingly queer space). I did not disclose this information to any of the programme associates as I felt I had become aware of it through my researcher role nor did I want to appear critical of the programme. I did try to highlight to this facilitator that LGBTQ+ lives might be salient in the room. The information was inadvertently revealed by the session leader towards the end of the day in the way in which he discussed his wife and children. I felt guilt at the social afterwards when a few attendees discussed this information and felt disappointed by it. I know I was an ethical researcher but I felt I was not a friend to these attendees in this moment. The ethical principle of not disclosing information to others had come into conflict with affective entanglements, specifically my relationship with attendees. One attendee shared with me further information in the pub (which I had not appreciated)

about the workshop session and how it made them feel realising the facilitator was not LGBTQ+; they did not repeat or expand upon this information during their interview.

I recognise the limitations of quantitative data from Guyan (2022), which elevated the imperative of the stories shared with me, using qualitative methods, to explore LGBTQ+ staff's working lives, their perceptions of leadership, and their experiences of the LGBTQ+ leadership development programme. Critically reading Guyan (2022) spurred me on, as a member of the LGBTQ+ population, to undertake this research rather than trust that others would, or care enough to understand. While I felt in a special position to become a part of the programme and to be gifted participants' stories, I also felt the weight of response-ability (Barad, 2007) of doing these stories justice; I knew some participants held the same expectations of me. Asking participants directly at the end of their first interview, I realised I was fortunate to be conducting this research within HE, as it came as no surprise that a researcher would be present and where potential outcomes of research (and particularly for LGBTQ+ leadership and the programme) were recognised and valued. Several interviewees shared with me that they valued the opportunity in interviews to reflect upon and articulate their experiences and perspectives. I was reminded that by listening to what was important to interviewees without judgement, I was giving as well as receiving and creating space for new possibilities to emerge (cf. Heckert, 2010). One interviewee shared that they felt comfortable sharing points with me because I was genuine and external to the institution. Another interviewee appreciated that I had taken part in everything during the programme days, in the same way they had.

My relationship with participants was not a dualist researcher/subject binary. With introspection, I became aware of unconscious aspects, resulting in behaviours between us, including defences coming from previous memories and fantasies which conflicted with reality. My anxieties included rejection, attraction, and a range of emotions connected to: my level of closeness with participants (and, similarly, my perception of their distance from me); my proximity to the programme; and feelings of pressure, indebtedness, and deference coming from fears of possible disapproval from senior associates (cf. Hunt, 1989).

During my research I navigated preserving and developing my professional relationship with the programme co-leaders. This involved being perceptive, flexible, and adaptable to the direction programme co-leaders took and, in particular, respecting their wish to safeguard

the space the programme provided. I had carefully considered during my research application for ethical approval the importance of the programme's space and the impact my presence as a researcher might have on attendees accessing that space. However I acted in line with programme co-leader (a)'s request not to write field notes in the room during day one of the programme and to participate in it. I respected at this stage that she knew the attendees better than me.

I tried to be sociable and transparent to programme co-leader (a) whilst avoiding becoming an irritation or a burden. One of my supervisors had known this programme co-leader previously professionally and I took confidence and reassurance from this programme co-leader's perception of me as a doctoral student when she stated to me on day 1 that "I [Alex] would be in [my supervisor's] safe hands". I felt the programme co-leader was expressing her respect for my supervisor and an interest in / protection of me achieving my EdD. The comment felt multi-layered in so far as it also suggested that the programme co-leader felt confident that the LGBTQ+ leadership development programme / accompanying research would be supervised by known safe hands. As I became more immersed in the programme, I realised there were others I could talk to including the second programme leader, co-leader (b). While co-leader (a) took a more prominent facing role on day 1, as the programme continued (day 2 onwards) she advocated for another associate, previously known to me and others as the LGBTQ+ staff network co-leader but now referred to as the programme co-leader. I recognised programme co-leader (b) equally respected programme co-leader (a) and would consequently relay information to her. I took the opportunity after day 2 to explain to co-leader (b) that I would be willing to share the findings of my research, once the 2022-23 programme and my research had finished.

At the end of day 3, co-leader (a) shared that the LGBTQ+ leadership development programme would not be extending beyond the present academic year and asked us all (if willing) to write a reflexive account of the programme that she could take to the board of governors. I took the opportunity over the next few days to write a succinct account explaining my position and research, some of my findings to date, and the influence the programme had had on me personally. I reflected upon the solidarity of attendees coming together and the freedom provided by the queer space for those who attended to reframe leadership. It helped me to process some of my feelings regarding the ending of the 22/23

programme and the uncertainty of the programme's survival, and lessened the weight of response-ability (Barad, 2007) I was also feeling, being entangled in the data, the majority of which I had gathered. It also helped, I felt, to inform co-leader (a) further about my research, particularly given I did not interview her until the very end of data collection (August 2023). In their second interviews and subsequent interactions, mentees were keen to hear about my research findings and to ascertain whether this could support the continuation of the programme.

Through interviewing participants, I heard individual reflections of personal and working lives, their impressions (and for some too their delivery) of programme sessions, their reaction to the programme (including their interactions with other associates), and the links all of these made to their understanding and enactment of LGBTQ+ leadership. Conversations flowed well though I was surprised when listening to early recordings that there were details that I could not remember hearing. There were times during the first few interviews when thoughts shared had triggered me to ruminate upon links I made to my own memories. As Tooth Murphy (2020) argues, insider status is not without complications, such as in her case omissions made by interviewees in presuming the common ground between them. This drawback highlighted the need for me to provide appropriate prompts in interviews.

I really cared about what my participants thought of me in this research. I knew that it would be more painful to be rejected by those inside rather than outside of the LGBTQ+ community. I found myself really nervous before the first interview I conducted with each interviewee, and far more nervous than in interviews I had conducted for previous research. After the first few interviews, I reflected that I had perhaps played up my queerness, trying a bit too hard to build rapport. With hindsight, this was not necessary; rapport came naturally and participants had offered and wanted to share their perceptions and experiences. At times, interpersonal encounters in fact went beyond rapport, reminding me that queer is as much connected to emotions as it is to a body of theory (Rooke, 2010). On one occasion I had smiled and laughed with a gay man, reflecting my capacity to relate personally to the experience he shared but during that moment and afterwards I worried that I was read as 'not like him' and my response may have been interpreted as laughing at him. I became softer and slower in my approach, allowing connections to grow and the space for

interviewee's narratives to flow. I tried hard to be present and listen carefully to what was of importance to my interviewees. I probed gently to ensure the accuracy of details I did not initially understand. I grew more aware of how participants were positioning me in telling me these stories (cf. Gorman-Murray et al., 2010). Interviewees took time to explain the differences (as they saw it) between their experiences and mine, including those related to age and leadership experience but sometimes they made incorrect assumptions. I felt quite relaxed and excited by the time I interviewed mentees a second time indicating our growing closeness. The significance of interviewing programme co-leader (a) had grown in my mind throughout the research process. However, as I came to arrange the interview, I was reassured by my supervisors and felt myself that this interview was not distinctively more significant than the other interviews I had conducted. In the event, there was an openness, honesty, and trust in the interview between programme co-leader (a) and myself. I shared further writing concerning my research and the impact that the programme had had on me with the programme co-leader (a) after interviewing her.

(Post-)qualitative research recognises that agency is not held by people who speak freely and rationally but rather that voice is one element of assemblages. Voice is entangled amongst matter, affects, and meanings in research intra actions (Mayes, 2019). (Post-)qualitative research draws upon the work of Deleuze & Guattari, Haraway, and Barad who question ontology, epistemology, and ethics. Ethico-onto-epistem-ology (Barad, 2007) does not isolate being and knowledge; knowledge is not obtained by standing outside the world; we know because we are of the world (p.185). As a researcher I am not distanced from my research, my own subjectivity has influenced the research process from the formation of the research questions onwards (Ringrose & Renold, 2014). I have a responsibility to account for these entanglements (and those excluded) while plugging into and out of the data (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). I read data diffractively, building new insights by reading insights through other insights (Barad, 2007). Niesche and Gowlett (2019) discuss the potential of Barad's work to rethink educational leadership, to explore the influence of non-human (data, equipment, technology) and human intra-action and entanglement on the meaning given to leadership. I tried to avoid viewing participants' voices as individual and self-contained. Instead, I opened up these voices, knowing them to be living movements, relational exchanges, infused with atmospheres and other voices, and potential moments of disruption

(Chadwick, 2020). I engaged in reflexivity throughout the research by writing and analysing my own research journal, given my queer identity, personal sensitivity to the topic researched and lived experience of working in HE (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Mason, 2018).

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of the interviews and my field notes. It argues that the effect of 18 attendees coming together in the programme's queer space and the influence of mentorship (on both non-dominant mentors and mentees) served to challenge and shift perceptions and enactments of leadership. I am not suggesting the paucity of previous role models are the cause or signifier of an individual deficit.

Jan, Henry, Alice, Maria, Jasmine, Charlie, Taylor, and Will were all mentees. The mentors included Sophia, Diane, Connor, Tim, and Matthew. The programme co-leads were Faye (who was also a mentor) and Adrian. Billy was a guest on day 3. Jan, Henry, Alice, Maria, Diane, Jasmine, Faye, Charlie, and Adrian attended the majority of sessions on all three of the programme days. Sophia and Taylor attended the majority of sessions on two of the programme days. Will, Connor, Tim, Matthew, and Billy attended all sessions on one of the programme days.

Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) helped me to become aware of three themes. It feels rather odd to present these themes separately given they are interconnected with one another and interwoven across and beyond the programme's duration. However, for clarity, I have presented the following themes in turn: 1. The distinctiveness and potential of LGBTQ+ leadership; 2. The portrayal, solidarity, and collaboration of trailblazers; and 3. The possibility, precarity, and rupture of queer space, along with data extracts and analytical commentary.

Each of these three themes includes a number of sub-themes: 1. The distinctiveness and potential of LGBTQ+ leadership: *Awareness of queer capital; Valuing a distinct vantage point; Listening to, supporting others, and making necessary changes; Redefining leadership*. 2. The portrayal, solidarity, and collaboration of trailblazers: *Representation of LGBTQ+ leaders; Relationships between attendees; Queer sharing.* 3. The possibility, precarity, and rupture of queer space: *Unexpectedness of this opportunity; Coming together; Reemerging queer space.*

The distinctiveness and potential of LGBTQ+ leadership

Awareness of queer capital

LGBTQ+ lived experiences were salient in the room (on programme days), these were reflected upon and attached to working lives and leadership with growing feelings of pride and joy. Sometimes these attachments were made for the first time for attendees (due to lived cultural experiences) and for some attendees, importantly, at relatively early points in their careers. The attendee below acknowledges the programme had encouraged them to overcome (some of) the shame and reprehension that society had taught them about their sexuality. Looking ahead, they were motivated to include participants from the LGBTQ+ community in their research:

> *Through this programme I feel that I kind of maybe it's right to say that I have accepted myself a bit more* [smiles] *… obviously I'm from the LGBTQ+ community, but I've never really kind of in my everyday life I don't always acknowledge it* [frowns] *… I recognise now I can be a bit more my<self … maybe I was just hiding … I feel more relaxed when I speak to people from the same community because I used to feel a little bit timid, I don't know why* [tilts head] *… it's also inspired me to incorporate elements of LGBTQ+ lives in my research.* [Attendee]

The programme had supported this attendee to reexamine previous experiences and in doing so they had begun to link elements of their life and perspectives which they now felt offered a strength to leadership:

> *I'm looking back and seeing. Yeah, there's so many times where people have, like, come up to me and confided in me or deferred about something to me. So I'm now kind of like thinking about that. So I'm thinking about those qualities that queer people offer to leadership and that's backed up from some personal experiences*. [Taylor]

Sometimes, links between LGBTQ+ lives and leadership had already been made, including the challenges faced and the qualities offered but reflections from others secured these associations:

> *Well, I really, I feel that one of the best values or the most important values to me is to be a kind and empathetic leader. And I feel I was nodding quite profusely in our*

session with [Diane] when she said, we're usually quite good at being empathetic because of the challenges that we've faced in our lives. [Will]

The lack of assimilation between LGBTQ+ lives and leadership (queer cultural capital (Pennell, 2016)) may have been due in part to not hearing reflections from LGBTQ+ people previously. During an introductory task on day 1, on the table where I sat, three attendees struggled to name one specific inspirational LGBTQ+ leader. Perhaps the attendees did not have enough time to reflect, or did not see LGBTQ+ leaders as 'inspirational', possibly because they were only contemplating celebrity figures (as the task followed a celebrity icebreaker activity):

> 4 of us sat in a group. One of the mentors in the group of 4 encouraged programme co-leader (a) who was walking around the room to join in with the activity she had just set attendees. Question 6 asked 'The LGBTQ+ person I most admire and why?'. We struggled. I shared common ground with programme co-leader (a) reminiscing about a lesbian icon but I rejected her on the grounds she was not trans inclusive. [Field notes: Day 1 morning: September 2022]

In their first interviews, some attendees who could name previous LGBTQ+ leaders recognised the positive traits of these leaders' leadership (including viewing these leaders' sensitivity towards others as one of their many competencies) but had not connected these positive behaviours to LGBTQ+ leaders' lived experiences nor connected this to their own possible leadership. Attendees may have noticed that these LGBTQ+ leaders did not resemble a typical leadership figure but had an alternative influence:

> *I find [Matthew's] got a different perspective and he really kind of thinks outside the box and I've worked really closely with him and I'm quite <u>observant</u>, I pick things up quite quickly and yeah, he can just talk to you like a person and I'm not saying it's because he's part of the LGBTQ, but he just has that softer empathetic side, which I really relate to and really like.* [Attendee]

> *I think [the LGBTQ+ leader] could read a room a lot better like they were more sensitive; don't get me wrong they could be quite brutal as well, when needed, but like emotions kind of wise, they could just tell if something was up like a mind reader. It's not to say that it's a queer superpower, oh someone's sad over there!, like it just*

kind of felt they were a bit more able to read; is it emotional intelligence they called it on the LGBTQ+ programme? … So I'll just [in temporary acting leadership role] try and keep everything afloat and not break anything. [Attendee]

Of course, some visibility was required for LGBTQ+ leaders to be known and some attendees (after day 1) stated that they found LGBTQ+ leaders' visibility and their leadership encouraging. One attendee spoke about the direct influence another attendee's visibility had had on their immediate perception of the environment and thus their openness about their sexuality at work:

Yeah, so I know that [senior colleague] is gay. He really helped in that when I kind of walked in on that first day and I met him, and I found out that he was gay. I did that like almost a si<gh of relief, not relief, but that I can be who I am and not worry, and he obviously has got to where he's got to embracing his sexuality. And he's a cracking leader … At that point. I was like, right. I'm going to tell everyone. I'm going to be who I am. I'm not going to hide this like I did in other parts of my previous job. I'm in higher education, I know that this is a good environment to be out. And I did. I fully embraced it, leant into it. [Attendee]

One more attendee spoke about learning from Matthew's leadership, their only experience of LGBTQ+ leadership. The mutuality between them and the 'natural' acceptance the attendee is reassured that Matthew will give him facilitates an openness; the attendee describes their distinct openness to Matthew:

No, well apart from [Matthew] he is the only person that I know … I've learnt a great deal from [Matthew] … because there is this natural inclination to want to maybe discuss certain things that ordinarily you wouldn't discuss with a straight counterpart in management. [Attendee]

Matthew revealed his own experiences from a much earlier point in his career, encountering visible senior LGBTQ+ leaders, which seems to have shaped his leadership and career. Matthew recounts the disparaging comments he also heard about these senior leaders from others, given their known sexual identities but reacts by turning these comments back towards the straight majority, highlighting the ludicrous fear that underlay these prejudicial remarks:

> *… when I had my first university job … we had a lesbian Vice Chancellor, two heads of school who were gay men, a few course leaders who were gay men and so for me coming to that environment I think it was the first time I'd ever seen anyone gay in leadership roles. I think it gave me a lot more confidence to realise that I could have a career in education. There were people saying, 'Oh, this is the gay mafia running this place', there were a few comments, you don't hear comments about straight people do you, but anyway, it was cool. It was very positive.* [Matthew]

The choice of being 'out' to some or the majority of people at work had been the only possibility for some participants; for others, it had shifted. One attendee mentioned that as their research focused upon LGBTQ+ communities it had often led others to assume they were a member of the LGBTQ+ community. Another attendee offered that her first and disastrous experience of coming out as a lesbian in her teens in the late 1980s invoked an immediate change in her to come out in any job application though warily: "*I'd rather die on my feet than live on my knees"*. Some participants had grown unwilling to remain invisible or silent. They had come to see the intolerance of a few as irrelevant. The attendee below explains her decision regarding her openness and thus how her visibility had changed (Guittar, 2003) on becoming a member of staff in the 2000s from previously being a student. She reflects upon her initial concern about the possibility of becoming too noticeable, the risk of 'standing out', particularly at work, and consequently remaining invisible. She did not want to be seen as a lesbian by others, knowing how she might be perceived, and only valuing herself in terms of her work output. However, her feelings had shifted again in direct response to the shortage of LGBTQ+ colleagues at her level (and by the lack of LGBTQ+ mentors who had previously been available to them). Her visibility still comes with a sense of vulnerability and loneliness; however, the risk is perceived to be low:

> *When I was a student, I was part of the LGB society as it was then, we were very out and proud and it didn't really matter … and I think when I went back as staff, that feeling was totally different, like I did not wanna stand out. I did not want anybody to know anything. I just wanted to disappear and just do my work and not have anybody talk about it. And that has changed, that's definitely changed … I do feel that there is a bit of a missing level and I don't know whether that's just because there isn't anybody … maybe they just skyrocket straight up, or they just don't bother. So now*

> *I'm going to be the thing that I'm looking for, which is somebody who's out in middle management who's got a seniorish role but is also visible and I think that that's quite important, but also a bit lonely maybe.* [Attendee]

As well as cultivating trust, transparency also gave some attendees the opportunity to share with staff and students the general constraints they were working within. Some of these constraints reflected the divide they felt from managers at the top levels of the institution. The changing role of middle managers was evident across various faculties and included handling restricted budgets whilst ensuring a consistent income revenue stream. The attendee below feels powerless in the current neoliberal environment in which government sets its own goals and targets (Beattie, 2018) but perhaps they can develop their understanding of institutional structures and systems in order to realise and make the required changes for their students:

> *So, the students see you as being the person that makes, you know, the rules and says yes or no, but actually, it's so much more complicated than that. And I don't think students often see that. So it is <u>hard</u> being in a leadership role, and particularly in a role where you don't <u>really</u> have much of a say.* [Attendee]

Self-awareness was heightened by the personalised feedback (regarding occupying time and space fully) given by the facilitator and others, to attendees, following the individual presentations they gave about themselves and their current job role on day 2 of the programme. This feedback was meaningful to attendees in terms of how their communication was received by others and held onto closely beyond the day. Attendees were encouraged to leave the room between their two presentations and some felt a degree of performance in this action:

> *You had to go out and then come in, it felt like you were walking on <u>stage</u> or something* [smiles]. [Charlie]

Changes in how attendees felt about themselves and what they witnessed in other attendees' presentations were also recognised:

> *It was really interesting watching that pro<cess of people having <u>to</u> stand up and say something about themselves, and then being given <u>guidance</u> outside about what*

> *they did, how it came over, and then coming back in and doing it differently. And just how every<body transformed.* [Attendee]

In the afternoon, attendees were encouraged to participate in exercises to prepare the body for presentations, reinforcing an idea of warming up for a performance which seemed to create a sense of inauthenticity for some whereas others recognised that a degree of performance is required in any communication role so as to engage others. There was an opportunity to play with performance. Attendees were then encouraged to find (higher) 'status' sitting in their chair (by placing the soles of their feet on the floor and lengthening their spines), reading quotes from Shakespeare. A sense of protection for group members arose when witnessing other attendees in vulnerable moments when the facilitator was correcting clarity and accents.

Attendees offered differing reflections (in interviews) regarding day 2. Some felt it presented LGBTQ+ staff as deficient – the idea being that the problem resides with the individual and thus instilling confidence and 'status' will automatically resolve any barriers to leadership, rather than critiquing the systems, structures, and power relations within the institution which fail individuals:

> *Day 2 was a bit more chall<enging for me, it was useful … but leadership development programmes for marginalised groups very easily become, 'fix the problem of the person'.* [Sophia]

Others saw the sessions on day 2 developing key communication skills and therefore providing valuable and relevant leadership training for all staff:

> *I think it would have been helpful for someone who wasn't LGBTQ to be honest, because you know, I found a lot of value in just the delivery of the presentation and the confidence that came with it.* [Henry]

While most attendees experienced discomfort at times, particularly in talking about themselves and witnessing others' vulnerability, all attendees found a personal value in the day and some expressed that this was the most significant part of the programme for them given the self-confidence they felt they gained in taking part:

I'm still not entirely sure how they achieved it. But I went in the morning feeling a certain way about myself and a certain way about where I was in my journey and came out of it feeling really, really different and that has stu<ck. [Attendee]

Valuing a distinct vantage point

Some attendees spoke about LGBTQ+ lived experiences and their LGBTQ+ identity much earlier and more frequently in interviews (after day one). For some, these experiences and identities seemed to feature more centrally in their leadership (alongside other identities including gender, ethnicity and age) than for others. There was a notable change for some mentees when interviewed a second time at the end of the programme, as they came to embrace themselves as LGBTQ+ leaders and viewed LGBTQ+ leadership as positive and distinct from other forms of leadership:

I definitely had never thought before that LGBT people made exceptional leaders. I don't think I ever had a doubt in my mind that we couldn't be leaders, but yeah, it definitely made me embrace it … It's made me feel really at home and comfortable, confident … well, I am stressed at the minute at work, but I could have been struggling more to deal with it and I'm managing to use the stress kind of productively … you know everyone I've ever worked for that was a great manager, always had a personal element to them, so I'm have been really kind of leading with that and going into conversations with people around that … whereas I perhaps wouldn't have done that before, I would have been more guarded about it. That's what's mainly changed in me, I would say … don't have to keep it hidden. [Mentee]

Will acknowledges the progress of the LGBTQ equality movement. As a consequence of older LGBTQ+ people's lived experiences and increasing public acceptance he suggests LGBTQ+ leadership may be different for different generations. He reflects upon the impact of the AIDS epidemic and specifically the effect that the public health 'tombstone' television advert had on him. The association of AIDS with the gay male community led to an increase in homophobia, hysteria, a lack of research into the disease, and stigma for those diagnosed. The AIDS epidemic marked a notable decline in both legal progress (Section 28 was introduced during the height of the epidemic) and public attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community in the UK and beyond. The weight of this experience and the lack of acceptance

Will faced during his adolescence has influenced his continuing empathy for others. His assumption about progress for all is, I would maintain, somewhat misplaced, given the prevailing anti-trans rhetoric in UK politics and media which is inciting violence towards the LGBTQ+ community with a possible set back to LGBTQ+ legal rights. Later, Will recognises that whilst the struggles may be different, similar difficulties of non-acceptance remain for LGBTQ+ people of all ages:

> *Because I'm sure it's not the case for every single LGBT person, particularly those who are in today's generation where it is much more accepting. I think if you were to interview someone a lot younger than me that might be in a leadership position, it might be a very different story. But for me growing up,* [clears throat] *late '80s, you know, it's, we've seen quite a lot of change for the better but I saw the AIDS struggle, the huge tombstone, I remember that coming down on the telly on the adverts, with AIDS, it just felt a really dark place and I think … I've grown up struggling through being accepted and therefore having empathy for others. And even though it's a different struggle today, your feelings don't change, how you respond to someone being anti-LGBT doesn't change.* [Will]

The security and agency which makes some LGBTQ+ staff feel supported and valued did not always extend to LGBTQ+ staff on fractional and temporary contracts or at lower levels of the organisation, or for LGBTQ+ staff in professional roles:

> *And I've worked seven weeks with no contract pay so I think they're utterly terrible at respecting fractional and temporary staff because when you're fractional, there's always that pressure oh and they say all you need is better boundaries and stuff … I've been here like three and a half years and I still have to tell them, I'm <u>not here</u> on a <u>Monday</u>.* [Attendee]

> *I suppose it's been <u>better</u> because I have a little bit more seniority. Whereas before I think I was perceived as or maybe I perceived <u>myself</u> as not being as sec<ure in my job, whereas now I feel like it's OK and I'm you know, they can't get rid of me quite as easily, maybe.* [Attendee]

Listening to, supporting others, and making necessary changes

All attendees felt that listening to, valuing, and developing people was fundamental to the LGBTQ+ leadership they enacted and/or the leadership approach they wished to manifest. The importance of these skills was acknowledged in their own leadership and/or other LGBTQ+ leaders' leadership, which came from experiences of marginalisation, working (outside of the education sector), and programme days. These attributes have previously been shown to support effective leadership in HE (Spendlove, 2007; Bryman & Lilley, 2009). The following attendee speaks about enacting such skills and highlights how the lack of certain practices and activities from others had hindered colleagues' development and collaboration in their team previously:

> *So, the thing I did do, which has been the majority of my work so far, has been creating a school where we all work together, people didn't know each other, for instance, which I was really shocked by … Appraisals weren't being done, pieces of work, meaning I was like you know, where would you like your career to go.*
> [Attendee]

This attendee states a personal precedence of listening to and responding to colleagues' and students' voices by making necessary changes, not simply responding to his own priorities. He expects all leaders in authority positions to hold the same collective responsibility although he is aware that some leaders in the institution only follow individual goals and desires:

> *Your role is to lis<ten. It's to find out what people require, what they need, what's going to make their working lives or their study lives better. And then to go away and do whatever you can to try and implement that and the higher you move up in the institution, the more context and network you build within the institution, that means you can deliver a lot more of the things that you're hearing that people want … we've definitely got some leaders who view it as this is what we're going to do and this is the direction we're going in and I don't really care what you think where we should be going. I'm really on the complete opposite of that … It's not about my agenda or what I want. It's about making sure that it's a better place for people to work in.*
> [Attendee]

Programme co-leader (a) demonstrated her leadership skills by valuing and developing her co-leader. From day 2 onwards she lowered her status and encouraged programme co-leader (b) to raise theirs; this involved programme co-leader (b) offering an outline for day 2.

Attendees' vantage point (and leadership potential) was heard within interviews in the ways in which they might enhance inclusion within and beyond the university. These included challenging binary notions of 'who's right?', suggesting individuals in relevant roles sought responses to actions that might support a necessary change of direction for the university, and the importance of continuing rather than closing down discussions with those beyond the LGBTQ+ community:

> *And we're not taking away anybody else's rights to enable you to have rights. And I think that's important and sometimes I think that's lost a little bit in the kind of 'who's right?' element and I think that's difficult because we're talking about things where there's no right or wrong, there's not a black-and-white answer … so it's difficult and I think that HE, that's a really difficult place to be because you are treading, you're constantly adjusting and changing to a group of students, group of staff, external pressures … I think we're quite good at doing what we say we're going to do. I don't necessarily know whether sometimes that's the best thing to do, but it's, you know, it is a positive action, but I'm not necessarily convinced that they are always the right actions. I also think we are terrible at walking back.* [Alice]

These actions were considered vital for the university within an everchanging HE sector and given the power the institution held more widely:

> *Universities have so much presence and clout but there's always this insistence that they don't … I would like to see universities kind of like stand to the hilt for various causes like for LGBTQ issues, for racial injustice, for accessibility. Like these kinds of things where it's not just, oh, we want to integrate like a little policy. Well, no, I mean like, we're research institutions, we kind of actually contribute to creating these policies. Like, you know, we should be the ones actually saying we've done the research and this is how things should look.* [Taylor]

Perceptions of the level of inclusivity of the institution varied between participants, challenging the notion of an inclusion/exclusion binary. Participants made contrasts to different times (across working roles) and places (countries and sectors). One (male) attendee, who looked back on 10 years at the university, reflected that they had not faced any discrimination and the university had always been accepting and welcoming to them, whilst a (female) attendee involved more directly with equality work in the university referred to *"pushing for equality and inclusion"* during her eight years in the institution. Two attendees, who had relocated from other European countries, appreciated the opportunities found within the university environment which strived to include people. This awareness was influenced by the marked prejudice they experienced working within their home country:

> *In* [country of birth] *the message is that you should be supportive of the LGBTQ+ community because we are all different. The point is not about being different, the point is about creating an inclusive environment. So I think this is something that's really <touched me here and I obviously appreciate it.* [Attendee]

> *I have had very bad experiences in terms of gender equality, back in [country of birth] especially … and here in the UK doing equality work has been quite a recognised line of work at university and something people appreciated if you wanted to get involved in that kind of work. So, yes, I always wanted to do that. And then it was my first role within the university where I really felt that I could work very much towards my strength. And my strengths are very much recognised in that role. And it's appreciated by people.* [Attendee]

At the same time, the second attendee (above) reflected upon times within their faculty when LGBTQ+ staff and student voices were not heard. The first attendee (above) recognised within their faculty the lack of diversity amongst the student population caused by the financial international recruitment need, which stopped any potential to learn from people arriving from a variety of cultures:

> *We have classes of 144 students and the large majority, we are talking about 90%, come from one specific country. I think probably we should go back and be more*

multicultural. Because now we are hiring from one specific country and I think that this can affect negatively on the multiculture of this university.

A few attendees questioned whether senior management's response to the LGBTQ+ community was given sufficient attention and/or extended beyond marketing actions:

> *So there are some posters up saying ◦ 'these people are gay' around the building. But it's not really in your face, and I think sometimes these things need to be in your face because when people walk in, it needs to be for that person who identifies in that character, that they can think oh, actually, I could develop my career here, etc. And also those people who perhaps are homophobic or whatever it's like, well, this is the culture you're walking into. So, tone it down or leave basically.* [Matthew]

These posters were read by some queer students (who had spoken to one of the attendees) as a sign welcoming them into the university and as an indication that the space was safe. However, this attendee also contradicts the idea that the institution is safe by highlighting the bravery that these LGBTQ+ staff needed to manifest in being so widely visible:

> *They [the students] really like those posters with the LGBT staff on them. And I was like, thinking to myself,* [shaking head] *that is such a small thing that I wouldn't really consider that important, to be honest. But if you are kind of like coming into the world and effectively like, you know, doing your first adult things and even more so when you're queer seeing those posters* [points] *and thinking oh, OK, this institution is not only proud of their people, of their LGBT staff, but also these people feel safe enough and feel brave enough to be able to put their faces literally all over the uni*. [Attendee]

The term 'rainbow washing' is used below to denote how university management were promoting the student society to capitalise on the LGBTQ+ movement while simultaneously acting harmfully to LGBTQ+ students. Ahmed (2017) describes this as an oblique violence, referring to the institutional structures that can cause a violation and harm to bodies:

> *I had some students who were doing some dissertations about coming out on social media and what impact that has … they set up a student society. And then I quickly noticed management were using it. It felt like that management were rainbow*

washing. They were like, look at this really cool thing how progressive we are. We've got a society for queer humans and at the same time they don't know what all the letters in LGBTQIA+ mean and they use the incorrect pronouns for the student who was transitioning at that time. [Attendee]

Redefining leadership

Enacting LGBTQ+ leadership was seen as being different (at times) from management and therefore did not necessarily require an authority position. Attendees instead offered something more immediate, positive, and creative within their current working role, and drew upon their experience to challenge the prevailing structure and culture. Leadership was seen as being influential and relational with others, and working together non-hierarchically. These insights came from participants' experiences, the programme's content (particularly the types of power one can draw upon to influence others offered on day 2 and day 3), and other leadership experience including activist leadership experience within the local community:

… so, I yeah, I would change structure I would change the teams around, I would change some of the roles and responsibilities of people, I suppose. [Henry]

Whereas now I think I look at it [leadership] more as a sort of an individual trying to change or influence others, but on a much kind of smaller everyday level, I think that's how I view it [smiles] *… so rather than looking at it as something that is linked to like a job role or you know like length of time served, I think I look at it more like how can I be a better teammate to the people I work with*. [Alice]

Ensuring that key performance indicators (KPIs), managerialist targets, were reached was essential for an attendee below in a middle (corporate) leadership role but marketisation also brought a tension between central and local leadership in HE, with central leadership disconnected and lacking an appreciation of being at the chalk face. Amidst this tension, this attendee saw their role as the 'buffer' to shield their immediate team:

Particularly in academia … my role is to try and kind of, help others do a good job. While also trying to make sure that we're, pushing certain KPIs for teaching agendas etc. and so the role that I'm in, sometimes it's about kind of getting people to develop

something or work on particular things and sometimes it's about being the buffer between stuff coming from on high and everybody on the ground. [Attendee]

One attendee in an executive leadership role spoke in interview about utilising marketisation and accountability to enhance inclusion. It seemed that navigating leadership at differing hierarchical levels of the institution required particular LGBTQ+ leadership qualities. This higher level of leadership allowed market forces (attracting students and retaining staff) to be utilised rather than creating a tension, though HESA data metrics still hindered LGBTQ+ students' needs from being fully understood:

I think marketisation you know gives us an opportunity [nods]. *> I think yes, it's fraught with difficulties* [smiles and shakes head] *… < but we can use marketing? As our friend* [smiles] *in order to ensure that when students are making decisions about where to <u>come</u> that they know that they can <u>be</u> whoever they want to be! … I'm disappointed that when HESA collects data on protected characteristics, we <u>don't</u> collect data on sexual and gender identity … I would like us to be able to look more closely at the outcomes for LGBTQ+ students in university so that we ensure that we're meeting <u>their needs</u> … and I think from a staff perspective, networks, are your ally … it is doing <u>really</u> well in our university.* [Attendee]

Authenticity was explicitly mentioned (with care) on day 1 by programme co-leader (a). Attendees said that as a positive consequence of declaring their LGBTQ+ status to colleagues, interactions with colleagues were generally enhanced, although this was initially caveated by some in terms of being 'out' where they could be or where it was relevant (cf. Fine, 2017): '*It doesn't need to be said because it's not important, it's just not relevant in this situation'* [Attendee]. Taking the opportunity of being open within the safe space on the programme seemed to support attendees reflecting upon their openness beyond it. Authenticity though was viewed by some as something beyond just declaring their sexuality or gender identity and being a visible member of the LGBTQ+ community, rather knowing oneself (an ongoing process) and embracing this. The attendee below challenges the notion (often held by those outside the LGBTQ+ community) that declaring your LGBTQ+ status is an example of openness. However, it is often required (repeatedly) to receive recognition (though your 'self' may still be disavowed by others) (Butler, 2007):

> *I find it really interesting the sort of perceived openness from people outside [the LGBTQ community] that you shared something extremely personal about yourselves* [shocked eyes]*, when in reality it's about as personal as telling somebody that you have a kid* [smiles]*. It's kind of, it's not really actually that astounding, and yet there's a notion that it is.* [Taylor]

Mentors offered a temporal aspect to authentic leadership, learning from and reflecting upon their own leadership experience. With time, self-awareness, and feedback from colleagues for one mentor, they had begun to overcome their apprehensions about directing others (particularly if it raised conflict) and delegating the work to others:

> *I went through a leadership training programme and had some 360-degree feedback. I remember one of the comments saying, 'You are the head of department now, so, if you give us an instruction, we will follow'. And I suppose there was always an anxiety about being a leader and kind of telling people what to do, and particularly if what you're telling them is unpopular or not what people want to hear.* [Mentor]

This mentor's reluctance to delegate work could signify an underlying tendency of overperforming as a means of defence (Lee, 2000b):

> *My leadership actually was not very good … I'm much better* [now] *at delegating, giving people ownership of their work, supporting people rather than doing the work for people … I do find it very difficult to step back and give ownership to people but, yeah, I'm trying to …* [Mentor]

Mentees came to the same understanding of leadership development, seeing it as a continual process, and people on the programme supported one mentee who expressed the risks of solely aspiring *'to climb the greasy pole'*:

> *I'm quite happy with just doing what I'm doing and becoming good at it. So actually I feel like although you kind of go, the next step would be to, you know, some kind of like deputy director or take on more responsibility or management and that's how you sort of build your career. I'm actually really happy doing what I'm doing right now and that's a nice place to be, like open to opportunities, but not upset because you haven't got them.* [Mentee]

Several moments of resistance occurred on day 2 of the programme during the communication session including the support offered to the group by programme co-leader (a):

The facilitator drew on amusing anecdotes and performances. He wanted the group to focus on how we were feeling as an audience. He went out the door. Faye piped up with *'Don't worry I've locked the door!'*. Facilitator came back in and played character 1 (guiding us to see him as shy, defensive, fast paced, and breathy; thus clarity diminished). Facilitator went out the door and returned again as character 2 (led us to see him as engaging and confident). Alice challenged softly (felt character 2 was too much), Jan and others agreed that the second character might be confrontational. Facilitator said he hadn't had a group respond in that way before. Alice suggested it might be because character 1 was played first. Others agreed. [Field notes: Day 2 morning: Jan 2023]

The facilitator's statement did not seem to offend the group; instead, the alternative verdict given by some about the two performances and heard by the rest of the group was quite powerful:

> *I found it very funny … there was this clear expectation that everybody will be like 'Oh we like person two more!'. And then people started to be critical of it and be like, 'yeah, but it's also confrontational and in some contexts, this might be a bit too much!'.* [Attendee]

Individual and collective resistance, disagreement, and refusal continued into day 3 of the programme. The first facilitator, a social media expert (who had previously engaged in work supporting LGBTQ+ inclusion in the university) introduced herself as a professional lesbian (her job directly relating to her sexual identity and thus presenting her sexual identity as a financial asset). This only assisted the business case for diversity rather than highlighting the ways in which the institutional context may constrain LGBTQ+ employees from being and working and ignored further structural inequalities within the setting (Ahmed, 2012; Rumens, 2016; Williams et al., 2009). The self is not fixed but always in process, a becoming, and produced within power relations (Foucault, 2000). Attendees were asked to volunteer their own labels (if they wished); three (of the 14 attendees present at the time) did. One attendee mentioned in their interview a hesitation in choosing labels to describe

themselves. Choosing ‘queer’ as a label, for example, might be felt by some as freeing, empowering, and inclusive but could potentially be felt by others sitting in the room as a slur. Choosing the label lesbian or feminist without further clarity could also be interpreted as exclusionary to trans people they had grown to know. This attendee said that they were strongly aware they were sitting amongst colleagues in a workplace setting. A second attendee offered during their interview that the way they might introduce themselves might change depending on the context and their audience but that offering their gender identity and sexuality was important to them when first meeting their cohort of students. A third attendee offered an alternative perspective in their interview seeing a label as a means of connecting underrepresented people and a fourth attendee also in their interview reframed labels to words which held a significant importance to them. As a result of day 3, this attendee found themselves increasingly comfortable in handling the emotions of difficult conversations, including addressing inaccurate assumptions that others made about their sexual orientation.

The second facilitator on day 3 started by referring to and offering her ‘labels’, a 58-year-old, middle-class, gay woman (stating a personal dislike of the sound of the word ‘lesbian’) and in a civil partnership (choosing personally not to marry due to it being deeply rooted in patriarchy). She made a point of drawing upon representation as a part of her understanding of leadership but rejecting rainbow lanyards because they were also worn by allies. Several of these fixed viewpoints were sensitively challenged by others in the room and were also reflected upon later by mentees in interviews. This second facilitator understood leadership in terms of responsibility and relationships. She saw leadership as a process rather than positional.

The final facilitator on day 3, a business psychologist, offered comically how she had invested considerable time in concocting a fictional boyfriend for colleagues in her first working role before becoming professionally gay (again, her career directly related to her sexual identity). She asked attendees to write down their ‘why’ (referencing Simon Sinek, a speaker and author on business leadership) for engaging in the work they do so that they would be able to articulate this effectively to motivate others while leading this work. They then asked attendees to engage with cognitive behaviour therapy (replacing irrational beliefs resulting from previous adversities with rational ones). In doing so a rational response was deemed

more valuable than an emotional one. These deemed irrational beliefs may have been justified from past experiences. The content offered and time available limited overcoming adversities fully. These adversities included intimidating relationships, failure, rejection, loss, and compliance with heteronormativity. The way in which these discussions took place and the setting for them felt quite exposing:

> xxx offers their previously violent break up, xxx talks about a coercive relationship, xxx talks about her relationship with her dad and failing her 11+, xxx interjects with how they were raised and encouraged by their dad into gendered activities. xxx says they are only really thinking about their recent break up. xxx supports them in not having to say anymore. Time has run out. xxx looks over at me and offers that we can [with a smile] *'chat in the pub'*. Facilitator asks if any of the tables want to share anything as a group, Faye offers softly with a smile *'move on'*. [Field notes: Day 3 afternoon: May 2023]

The speakers on day 2 and day 3 seemed to focus on attendees' deficits. However, the attendees who came together for the programme days seemed to create a shift in others' understanding of what leadership might look like in more collective and egalitarian ways and generated a readiness in one another for it. Leadership was seen and modelled by attendees as relational and a responsibility (which included LGBTQ+ equality work) that could be shared (with LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ staff) rather than an individual burden:

> *'I found xxx has been <u>inspirational</u>. I think she really cares about our development. She would spend the time and really looking into things with us, you know, sit down with us and look into things to help us. So … in my mind, if every leader is like xxx this world would be a better one [smiles]'. [Attendee]*

Participants gained further resilience in undertaking working roles, an inclination to seize opportunities (including promotions, job applications, and pursuing further professional development) as well as handling potential ensuing disappointments. Whilst attendees, through self-reflection of their working experiences, recognised they had influence on others in any working role, navigating power in the institution seemed only to be viewed as looking forward to a better future (rather than ensuring it was currently liveable) and gaining status by moving upward (securing an individual promotion). However, it was also noted that

progression was not always available, nor should it be the only aspiration given the risk and limitation involved. Programme days might have allowed attendees to dissect how power operated within their institution to transform it, how the field has changed and therefore what is valued within it, and thus how power might be navigated more expansively (cf. Heffernan et al., 2022). Individual promotion was also how the programme's effectiveness seemed to be formally measured though, critiques of power within the institution may have occurred during mentorship discussions.

Attendees gained confidence to walk their own paths and voice alternative viewpoints, valuing their 'rebel talent' (novelty, curiosity, innovation, and creativity) rather than just learning how to 'play the game' and/or get by. Attendees gained a sense of direction whilst also recognising the unpredictability and uncertainty of career trajectories and timescales. Attendees below consider that their future roles will entail a purpose of giving back, making changes, and encouraging others in similar situations to their own. The first attendee uses a problematic term in the sense of a 'wellbeing' direction, often used to enhance an institution's reputation whilst overlooking the structural problems causing it, in the workplace. The second attendee shares giving back in terms of continuing their social enterprise work. The third attendee talks about holding the door open, recognising that inequalities remain but highlighting the importance of ensuring that everyone enters the discussion on the same level:

> *I'm hoping to move into a wellbeing direction … It was previously helping students with work and extensions and whatever life throws at them whereas now it is a bit more LGBTQ as well … so yeah, I'm hoping to be in a leadership role hopefully … I wanna find a job where I'm <u>actively</u> influencing someone's life <u>positively</u>.* [Attendee]
>
> *Everyone's* [in the faculty] *saying you're too busy. You can't do all these things* [shakes head]*, and it's not possible, but no, I really like all of them. So now I'm seeing other colleagues are like wanting to set up social enterprise stuff. And I'm like, well, that's cool. If they're wanting to do it, then I should definitely carry on mine.* [Attendee]
>
> *I'm hoping in the next few years that I can be a <u>part</u> of those conversations where we're trying to change culture, where we're trying to change understandings of things. I can just be somebody, trying to hold the door open for other people to come*

in and talk about their own struggles [rubs arms which are crossed in front of chest]. *I think it's very, very important that people speak for themselves.* [Attendee]

The portrayal, solidarity, and collaboration of trailblazers

Representation of LGBTQ+ leaders

Before being assigned to their mentors on day 1, the (9) mentees present (and other attendees) had listened to three mentors. One of the mentors, who was also a programme co-lead, spoke about the qualities that LGBTQ+ people might offer to leadership and the specific opportunity the programme presented mentees. Two mentors, one white lesbian cis woman (50+) in a senior professional role, the other a white gay cis man (40+) in a senior academic role, delivered 'inspirational leaders' speeches about their lives and careers. Themes of the talks included personal qualities, tendencies, struggles, and opportunities they had taken. Mentees stated in interviews that they recognised mentors' (and other attendees') accomplishments and personal qualities (including the empathy they showed to others as result of the adverse experiences they had faced, their bravery, their authenticity, and their willingness to share opinions). Attendees were highly attuned to elements of mentors' stories that resembled their own lives. They valued the wisdom that these mentors offered and could pass on that might help them navigate their own (leadership) path:

> *One had a really epic caption was it 'lo<ng time lesbian and HE leader'? I wa>nt that! They were really authentic … there was a lot of power in their stories; it sounds like > a typical narrative about how they overcame adversity and look where they are now < but there are some nuances to this as a LGBTQ+ human. And, it seems that there was more empathy.* [Charlie]

These mentors had started to construct the idea of LGBTQ+ leadership on the programme as being distinct, given the vantage point that LGBTQ+ lived experiences offer to their leadership and this had begun to influence mentees' thoughts and future aspirations. Jan had previously held management roles but had found them stressful. Even though he had chosen this leadership course, he hadn't envisioned himself leading again, and he doesn't presently seem to see himself as a leader:

> *Because I wasn't thinking about pursuing a leadership role in the future at all … but then it's because I'm listening to these inspirational speakers speaking. And I suddenly thought, well, yeah! I suppose I could be a leader one day, you know.* [Jan]

Programme co-leader (a) assigned the pairings of mentees with mentors; some mentors had one mentee; others had two. Pairings were arranged primarily to ensure mentees were not mentored by anyone who held a close line management connection to them in their service function or faculty. Consideration was also given to whether mentors and mentees held comparable roles, e.g. profession or lecture or research. A third consideration was pairing known identities, e.g. a lesbian mentor with a lesbian mentee. Some mentees had also made some specific requests which included not being paired with a best friend. It was stated on day 1 by co-leader (a) that mentorship would be mentee-led (which it was). A mentoring model and guide were also offered. Some mentees had not had a mentor before and felt self-conscious (after day 1) about being expected to steer the mentorship, given their mentor's status. Specifically, mentees worried about building a relationship with their mentor and having to anticipate in advance what they wanted to get out of it for the future. For some mentees this meant they were conscious they did not have a specific goal or only an immediate goal and/or operational issues to discuss:

> *We had an initial meeting, and then a follow up. And we did some kind of mock interview questions just before I did my interview for my promotion. And to be honest, we haven't really spoken since I told him that I got the promotion and I thanked him for his help, but there's still like lots of skills I want to develop with the programme. But I thi<nk I've almost got one of the things I went into it, asking them how to be confident in an interview and he gave me that.* [Mentee, interviewed after day 2]

For other mentees and mentors, it allowed them not to be constrained by goals, recognising leadership as an ongoing developmental process rather than fixed:

> *I think this is always something which I find massively difficult in leadership development programmes … 'what we want you to be as a leader'. So you have to identify clear aims and goals and action points and I'm like look it's a nat<ural process. This might take years …* [Mentor]

The lack of (known) LGBTQ+ leaders may have contributed to the heightened significance for some mentees of LGBTQ+ mentors provided by the programme and the guidance and encouragement these mentors gave them:

> *Gosh [laughs]. I don't think I know a lot [of LGBTQ leaders]. I think only through the first day of the leadership programme I realised oh!, there were these people, wonderful people.* [Attendee]

One attendee felt a discomfort with their capacity to hold an individual role model status as a mentor:

> *I don't know how comfortable I would be standing up in front of people and saying, I'm a leader and this is what I do and this is how I can help you to be better at what you do.* [Attendee]

Relationships between attendees

Between day 1 and day 2, relationships between mentees and mentors were still at an acquaintance stage; there had been just a few interactions and whilst conversations were polite and respectful, some mentees remained reserved. Nevertheless, several mentees felt there was an unspoken shared understanding (including gender identity, gender expression, and sexuality) which underlay their dialogue (cf. Ragins et al., 2007):

> *I think just so<me clarity as to what I need, support I guess, with my plans, my thoughts. Some reassurance would be nice. Umm and I'd like to just talk to her again because she's really cool and I think, you know, she's got so much life experience.* [Jasmine]

Other mentees had previously experienced other forms of mentorship and felt able to guide the relationship and conversation more specifically:

> *I've emailed him* [mentor] *about lots of different things … we've got a meeting this month as well. That has been really helpful to have someone you can contact about specific things, specific challenges, yeah.* [Will]

Some mentees shared that having a mentor outside their immediate faculty allowed for a more open dialogue. For the majority, relationships between mentees and mentors in

assigned mentorships grew over the year, there was a mutual investment in one another, offering both tangible and unquantifiable outcomes:

> *She helped me, she looked at my CV, help me look at applications for positions and lots of meticulous things. But she was also very gen<uine. I've got a new friend! I've made a new friend. She's very genuine and very down to earth. I felt I could just relate to her, speak to her easily and openly* [smiles]. [Mentee]

Some mentors recognised the potential of specific pairings for other mentees. The mentor below shares how the mentorship pairings (their roles and similar identities) could support a mentee (who was known to them but not their own mentee). At the same they perhaps felt a limit to their own pairing, given they did not undertake the same role as their mentee:

> *She potentially hasn't had many strong women or particularly queer women above her in a leadership area to support her to be that sort of vision of what she could be because I think she's very intelligent. She's very enthusiastic. I think she's got a great potential ahead of her. And I think this* [the LGBTQ+ Leadership Development Programme] *will really help her push herself forward to understand where she wants to go to, so I think that's pretty positive …* [my mentee] *perhaps is not my ideal person to mentor. I think he's a bit more professional services than me, but I've been able to support him, I think I'm meeting him on Monday actually, we've only met online because he's at* [the other campus]. [Mentor, gay cis man]

Relationships within some mentorship pairings seemed more distant and interactions less frequent but mentees still wanted to share their news with mentors and mentors wanted to hear about it. It transpired through interviews that some mentees were supported by other mentors (not specifically assigned to them). Two mentees spoke about how another mentor on the programme had also made time for them, conversed, and shared guidance. Some mentees also said that the programme days offered a similar or greater significance than the mentorship for them because they did not have a current specific goal but would look for mentorship when or where it was needed. Formalised peer-to-peer mentoring was suggested in interviews as a way of further supporting mentees and bridging gaps and levels in future programmes.

Queer sharing

There were times mentees had experienced overt discrimination; however, the issues they wanted to discuss with mentors were mainly centred on navigating a cisnormative and heteronormative environment as an outsider and/or being stereotyped if they were 'out':

> *Um, the assumption that, you know, everybody's one way and so when you're not, you feel excluded from the conversations or excluded from something or you feel if I say anything, I'm gonna make a big deal about it and it isn't a big deal, but I'm gonna, you know, where do I go? And so, a lot of my negative experience have been that, in you know, kind of group settings where you think do I say something or do I just shut up?* [Alice]

> *Beyond just kind of, this person is LGBTQ it is more this person is LGBTQ and they have like a lot of great ideas and they're very intelligent, they've done amazing things.* [Taylor]

Mentees (some of whom were fairly new to HE) appreciated the encouragement and specific assistance that mentors provided in helping them progress (either at the present time or for the future). This included mentors offering support when mentees applied for specific jobs during the programme's duration and mentors explaining pathways for academic staff (which for some had been previously obstructed); clarifying the university's systems and structures; and advising mentees to network with colleagues within HE:

> *I think I felt maybe more confident saying [to colleagues] 'I'm going for senior lecturer this year'. I don't know if it's just a shift in me from being uncertain to be like 'No, I am with or without you'. Because I thought I needed like the course leader's approval. Turns out you don't! Just your manager and my manager is completely behind it.* [Mentee, Academic]

> *So, it's been, I mean the fact that my mentor is like the head of xxx has been just very, very good from a networking perspective at work [laughs] ... It's just quite nice actually generally speaking to someone that you wouldn't necessarily speak to … and knowing that if I needed a bit of advice that I could reach out …* [Taylor]

Mentors spoke (after day 2) about how their reciprocal relationship with mentees was fundamental and allowed knowledge and perspectives to be exchanged. Some mentors also shared that they grappled with mentee-led mentorship given that they were ambitious for their mentees; however, these ambitions were not necessarily achievable by mentees at the current time. Sophia had never had a LGBTQ+ mentor herself and was learning from their mentee and the experience of mentorship:

> *I was terribly nervous about the mentor session. But I think it's going very well and my mentee very quickly learnt to feed back which I absolutely love. So we do have very open communication in terms of what both of us actually need. Which I really appreciate and I think I'm taking a very active step letting the mentee take ownership*. [Sophia]

The possibility, precarity, and rupture of queer space

Unexpectedness of this opportunity

To explore the programme's queer space in more depth, I return to the beginning, how the programme came about and attendees' motivations for signing up. I analyse programme day 1, 2, and 3 again, but this time in relation to the space provided by it.

Programme co-leader (a) had been encouraged by an executive leader in the university to run the programme as a pilot and she was provided with a small budget to do so. Given that the LGBTQ+ leadership development programme was the first of its kind at the university, attendees generally stated in interviews that they arrived in the space open-minded and curious about how it would be delivered:

> *I wasn't going in with any particular expectations. I was just kind of very keen to just se<e, what would happen and what might come out of it.* [Taylor]

The LGBTQ+ programme's specific focus and membership was the motivator for many mentees entering the queer space. One mentee explained that they had declined the alternative women's leadership training offered as they did not see the space as relevant to them, though it was assumed by others that it would be. A few attendees were initially uncertain whether such a distinct queer space was necessary. This feeling may have arisen from dismissing their specific needs and/or a concern that those not directly involved with

the programme may hold a lower value of queer space in comparison to the typical space of generic leadership programmes:

> *But then I just suddenly thought, well, you know, so there are <u>two</u> leadership programmes one is for peo<ple in this group and one is for every>one … maybe there's some anxiety about whether this would just become like a <u>niche</u>, you know, the programme I'm on and yeah, I don't know?* [Attendee]

Several mentees in professional roles mentioned that they would have taken advantage of the space of any leadership development programme, given that training and progression opportunities were limited. This restriction seemed to make several mentees in professional roles acutely aware of their position (and perceived value) in the hierarchy, given that opportunities only became available when reaching a certain level rather than the institution recognising and supporting potential talent:

> *Since I've <u>been</u> in this higher role, I've had a lot more opportunities to learn, go on leadership courses. People are more willing to engage and share stuff; so I think that there's … that kind of juxtaposition of like 'Oh, you've reached it. Let's give you loads more stuff' versus 'You have the potential but you're in the wrong role'.* [Mentee, professional role]

For one mentee in a professional role this alternative space / programme was the only one relevant:

> *I would definitely choose <u>this</u> over any kind of traditional leadership thing because … I cannot even imagine a world where I would find it remotely interesting* [laughs]. [Mentee, professional role]

Several of the mentees, in academic roles, were concurrently attending another leadership programme (this included one generic leadership programme and one business leadership programme). Two academic mentees shared that they were surprised to have a job in HE because of their non-traditional route and whilst offering industry experience were aware they did not currently hold a PhD. The lack of a doctorate, in these mentees' eyes, precluded full membership to the academic community. Some of these hierarchies that both professional and academic staff experienced in their institution were removed physically,

socially, and mentally (Lefebvre, as cited in Schmid, 2022) within the queer space of programme days which also valuably brought professional and academic staff together. Attendees spoke about how approachable others were, they spoke warmly about fellow attendees, and being made to feel part of something bigger.

One (academic) mentee explained that they joined this space / the programme to support their progression but also in response to the specific difficulties they were facing as an LGBTQ+ academic course leader handling working relationships with non-LGBTQ+ colleagues. The mentee described the difficulty as a difference between how they and their colleague inhabited and viewed the world, specifically a disparity in empathy between them. Difficulties for the mentee also encompassed how they might be perceived by others and how they might navigate this. It was relevant to the mentee to share that they were carrying out their leadership role with colleagues who, while not senior to them in ranking, were older than them. This particular mentee had been encouraged to come onto the programme / enter the queer space by another LGBTQ+ programme associate.

In addition, individual mentees' ambitions concerning leadership underlay their motivations for attending the programme / arriving in the queer space at this point in time. Their leadership aspirations were related to mentees' gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and age. For Henry, line management responsibility is attainable and he hopes to develop skills to lead, though he has already embraced his sexuality to some degree in his working role:

> *I have been lucky enough to get a promotion but they're still both technical roles. They have no line management capacity. And I think ultimately, that is what I want to do. I want to like manage people … Yeah, it just seemed like a great opportunity to kind of <u>embrace</u> my sexuality within work, but also, you know, develop skills in me to lead people.* [Henry]

Maria already has management experience but, reflecting on this experience, she feels she was not able to present herself naturally in that role. She knows her sexuality and gender are an integral part of who she is and she now wants to embrace and embody this in her leadership:

> *Well, I think it's a natural continuation. I know that I can be a manager. I've been managing … what I missed when managing people, is giving something that is more,*

> *me … <I want to be the leader that I am and to be the leader that I am, I cannot forget any part … I would be another person if I weren't a les◦bian.* [Maria]

Coming together

The community of mentors and facilitators came together in the queer space because they had a previous tie with the programme co-leaders; one of the co-leaders in interview referred to *"getting out my black book of contacts".* External facilitators were financially reimbursed for their time but getting the mentors (all of whom were part of, or had previously been part of, the university LGBTQ+ staff network) to be a part of the programme required the co-leaders to "*call in some favours"*. One of the co-leaders acknowledged that it was a *"big ask"*, stating that mentors gave a *"tonne of goodwill"* (a considerable amount of their time voluntarily without any financial reimbursement due to limited programme funds).

In mentors' (sometimes unexpected) roles of mentor and attendee on programme days, mentors (interviewed between day 2 and 3) felt they gained in the queer space an appreciation of the programme's content, demonstrated active support for the programme, and learnt from other attendees' experiences and perceptions of leadership (expressed in terms of age, sexuality, context, and working role but perhaps not always recognised in terms of the influence of gender and gender non-conformity too):

> *So being able to listen to* [Diane's] *experiences … hear her story and her experiences and some of the challenges that she faced because there is an age difference … And* [Faye's] *… I suppose I feel very heartened about the fact that my professional experience today has never been kind of shrouded or faced some of the real challenges and anxieties, like the fears of, like, quite legitimately, you could lose your job. You could lose your livelihood because of the person that you, that you love. That's not something that I've ever had to deal with … I suppose for me I've made a profession out of my* [smiles] *sexual orientation.* [Connor]

Sophia (below) assumed she would be a mentee; however, her experience is valued by the programme co-leader who encouraged her to undertake a mentoring role. Sophia is delighted that she still engaged in the queer space as a participant:

> *Then I had a bit of a conversation with [Faye] whether I should participate as a mentee, but then she was like, "look, you're [current position] so I would really appreciate if you could be a mentor in the programme" and of course <I was very happy to agree to that. At that stage I didn't actually know that the mentors would be allowed to participate in the programme and be there on the day … very happy to participate.* [Sophia]

All participants appreciated finding an LGBTQ+ community within the institution which was partly facilitated by the programme's queer space. This offered an additional level of comfort and solidarity, to lessen feelings of loneliness and isolation, showing the limits of the wider university space. However, programme co-leaders were aware of two members of staff who worryingly had backed out of coming onto the programme, one of whom (despite reassurance given by co-leaders) said that they feared they might receive information about the programme via email that colleagues might see.

Some attendees referred to the LGBTQ+ community as their *"family"*, *"friends"* or *"tribe"*, perhaps reflecting the connections they wanted, needed, or felt. A family presumably reflects a close, powerful cross-generational, or ambivalent influence. The programme perhaps provides an alternative or complementary family, a kinship, though the attendee below feels any member of the LGBTQ+ community is already family to them. There is a need for attendees to feel 'at home' in so far as being somewhere familiar, comfortable and affirming. Paradoxically, though, for this attendee and for many LGBTQ+ people, home did not represent a space where they had always been made to feel fully accepted:

> *And even under the, let's say, networking point of view because you know we try to find our home … I always try to find my community. Even if I don't know them … being part of a minority is like being part of a family. This is what people sometimes don't understand because you have been through not necessarily for all your life, you have been through the same things.* [Attendee]

The term 'friends' may have been meant slightly differently for individual attendees, perhaps as a few deep relationships or one of many people sharing a mutual bond. New friendships were formed by attendees by day 2, as a result of day 1. These friendships allowed attendees to be themselves and seemed particularly important for a few attendees in their 20s to

provide a sense of belonging, but equally for older attendees who were experiencing a time of change. Friendships, offered attendees the opportunity to acquire an additional social support system, helping them to navigate personal and professional lives:

> *… now I'm good friends with a few of the humans on there and like, meet up and sort of chat in like a social context. And it's not that I can't speak with like, straight colleagues. It's just there's like subtle nuances to things that are kind of different.*
>
> *So, yes. So, me and xxx have become really good friends now* [after day 2]*. We met on the programme, which is lovely.*
>
> *Obviously, it's been <u>great</u> to meet people outside of work. I've got like xxx I've got a really good friendship with now. So that's been lovely. xxx I've also got a really good friendship with XXX now who I didn't know before.*

A tribe, a contested term, can represent a political unit or something more fluid, signifying close friends who might share a common character, culture, language and/or history, though this attendee also reveals an individual, goal-orientated focus:

> *I think it was one of the best things <u>actually</u> because just knowing that you also have your <u>tribe</u> like you know, you have that sort of safety blanket and that you have that safe space … and I should be learning from other colleagues in similar situations or different situations and it looks <u>good</u> on my CV, that I've attended a leadership programme* [smiles]*.* [Attendee]

The temporary (physical) queer space that the face-to-face programme days intentionally provided offered opportunities for attendees to connect for the first time, sometimes reconnecting on a different level (as some people were already known but not by others as LGBTQ+), reconnecting for some mentors away from strains of university roles, interact, and bond (quickly). For some, these possibilities had occurred unexpectedly. Some people knew most people on the programme (and some were well acquainted), some knew only a couple of people (occasionally by name rather than by face), and some people did not know anyone (having not been engaged previously with the LGBTQ+ staff network and perhaps not many LGBTQ+ groups beyond the university either):

I didn't know anyone. And when I got there, I felt, it just felt like a warm welcome straight away. Because I just, you know, I found a group of people, I just sat with them and started chatting [smiles] *… I think being part of this programme, I suddenly feel oh, there's actually there's definitely a community and to be honest, I don't even have a lot of LGBTQ friends at all. And now I certainly feel there's a sense of community and also, you know, that sense of belonging and I feel there might be people I can turn to.* [Jan]

So, I knew of, I'd had spoken to one person once before, but actually now I know [Adrian] *through the programme … it's so helpful to know him through the programme and asking questions and like, we just got that kind of relationship now where we can talk and I don't think that would have happened without the programme. I knew of another person but hadn't ever spoken to him … so the programme really did help me build those connections.* [Henry]

There was both a sense of relief and excitement of being in a room with other LGBTQ+ people who held different roles within and beyond the institution. It offered the chance to breathe, and share personal feelings and discomforts that may have otherwise been suppressed in other (mixed) spaces:

I feel like a lot of the time where we've had kind of LGBTQ+ stuff, you look around the room and you're like everybody here is just nice and they just wanna be nice and they just wanna be part of making things better for other people. But actually, am I the only gay in the room? It's that sort of weird thing. So sometimes it's nice to feel part of a community … representation, people who look like me was really important. [Alice]

Early interactions between attendees were encouraged on day 1 by icebreaker activities, which offered the potential to share personal details which many attendees took up. Perhaps these activities were not needed for building rapport between attendees, and these discussions were restricted anyway to the groups in which attendees sat, though commonalities and differences were recognised within groups. Some of the attendees joked (in the room on day 1) that one of the activities highlighted their age but it may have also

intensified individual fears of rejection from the group, a feeling that they did not know enough queer trivia knowledge to be accepted:

> *So I think there's been some tiny missteps [an icebreaker activity], but I think day 1 was really positive. For day 1 it's more about the mentor and the mentees getting to share a space and getting to know each other and build a relationship.* [Attendee]

Programme co-leader (a) encouraged attendees to talk during refreshment breaks and after lunch (paid for on all three days from programme funds) all attendees (17) sat informally talking as one large group. All participants appreciated the relaxed, safe, and informative arrangement of day 1 which seemed to have been prioritised by the programme co-leaders to allow relationships to grow and to bring the group together:

> *It felt like we had found kindred spirits, we found people you know who've had similar experiences to us or on the same path that we're on. So I felt there was a good community spirit? by the end of the day.* [Tim]

LGBTQ+ staff who had chosen to engage in the programme, became both visible and available to one another, which was valued within a post-pandemic working context which was acknowledged by two attendees using the same phrase, that staff often did not happen to come across one another but rather "*passed like ships*". Some attendees spoke of a feeling of encouragement and solidarity, (mentally) growing through these developing bonds and from listening to one another:

> *I didn't necessarily realise how lon<ely it was until I was in a room full of people and it's like a different energy … now I want to change things. Why have we got a com<plicated maternity policy for a same-sex couple? … it sort of gives you yeah, I'm not the only person with this weird issue. And it should be fixed … acknowledging yes!, there's other people there's power in that, really powerful.* [Charlie]

The diversity of attendees including the range of university roles they held, was valued by attendees; some attendees recognised whose voices were missing in the room including trans mentors/facilitators and the remaining LGBTQ+ staff who had not joined the programme. The lightness of the room was supported by 'in jokes' and self-deprecating humour which illuminated shared understandings, truths, and collective resilience of the

group; as well as learnt defences amongst the group. The laughter did not devalue, demean, or diminish anyone rather it created a freedom to break the norms whilst laughing about doing so. Attendees valued the opportunity to listen to one another:

> *… meeting different people, men, women, you know, it was just a really nice mix of ages as well as job roles, which was really refreshing. I got a lot out of it to be honest, especially the presentations … what they've been through and how that's impa<cted their work, how that's got them to where they are now … I felt quite inspired … I was surprised as to how chilled it was … I felt quite relaxed afterwards and quite happy.* [Jasmine]

> *And I think we all need that: I think we were all looking for that but maybe not knowing we were looking for that* [laughs] *… a collective understanding and experience of what it means to be LGBTQ+ in education and leadership was really helpful to me. I learnt a lot just from listening and from picking up different strategies from other people.* [Will]

Still committed, one attendee raised uncertainties about the aim of the programme and perhaps the capacity she felt she had to develop from the experience of day 1. She also wondered whether the programme could indeed support both academic and professional staff. The attendee went on to explain that the effectiveness of the programme would not be captured by only measuring whether mentees had gained promotions and other attendees spoke about the 'softer' merits of the programme, for example friendships continuing to blossom. Three attendees were known to be promoted during/shortly after attending the programme:

> *If it's all an experience and you just learn from it, from listening to other people, that's gre>at. If you're supposed to dev<elop somehow that's gre>at too, but I'm not sure at this point [after day 1] which one this is.*

On day 2, seven attendees (one of whom joined after lunch) engaged in the communication sessions led by a facilitator. Attendees had become more familiar with one another but this also generated a heightened awareness of who else was in the room. It was mentioned in interviews by two attendees that two mentors (including programme co-leader (a)) did not

participate but observed from a short distance, their laptops open but watching and listening. This did allow programme co-leader (a) at several points to offer timely witty inputs which protected the group and supported individual attendees.

Attendees were asked to share the difficulties they faced in communicating. Attendees offered their personal reflections of communicating; this included the effect of age, gender, sexuality, and neurodiversity (though characteristics were not always explicitly referred to). I noticed the facilitator asked attendees to repeat some points, he may have needed to clarify his understanding of points further given his own positionality as a white, cisgendered, straight man.

On day 3 of the programme, three external facilitators (one working in Higher Education and two running businesses) met with the group for the first time (though all facilitators knew programme co-leader (a)). It was noted by some attendees that all facilitators on day 3 appeared to be cis gay women/lesbians (they were also all white). Some attendees recognised the differences between the three of them and valued insights coming from working within EDI, working in another HE institution, and working outside the HE sector. The facilitators delivered sessions which encouraged attendees to offer input that highlighted the intersections and heterogeneity of the group. This included differences in personalities, priorities, lived experience, and opinions amongst the group. Attendees were asked to reflect on past experiences with no prior preparation which led some attendees (but not all) to feel it was quite heavy on a concluding day. Equally, these attendees recognised the limited time available to cover programme content and acknowledged familiarity between group attendees had supported it. The guest who came to day 3 and co-leader (a) reflected (in interview) upon the evident closeness of the group by day 3, for example attendees hugging one another when they arrived/left and going off to the pub together. Some attendees shared in interview that given they were asked (though not compelled) to offer deeper personal reflections, there was an amplified awareness of who else was in the room (including senior managers) and/or those who were not (mentees who were known but not in attendance). Co-leader (a) acknowledged these limitations (in interview) which were created by the fact that all attendees came from one institution (two of the attendees were former employees).

There were only three programme days with a four-month gap between days (though mentorship and informal gatherings of some attendees occurred during these intervals). Some attendees may have felt more on the periphery the group and/or perhaps felt the group was less important them. However, the encouraging atmosphere of programme days and the camaraderie between group attendees was noted by all. This was recognised even after day 1 and for attendees who missed some of the days. Attendees reflected about the programme after day 3: *'it's got that personal touch'*, a second attendee '*it cuts deep in a good way'*. It instilled a commitment of most attendees to the programme (though two attendees who appeared on day 1 did not appear for either day 2 or 3); its legacy; its survival, and, interestingly as a by-product of the programme's tangible investment in attendees, the institution itself. One mentor treasured the programme as *'growing our own talent'* within the university. Mentees wanted to be asked to be mentors in subsequent programmes and another attendee remarked *'we're doing something important and if it gets* [up] *steam then it will flush into something big and being a part of that is very exciting'.* A further attendee reflected about the programme *'it's that final piece I needed to reassure me that yes, this is somewhere I want to stay for the foreseeable future'*. This is an important point about institutions and creating staff belonging so as not to waste talent. The precarity of the programme further reinforced attendees' commitment to the programme:

> *… now it's here I don't want it to g<o; is it going to be a o<ne-hit thing or is it going to st<ay? I like the idea that if I'm here in a few years I could mentor someone else. That sort of thing. I'm aware things work in cycles and funding and people come and go. Now it's here, I don't want it to g<o.* [Charlie]

Reemerging queer space

Attendees' loyalty to the programme was given even though attendance on the programme and the (perceived) external value of the programme was not guaranteed by the wider university culture. The programme co-leaders had not insisted that attendees gave prior notice or gained prior consent from line managers in case this deterred potential attendees (who may not have been out to anyone/some/everyone in the university) from engaging with the programme. If necessary, it was felt attendees could take annual leave. Co-leader (a) had shared information about the programme at a line managers' forum so they were aware and could promote the programme (if they wished) to members of their teams:

> *The problem is that the 2nd day has been scheduled when I have one of my more important meetings with the faculty* [smiles] *… it's not really one that I can skip* [chuckles] *… so I'm probably going to end up being there halfway through, which is a bit of a shame. I'm basically fingers crossed going to be there* [laughs]. [Attendee]

The programme's survival beyond its first iteration was never certain and had influenced positive actions taken from the outset by the programme steering group. The programme steering group described a group of LGBTQ+ staff network members, who consisted of the programme co-leaders and mentors, who had attached the programme to the expanding LGBTQ+ staff network body, to encourage members to enrol onto the leadership development programme. It was also recognised by the programme co-leaders that the LGBTQ+ staff network offered a precious and continuing dwelling for the programme's attendees beyond the programme's duration. After the programme finished, two mentees went on to become two further co-leads for the LGBTQ+ staff network:

> *And we talked about it [as a Programme Steering group] how can we, if this was our <u>one</u> opportunity, if this is the <u>one</u> time the programme runs, how do we make it that it benefits the greatest number of people that are here at [the university] right now. And so we decided what was important was to build the [LGBTQ+] network a little bit first bef<ore we ran and launched the programme … we decided that we needed to really <u>embed</u> ourselves and … build a space where staff felt <u>safe</u> to identify… we would then be able to <u>maximise</u> the benefit that the programme had.* [Attendee]

Programme co-leader (a) announced at the end of day 3 that the 2022-3 programme and formal mentorship had come to an end. She expressed gratitude for the voluntary involvement of mentors within the programme, although shared the unlikelihood of the programme occurring in the following academic year. Attendees were invited to write anything for the programme co-leaders (after the day concluded) that might be taken by the co-leaders to the board of governors. Attendees' evaluative feedback had already been collected at the end of each programme day. Attendees did not hear (some were surprised not to hear) each other's reflections or ambitions for the programme within the session and attendees were left wondering if funding was indeed necessary for the programme to continue and if their own written contribution would be sufficient for it to do so though programme leader (a)'s senior status in the university's hierarchy was valued.

Ensuing actions for the LGBTQ+ staff network (notably Pride month) were discussed in the pub at the end of the day (with the majority of attendees in attendance). Trade unions were not mentioned during programme days or interviews. Most attendees expressed their desire to be involved in the organisation of community Pride events and co-leader (a) conveyed in interview her delight at watching attendees' subsequent involvement in such events. Moving out of the freedom of the programme's queer space, mentees imagined their own next steps in second interviews along with their intention to remain in contact with fellow attendees. Programme co-leader (a) clarified in interview that the programme would not run in 2023-4 and shared that she had not yet resolved if a future programme should run at a local, regional or national level, given various conflicts in her mind (keeping the programme free to participants which would encourage greater engagement particularly for those who were not currently out in their workplace, alongside the significant administrative time and cost).

Below, I offer a poetic retelling of the programme and its queer space through attendees' spoken words, to invite the reader into the assemblage:

Affective power in the room

If this was? <Our one opportunity
I got out my black book of contacts!
I wasn't going in with any expectations
But there's *a different energy!*
<It cuts deep in a good way
I'm looking back and seeing
I'm nodding profusely
I've accepted myself a bit more
I can be who I am [but] it's a bit lonely
He's the only person
He's a cracking leader!
Maybe they just skyrocket straight up or they just don't bother
How you respond to someone being anti-LGBT doesn't change
Do I say something or do I just shut up?
I'd rather die on my feet than live on my knees!
I've made a new friend

Your role is to lis<ten

My pronouns are

We all work together

How can I be a better teammate?

It's about being the buffer

I would change structures

This is how things should look

Staff networks are your ally

I can just be somebody trying to hold the door open for other people to come in.

Composing this poem, I think of Deleuze and Guattari (2013)'s critique of desire. The desire to be in this room does not originate from a sensation of not having had such an opportunity previously but rather from the energy and intensity of the matter and material circulating inside. This force continues in how attendees feel on leaving this space, wanting to resist the door closing. There is an example of desiring silence within the wider university, not raising attendees' difference to others to maintain an illusion of sameness, not causing a conflict to preserve a smoothness which upholds the status quo. In the room, power and knowledge within discourse move in different ways, producing different effects. Attendees are aware of how they conform to fit in, to remain intelligible, which reproduces and regulates gendered norms. They contest the norms, including asking and receiving recognition of their gender. It is not just the discourse but the entanglement of it with the material in the room which enacts an oppositional way of thinking. Bodies, discourse, and the place become diffracted through one another to produce new ways of thinking, seeing, and enacting leadership.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In this chapter, I draw together and expand upon issues of power, EDI, and violence which were identified in earlier chapters. I explain how LGBTQ+ leadership, leadership models, and leadership development were specifically reconceptualised in this research utilising a queer theoretical framework. The (post-)qualitative approach taken acknowledges the entanglement and intra-action of ethics, being, and knowledge in the meaning-making of these concepts (Barad, 2007). Returning to the literature, I clarify how the research findings build upon and adds to the existing body of literature.

Power, EDI, and Violence

This research and its findings contribute to the critical leadership literature (Collinson, 2011) by critiquing the power relations imbued in leadership. The diminished power experienced by LGBTQ+ staff in UK HE was discussed in the Introduction chapter in relation to the inaccuracy and misreading of LGBTQ+ staff data (Guyan, 2022), their marginalised and at times stigmatised status, their frequent omission from the leadership literature (Ferry, 2017; Lumby & Moorosi, 2022), the scarcity of LGBTQ+ specific leadership development provision, and the violence directed towards the LGBTQ+ community, drawing upon Ahmed's writing. I articulated the argument, building upon the work of Gunter (2001, 2005), Courtney (2014), Parker (2002), Bowring (2004) and others, of the importance of challenging leadership itself rather than focusing solely on the representation of LGBTQ+ leaders to respond to systematic and inequitable power relations which have been acerbated by neoliberal forces in UK HE. Leadership and mentorship have been constrained by individualistic, fixed and binary conceptualisations in ways that enable and maintain prevailing power structures and inequalities (Gunter, 2001; Crow, 2012; Ragins et al., 2007a). This includes the notion of the one hero leader who holds the power in the hierarchy resulting in gendered, racialized, and class inequalities within leadership and mentorship which upholds normative institutional structures. The precedence given to a male leader and views of leadership which are underpinned by the structure of the heteronormative family (Ferry, 2017).

Power themes arose again in the literature review when highlighting that the existing LGBTQ+ leadership literature tends to focus on only some people within the LGBTQ+

population ('out', cis, white, middle class, lesbian and gay, educated professionals) and the barriers that this group of staff may face in attaining and within leadership roles (Fassinger et al., 2010) or by simply inhabiting the heteronormative space of UK HE (Ahmed, 2016). In the Findings chapter, power surfaced in terms of the significance of the programme's queer space, contrasting with the wider university (Halberstam, 2011) and conventional leadership development programmes (Lugg & Roscigno, 2021). In interviews, there was a perception that power in the institution (and opportunities for training and progression) did not always extend to LGBTQ+ professional staff, LGBTQ+ staff on fractional or temporary contracts, or at lower levels of the organisation. There were examples given by attendees of oblique institutional and social violence. At times, LGBTQ+ voice was invalidated, diminished, dismissed. The silencing of the violence creating a further discomfort for these staff and students, while the issues were allowed to remain. One example included where management were capitalising on the work of the LGBTQ+ student society, with management highlighting this work as evidence of the organisation's EDI success and yet simultaneously not recognising a student's gender identity or the violence that their error had caused. A second example included the prioritising of International recruitment resulting in only some bodies and perspectives entering the institution and engaging with a particular degree course.

Power and knowledge in discourse moved in new ways in the programme's space. What was known, seen, and valued by those in the room enabled a crucial re-examination of queer capital for attendees (Coon, 2001; Christos, 2014; Pryor, 2010). Seeing and hearing one another had a powerful influence on how LGBTQ+ programme attendees viewed and recognised LGBTQ+ leadership as positive and distinct from other forms of leadership. The specific focus and membership of the programme alongside LGBTQ+ mentorship facilitated intergenerational queer knowledge sharing amongst LGBTQ+ staff in professional and academic positions and might offer an example of how distributed leadership and discussion could work in practice. The collective solidarity and camaraderie of the programme attendees who came together readdressed feelings of powerlessness, and nurtured and developed LGBTQ+ staff talent (and the university's emerging leadership). Specifically attendees' confidence and resilience in navigating the HE setting and mentees' readiness for leadership. Attendees may not of been healed of the violence they had faced but the

programme's space offered the time and space for some of these experiences to be processed and for this violence to be resisted collectively rather than individually. Referring back to the quotes in the poem, 'hold the door open' could be inferred as someone holding a burden and resisting the forces that were felt to be closing this door and thus the opportunity for others. It could be interpreted as a chance for the LGBTQ+ community to open a door and encourage others to proceed through.

LGBTQ+ leadership

LGBTQ+ leadership was conceptualised through attendees' vantage points and modelled by attendees as listening to, valuing, and developing people, and challenging inequalities by voicing an alternative perspective. This model of leadership came from attendees' marginalised experiences (Courtney, 2014) within and beyond the university. Meaningful EDI work (Ryan-Flood, 2023; Richards et al., 2023) has an important relevance to educational leadership values (Biesta, 2010, 2015). HE staff are collectively well placed to advocate for all staff and students in the institution (Pryor, 2021) and have a responsibility towards the influence that HE institutions hold more widely on society. There was an awareness by some attendees of where workplace diversity had been used to market the university and yet obscured systematic inequalities faced by LGBTQ+ students and staff (Ahmed, 2012, 2017; Rumens, 2016). Enacting LGBTQ+ leadership was seen as being different (at times) from management rather than the two being interchangeable terms; attendees sheltered their team from or utilised market forces in UK HE to support inclusion and recognised that leadership did not necessarily require an authoritative role. The six types of power / influence which were identified during a session on day 3 being liked (referent), good behaviour (reward), bad behaviour (coercive), knowledge (informational), authority position / status (legitimate), and credibility (expert) opened up the idea that influence (leadership) was not dependent on an authoritative role. In interviews, attendees offered examples of positively influencing others from their current working role. While the communication sessions on day 2 encouraged attendees to attain status in normative ways, the group individually and collectively resisted how this might be achieved and received. LGBTQ+ leadership (and the programme), however, were perceived among those in attendance as undervalued by others in the wider university (reinforced by the precarity and eventual cessation of the programme).

Leadership models

Whilst Authentic Leadership Theory (Avolio et al., 2004) fails to consider the complexities of relational and contextual factors, the attachment of the concept of authentic leadership within the LGBTQ+ leadership development programme's design offered personal benefits to LGBTQ+ attendees' wellbeing and leadership potential (Fletcher et al., 2024) and encouraged qualities in their leadership, which have been identified as being essential to UK HE (Spendlove, 2007; Bryman & Lilley, 2009). The embracement of social justice values that attendees attached to leadership also adheres to authentic leadership values (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Instead of assimilating or conforming to normative versions of leadership, attendees escaped this and embraced an alternative (Halberstam, 2011), as LGBTQ+ lives were attached to leadership with growing pride and joy. In this way, leadership practice was transformed and this alternative form of leadership was or became more pertinent to LGBTQ+ attendees. Crucially, though, the attendees in this queer space reflected upon and redefined the meaning given to authenticity (Fine, 2017), which was viewed by some attendees as beyond an 'outness' (recognising the nuances involved in this act), rather knowing oneself (an ongoing process) and embracing this. Leadership theory was previously noted as a contested terrain but the literature suggests a necessary shift towards leadership processes which are distributed, relational, and contextually influenced (Bolden et al., 2008; Bryman, 2007). Leadership was seen by attendees as being influential and relational with others, working collectively non-hierarchically (as supported by distributed leadership theory). The context of HE and the 'battlefield' of power struggles (Beattie, 2018) could have been considered more specifically within the programme's content but attendees' LGBTQ+ lived experiences in UK HE were offered and reflected upon, for example the wearing of rainbow lanyards and the general constraints in which attendees were working, and further reflections on the HE context may well have occurred in mentorship discussions.

Leadership development

Attendees viewed leadership development as a continual process of learning from and reflecting upon their leadership and life experience. It was also noted that progression was not always available, nor should it be the only aspiration, given the risk and limitation involved. The non-dominant mentorship provided as part of the programme supported mentees in the uncertainty of career trajectories (Heckert, 2010), specifically the assurance

to seek out opportunities and the resilience to handle potential ensuring disappointments. The mentorship provided by the programme was significant for both mentees and mentors (Ragins et al., 2007) and was not constrained by promotional goals. Through this distinct LGBTQ+ leadership development programme, attendees gained confidence to walk their own paths and voice alternative viewpoints, which emphasises the effect and value of the programme (in the way in which leadership was practised and encouraged) for both attendees and the institution. Perhaps though, through the programme, attendees were encouraged to buy in to a 'cruel optimism' (Berlant, 2011) of leadership and the institution, an existence which does not exist given the various types and examples of institutional violence.

This raises an important question of who should be paying to provide such programmes, given that it supported the retention and development of diverse talent who also wanted to 'give back', offering further benefits to the institution. Although the institution provided a small budget, it primarily relied upon the voluntary goodwill of LGBTQ+ staff to develop LGBTQ+ staff talent. Attendees looked to the future (Munoz, 2019) for themselves and others, a desire that was heightened by the precarity of the programme itself. From their present working role, attendees also offered examples of leadership, challenging the institution's prevailing structure and culture. Finally, the programme's space and the reemerging queer space provided by the LGBTQ+ staff network may have offered a means, individually and collectively, of making the present more liveable for a number of the programme's attendees.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This chapter summarises how my research was designed and revisits the configuration of the LGBTQ+ leadership development programme that I accessed. The chapter moves on to explain how my research questions have been answered, how my research builds upon the work of others, and the contribution my research makes to scholarly understanding and practice. It also considers the limitations in my work and the direction future research might take.

My research responds to the scarcity of literature regarding LGBTQ+ leadership within the specific context of UK HE. I noted that concepts of leadership within the broader leadership literature have often been restricted and I recognised the distinct capital that LGBTQ+ leaders offer to challenge these notions. I acknowledge the importance of LGBTQ+ leaders' visibility; however, I was conscious of the call in the literature to move beyond this, in queering leadership itself. Reframing leadership helps to make LGBTQ+ leaders' leadership intelligible (Butler, 2007) rather than compelling LGBTQ+ leaders to look, work, and lead in other (conventional) ways and it makes leadership more pertinent to diverse staff talent in UK HE. I recognised the significance of accessing a LGBTQ+ leadership development programme in HE in order to que(e)ry educational leadership, leadership development, and mentorship. I was attentive to the fact that marginalised voices within the LGBTQ+ community have often been excluded in LGBTQ+ literature, limiting understanding and potential. I also acknowledge the often-assumed superiority of LGBTQ+ researchers researching the LGBTQ+ population and have accordingly challenged (and looked to others and queer theory to challenge) my meanings and assumptions throughout this research.

My research is distinct in taking a (post-)qualitative approach, which does not seem to have been previously employed in leadership research, due to my fluid insider/outsider position with attendees, my unexpected dual role within programme days accompanied by the opportunities which arose beyond it, and my mode of analysis. This research builds upon previous research which supports the need for a LGBTQ+ leadership development programme which incorporates mentorship (Arwood, 2006; Coon, 2001; Christos, 2014; Lee, 2021). My research offers an insight into one LGBTQ+ leadership development programme

through observations and interviews; it specifically describes the significance of a community of LGBTQ+ people coming together in the queer space of programme days and mentorship relationships (on both non-dominant mentors and mentees) which may guide future leadership development programmes.

Accessing this rare (pilot) LGBTQ+ leadership development programme in one post-1992 university allowed me to gather 16 attendees' perspectives of the programme days and mentorship as well as enabling me to analyse their shifting understanding of LGBTQ+ leadership within the current climate of UK HE. These attendees were professional and academic staff at varying career stages, in differing roles and levels of seniority within and beyond the institution, who were involved with the programme in multiple ways. All attendees were from the LGBTQ+ population and though they (only) represented members who were willing to engage with the programme in their current/former work setting, intersectionality was recognised with regard to discussions regarding sexuality, gender, gender nonconformity, age, cultural background, and neurovariance.

The programme was an identity-focused leadership development programme that consisted of three formalised classroom days. Such a distinct LGBTQ+ leadership development programme may reinforce the narrative that LGBTQ+ attendees are deficit and require additional support. This view could have been inferred in the sessions which sought to develop attendees' communication and motivational skills. The programme, however, also facilitated connection and discussion between LGBTQ+ attendees who joined, allowing queer sharing and the voicing of intersectional differences. These attendees were associated with one large organisation which at times limited their openness with one another but without the programme these attendees only encountered colleagues in a transitory and incidental manner. The programme's queer space emphasised the angle of marginality and allowed attendees to challenge the traditional notions of leader and leadership. While the LGBTQ+ leadership development programme drew upon authentic leadership and a practitioner approach to leadership, attendees challenged the concept of authentic leadership. This was important given that the barriers impeding marginalised groups from accessing leadership are also implicit in leadership model theory. The programme also drew upon a social theory of mentorship to support mentees' experiential learning and reflection within their working role and context. An analysis of power structures, processes, and

relations within the organisation during programme days may have supported more expansive means of attendees navigating power (beyond promotion/upward orientation). This may have helped attendees work for change (maintaining a strategic distance from structures to question them and challenge perspectives) and deliver change (to positively transform the organisation) (cf. Gunter, 2005). I appreciate that critiques of power within the institution may have occurred further during mentorship discussions, and some attendees voiced the risks of only aspiring to climb the greasy pole.

Mentees were in/sought to be in middle leadership roles and selected themselves for the programme as a pool of leadership potential rather than others attempting to determine an elite cadre. Although it was equitable that the programme remained accessible to those who were not currently out in their workplace, entering the queer space and optimising the programme's potential in reality required a willingness on the part of the individual to be open to other attendees. The programme was limited to three formalised days and might be more accurately referred to as leadership training (mindset, skill, and networking) rather than development, given the short duration. However, there was a notable change (development) in mentees' perceptions of LGBTQ+ leadership and themselves as LGBTQ+ leaders by the end of the programme. The programme intended to be externally measured by the number of mentees who gained a promotion but this may have underestimated its return on investment given the outcome was measured at the immediate completion of the programme, by way of a small number of mentees involved, and overlooked the curvilinear/broader consequences of the programme over a longer duration for both attendees (mental wellbeing, career satisfaction, and career direction) and the organisation (development and retention of diverse talent).

My research was designed to answer four research questions: how attendees felt LGBTQ+ identities shape leadership in HE and how LGBTQ+ leadership is shaped by HE; how LGBTQ+ leadership was understood and constructed on the programme; how attendees anticipate using what they learnt on the programme; and how leadership and leadership development might be que(e)ried beyond this study. I have provided further analytical questions (ARQ) below, which show how my research questions evolved by looking more closely at and beyond the data and possible interpretations.

RQ1: How do attendees feel LGBTQ+ identities shape leadership in HE and how do attendees feel LGBTQ+ leadership is shaped by HE?

ARQ1: How is (LGBTQ+) leadership perceived to be valued more broadly in UK HE?

There was a perception among those in attendance that the LGBTQ+ leadership programme and LGBTQ+ leadership in HE more generally was undervalued by others in comparison to conventional, ordered, 'straight' leadership. Some attendees also felt established leadership development opportunities often marginalised staff in professional roles. While the LGBTQ+ leadership development programme indicated an investment in LGBTQ+ staff, the precarity and eventual cessation of the programme reinforced the group's marginality. LGBTQ+ staff had experienced loneliness, not being acknowledged, and not being heard when speaking out in the institution. This was felt acutely by those working at lower levels of the organisation, on fractional, and on temporary contracts. Most attendees also negotiated and navigated decisions around presenting themselves in their working role and leadership. This included their sexuality in addition to (for some) their age, gender, gender nonconformity, and cultural background. Navigating personal and professional decisions seemed different for those at higher levels of the organisation given their greater security and agency. At a higher level, a LGBTQ+ leader spoke about utilising market forces whereas a LGBTQ+ leader at a middle level spoke about the importance of meeting targets while simultaneously shielding his team. This might indicate that an adapting style of leadership is required as people move into more senior roles in UK HE. The visibility of LGBTQ+ leaders was important to attendees and attendees responded reciprocally to the lack of representation around them by being visible (though some felt a vulnerability in being hyper visible). Some attendees appreciated the qualities of LGBTQ+ leaders but did not recognise initially whether these, for example cultivating trust, were due to their LGBTQ+ lived experience or whether these traits and ways of leading would be valued in potential leaders to the same degree as performativity measures.

RQ2: How is leadership understood and constructed in the context of a programme which promotes LGBTQ+ leadership in HE?

ARQ2: How was leadership reframed by the LGBTQ+ programme's community in a queer space?

The community of mentors and facilitators came together because they had a previous tie with the programme co-leaders; however, this limited the diversity of facilitators who joined programme days 2 and 3, who were determined by the reach of co-leader (a)'s professional network. There was a contrast between how (LGBTQ+) leadership was constructed in sessions led by the facilitators (who were joining the group of attendees for the first time) and the attendees (who appreciated the dynamic space and camaraderie between attendees and collectively contributed to it). While the facilitators looked to address deficits or develop key (leadership) skills, attendees came together to offer and model the qualities and vantage point of LGBTQ+ leadership to one another which included empathy, developing and encouraging others, and voicing an alternative perspective. The representation and openness of LGBTQ+ people in senior positions offered an affinity to other attendees' lives and provided a mutual relationship that could be trusted and allowed knowledge to be exchanged between them. Dialogue and interaction between attendees within and beyond the queer space of programme days seemed to support attendees' continued openness and resilience beyond it.

There was a stronger and more positive attachment of LGBTQ+ lives to leadership by the end of the programme. The importance of LGBTQ+ leaders making this explicit connection was recognised in Christos' (2014) research where LGBTQ+ leaders had only intuitively recognised the importance of this attachment. Attendees were or became deeply aware of how they thought and behaved and increasingly conscious of their own and others' values, which are often identified as dispositions of authentic leadership (Avolio et al., 2004) and cited as essential for effective leadership in HE (Spendlove, 2004; Bryman & Lilley, 2009). Mentees came to embrace themselves as LGBTQ+ leaders (wanting to empower others and make changes within the organisation). Mentees viewing LGBTQ+ leadership as positive, collective, and distinct from other forms of leadership. Authenticity was conceptualised by some as declaring their sexuality or gender identity and being a visible member of the LGBTQ+ community; others troubled/questioned the openness of simply declaring their LGBTQ+ status. Some attendees re-envisioned authenticity as being beyond an openness, rather a growing/affirming sense of self and an ongoing process of self-awareness, to know oneself fully and embody this in leadership in order to break glass closets (Pryor, 2021). A shared and collective resistance was voiced amongst the community to the dominant

normative ways of being, doing, and knowing leadership, as well as amongst the programme's group of attendees to assumptions that were made by other associates.

RQ3: How do LGBTQ+ attendees anticipate using what they have learnt?

ARQ3: How was the LGBTQ+ leadership development programme valued by attendees?

Attendees added to and related to the programme's content from their own experience and immediate working role. For some mentees, the programme days held a greater significance for them than the mentorship; others felt the opposite. This underlines the importance of offering both elements, although given their differing underpinning and influence it also emphasises the importance of mentees and mentors committing to both from the outset. For attendees (who were present), seeing other LGBTQ+ staff and then listening to individual contributions and dialogue within the relative freedom of the queer space was powerful and inspiring. Some attendees questioned whether this alone would help them to develop, though by the end of programme days, attendees recognised they had connected their LGBTQ+ life and leadership and valued this alternative perspective and orientation with mounting pride and joy. Attendees also spoke about the importance of networking and continuing their contact with fellow attendees beyond the programme. The mentorship provided most of the mentees with someone they were (unknowingly) looking for, someone to turn to. It assisted mentees' self-reflection, offering a direction and purpose to their own career path which sometimes facilitated a promotion during the programme's duration (though this only partially captures the outcomes of the programme, as mentioned previously). Participants gained further confidence and resilience in undertaking working roles, an inclination to seize opportunities as well as handling potential ensuing disappointments. There was a desire from mentees to give back and contribute to future programme days and mentorship. Mentors also gained knowledge and perspectives from their mentees and they developed in their experience of mentoring.

RQ4: How could leadership and leadership development in HE be que(e)ried beyond this research study?

ARQ: How might LGBTQ+ leadership and accompanying development programmes be reimagined, moving out of the programme's queer space?

The precarity and eventual rupture of the programme's queer space as well as the uncertainty surrounding any prospective programme may have intensified attendees' desire to look forward and create a hopeful future for themselves, one another, the programme, and a change in the organisation. The LGBTQ+ staff network offered an immediate dwelling for attendees beyond the programme and generated an opportunity for two mentees to take on a leadership role within it. The LGBTQ+ leadership development programme came full circle, from the rainbow university Pride bags neatly arranged on the tables for each of the attendees on day one of the programme to attendees contributing to the local community Pride events after the programme ended. Political and social activism seemed to be the source and root of the leadership programme, bringing people together to generate a greater voice and a collective power.

The changing landscape of HE is bringing complex and novel challenges which require a corresponding shift within leadership to lead positive transformation (Lee, 2021; Holt, 2023). LGBTQ+ leadership constructed and modelled on the programme challenged the dominant conception of leadership within HE which has been influenced by marketisation forces (Gunter, 2001). LGBTQ+ leadership was viewed as being different (at times) from management and therefore not necessarily requiring a senior authority role. LGBTQ+ leadership offered the possibility of being and enacting something more immediate, positive, and creative, drawing from attendees' experiences and from the position of their current working roles. LGBTQ+ leadership was also envisioned to allow and offer an openness and candidness with colleagues and students to diminish the negative pressures and bearings of marketisation and accountability. Embodying this openness and an authenticity in terms of a growing/affirming sense of self and commitment to an ongoing self-awareness within leadership seems pertinent to LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ leaders alike. The openness offered by attendees on the programme certainly seemed to encourage the openness of other attendees.

Leadership in HE should concern educational leadership (Biesta, 2015) and meeting the needs of the institution, students, and staff as opposed solely to short-term profitability. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is an essential concern of 21st century leadership and requires strong commitment at all levels of the organisation. LGBTQ+ attendees' leadership included a responsibility to listen to and co-produce initiatives with staff and students,

challenging policy and practice, supporting and holding staff accountable, and ensuring a transparent and accurate evaluation of processes. There was an insightfulness from attendees around minimising and navigating conflict. Such qualities would appear valuable for any leader, given the need collectively to share the responsibility of social justice. Educational leadership research needs to be continually challenged to ensure it does not have blind spots, thus allowing education to remain blighted by inequalities. This seems pertinent, given that LGBTQ+ staff and students may be feeling less safe now within UK HE culture than even a few years ago, challenging neat narratives of progression. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), the UK Equality Watchdog as of November 2023, is being reviewed by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) given concerns regarding its possible lack of independence from the UK government and its failing record on transgender rights for some time. With a general election in the UK looming in 2024, and the two main political parties both taking an increasingly anti-trans stance, it is probable that trans rights will be further weaponised in the lead up to the general election (Lamble, 2024). This 'cultural war' alongside a similar 'moral panic' across the globe will undoubtedly play out in UK HE and wider society but there is also a sense of hope given to younger generations from an older generation of LGBTQ+ people who have overcome examples of hostility in the past and generations of LGBTQ+ people and their allies who will not allow hard-won positive changes to be overturned so easily. This research accentuates the need and positive significance of a distinct LGBTQ+ leadership development programme for LGBTQ+ attendees and their organisation. I hope this research secures and enhances the future possibility of the LGBTQ+ leadership development programme I accessed. I appreciate the financial constraints and voluntary goodwill entailed in the planning and running of this LGBTQ+ leadership development programme, which may well apply to future versions. I also appreciate that looking at only one programme does not necessarily tell us what will work in the future; however, at present it is the only guide we have.

Future LGBTQ+ leadership development programmes may be able to consider the following issues. The publicity of LGBTQ+ leadership development programmes and their recruitment process need to encourage and sustain the commitment of a pool of LGBTQ+ staff talent. To ensure this, LGBTQ+ staff need to be willing and able to engage in all programme days (barring emergencies), mentorship, the preparation for/ensuing deep self-reflections, and an

inclination to embrace, from the outset, social justice values rather than simply seeking a promotional goal. A wider diversity of LGBTQ+ presenters (to include those who are trans, people of colour, and those who are disabled) may encourage further attendance from LGBTQ+ staff and would add valuable perspectives to the construction of LGBTQ+ leadership. The curriculum content of the programme should change over time but it ought to consider the context of HE and the organisation, specifically how power operates in terms of the structure (policy), processes (agency), and professional practice (Gunter, 2005), as well as global and political influences and the governance of the setting. This would support attendees in influencing structural change and thus transforming the organisation. Consequently, the balance of LGBTQ+ staff within the organisation alongside external facilitators for programme days needs to be reflected on. LGBTQ+ attendees within the organisation would offer this contextual understanding and would also appreciate the dynamic atmosphere of programme days and group dynamics. The construction and que(e)rying of leadership could also consider the requirements, agency, and means of leadership at differing levels of the organisation. LGBTQ+ mentees might be further supported by arranging peer mentoring and by offering further opportunities for peer sharing. The duration and evaluation of the programme needs to support and measure the wider merits and longer-term outcomes for individuals and the organisation (beyond immediate promotion). Future LGBTQ+ leadership development programmes may also consider leadership in different operational roles, engaging multiple organisations (which may offer the opportunity of greater ambiguity and therefore openness), and focusing specifically on providing a LGBTQ+ leadership development programme for students.

Limitations

I recognise there were limitations (some of which were out of my control) to this research. The research participants only constitute associates who were able to access the programme at one post-92 university and a relatively small number of mentees who were working at lower to middle management levels. However, associates (from multiple positions in the organisations and roles within the programme) did engage with this research; 17 of the 23 associates allowed their oral contributions to be added to field notes and 16 were interviewed (7 mentees were interviewed twice). My own subjectivity in this research and my participation in the programme has been acknowledged and discussed in the methodology chapter; in addition, attendees' responses indicated how they positioned me. I

was aware at times of details not spoken about or only optimistically. I was only partially able to capture the messiness of the programme's space due in part to my participation on the programme. My position as an outsider of the university meant I did not have access to participants prior to the start of the LGBTQ+ leadership development programme (with the exception of programme co-leader (a)) and restricted my time in the university during and beyond the end of the LGBTQ+ leadership development programme. Writing up my thesis at this point has restricted my study of the longitudinal curvilinear outcomes of this programme for multiple attendees; however, I have not left the field nor has the impact of undertaking this research left me.

Possible direction of future research

The lack of LGBTQ+ research and research which takes this design within the leadership literature indicates the need for and the potential scope of future research. Possible research may be influenced by future iterations of the LGBTQ+ leadership development programme accessed in this research, or similar ones that may follow. There is the possibility of widening the lens to encourage 'nomadic thought' (Deleuze & Guattari, 2013), looking at LGBTQ+ leadership across universities in the UK and beyond. This may open up the que(e)rying of leadership to those occluded by this research while offering greater anonymity to attendees, to engage with further reflections on race, trans- genders, class, and ability. Including a greater number of universities may help to make the programme financially more viable and justify an annual/longer programme. It may also be felt to be increasingly relevant, given that universities are increasingly engaging and working across cultures and settings. Future research could profitably be longer in duration, engaging with attendees before the programme's start and for an extended time following the programme's completion.

My experience of the LGBTQ+ leadership development programme

It seems fitting to finish this thesis by reflecting on the effect the LGBTQ+ leadership development programme and carrying out this research had on me. I was not prepared for the intensity of emotions and sense of responsibility that I felt in my dual role as a researcher and a participating member within the programme. I did not expect that engaging in the programme, undertaking interviews and analysis, attending events and the bonds I formed with other associates (recognising their qualities and seeing aspects of

myself in them) would have such a strong impact on me. I knew I was changing personally and professionally (as a researcher and as a leader). I now see a strength in my LGBTQ+ lived experience, something I formerly overlooked. There was a particularly encouraging, novel, and joyful experience for me (in a work setting) on day 2 of the programme, when I shared a lift with three successful (as I saw it) masculine-presenting lesbians and the lift ascended to the top floor. I felt an affinity to the stories they had already shared with me, to the conversation we had in this moment in this queer space concerning marriage, and with the way in which they presented themselves. I recognised their 'success' as being happy, confident, and apparently navigating working roles positively. I have frequently recalled this memory in my EDI role at work; it evokes confidence in me through the feelings of unity, weightlessness, and elevation attached. It reminds me to look sometimes for a different way, not always trudging up the stairs on my own but instead reaching out to others.

My understanding of leadership has shifted; I now understand it as relational and collective, something that might be enacted at any level of an organisation rather than requiring an authority role. I continue to reflect critically upon my own lived experiences, which I recognise as desirable for leadership in order to prioritise purposes and values. Prior to hearing about the LGBTQ+ leadership programme I had not given any thought to the link nor recognised the particular qualities LGBTQ+ lived experiences may offer leadership. I now know myself a little better; I am more aware of my fears of rejection, loss, and failure resulting from previous painful experiences and, importantly, how to allay these. I appreciate I can draw upon being knowledgeable and credible without any institutional senior authority position in the EDI aspect of my current working role. I know my leadership skills will continue to develop through further leadership and life experience.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Interview (1) Questions [mentees]

1. Do tell me about your current job role at the university?
2. What do you particularly value about working at your current university?
3. If you could change anything about working there, what would it be?
4. Why did you choose to engage with this leadership programme?
5. Have you had leadership responsibility?
6. What was that experience like for you? (or do you see yourself leading in the future and what does that look like?)
7. What examples of LGBTQ+ leadership have you seen within HE?
8. Tell me about the mentorship you have experienced on this programme?
9. How would you describe your experience of Day 1?
10. [How would you describe your experience of Day 2?]
11. How would you describe being on the programme so far? (Did you know anyone on the programme before it started? Has anything surprised you?)
12. Is there anything else we haven't spoken about that you would like to talk about?
13. Do you feel my presence has had an influence on your experience of the programme?

<u>Prompts</u>

'Can you give me an example?', 'What was that like for you?', 'Can you say a bit more?'.

Appendix II: Interview Questions [mentors]

1. Could you tell me about your current working role?
2. Could you describe your experience of carrying out a leadership role in HE?
3. How did you come to be involved in the programme?
4. Did you know anyone on the programme previously?
5. Could you tell me about your experience of days 1 & 2? [if applicable]
6. Could you tell me about your workshop session? [if applicable]
7. How would you describe the mentorship you have facilitated on this programme?
8. In what ways have you seen attendees/mentees develop? (what might they bring to their current or future roles)
9. Has anything surprised you about the programme or how it has been received so far?
10. Is there anything else you would like to talk about?

Appendix III: Interview (2) Questions [mentees]

1. How do you currently feel about working at the institution?
2. Would you talk me through your experience of day 2 & 3? (positive and negative)
3. Has your perception of leadership changed at all?
4. Do you connect your LGBTQ+ identity and leadership?
5. How far have you made use of any of the elements of the programme in your current role? How have you done this [if they have – why not if they have not]?
6. How would you describe the LGBTQ+ mentorship you have been engaged with on the programme?
7. How far has the mentorship supported you in your current role? And how?
8. Where do you see yourself in 5 years' time?
9. Has the programme made any difference to how you see yourself in 5 years' time?
10. Is there anything else you would like to talk about?

Appendix IV: Interview Questions [adapted for guest on day 3]

1. Please tell me about your current working role.
2. Please describe your experience of carrying out a (leadership) role in HE?
3. How did you come to be involved in the programme?
4. Did you know anyone on the programme previously?
5. Please tell me about day 3.
6. What did you gain from the sessions?
7. Did anything surprise you about day 3 or a particular session?
8. Did anything surprise you about the programme?
9. Is there anything else you would like to talk about?

Appendix V: Interview Questions [programme co-leaders]

1. Why did you choose to set up the LGBTQ+ leadership development programme at your university? What was the university's response? What was it like for you leading the programme?
2. How would you describe LGBTQ+ leadership?
3. How far do you feel as an LGBTQ+ leader that you can challenge the status quo in the university?
4. Tell me about the mentees? (Criteria/Application process?)
5. Tell me about the mentors? (How did you select them?)
6. Tell me about the facilitators? (How did you choose them?)
7. Looking back on the three days of the programme what were the highlights for you? Did anything surprise you?
8. Could you tell me about the mentorship?
9. In what ways have you seen attendees/mentees develop?
10. What are the next steps for the programme?
11. Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?