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LGBT+ culture in higher education: the impact of institutional policy

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Exploring LGBT+ identity, being and experiences
LGBT+ research conference 2023

LGBT+ Culture in Higher Education: The impact of institutional policy

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Introduction

This paper explores findings from a case study considering the lived experience of LGBT+ staff and allies within the context of a higher education institution. Institutions are required to act where instances of [indirect, structural, or systemic] disadvantage or discrimination are identified. This is mandated by the Public Sector Duty directives outlined within section 149 of the UK Equality Act 2010, 'those subject to the equality duty must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination' and to remove or minimise disadvantage (E&HRC, 2023). Here we consider findings emanating specifically from the *qualitative document analysis* (QDA) phase, which examined the impact of institutional policies on the lived experiences of LGBT+ staff.

From a pool of 195 institutional policies, 41 met inclusion criteria and were analysed using NVivo, with further relevant findings synthesised from across the wider case study. Language use varied throughout the sample and use of the acronym LGBT+, and comprising terms, were found to feature within only 6/41 of the documents. LGBT+ terminology featured predominantly through the most recent strategies, reports, and guidance materials.

Intersectionality was observed, although this remained limited to giving reference to women of colour and neurodivergent non-binary staff. Overall, the policies considered within this sample have been shown to empower staff, raise awareness, foster inclusivity, and monitor inequalities. Co-production throughout developmental initiatives was identified as key to achieving related strategic aims and institutional leadership has also been identified as the core driver, without which, implementation stalls.

It is hoped that findings drawn and presented within this paper, may support stakeholders across the sector in their work towards the development of fairer and more inclusive policies for LGBT+ staff.

Methodology

This QDA explored how institutional policies inform the experience of LGBT+ staff. As an emancipatory method, this phase progressed through iterative review cycles that resulted in the identification and development of themes (Bowen, 2009). Appraising and reappraising documentary evidence in this way, enabled the development of meaning that resulted in the framework used to answer this question (Bryman, 2016). This inductive and interpretative approach included an examination of currency and representation alongside examples of structural support and oppression.

Given its focus on LGBT+ staff, the sample for this QDA omitted policies that solely concerned students. The resulting sample included 195 staff facing documents. Through a process of traffic light evaluation the sample was further refined: Grouping the policies as, (green=41) communicating to the experience of LGBT+ staff, (amber=81) understood as indiscriminately speaking to all staff, and (red=73) providing reference to technical processes and, therefore, considered irrelevant. Policies highlighted green were subsequently considered, chronologically and conceptually, for this QDA.

The QDA sample of 41 documents consisted of varying types of documents, including n=14 policies, n=11 guidance materials, n=1 an information sheet, n=4 institutional strategies, and n=6 reports. These documents were organised in and analysed using NVivo 12 software (NVivo Mac release, 1.7.1). A word search was undertaken to identify pertinent language usage and relational aspects throughout the sample. Assessment of document types and investigation of relevant word frequencies went further, enabling the identification of document aims and purposes. Expressions of frame-of-mind – signposting author context, positionality and understanding – were observed within the sample and, overall, terms linking LGBT+ matters were less prevalent, amounting to only 3.12% of the sample text.

Based on the differences and similarities observed, the documents were then clustered into groups. Documents were grouped by the arrangements they communicated and largely by title. For example, Adoption Leave Policy; Maternity Leave Guidelines; and Maternal Leave Provisions. Similarly, language used to define actions or provisions tended to use consistent language, with examples including documents identified as 'policies' or 'regulations'. To the contrary, documents grouped as 'guidance materials' and 'statements' presented examples of documents where language use and prose were observed to vary.

Subsequently, an examination progressed considering the structures embedded that directly impact the experiences of LGBT+ staff; acting to promote or limit the identities comprised in the acronym, or intersectionally, or weighing on the expression of the uniquely held identities presented throughout the course of the wider case study.

The higher education institution that this case study focussed on, is a modern multi campus university and Alliance group member. Located within the South East of the UK and comprising of c. 20,000 UK based students and c. 2,000 FTE staff. The demographic of the university in question is richly diverse and attracts a sizeable number of international students. The multi faculty programmes offered include various disciplines largely designed to prepare students for entry or progression within various industries and sectors.

Results

Language and frequency

The exploration of terms using NVivo search queries extended beyond the acronym LGBT+. Examples of the extended terms queried included, asexual, homosexual, nonbinary, pansexual, poly-gender, queer, questioning, queergender, transexual. The results here include the terms present within the sample only, indicating frequency of use.

In total 6 of the 41 documents included either related terms or the acronym, amounting to 3.12% of the sample text available. An *Equality Diversity and Inclusion* (EDI) Report, Transitioning at Work Policy, Inclusive Language Guidance, and LGBT+ Guidance for Managers, provided examples of documents found to include these related terms. The most diverse representation of relevant language was observed to proliferate through the guidance materials. The terms found within the sample were also found to fulfil differing purposes. In this way, the acronym featured throughout action plans and was used to identify groups – connecting LGBT+ staff or students. Use of the term homosexuality was only observed within the negative context of something one may be opposed to. Subsequently, identification of this term within the Guidance for Managers, was understood as unnecessary – thereby, validating a term that historically holds negative connotations. Survey datum was represented using, and limited to, terms directly derived from the acronym. Representation of the terms comprised within the acronym extended through documents raising awareness and were observed *en masse* as classifications, featuring most predominantly throughout the guidance materials.

Intersectionality was observed twice within the sample, primarily giving reference to women of colour and then secondly, connecting nonbinary and neurodivergent identities.

The limitations relating to this representation of intersectionality were understood as comprising aspects of gender and race or gender and disability, whilst omitting aspects of sexuality or sexual orientation. A further limitation identified was the use of gender-neutral pronouns ze/zir that appeared only once within Inclusive Language Guidance and nowhere else within the sample.

Themes emerging

Analysis considered how LGBT+ identities were negotiated on a structural level across the sample. Five themes were identified within the sample, including:

1. Action plan for inclusion
2. Empowerment
3. Inclusivity
4. Inequalities
5. Raising awareness

Sub-themes resulting from these principal themes further illuminated the intent, interconnectedness, and complexity of the issues here presented.

10/41 documents evidence an (1) *action plan for inclusion*. This theme refers to the steps that can be taken to create an inclusive environment. Examples recognising and framing this intention, include the Transitioning at Work Policy, which signposts how 'the university aims to create an inclusive workplace and learning environment, free from discrimination, harassment or victimisation' (doc. published, 2021). Additionally, the EDI Report and Action Plan 2019-22, outlined the university's intention to 'establish staff networks' (doc. published, 2019:02). The strategic aims identified across these 10 documents included initiatives targeting the removal of attainment gaps, leading to equal pay, enhancing staff wellness and productivity, ensuring privacy for staff transitioning at work, providing training, and enabling managers to foster safer spaces.

These initiatives signpost the 6 subthemes relating to the theme of, (1) *action plan for inclusion*. Examples of key documents that connect themes-subthemes specifically are as follows.

In relation to (1.1) *bridging attainment gaps*, the Access & Participation Plan 2020-25, reads: 'Our ambition is to eliminate all the access, attainment, continuation and progression gaps we have highlighted' (doc. published, 2020:11).

Emphasising commitment towards (1.2) *eradicating pay gaps*, the Gender Pay Gap Report 2020, presents the intention: To 'monitor and consider positive action steps to ensure recruitment, promotions' and 'tackle bias in decisions, and attract applicants from underrepresented groups to support gender balancing' (doc. published, 2020:06).

Through its focus on (1.3) *increasing productivity*, job satisfaction, *motivation and wellbeing*, the People Strategy 2016 defines how: 'To achieve a cultural change in the relationship between the University and its employees and the environment we create to support engagement and performance' (doc. published, 2016:02).

The Transitioning at Work Policy 2021 confirms the intention to ensure the (1.4) *privacy for staff transitioning*, by respecting: 'The confidentiality and status of all transgender staff and will not reveal sensitive information without the consent of the individual' (doc. published, 2016:04).

The LGBT+ Staff at Work – Guidance for Managers 2021, materials highlight how (1.5) *supportive managers* can facilitate environments that are comfortable and inclusive for LGBT+ staff members.

A call for (1.6) *training* was observed only within the Gender Pay Gap Report 2020, which opined the requirement for: 'Training for all staff on equality, diversity and inclusion so that they can embed the University's values and the associated behaviours into their day-to-day work' (doc. published, 2020:02).

The theme of (2) *empowerment* was evidenced across 6/41 documents. Among the examples, the Mentors Guidelines 2014 was found to empower mentees by advising mentors of the following needs:

- Simply being available for a chat – either face to face, on the phone or may be by email
- Setting time aside to listen, support, encourage, helping the mentee keep track of their work
- Knowing 'someone who can' when you personally cannot,
- Help by asking simply, how is it going?
- Helping the mentee to see "a way through"
- Giving informal feedback on what mentees have already done
- Being positive about achievements
- Providing an opportunity for learning based on the mentee's own experience
- Sharing knowledge and experience

- Helping the mentee to make the most of feedback from others
- Reviewing/evaluating the mentoring relationship from time to time to refocus

(doc. published, 2014:02).

A further example of an empowering statement was identified within the Appraisal Policy and Procedure 2020, soliciting that staff should 'receive appropriate development to help them to grow as individuals enabling them to carry out their role to the very best of their ability' (doc. published, 2020:03). These examples highlight the intention of these documents and recognise the importance of empowering individuals to meet their full potential. Thereby implicitly acknowledging the benefits for both the individual and the university when individuals are empowered to flourish and thrive.

18/41 documents negotiated the concept of (3) *inclusivity*. Eighteen is close to half of the sample – documents understood as speaking directly to the lived experience of LGBT+ staff – that sought to place the significance of inclusivity as central to institutional processes and values. Examples of the most predominant embodiment of inclusivity was exemplified by the university's Rules for Staff Conduct (doc. published, 2015), Access and Participation Plan 2020-25, Special Leave Policy (doc. published, 2020), and its Impact Equality Analysis (doc. published, 2020), procedural guidance documentation.

Distinct subthemes relating to (3) *inclusivity* have been identified, including (3.1) *legislation and accountability*. Examples of legislation cited within this sample included the Gender Pay Report 2020, whereas it stated that 'as part of the University's legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and as required by the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017, the university is required from March 2018 to publish data on the university's gender pay gap' (doc. published, 2020:02). Legislation is cited across the sample, in terms of confirming institutional commitment to providing a fair and inclusive workplace and further providing protections in relation to its legal liabilities.

The *Access and Participation Plan* (doc. published, 2020) further accentuates the university's intention to (3.2) *welcome all students*. The APP evidenced how recruitment drives were focussed towards widening participation, with the specific intention of extending access among groups considered disadvantaged or where barriers to entry for specific protected characteristics (Equality Act, 2010) were identified. Access and participation planning here recognises the importance of maintaining a diverse student body and through this action the university acknowledges the need and mandates the positive action required, in response.

Fourth among the principal themes emerging from the analysis of this sample, is (4) *inequalities*. 6/41 documents were found to negotiate inequalities, through the presentation of data and statements illustrating examples of unconscious biases and unwilling systemic disparities. At large, the pay equality auditing and reports considered all illustrate the imbalance between binary, female and male employees. Where it is recognised that on average women continue to be found working at lower paying grades than men.

The Gender Pay Gap Report 2020 presented data illustrating that females earn a mean average of £3.72 per hour and a median of £3.78 per hour, less than their male counterparts (doc. published, 2020:04).

The inequality focussed subtheme of (4.1) *heteronormativity* was observed within the Maternity Leave Guidelines, which provisioned six months leave to the 'partner' only to go on to assume gender roles and detail this under provisions for 'paternity' leave (doc. published, 2021:04).

One example of the subtheme (4.2) *homogeneity* was found within the Equality Pay Audit Report, which read: 'The Group agreed that for the purpose of analysing ethnicity data, Black Minority Ethnic (BME) should form one homogenous comparator group against White and should not be broken down into sub-categories' (doc. published, 2009:02). This document went further to classify ethnicities for reporting purposes as, white and non-white. Presenting data in this way can be understood as obfuscating the myriad diversity comprised within the term 'ethnic minorities'. It is possible to understand how the identities grouped here differentiate vastly ranging across ethnicities, and even more so intersectionally, in terms of varying nationalities, religious/non-religious standing, sexualities/sexual orientations, genders, disability, marriage and parental status, age, and economic status. These are all presenting lived experiences that can be understood to impact the differing roles held and the amounts paid to them.

(4.3) *Missing data* was identified as an aspect connecting with the theme of inequality and this subtheme was identified through the same Equal Pay Audit Report from 2009. In this example, the university recognised that it 'does not capture personal data relating to sexual orientation and religion or belief, these issues were excluded from the audit' (doc. published, 2009:02). Subsequently, the university has extended the data captured to include sexual orientation, religious belief. Worth noting here that this is an area that is being expanded upon further in light of the findings of the wider case study (Pentaris et al, 2022:58).

The same report from 2009 signposted the subtheme of (4.4) *pay gap*, in relation to the inequalities observed. This further to the Gender Pay Gap Report 2020, which continues to confirm how the issue manifests at an institutional level.

The final subtheme relating to inequality relates to (4.5) *structural disenfranchisement* and this is exemplified through the Parental Leave Policy 2021. This document sets out to address all staff notwithstanding gender. However, whilst holding a stance that can be understood as inclusive of gender identities beyond binary notions, barriers are identified in terms of the intersections where gender meets sexual orientation. In this way same sex relationships are not given sufficient recognition, and this is understood as potentially nullifying or disenfranchising staff holding identities that are intersectionally complex and lacking full representation through policy regulating parental provisions.

6/41 of the documents considered through this QDA were found to proactively (5) *raise awareness.* The theme of raising awareness here extends to consider LGBTQIA+ identities and intersectional aspects that have otherwise here been identified as experiencing low representation, or barriers. Accounting for documentation focussing on EDI strategically through to reporting and the development of LGBT+ specific guidance materials, the role of the LGBT+ Staff Community at the university is recognised as essential. This is clearly framed within the EDI Annual Report 2020–21, where it states: 'The community has promoted understanding of the LGBT+ University community through awareness-raising and sharing testimonials and stories, including through: i. LGBT+ History Month (February 2021) and disseminating moving "coming out" experiences from different perspectives, and accounts of microaggressions' (doc. published, 2021:07). The Impact Equality Analysis report undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic speaks directly to inclusion and raising awareness, further to calling for staff generally to consider what it takes to establish a supportive environment: 'Homophobic bullying, not feeling able to be "out" with family or employers, rejection from family/friends, harassment at work and poor responses from professionals are common mental health triggers which LGBT+ people can experience more' (doc. published, 2020:15).

Extending the scope of this theme further, the subtheme of (5.1) *celebrating LGBT+ identities* is recognised through key examples including the EDI Annual Report 2020-21. A variety of initiatives do just that, driving for enhanced engagement and understanding institutionally. Going further to acknowledge and highlight the need to recognise the specific situational complexities faced by staff holding intersectional identities. Such documentation presents a movement away from homogenous understandings of the LGBT+ population, and manifests as a *cause célèbre*, extending the reach of related actions.

What has been identified here as presenting barriers and restricting understanding through homogenous labelling is now presenting opportunities for other groups to adopt similar approaches to institutional recognition, and action.

The potential for broadening our intersectional scope is observed in the 2021 EDI report, which extends to networks representing BAME, disabled, and women, inclusive of gender non-conforming identities. Although, this is understood as the tip of the iceberg, intersectionally speaking, with more work needed to better represent identities defined by their age, religion or belief, more to aspects of identity that are not accounted for within the UK's Equality Act 2010, such as socio-economic status.

The subtheme of (5.2) *raising awareness for managers* was specifically identified as significant. LGBT+ sensitivity among managers was highlighted as potentially being transformative in relation to improved wellbeing. The 2021 Guidance for Managers document presents the scenario that whilst some consider talk of sexual orientation in the office to be inappropriate, a sense of acceptance and support affording the ability to honestly respond and identify as within an LGBT+ relationship, can directly and positively impact LGBT+ staff performance (doc. published, 2021:02). Moreover, this guidance makes clear that: 'LGBT+ people, and those perceived to be LGBT+, sometimes experience homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, hostility, harassment or prejudice at work which can go unrecognised and unchallenged' (doc. published, 2021:02). Within this context it is possible to understand the manager's role as pivotal in relation to defining expectations and affecting work space cultures.

Relational comparisons

Gaps were observed between documents speaking to an (1) *action plan for inclusion*, and those aligned with (2) *empowerment* or (3) *inclusivity*. Greater cohesion between the documents representative of these themes is an area that has been highlighted and requires greater emphasis. Seemingly intuitive, the theme of (4) *inequalities* was identified as presenting specifically through different forms to the action plan. Whereas action plan materials remained tied into raising awareness, celebrating identities, and sensitising managers via resulting initiatives.

Relational analysis went further to depict compatibility matrixes, with examples including:

- Documents directly related to LGBT+ identities (e.g. Transitioning at Work Policy) are more likely to promote awareness of issues faced by LGBT+ self-identified staff

- The documents detailing the action plan for inclusivity rarely address empowerment as a concept or approach towards enabling staff to meet their full potential
- Some documents (e.g. Maternity Leave Provisions) are inclusive of an action plan for inclusivity but also pose unconscious inequalities, primarily due to language
- Documents promoting staff empowerment either do not recognise inequalities or promote structural inequalities
- Of the 15 documents wherein inclusivity is addressed, only three refer to empowerment and enablement of staff to meet their full potential
- Of the 15 documents wherein inclusivity is addressed, five recognise inequalities across the University

<div align="right">(Pentaris et al, 2022:60)</div>

QDA findings synthesised

The case study that this QDA contributed to, included a variety of additional phases. Other phases included a survey that garnered a 10% response rate across FTE staff at large; 40 semi-structured interviews with staff self-identifying as either LGBT+ or as LGBT+ allies. Focus group engagements progressing through discussions considering themes resulting from interviews, comprising a total of 35 participants across 6 sessions. Further to the phases of the case study, short essay contributions were received from leaders of the LGBT+ Staff Network, past and present, and further to allyship. From the wealth of data resulting from these extended areas of study, a myriad of findings were found to bear directly on the lived experience of LGBT+ staff in relation to policy. For example, the staff network told us that they are [now] (2021/22) being consulted, as part of the university's policy review and consultation process; and that, network members have directly contributed towards the creation of the guidance materials referenced here.

4/5 staff participating in interviews reported either directly experiencing or observing discrimination. In total this case study presented 11 forms of discrimination, with structural discrimination reported among the most prominent – manifesting throughout policies and the practices they inform.

One key example derived from interview, which was further identified at source through this QDA, was the sense of being delegitimised and excluded by the heteronormative framing of policies speaking to parental provision and processes.

An interesting point was raised in relation to the notion of allyship presenting performatively among mid-senior levels managers. Whereas the personal motivations of managers were questioned, with concerns relating to actions being driven by policy for the purpose of 'box ticking' over personal integrity and a desire to better support and understand LGBT+ colleagues.

In terms of empowerment, the survey signposted where correlations existed between openness at work, feeling respected and heightened awareness of the LGBT+ supportive policies. Profiles that were in turn found to directly correlate and connect with 'greater confidence reporting discrimination'.

A further relevant point synthesised from survey data, and this relates to the scope of intersectionality present among respondents, were aspects of identity that extended to include disabilities, religious/non-religious beliefs, nuances recognising heteronormative identities among respondents, nonbinary and the wider trans spectrum, age, race and ethnicity, and allies – identifying from both within and without the LGBT+ staff population.

In concluding this section exploring areas of synthesis, connecting QDA findings with those of the wider case study, it is important to acknowledge how the findings presented here mirror those of similar preceding studies. Examples include the National LGBT Survey (2018), McKinsey (2020) and those from Stonewall (2018; 2020), which all accord with the message that in spite of the improvements documented through each example, discrimination continues to impact the performance, progression and sense of belonging for LGBT+ people at work.

Recommendations

Following the examination of a wealth of data resulting from the QDA, which was further informed by findings synthesised from across the wider case study, a framework of recommendations focussed upon resolution were shared.

A summary account of the report's recommendations speaking to policy, include:

- An ongoing need to review policies, recognising there is no end game
- Promotion of related work and policies that support the LGBT+ experience are key actions, which can be embedded into cycles of recruitment, appraisal, promotion, and training
- Recognition that knowledge of policies that are supportive serve to both empower LGBT+ staff and foster a culture of inclusion

- Ensuring heteronormativity is not present and indirectly discriminating against LGBT+ parents
- Ensuring that the institution's positionality is repeatedly promoted, emphasising the zero-tolerance policy against discrimination

<div align="right">(Pentaris et al, 2022:164-166)</div>

What can we take from this?

This paper has presented the results of a QDA that set out to explore the impacts institutional policy has on the LGBT+ staff population. The review of institutional documentation resulted in a sample of 41 documents that met criteria for inclusion – by structurally negotiating the lived experience of LGBT+ staff. The sample comprised of documents that perform different yet interconnected functions, ranging across guidance materials, information sheets, reports, regulations, statements, and strategies. Through the sample, a proliferation of relevant documents targeting inclusion was observed; expanding over a timeline that started with 1 single publication in 2009 and led to 13 being published throughout 2021.

Language usage was observed to vary across this timeline, with further in-/congruences observed throughout the varying documents included. Just 6 out of a sample of 41, made use of either the acronym LGBT+ or the related language it represents. Leading the way in terms of use of these key terms were the most recent guidance material and strategies underpinning them.

A pivotal moment was observed in the call-to-action included within the 2019-20 EDI Strategy and Action Plan, which for the first time set out a clear road map, connecting strategic principles with actions. The development, understanding and awareness raised through the innovations and related publication that followed – extending recognition and representation to the less prominent LGBTQIA identities, previously omitted entirely.

Intersectionality featured only twice and presented an area where more work is needed to build upon the identities there presented relating to women of colour and neurodivergent nonbinary members of staff. An axis to support further recognition of important intersecting aspects has been identified in the UK Equality Act 2010, which presents 9 (so-called) protected characteristics. The compounding impacts of holding multiple characteristics is an area that requires more work, to enable greater equity for those most disadvantaged by the identities they hold.

Prose and function were found to connect pockets of language use. Uniformly grouped documents were found to share consistencies, with departures also owing to variations in document type and author. Understanding this draws our attention to the need for a centralised review and quality control system that is premised upon co-production by those holding a full spectrum of LGBT+ identities

The first theme to emerge from the data was the (1) *action plan for inclusion*, which stemmed from 10/41 documents. A framework underpinning the intention to place inclusion as a core institutional value and objective, manifested through the following aims:

1. Creation of inclusive work and study spaces
2. Establishment and support for staff networks
3. Elimination of all [staff and student] access, attainment, continuation, and progression gaps
4. Eradication of the pay gap between staff identifying as male and female
5. Increased productivity and sense of wellbeing
6. Respect for the confidentiality and status of all transgender staff
7. Supportive management
8. Provision of training for all staff

(Pentaris et al, 2022:70)

While seemingly comprehensive, nonbinary identities have not been included here.

A further principal theme was that of (2) *empowerment*, which emanated from 6/41 documents in the sample. The directives within these documents serve to ensure staff are protected and empowered to reach their full potential. Provision of empowering documentation is understood to be mutually beneficial, both for the individual and the university. Documents defining staff appraisal, conduct and mentoring arrangements, were all identified as empowering. Mentoring arrangements and guidance focussed on the empowerment of staff progressing early to mid-length careers. Aspects of communication and relationship management were shown to be important. Guidance materials were observed as presenting opportunities for mentoring to take place, outlining supportive approaches and encouragement strategies, which present an accessible invitation to any would-be mentees. In this way a 360 cycle of communication is encouraged, through experimentation and curiosity, focussing on context, skill development, and the professional advancement of the mentee.

18/41 documents offered the most prominent of the principal themes identified within this QDA, (3) *inclusivity*. Many of the documents connected themes and fulfilled interconnecting roles. Examples that tied into inclusivity included, those speaking to staff conduct, outlining special leave arrangements, detailing planning in relation to access and participation, and the toolkit provisioned to support the identification of minority experience that may otherwise go unaccounted for, the Impact Equality Assessment. The subthemes connecting to inclusivity included (3.1) *legislation and accountability* and (3.2) *welcoming students*. The appointment of staff presented notable legal responsibilities to consider, as did binary gendered equal pay reporting. Welcoming students followed the specific aims laid out in order to widen participation among underrepresented groups.

The fourth theme of (4) *inequalities* was observed and negotiated across 6/41 documents. Unconscious, unwilling, and what may be considered indirectly discriminative systemic inequalities were also observed and further substantiated through connected subthemes:

4.1 *Heteronormativity*, with the example given presenting the alienation of same-sex parents throughout the division of parental leave

4.2 *Disenfranchisement*, of the couples impacted by the heteronormative framing of parental policy

4.3 *Homogeneity*, recognising what is lost when representing diverse and unique individual identities using an acronym

4.4 *Missing data*, which signposted how characteristics of import have been omitted in the past and signposting how this persists, with nonbinary identities the least represented in this sample

4.5 *Pay gap*, was illustrated throughout documents negotiating inequalities and presents a very real impact on lived experience that is currently only considered through a limited intersectional lens.

Fifth among the themes that present the cornerstones of this QDA, was (5) *raising awareness*. 6/41 documents were found to raise awareness in relation to LGBT+ matters, with the majority arriving during 2021. Guidance materials and reports were considered to be most impactful here, with subthemes identifying the import of (5.1) *celebrating LGBT+ identities* and (5.2) *raising awareness for managers*. Reports were identified as giving voice to the contribution of LGBTQIA+ staff members, thereby celebrating the identities and product of LGBT+ staff. Guidance was understood as necessary to educate and sensitise line managers, who were also identified as holding the power to enable safer spaces for LGBT+ staff to authentically be themselves at work and thrive.

In conclusion, relational observations were made denoting where connectivity lacked, separating documents negotiating inequalities from those raising awareness, developing inclusivity, and empowering staff. The disconnections observed here mean it is possible to apply procedure whilst remaining ignorant of the inequalities underpinning the directives therein.

The relational analysis resulted in 6 statements:

1. Documents directly related to LGBT+ identities promote awareness of the issues faced
2. Action plans do not address approaches to empowerment
3. Unconscious bias and unconscious inequalities are observable and relate to language usage within documents
4. Documents promoting empowerment do not recognise inequalities
5. 15/41 documents feature themes of inclusivity, only 3/41 provide instruction relating to empowering staff to meet their full potential
6. 15/41 documents address inclusivity, only 5/41 recognise inequalities across the university

(Pentaris et al, 2022:60)

This QDA and wider case study, have illustrated how emerging themes are interconnected and all contribute to creating an inclusive culture. Further it has been shown how strategies feed into action plans, which in turn result in guidance materials that directly address inequalities, detailing support, and accountability. The role documents play in empowering staff has also been observed. By placing the experience of LGBT+ staff at the centre of practices and setting out expectations that encourage staff to achieve their potential. Raising awareness plays a key role, from signposting the existence and impact of inequalities, to developing understanding, and encouraging behavioural change. The timeline of development here presented across this sample also illustrates how strategic aims targeting greater inclusion can be implemented at structural level. With direct support from section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, provocations relating to discrimination or disadvantage can no longer be allowed to go unanswered.

NB: Due to the ongoing cycles of review, amendment and retitling of institutional policies, versions cited in this paper may now be obsolete. To access the policies referenced, requests can be made directly to research authors. Additionally, a chronological sample list, including full document titles and publication dates is provided in the appendix, below.

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Appendix, The QDA Sample

No.	Titles	Date
1	LGBT+ Guidance for Managers	2021
2	Transitioning at Work Policy	2021
3	Inclusive Language Guidance	2021
4	This is our time: University of Greenwich Strategy 2021-30	2021
5	Special Leave	2021
6	Paternity Leave and Pay Policy	2021
7	Shared Parental Leave Policy and Procedure	2021
8	Adoption Leave Policy	2021
9	Maternity Leave Guidelines	2021
10	Equality Analysis Screening, Proposed Changes	2021
11	Parental Leave Policy	2021
12	Informal Meetings – Additional Guidance for Managers	2021
13	One-to-One Meetings – Guidance for Managers	2021
14	Impact Equality Analysis (IEA)	2020
15	IEA to support COVID19	2020
16	EDI Annual Report 2020-21	2020
17	Access & Participation Plan 2020-25	2020
18	Appraisal – Policy and Procedure	2020
19	Gender Pay Gap Report 2020	2020
20	Death of a Colleague Guidance	2020
21	EDI Strategy & Action Plan 2019-22	2019
22	Appointment of Academic Staff Regulations	2018
23	Personal Relationships Policy	2018
24	Managing Attendance	2017
25	Maternity Leave Provisions	2017
26	Return to Work – Guidance for Managers	2017
27	Appointment of Professional Services Staff Regulations	2017
28	Bullying and Harassment Policy	2017
29	Equality Analysis Screening Tool for Working Guidelines	2016
30	University of Greenwich People Strategy 2016	2016
31	Disciplinary Policy and Procedure	2016
32	Grievance Policy and Procedure	2016
33	Mentoring new staff	2015
34	Rules for Staff Conduct	2015
35	Avoidance and Resolution of Disputes Procedure	2015
36	Stress Policy	2015
37	Additional Information for Applicants to Teaching Posts	2015
38	Keeping in Touch Days – Parental Leave	2015
39	Mentors Guidelines	2014
40	Equality and Diversity Policy Statement	2014
41	Equal Pay Audit Report 2008	2009