Leadership identity : insights from women-only leadership development programmes and LGBTQ+ leaders

Leadership Identity: Insights from Women-only Leadership Development Programmes and LGBTQ+ leaders

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Abstract

Sixty-four percent of UK businesses are taking action to harness the benefits of leadership diversity (The Chartered Institute of Personnel Development, 2022). Leadership development programmes (LDPs) are one such action, aimed at supporting underrepresented groups in their development. However, the evidence informing these programmes is limited (Ely & Meyerson, 2000), potentially eroding organisational investment and hampering the development of those from underrepresented groups.

The aim of this thesis is to deepen understanding regarding the leadership development of two of these groups - LGBTQ+ leaders and women leaders. Their journeys to leadership have synergies as they challenge conventional notions of 'leadership' (Eagly & Chin, 2010). A review of the literature found no published research on LDPs aimed at LGBTQ+ leaders. While research on women-only LDPs (WLDPs) is more advanced, there has been no previous consolidation of this knowledge. Given the similarity of their respective journeys, important lessons could be extrapolated from WLDP scholarship and potentially applied to LGBTQ+ leaders.

To address this aim, two studies were conducted. The first, a systematic literature review (SLR, n = 13), examined how WLDPs contribute to leadership development in women leaders. The results suggest the leaders' exploration of identity dynamics, and the impact this has on the formation and development of a leadership 'self', is a key beneficial component. These findings informed the second study, which explored leadership identity formation and development of LGBTQ+ leaders. Three stages were identified: reconciling responsibilities of both LQBTQ+ membership and leadership, recognising strengths derived from the interaction

between their LGBTQ+ and leadership identities; and utilising these strengths, manifesting in certain protagonist identities.

Overall, this thesis advances understanding of leadership development for underrepresented groups, exploring the beneficial components of WLDPs and deepening understanding of LGBTQ+ leadership identity development. These findings may help organisations accelerate the representation of diversity in leadership roles.

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Professional practice statement

This body of work marks the end of a four-year journey of learning. Having completed Part One of the Professional Doctorate (Professional Practice Portfolio) in Years 1 and 2 and achieved Registered Occupational Psychologist status, this thesis satisfies the requirements for Part Two and represents two years' part-time study. The following statement provides a summary of how my professional practice and personal values informed this thesis.

I've worked in the field of leadership development for over 10 years, in a variety of project management and consultant roles. Throughout that time, my interest has been in understanding the intricacies of what makes a leader 'a leader.' My own identity as a gay man fuelled this further and made me ask myself, 'how much did this influence my leadership 'self'?' and 'how could organisations support people like me on their path to leadership?' Having attended many leadership development programmes over my career, I felt frustrated that this perspective was missing. I like to think that they have equipped me with certain skills and competencies, yet the extent to which they focused on the nuances and interactions between my identities was absent – but why? My identity as a gay man was integral to who I was; why did it feel that these programmes seemed to convey that it lacked significance?

Working for a Management Consultancy and being a creator of leadership development programmes purchased and delivered to clients, I realised I was part of the problem. Of course, we as practitioners are often at the mercy of our clients' areas of focus and concern. Though not all, the majority want to see a positive shift in particular behaviours they require for success. They want immediate and recognisable returns on their investment. Had I sold something that

was focused on these aspects? Absolutely. But had I advocated for the inclusion of content that explored the participant's leadership identity formation and how they want to 'show up' as a leader? Absolutely not. This reflection was somewhat of a personal reckoning. I had a responsibility to my clients, my participants, and to myself to do better. Therefore, this professional doctorate has been both a professional and personal journey of discovery.

When I looked into the literature, what was striking was the lack of research that incorporated the LGBTQ+ 'voice' and identity into the design and delivery of leadership development initiatives employed by organisations. Why? How could this be the case? Are we, as a community, being erased? This dearth led me to explore the programmes aimed at another underrepresented group in leadership – women leaders. My rationale being that beneficial components of these programmes had the potential to inform the design and delivery of those directed to LGBTQ+ leaders. What this revealed deepened my concerns. Why is the reporting of research into programmes aimed at women in leadership so opaque and obscure? Where is the practical guidance - the translation of theory into action? And due to this, as a research community, are we exacerbating existing gaps and generating new barriers that tether women to a non-leadership sphere?

These questions left me feeling both frustrated and concerned, and so they formed the basis of this body of work. This professional doctorate thesis has been cathartic in tempering my frustrations in three ways. First, it has allowed me the time to reflect and deepen my understanding of my own journey to leadership, as well as how my LGBTQ+ identity has supported and sometimes hindered this journey. Second, while it may sound self-absorbed, I wanted to give back to my community that I hold so dear. I want to give them that 'voice' that

is so clearly missing and underexamined. Third, I've strived for transparency and clarity in my reporting, holding myself to account in ensuring the knowledge this thesis illuminates is accessible and practical. Together, my hope is that the learnings and evidence from this thesis give organisations and practitioners 'food for thought' in the use of leadership development initiatives; avoid presuming that the intersection of identities lacks significance, and explore and support these interactions as they allow you and, most importantly, the individual the chance to reap the benefits that manifest from them.

Chapter 1: Supporting leadership diversity: An introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter offers an introduction to leadership diversity and one initiative employed by organisations to increase the balance of diversity in their leadership populations - leadership development programmes (LDPs). It explores the factors which impede leadership diversity and highlights the impact this has on two populations - women leaders and LGBTQ+ leaders. It then introduces the mechanisms organisations employ to obtain and maintain leadership diversity, before a review of LDPs and their salient components. Finally, it highlights the lack of exploration and reporting regarding the impact LDPs may have on these two populations, justifying the need to investigate these facets further. This chapter also introduces the structure of this thesis, concluding with a synopsis of the two studies, along with the reflexive stance of the researcher.

1.2 What is leadership diversity?

Whilst both 'leadership' and 'diversity' have been extensively researched in isolation of each other, the importance of 'leadership diversity' is becoming increasingly recognised in academic and popular realms (Burton & Leberman, 2015; Farkas *et al*., 2019). Defined as those who come from "non-privileged, non-dominant, underrepresented, disadvantaged or unusual demographic backgrounds" (Eagly & Chin, 2010, p.216), the term incorporates a wide taxonomy of identities which question the de facto assumptions of leadership; those being "white, heterosexual, male" (Joseph & Chin, 2019, p.1). Whilst there are a broad spectrum of identities that challenge these assumptions (i.e., Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals, disabled individuals and those who are neurodivergent, this thesis focuses on two identities

which directly challenge this de facto assumption of leadership: women leaders and LGBTQ+ leaders. This is because their respective journeys are intertwined (Channing, 2020) and pose similar questions which threaten these prevailing views of leadership. For example, homophobia is not only about sexual discrimination. Like misogyny, it is also about normalising gender stereotypes and ostracising those who do not conform. The scholarship of women in leadership, whilst somewhat uneven in its reporting, is more advanced in comparison to LGBTQ+ individuals in leadership. However, given their intertwined nature, important lessons could be extrapolated from women in leadership scholarship and could potentially applied to LGBTQ+ leaders. This, in turn, could inform action to support the LGBTQ+ leader on their path to leadership, and allow organisations to harness the impact that comes with having a diverse leadership population.

1.2.1 The benefits of leadership diversity

It is acknowledged that leadership diversity has a profound impact on organisations and their workforce. For instance, the global growth of diversity among followers and non-leadership workers challenges organisations to do more in ensuring that these populations feel heard and represented by those charged to lead them (Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 2006). The representation of diverse groups at these senior levels attempts to meet this challenge, whilst also directly contributing to feelings of inclusion amongst minority group members (Meeussen *et al*., 2014). Leadership diversity has also been noted to bring benefits to decision-making and exploration. For example, leaders from racial and ethnic minority groups may have valuable multicultural experience because they have learned to navigate multiple cultures (Leung & Chiu, 2008). In turn, this can foster flexibility, openness to change and thinking dexterity in the form of creative cognitive processes and problem-solving skills (Maddux *et al*., 2008; Molinsky, 2007). Leadership diversity may also prompt the exploration of new

approaches and mitigate the inherent dangers of groupthink (Baron, 2005; Hong & Page, 2004; Page, 2007).

Although those in possession of typical leadership characteristics (i.e., White, cisgender male; Eagly & Chin, 2010) still dominate leadership roles, recognition of the advantages of leadership diversity appears to be permeating organisations. The rise in leadership positions held by such individuals is testament to this progress (FTSE Women Leaders Review, 2023; Parker Review, 2023). For instance, the ratio of women on boards of Britain's 350 largest organisations has breached the 40% mark for the first time (FTSE Women Leaders Review, 2023). Further, nearly all FTSE 100 firms now have at least one minority board member (The Parker Review, 2023). These sources also indicate a significant shift in the discourse surrounding leadership diversity, highlighting the enhanced quality in the conversations regarding the actions and initiatives organisations employ. Such conversations and the actions which are evolving from them are shifting from merely adopting practices and policies to manage a diverse workforce as these, in fact, are not serve the organisation or its people well. Rather, organisations are adopting and promoting initiatives which help them to capitalise on the benefits of diversity, for themselves and their workforces, to achieve and sustain heightened levels of performance and success.

Despite these recognised advantages and the progress made to create diversity in leadership ranks, there is still much to be done. Those from underrepresented backgrounds still face challenges in the form of overt and covert discrimination, being overlooked for promotion and having to demonstrated higher standards compared to majority groups in order to achieve progression (Cranfield University, 2022; FTSE Women Leaders Review, 2023; The

Parker Review, 2023). Further, there is an alarming lack of clear reporting and understanding in relation to leadership positions held by those in possession of other characteristics and identities beyond gender and ethnicity (e.g., LGBTQ+ individuals). Together, these observations indicate the impact that prevailing societal beliefs have on tethering those in possession of non-typical characteristics to non-leadership roles.

1.3 Factors impeding leadership diversity

Could the lack of representation indicate the absence of necessary qualifications by those in possession of non-typical characteristics? Or does it indicate barriers to positions of authority to those without typical leadership characteristics? Scholars have attempted to answer these questions, and this has culminated in conclusions that individual (e.g., education and experience) and structural (e.g., occupational segregation) constraints are only part of the answer, with discrimination viewed as a contributing factor (Arrow, 1998; Blau & Kahn, 2006; Grodsky & Pager, 2001; Maume, 1999).

To understand the risk of inequitable treatment in relation to leadership, it is first key to understand the prevailing schemas and societal models of the term 'leadership'. Although these ideas surrounding the characteristics of effective leadership are informed by organisational culture and contexts (Lord *et al*., 2001), the prevailing societal views of leaders focus on dispositional elements of ambition, confidence, independence and agency (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005; Powell *et al*., 2002; Schein, 2001). Despite the more recent inclusion of qualities relating to care and support (Gillet, 2010; Owens & Hekman, 2012; Rahman & Castelli, 2013), most leadership roles are strongly instilled with societal models of traditional masculinity and leadership prototypes (Atwater *et al*., 2004; Calás & Smircich, 2009; Hopkins *et al*., 2008;

Petsko & Rosette, 2022). The potential for discrimination is present when perceivers view individuals as not possessing the qualities which come with these dominating archetypes of leadership (Eagly & Dieckman, 2005; Heilman, 2001). This culminates in a less favourable attitude to the individual, and often this translates to unintentional discriminatory behaviour (Hilton & von Hippel *et al*., 1996).

1.3.1 The impact on women leaders

The impact of this unintentional discriminatory behaviour means that, for women leaders, they can be subject to particular beliefs regarding gender, workplace barriers and patterns which champion men (Calás & Smircich, 2009; Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Kolb & McGinn, 2009; Sturm, 2001). A result of organisational structures and hierarchies which favour men, as well as the above observations which stereotype leadership behaviours with typical masculine characteristics, leads women to face an uphill struggle to leadership. The activation of such stereotypes leads to observers casting doubt on the abilities of women leaders (Davies *et al*., 2005). In turn, this leads the woman leader actor to experience stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995), where the individual feels anxious about validating these stereotypes and, therefore, is hesitant to occupy these senior roles (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). Additionally, tendencies to associate and promote others who share similar interests and characteristics with oneself exacerbate the effects of discrimination that stem from these stereotypes. This means that in those hierarchies in which men dominate, there is an intensified risk of the natural human inclination to move towards and champion those who are similar to themselves. The result is that these powerful men promote and advocate for other men (Eagly & Carli, 2007). This further erodes the ability to gain access to important networks and developmental relationships (Mousa *et al*., 2021) which may support women leaders in obtaining leadership roles.

In summary, there appears to be an enduring cycle of perpetuation. The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions fortifies the prevailing societal stereotypes of leadership. This validates men's advantage to attaining positions of power and, in turn, preserves these prevailing norms.

1.3.2 The impact on LGBTQ+ leaders

Whilst the same observations regarding stereotypes and the discrimination they can create can be applied to LGBTQ+ leaders, there is far less research on the experiences of this population (Fassinger *et al*., 2010; Garg & Sangwan, 2021; Ruggs *et al*., 2013). However, more recently, the topic of LGBTQ+ leaders has been recognised as an area of emerging research, and the last few years of work in this area has brought to the fore the challenges and biases faced by this community (e.g., Liberman & Golom 2015; Morton 2017; Niedlich & Steffens 2015). Whilst these studies explore and question the heteronormativity and cisgenderism of leadership, they focus on the perceived effectiveness of LGBTQ+ leaders compared to heterosexual and cisgender counterparts and, in posing these questions, may further perpetuate and reinforce barriers to leadership positions (Burke & LaFrance 2016; Moghaddam & Harré, 2010).

Other observations have suggested that LGBTQ+ individuals face a nuanced navigation of complex personal and professional frontiers in the workplace, as well as experience anxiety surrounding the potential judgements regarding their personal identities (Grace & Benson, 2000). The anxiety experienced, particularly by those in leadership roles, can cause the individual to feel obliged to conceal, 'mute' or reduce these personal facets at work (Gray *et al*., 2016). To support this concealment, those in possession of these identities will often

attempt to conform to or imitate heteronormative and cisgender stereotypes to seek acceptance and open opportunities (Gray *et al*., 2016; Reimers, 2020).

Much of the observations regarding anxiety and 'muting' of certain aspects of personal identity can be applied to transgender persons, those whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth (GLAAD, n.d.). However, they face unique issues that lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals do not. Indeed, prior research does appear to neglect this uniqueness and the difficult position of these individuals in the workplace (Fletcher & Everly, 2021), with LGBTQ+ research predominantly focusing on LGB individuals (Verbeek *et al*., 2020). For instance, transgender individuals who undergo gender transition at work may be viewed as more "visibly other" (Beauregard *et al*., 2018), and lead to more challenging dynamics and obstacles to navigate at the intersection of their personal and professional identities (Hennekam & Dumazert, 2023). This can lead to the voluntary withholding of their perspectives and engage in self-protective actions in order to avoid mistreatment (Beauregard *et al*., 2018; Grant *et al*., 2011). Additionally, societal attitudes towards transgender persons are often more belligerent than those towards LGB individuals, resulting in more severe consequences (Kwon, 2013, Ozturk, 2011). These include being the target of confusion and tension as transgender employees do not readily fit into prevailing views of gender categories (Ozturk, 2011). With these observations, as well as those outlined regarding the benefits of leadership diversity, it is unsurprising that organisations have adopted mechanisms to promote it and support the leaders who possess these diverse characteristics.

1.4 Mechanisms to support leadership diversity

A broad range of mechanisms aimed at enhancing leadership diversity have been explored in the literature, with varying degrees of success (Carter *et al*., 2020; Dobbin & Kalev, 2018; Sanyal *et al*., 2015). Additionally, some of the most recent recommendations regarding the creation of leadership diversity call for a system-wide approach (Carter *et al*., 2020; Stamps & Foley, 2023). This advocates for diversity initiatives to be holistic and be woven throughout an organisation's policies, process and strategic intent as, without this commitment, there is likelihood for any initiative to be seen as "window-dressing" (Parker, 2002, p.1). This leads to initiatives being deployed in isolation or without a cohesive 'thread' that unifies them, potentially eroding their impact (Carter *et al*., 2020). However, organisations are unlikely to commit to this system-wide approach due to a number of factors, predominantly the cost of such a change (Ng & Sears, 2020). Therefore, focus is placed on those initiatives which carry some impact and which do not carry a heavy financial burden. Köllen (2021) offers a useful framework by which to explore this, framing practices in two distinct yet interconnected domains: those which support the attraction of diverse populations to organisations, and those which support the maintenance of diversity which already exists within organisations.

1.4.1 Mechanisms to support the attraction of diverse populations

Practices which are primarily related to the attraction of diverse leadership populations are predominantly those corresponding to recruitment processes. Such practices can include processes to target candidates of underrepresented groups (Avery & McKay, 2006; McKay & Avery, 2005), such as advertisements in targeted media outlets and events. Further, such advertisements are also likely to portray racial, ethnic and gender diversity in photographs (Ng & Burke, 2005), signifying the recruiting organisation's commitment to potential candidates

(Bernardi *et al*., 2002). This 'diversity image' of a potential employer has previously been observed to be a key decision-making facet of many minority candidates when contemplating applying or accepting a role (Avery & McKay, 2006).

Another common practice involves the leveraging of formal assessment methods and psychometric instruments to provide objective data to inform decision-making in a hiring context (Whysall & Bruce, 2023). Such processes can provide objective and reliable data regarding a candidate's behavioural and skill competence, as well as provide indications of potential for future growth (Church & Rotolo, 2013; Sackett *et al*., 2022). Such methods also counterbalance traditional methods of selection which rely on less predictable data (i.e., experience). Further, these methods mitigate the bias known to impact leadership selection and which systematically, although not necessarily consciously, screen out those who do not match prevailing schemas of leadership (Caver & Livers, 2020).

1.4.2 Mechanisms to support the maintenance of diversity within organisations

Formal assessment methods can also support the maintenance of diversity that already exists within organisations (Church & Rotolo, 2013). From a leadership succession-planning perspective, such methods can be used to inform the identification and development of future leaders (Church & Silzer, 2014). This, in turn, can mitigate the extent to which those who do not meet prevailing leadership 'moulds' are disregarded.

Diversity training is another widespread practice in the maintenance of diversity (Alhejji *et al*., 2016; Carter *et al*., 2020). This training aims to equip employees and leaders with the enhanced awareness of stereotype-based diversity-related biases that may exist,

prompting intergroup relations within the organisation (Pendry *et al*., 2007). Similarly, this same awareness and relations may also be nurtured through network affinity groups of minority employees, such as women-only groups, LGBTQ+ networks, or networks for certain ethnic minority groups (Clutterbuck *et al*., 2012; Clutterbuck & Ragins, 2002). Such affinity groups also aim to provide members with valuable (i.e., access to connections, influential stakeholders and opportunities) for their career progress; those which are assumed to be less available than members of more privileged groups (Clutterbuck *et al*., 2012).

Providing access to these valuable resources is also an objective of leadership development programmes (LDPs). The section that follows provides an overview of leadership development, the content and outcomes of LDPs, and the need to deepen understanding in the development of two underrepresented groups in leadership: women leaders and LGBTQ+ leaders.

1.5 How leadership development is defined

LDPs are a mechanism to support leaders in their development and they have been the focus of a number of organisational researchers (Cacioppe, 1998; Conger, 1989; Davis, 2001; Day *et al*., 2004; Fulmer & Wagner, 1999; Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004; London, 2002; McCall *et al*., 1988; McCauley, 2001; Pernick, 2001; Yukl, 2008). However, consensus surrounding the universal definitions of both 'leadership' (Avolio *et al*., 2010) and 'development' (Kirchner & Akdere, 2014) is lacking, as is agreement surrounding the definition of the combination of these terms. Kaye Hart *et al*. (2008) do offer a definition of 'leadership development' which extrapolates the meaning in the literature, whereby leadership development "involves expanding an organisation's capacity to generate leadership" through

"development at an individual level" (p.633). This positions LDPs as an interaction between the individual attending the programme and the larger organisational environment and strategic intent, where there is emphasis on a coordinated, methodical effort by both parties directed toward leader improvement.

1.5.1 The content of LDPs

The consensus regarding the content of LDPs appears to be clearer, with four overarching domains being observed in the literature (Conger, 1992): personal growth, conceptual understanding, skills building and feedback. The following sub-sections will examine each of these in turn.

1.5.1.1 Personal growth

LDPs which focus on personal growth promote an inward-looking approach to participants, causing them to reflect on the demonstration of behaviour, their values and needs (Amagoh, 2009; Ely *et al*., 2011; Northouse, 2010). Ely and colleagues (2011) posit that such programmes could be positioned as "identity work" (p.2), and the process in which individuals construct their leadership identity, understand their strengths and development needs, as well as understanding enablers and barriers to success (Avolio *et al*., 2010; Day, 2000). The concept of leadership identity is explored comprehensively in Chapter 4 and, therefore, not described here to avoid repetition.

1.5.1.2 Conceptual understanding

LDPs which focus on conceptual understanding bring into sharper focus key leadership theories (Goldman *et al*., 2021), as well as why the behaviours they promote are important and the situations where they may be most effectively deployed (Burbaugh & Kaufman, 2017). The act of exploration and knowledge acquirement may, as highlighted by Mezirow (2000), widen the individual's immediate frame of reference and prompt the creation of new mental schemas.

1.5.1.3 Skills building

LDPs which focus on skills building have content predefined and delivered instructionally, unlike the above which have been seen to involve a co-creative environment between participants and facilitator (Atwater *et al*., 1999). A primary focus of this approach is the practice of key leadership skills (such as feedback conversations and presentation skills) delivered via simulations, role-plays and activities to build comfort and expertise (Goldman *et al*., 2021; Kaye Hart *et al*., 2008).

1.5.1.4 Feedback

LDPs which focus on feedback incorporate psychometric assessments, multirater feedback, peer debriefs and leverage mentoring and/or coaching conversations (Boyce *et al*., 2010). Such programmes tend to be individual in nature and focus on the personalised learning and development needs of the individual participant, rather than the previous domains which tend to be synonymous with group-based delivery methodologies (Ely *et al*., 2010). LDPs which incorporate each of the domains of personal growth, conceptual understanding, skills building and feedback have been seen to be fruitful in enhancing the application of learning

and supporting positive outcomes (Frawley, *et al*., 2018; Goldman *et al*., 2021; McAlearney, 2006; Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001).

1.5.2 The outcomes of LDPs

Whilst there is much within the literature regarding the outcomes of LDPs, a comprehensive analysis of outcomes is lacking due to the unique nature of each programme's aim and content, as well as the strategic intent of the organisation in which they are deployed (Day, 2000; Douglas *et al*., 2021; Mousa *et al*., 2021). It is possible, however, to draw some consensus from this literature, and separate these outcomes into two domains: human capital and social capital (Day, 2000).

1.5.2.1 Human capital, leadership identity and authenticity

Human capital refers to a focus on intrapersonal competence. Through an enhanced self-view and leadership identity formation (Hall & Seibert, 1992), the aim of LDPs is to enable participants to think and act in new ways (Coleman, 1988) and to engage with productive behaviours (such as self-control, adaptability and confidence).

Leadership identity is grounded in the scholarship of personal identity and "the various meanings attached to oneself by self and others" (Gecas & Burke, 1995, p.42). To extend this definition further, an individual's leadership identity, that which is their leadership 'self' and underpinned by their characteristics, attitudes and convictions (Ibarra, 1999), shapes elements of an individual's social self: it is seen as an extension of who they are. At the heart of this description is the concept of authenticity, defined as the core attributes and the essence of an individual which they are driven to project and adhere to (Gergen, 1991). Whilst the

importance of authenticity is discussed in various ways across psychological research (see Vannini & Franzese, 2008 for a review), it is widely acknowledged that the embracement of the self, as well as an individual's capacity to remain true to this, is important for psychological health and well-being (Harter, 2002).

Authenticity has, from a theoretical perspective, been repeatedly linked via empirical observations to the constructs of uniqueness, righteousness and sincerity (Vannini & Franzese, 2008), yet some scholars (e.g., Erickson, 1994) argue that it has parity with a much deeper idea: the ability to recognise and attain one's expectation of oneself. Though an individual's sense of self can be partially formed by external observers (Tajfel, 1979), Erickson posited that an individual can only fully achieve authenticity by creating congruence between one's sense of self and one's actions. When an individual feels unable or restricted in fulfilling their authentic self, by obstacles such as social stigmas and fears of discrimination (Levitt & Ippolito, 2014; Williams, 2013), problems are likely to arise in regard to optimal psychological health and well-being (Goldman & Kernis, 2002). Therefore, leadership identity development, and the opportunity to explore this in an LDP, seems fundamental in mitigating adverse psychological states.

1.5.2.2 Social capital, developmental networks and relationships

The concept of social capital was once confined to the social and political sciences and has since become progressively more important to the healthy functioning of organisations (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Cohen & Prusak, 2001; Timberlake, 2005). In this context, social capital refers to the personal relationships and partnerships that a leader has within an

organisation (Alder & Kwon, 2002; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998), to enhance cooperation, knowledge sharing and resource exchanges (Cohen & Prusak, 2001).

Unlike human capital which focuses on the intrapersonal aspects of leadership, social capital is grounded in the more relational aspects of leadership (Brower *et al*., 2000; Drath & Palus, 1994). The development of social capital has been seen to be of benefit to participants of leadership programmes. For example, it can be argued that the higher an individual progresses within leadership, the more they rely on their network (Kanter, 1977), as it is instrumental in achieving and being perceived as successful (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Oh *et al*., 2004). Leaders with a solid network, and tactical skills to expedite the development of one, can be perceived as holding greater power and influence (Putnam, 2001). This, in turn, has been noted to create higher levels of observer trust in the actor's leadership ability, the alignment of shared goals and greater coherence of action (Cohen & Prusak, 2001). Equally, a strong network can offer opportunities for career development and advancement that may not appear via more traditional means. Networks can shape the direction of careers through the access to opportunities, and support in the channelling of information and referrals which may be fruitful in securing them (Burt 1992; Higgins & Kram, 2001).

Additionally, such networks allow for individuals to experiment and to practice new behavioural competences in relative safety and security (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Foschi, 1996). Without these important relationships, individuals may develop enhanced levels of cautiousness and risk-aversion. This, in turn, inhibits the exploration and testing of new skills which may be advantageous in their career development.

In summary, the development and composition of a network appears to grant access (or not) to the power structures which may expedite an individual's career progression. Therefore, the expansion of one's social capital through tools and techniques to develop networks and relationships appears to be a crucial staple of LDPs. Given the above observations, social capital seems particularly useful for those participants who are members of underrepresented groups, as the prevailing societal norms create a disadvantage in establishing these important developmental relationships.

1.5.3 The impact of LDPs for women leaders and LGBTQ+ leaders

There has previously been no synthesis that seeks to bring together and conceptualise the components of programmes aimed at advancing women leaders within organisations, as well as an understanding of how these programmes are developed and delivered and their efficacy measured. Thus, it is crucially important to draw conclusions through the extrapolation of women-only development programmes and to understand the dynamics which make them successful. Mousa and colleagues (2021) offer a perspective through a medical/healthcare lens and incorporate a broad focus of organisational interventions. They surmise through their systematic review and meta-analysis that advancing women in leadership in a healthcare setting is based on a number of factors, namely organisational processes, gender barriers to promotion, executive sponsorship and support tools (i.e., recruitment practices and recognition schemes). Whilst their work mentions LPDs as part of these factors, their wide perspective and the combination of search criteria used does not provide a comprehensive and specific view of such programmes.

In the review conducted for this thesis, no literature could be found surrounding LDPs which are geared towards the LGBTQ+ community. When viewing sexual minorities as members of a disadvantaged group in the workplace, similar to those who are in possession of other protected characteristics (such as gender), programmes that are specifically aimed at these disadvantaged groups may provide some foundations for the development of the evidence-base for LDPs aimed at supporting LGBTQ+ leaders. However, the above observations suggest that there are important experiential and intersectional aspects faced by LGBTQ+ individuals to consider. This poses interesting questions in relation to the utility and applicability of existing leadership development practices, and the ability of these programmes to cater to the nuances of leadership identity construction for LGBTQ+ leaders. Therefore, enhancing the understanding of the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ leaders will help identify the core foundations and topics which could be included in developmental support and aid in building leadership capability in members of this community.

1.6 Thesis structure

This thesis contains five chapters. This introductory chapter explores LDPs more broadly, as well as exploring the nuances that women leaders and LGBTQ+ leaders face in ascending to leadership positions. Using these observations, it proposes a justification for the rationale as to why further research into the programmes aimed at developing female talent is required, as well as how these findings may inform LDPs geared towards supporting another underrepresented group in leadership – LGBTQ+ leaders. Chapter Two explains the methodology and epistemological stance of the researcher, providing insight into the research design and approach. Chapter Three presents the first study of this thesis – a systematic literature review (SLR). It explores what is known about women-only LDPs, with specific focus on the recruitment processes of participants, the design and instructional methods

employed, the outcomes and their measurement. This SLR is the catalyst for the design of the second study. Chapter Four is a comprehensive presentation of this second study, which explores the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ leaders on their path to leadership. The final chapter – Chapter Five – provides a holistic overview of the findings from each of the studies. The researcher explores the contribution these studies make to existing knowledge, for both theory and practice, and makes arguments for the direction and future progression of research in this area. Limitations of the studies are also highlighted, along with how future research may mitigate these areas.

1.7 Research aim

The aim of this thesis was to deepen understanding regarding the leadership development path for two underrepresented groups, those being women leaders and LGBTQ+ leaders. Firstly, this will help enhance the knowledge of LDPs employed by organisations to promote women leaders, as well as inform future interventions. Secondly, it will inform the emerging mechanisms which could support the LGBTQ+ leader as they walk the path to leadership.

The first study, a systematic literature review, had the overarching objective of examining how LDPs contribute to leadership development in women leaders. Specifically, it looked to cover four aims. The first was to examine who is recruited to women's LDPs and how this recruitment takes place. The second was to understand the design and instructional methodologies these programmes employ. The third was to explore the skills, knowledge and abilities these programmes look to develop. Finally, the fourth was to investigate the outcomes of these programmes and how they are measured. A key finding from the SLR was the

inclusion of curricula regarding intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) and identity dynamics. Participants of the reviewed studies reported the beneficial nature of guided reflection regarding their multiple identities and, in particular, their gender, and the impact these had on their leadership identity construction. Such guided reflection was reported to improve self-knowledge, enhance awareness and deepen confidence in the participants' authentic self. Therefore, the inclusion of guided reflection surrounding intersectionality and identity dynamics appears to be a fruitful component of women-only LDPs. As these aspects are associated with higher degrees of self-efficacy in confronting the structures which favour men and schemas of traditional forms of leadership (Atewologun *et al*., 2016, Ely *et al*., 2011), intersectionality and identity dynamics may have a place in programmes and interventions aimed at developing other underrepresented leaders (i.e., LGBTQ+ leaders) and those who challenge these prevailing structures and schemas of leadership.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no research currently exists that focuses on the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals and the dynamics between their LGBTQ+ and leadership identity. Therefore, the second study, a qualitative research study, explored how LGBTQ+ leaders experience the intersection and dynamics of their LGBTQ+ identity with that of their leadership identity, as well as how they make sense of these experiences. The findings from the second study culminate in a process model of LGBTQ+ leader identity development, offering practical implications for its usage in development programmes and interventions aimed at developing LGBTQ+ leaders. It emphasises a dynamic and iterative journey of leadership identity formation, and one which supports the LGBTQ+ leader in improving their self-knowledge, enhance their awareness and deepen their confidence in their authentic self. Together, these aspects may support the LGBTQ+ leader in navigating and confronting the structures and schemas which cause them to be underrepresented.

1.8 Reflective statement

This arena of study was chosen for three reasons. The first is that I have a personal investment in this research area. As a member of the LGBTQ+ community and having attended a number of LDPs throughout my career, I felt like something was 'missing'. Yes, they were useful, particularly with a lens to certain competencies that I needed to strengthen in order to feel more competent as a leader, but they felt generic – and missed the opportunity to discuss the ways my LGBTQ+ identity has shaped who I am as a leader; how it has strengthened certain behaviours but also inhibited me from bringing my 'full self' to the workplace.

The second, and related to the above, is that in working for a management consultancy, I often feel frustrated that our LDPs and other services do not incorporate research into the design and deployment of these offerings. My hope is that the findings from this thesis will help to shape these services and improve them, particularly those geared to supporting and developing diverse talent which are, as the observations above suggest, characterised by complexity and nuance.

The third relates to the indignation and frustration I feel at the underrepresentation of diversity in leadership. The continued narrative and rhetoric regarding women leaders, and the societal norms these prevailing views perpetuate, frightens me. As a brother and son to two successful women leaders, I have heard first-hand the how these norms create barriers and lead to innocuous comments from others. I feel it my duty to add my voice to this debate and bring further attention to these prevailing norms and the barriers they breed. Yet, I feel an undercurrent of concern that I may simply be 'shouting into the void'.

The topic of equity, diversity and inclusion within my client work has become more prolific over recent years. Yet, in this experience, I see organisations requiring a 'quick fix' to the predicament of leadership diversity. It would be naïve to believe that an LDP would correct all ailments and, indeed, this is a message I relay to my client base – albeit with a kinder tone. Simply deploying a programme in the hope that it cures organisational systemic issues is akin to casting words into the wind; meaning that without tackling the root cause and without dedicated action, any remedy is limited or short-lived. By exploring these LDPs, I am aware that I may seem to reinforce this 'quick fix' mentality, rather than exploring the issues at the source and, in part, this may be true. With the reticence I've experienced from organisations in intercepting the primary origin of these systemic issues, there is a need to ensure that secondary support mechanisms they are prepared to invest in - like LDPs - have some use and value.

Chapter 2: Methodology

This thesis set out to examine one initiative employed by organisations to increase diversity in their leadership populations - leadership development programmes (LDPs). Initially, a systematic literature review (SLR) was conducted to explore the existing literature of programmes aimed at developing one underrepresented group in leadership populations – women leaders. The results of the SLR informed the design of the second study, focusing on another underrepresented group – LGBTQ+ leaders. Whilst research that focuses on the LGBTQ+ community in leadership has increased over recent years, there continues to be a limited number of studies which attempt to understand the lived experiences of this population, and specifically the challenges they face on their path to leadership identity formation and development. A qualitative approach was employed to understand the participants' meaning- and sense-making along this path.

2.1 Epistemological approach

This thesis is founded upon constructivism, underpinned by critical feminist and queer theory approaches. Within academia, and in particular within the discipline of organisational psychology, positivist approaches rule (Zhang *et al*., 2011). This asserts that a single truth reigns supreme and that, through defined methods, researchers can uncover and explain these truths. From this perspective, the researcher is objective and distant from that which is being explored, with no affect or impact on the phenomena of focus. With this view comes little attention to the researchers' own assumptions informed by their social identities (e.g., socioeconomic background, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation), and how this informs the questions posed, the methods employed, or the analytic technique(s) used. In essence, the

location of researcher and their experiences needs to remain hidden in order to protect objectivity (Scharrón-del Río & Nadal, 2021).

Constructivism challenges these views, advocating that research can never be objective as it "views and constructs reality through the eyes of one person" (Stanley & Wise, 1983, p.174). Instead, the emphasis is "seeing the world from the point of view of the people who participate in it" (Arnold *et al*., 2016, p.55). This viewpoint means that the "world" is not objective, but is created through meaning applied to events, concepts and environments. Therefore, constructivist research aims to "understand and explain why people have different experiences, rather than search for external causes and fundamental laws" to explain them (Easterby-Smith *et al*., 2002, p.30). The attempts made by the researcher to "understand and explain" the phenomena of interest requires interaction and interpretation with the participant's experiences. Therefore, in contrast to positivist stances, data are not viewed as an objective reality that exists independent of the view of the researcher and the researched (Willig, 2008), and interpretation is required to unearth and understand the experience.

Leadership development has previously been positioned as "Identity work" (Ely *et al*., 2011, p.2). This posits that the continual construction and internalising of a leader identity is central to the process of becoming a leader (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Ibarra *et al*., 2010; Lord & Hall, 2005). This internalisation requires interpretation in order to gain access to these processes. In identity formation and development research, a constructivist stance allows for the exploration of these complex experiences and interactions (Reid *et al*., 2005). As such, constructivism is an appropriate epistemological stance as it helps to comprehend these

processes within an individual's lived experience (Bamberger, 2000). Therefore, it is the basis for this thesis in researching leadership identity in underrepresented groups in leadership.

A critical paradigm is an extension of this constructivist stance (Egbert & Sanden, 2020). At its core is a focus on power, inequality and privilege, with ontological roots in social change (Calhoun *et al*., 2007). This includes both feminist and queer theory approaches (Fraser, 1989; Sullivan, 2003). Therefore, the values and beliefs of the researcher play a central role in the research design and operationalisation, meaning reflexivity and reflection are essential tenets of the critical paradigm. The critical paradigm seeks to explore the ideas and perspectives of those who are on the fringe of prevailing social norms and, in turn, excluded (Gridley & Turner, 2005; Nelson *et al*., 1998). Traditional and positivist approaches have been primarily based upon Western, Educated, and from Industrialised, Rich and Democratic (WEIRD, Henrich *et al*., 2010) territories. This means the privileged, elite, heterosexual, White male perspectives are prevailing (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004; Fattoracci *et al*., 2020). Critical approaches attempt to decolonise these perspectives.

Decolonising psychological research involves understanding the limited applicability of the prevailing positivist rule (Smith, 1999; Trimble *et al*., 2014), and expanding the populations to which psychological research and interventions are applied. This is to say that research, the findings that emerge from it and the application of these, have been developed with mostly WEIRD, heteronormative views of sexuality and gender, and applied to communities outside of these prevailing norms. Feminism and queer theory support this challenging of prevailing norms. The respective journeys of women and LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly on their path to leadership, are intertwined and pose similar questions which

threaten the traditional views of leadership. For example, homophobia is not only about sexual discrimination. Like misogyny, it is also about normalising gender stereotypes and ostracising those who do not conform. For women leaders and LGBTQ+ leader, this can lead to particular beliefs, workplace barriers and patterns which champion dominant schemas of gender and leadership (Calás & Smircich, 2009; Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Kolb & McGinn, 2009; Sturm, 2001). This can manifest in the inhibited access to important workplace and development resources, such as networks, relationships and opportunities (Burke & LaFrance 2016; Moghaddam & Harré, 2010), with access withheld to those who do not? 'fit' the dominant conceptions of leadership.

Therefore, it is the duty of feminist and queer theory researchers to question the findings from these prevailing positivist approaches, using their power and platform to confront and decolonise these views (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). As both a feminist and as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, this power, and the sense of responsibility which accompanies it, is felt by the researcher. This highlights the importance of reflexivity, which allows for the surfacing and acknowledgement of the influence these sentiments have, and the challenging of assumptions and biases which manifest from it.

2.2 Ethics

This research was conducted using both The British Psychological Society's Code of Ethics and Conduct (2021) and the Health and Care Professions Council Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (2016). It followed five considerations in its design and delivery. The first focuses on informed consent, ensuring participants have an awareness of how the information collected will be and could be used. This transparency also reflects the position

of authority the researcher fills in the relationship, and therefore protection of the participant's privacy and the authentic representation of the research aims are responsibilities to be upheld.

The second consideration surrounds respect, which recognises the worth of all human beings, irrespective of perceived or real differences in social standing, ethnicity, gender or any other group-based characteristics. In this research, this was upheld by adhering to privacy and confidentiality agreements with the participants. Additionally, as a gay, white, cis-gender man, an awareness of both power and privilege was considered and, therefore, autonomy and freedom was reinforced (i.e., highlighting the right to withdraw from the research at any moment and without questioning).

The third consideration centres on the competence of the researcher. Psychologists, either practicing or in training, should not provide services outside of their skill sets or knowledge, acknowledging their professional limitations and competence. The nature of this research, which focuses on deep-seated aspects of identity, means that it had the potential to be sensitive and challenging. If a participant asks for specific advice and guidance outside of the researcher's competence, recommendations to specialist professionals would be provided. This links to the fourth area of consideration, and the responsibility of the researcher. This involved being aware of issues of trust such as not leading the participant to answer questions in a particular way, being attentive to emotional, physical and non-verbal cues to protect the welfare of the participants and the responsible use of the researcher's knowledge and skills in the avoidance of harm to those participating in the research. The final consideration focused on integrity and on further strengthening the transparency in the relationship. For this research, this involved being accurate and consistent in the researcher's actions, communication and

methods, the maintenance of personal and professional boundaries, and ensuring the participants and their experiences were represented accurately and without bias.

2.3 Study One – systematic literature review

Systematic literature reviews (SLRs) are a recognised approach by which to extrapolate themes from an existing body of literature (Rojon *et al*., 2021). It supports the development of future research directions by reviewing that which already exists (Tranfied *et al*., 2003). Whilst LDPs have been subject to this methodology (Frich *et al*., 2015; Kirchner & Akdere, 2014; Rosenman *et al*., 2015; Straus *et al*., 2013), to the best of the author's knowledge there are no previous reviews which seek to understand LDPs aimed at underrepresented groups of leaders. This study seeks to bridge this dearth in research to uncover what is known about women-only leadership development programmes (WLDPs), and where learnings from the SLR can inform research into other underrepresented groups in leadership, i.e., LGBTQ+ leaders.

Despite the SLR being an established methodology, there are noted criticisms which warrant exploration. Foremost among them is that the SLR process may eliminate important data (Burke, 2011). This is mitigated, to some degree, by the use of a robust protocol which explicitly articulates the rationale for inclusion and exclusion criteria. For example, the SLR in this thesis did not include 'grey' literature to avoid the potential for less trustworthy sources to affect the findings (Adams *et al*., 2016). Only peer-reviewed journal papers were included to provide a higher level of confidence about the quality, insights and trustworthiness of the resulting SLR (Adams *et al*., 2016; Podsakoff *et al*., 2005). Additionally, the search terms for the SLR in this thesis did not include particular delivery mechanisms of development (i.e.,

mentoring and coaching). This is because these methods often form part of LDPs (Ely *et al*., 2010; Kirchner & Akdere, 2014).

SLRs are also noted as being time-heavy and intensive on the researcher (Nolan & Garavan, 2016). This is countered by the review being intentionally narrow in scope, which supports the balance between the resources required to conduct it and the value it brings to further knowledge and future research (Rojon *et al*., 2021).

The SLR process is also impacted by the transparency of those conducting the review. For example, theoretical frameworks and epistemological stances of researchers have been noted as rarely explicit (Rojon *et al*., 2020). Without the declaration of this, erosion of the quality of the SLR can occur, as well as the implications for theory, practice and future research (Rojon *et al*., 2020).

There are, however, notable benefits of SLRs. The structured and rigorous approach employed affords researchers to examine prior research with enhanced levels of criticality and robust assessments of quality (Rousseau *et al*., 2008). The SLR protocol is a crucial instrument in this process, offering transparent outlines of the approach taken and the rationale for actions. Detailing the focus, intent and search terms, its robustness supports the mitigation of bias and answers calls from previous scholars to explicitly articulate the frameworks, synthesis approach and epistemological approach employed (Briner & Rousseau, 2011; Rojan *et al*., 2020). The SLR in this thesis uses the SPIO framework (study design, participant population, interventions, outcomes) a variation on PICO (Population, Interventions, Comparison, and Outcomes; Richardson *et al*., 1995). First cited/used in Robertson *et al*. (2015), the SPIO

framework is used to ensure the inclusion and exclusion criteria has been considered thoroughly and robustly reported. To critically assess the quality of the included papers, checklists based on Snape *et al*. (2017) were employed as this methodology allows for the analysis of both qualitative and quantitative studies.

The researcher's own stance as a constructivist and feminist researcher influenced how they reviewed and assessed studies through the SLR process. For example, quantitative studies which measured feelings of capability and comfort in deploying a particular behaviour both pre- and post-LDP, whilst providing replicable detail on the methodology and, in turn, achieve a high score in the respective domain in the checklists, would be marked down if no rationale or justification was included as to why these behaviours were important for women leaders. In completing the SLR process, the researcher was able to critically explore and assess not only the results of interventions, but the arguments for the design and delivery of the content. Indeed, the findings of the SLR in this thesis found a lack of reporting in this area, and advocates for more explicit coverage in the design and delivery methods of WLDPs.

It is also prudent to acknowledge how the researcher's own stance as a constructivist and feminist researcher may be viewed as misaligned with the positivist nature of the SLR methodology. SLRs originated from within the medical and healthcare fields (Chalmers *et al*., 2002; Hong & Pluye, 2018) meaning that, as a result of these origins, SLRs are positivist in nature. Whilst the use of SLRs has increased beyond the medical and healthcare professions into other scientific domains, relatively recent statistics (De los Santos *et al*., 2022) suggest that the domains of psychology and the social sciences account for less than seven percent of SLRs published between 2010 and 2022. According to De los Santos *et al.* (2022), a key

explanation of the low adoption and publication rates from these two domains lies in the misalignment between the positivist methodology of SLRs and the ontological and epistemological variances (e.g. constructivism, interpretivism and subjectivism) that exist within psychology and the social sciences. To mitigate the impact of this misalignment, the researcher followed the positivist SLR conventions, Search strategy and reporting of Results sections in their SLR (p. 56 – 77) and addressed the impact of these results with a critical feminist lens in the Discussion (p. 78 – 83).

2.4 Study Two – empirical research

2.4.1 Data gathering

Queer theory is a tool which has spearheaded the reconsideration of cultural norms and values, and specifically through qualitative research approaches (Wozolek, 2019). This is because traditional positivist stances and the quantitative methods employed favour prevailing norms that 'other' identities outside clear categories and expectations (Kilgo, 2022). In other words, queer theory approaches to research seek to unearth and construct, rather than suppress and constrain. Therefore, queer theory is an extension of critical theory (Carroll, 2012), giving a platform to the suppressed and constrained. Using this perspective, semi-structured interviews were used to explore the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals on their path to leadership, capturing their voices regarding how their LGBTQ+ identity intersected with that of their leadership identity. As well as creating such a platform, there is also further rationale for the researcher's use of this data gathering method. A semi-structured interview grants the participant the opportunity to tell stories and express their ideas in both length and richness, whereas "a highly structured interview, or within the limits of the kinds of questions which may be included at the end of a questionnaire, these things are much less likely to occur" (Smith *et al*., 2009, p.56).

The creation of a semi-structured interview schedule provides a foundation for the discussion and supports the elicitation of experiences of the phenomena of focus. However, it also grants the researcher the permission to explore and capture an enhanced level of richness through a flexible approach. In essence, the approach allows for the researcher and the participant to "engage in a dialogue whereby initial questions are modified in the light of participants' responses" and "enquire after any other interesting areas which arise" (Smith *et al*., 2009, p.57). As with any research methodology, there are issues with this approach. Interviews must be viewed as partial in their scope as they merely provide a "snapshot of the person's attempt to make sense of their experiences" (Smith *et al*., 2009, p.66). Particular attention was paid on the crafting of questions, ensuring they were open and expansive, to encourage participants to talk at length and share their reflections pertinent to the research questions. This also reflects the acknowledgement that these types of data gathering methods require an enhanced level of skill from the researcher (Flowers, 2008). Therefore, attention was also paid to the phrasing of questions and the rhythm of the interview to not lead the participant to an answer. This was created through positioning questions clearly and giving space for silence.

The richness that the data gathering method aims to provide, as well as the analysis technique employed by the researcher and the time commitment this required, meant that the size of the sample in this second study was given thorough consideration. Prior guidance from previous studies was leveraged, and sample sizes of seven and above have been noted to be adequate (Smith *et al*., 2009). In line with this recommendation, the second study used a sample size of seven.

2.4.2 Data analysis

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used to examine the data. IPA is an established qualitative method of analysis focusing on the detailed exploration of personal lived experiences, examined in parallel with the meaning making employed by participants. This is to say that IPA allows the researcher to explore the "innermost deliberation" (Alase, 2017, p.9) on an individual level, moving from "the particular" (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009b, p.29) to inform a collective, shared experience. This is compared to Grounded Theory, which can be complex to operationalise, and which may have no formal psychological focus; likewise, Thematic Analysis, which rather than emphasising the idiographic nature of the data, often treats all participants as one data set from the outset (Smith *et al*., 2009).

In qualitative research, and in particular IPA, the researcher is active in the process. The 'hermeneutic turn' present in IPA means that the researcher is making sense of the participant, who is making sense of x. Positivist stances, which view 'the truth' as universal and applicable to all, reduce the influence of the researcher. In qualitative research, particularly that informed by queer theory, removing this influence would impact the advantages of the research (Spindler & Spindler, 1982). As a member of the LGBTQ+ community, this identity supported the researcher in engaging in the double hermeneutic process involved in IPA and, as such, influenced the analysis. This means that researchers viewing the data from other epistemological stances, or possessing identities which influence their approach, may analyse the data differently and, in turn, draw alternative conclusions. This lack of replicability causes qualitative research to be viewed as less robust and rigorous than quantitative research (Santoro, 2023). However, the universal 'truths' that quantitative research advocate, and the epistemological positions that accompany this, are unlikely to provide the platform required to disrupt the normalised aggressions suffered by the LGBTQ+ community (Wozolek, 2019).

As with many other qualitative approaches, the basis of IPA is in its analytic focus. Specifically, with IPA, that focus is directed towards the participants' attempts to make sense and apply meaning to their experiences. The existing literature on analysis in IPA has not prescribed one single method to do this, yet a common set of practices is described which moves "from the particular to the shared, and from the descriptive to the interpretative" (Smith *et al*., 2009, p.79). These practices were used during the second study of this thesis (Larkin *et al*., 2006; Nizza *et al*., 2021; Smith, 2004; Smith *et al*., 2009):

- Interviews were transcribed verbatim.
- The close analytic reading of the participants' words and focus on the experiential and/or existential meaning applied the identification of emergent patterns and themes within this material, emphasising both convergence and divergence.
- The development of a dialogue between the researcher and the data, leading to the development of an interpretative account.
- The construction of a persuasive and coherent story which unfolds, using selected and interpreted extracts from the participants to demonstrate the emergent patterns and themes.

The researcher's reflexive stance as a queer theory researcher, member of the LGBTQ+ community, and also as a business leader, influenced the above analytic process. As a queer theory researcher, and one who is focused on questioning prevailing norms and injustice they have experienced, the researcher realised the potential for them to view data through a lens of

indignation and frustration. This, in turn, could potentially lead the researcher to focus on aspects of the participants' accounts which awaken and reinforce these emotions. Further, the interaction between the researcher's LGBTQ+ and leadership identities meant that they was cognisant of the danger of applying their own experiences to the accounts and, in turn, interrupting the extent to which the participants' voices and sense-making was heard. Through a combination of a reflexive journal, peer group working and conversations with doctoral supervisors, the researcher was able to challenge and be challenged on the rationale for the inclusion and exclusion of data, as well as the themes that emerged from it.

Chapter 3: What is known about women-only leadership development programmes? A systematic literature review

3.1 Abstract

Organisations are recognising that more needs to be done to support female talent. One response to this is women-only leadership development programmes (WLDPs). However, no systematic review has previously been conducted to examine these programmes. The purpose of this review was to extrapolate and bring together current knowledge of these interventions. A systematic review of the literature resulted in 13 articles meeting the inclusion criteria. Findings indicate some encouraging signs that these programmes support the development of women through the incorporation of intersectionality and Positive Psychology theories, as well as curricula on networking, conflict management and career planning. This review also raises questions regarding the rigour of the selection methods by which participants are given access to the programmes, and the transparent reporting of the design and delivery methodologies. Further research directions and implications for both theory and practice are provided.

3.2 Introduction

In 1986 the “glass ceiling” metaphor was introduced by Hymowitz and Schechellhardt in the Wall Street Journal (Jain & Mukherji, 2010) as "an invisible, covert and unspoken phenomenon that existed to keep executive level leadership positions in the hands of Caucasian males” (p.13). Organisations are increasingly recognising the inhibiting nature of this analogy, employing strategies and policies to leverage an inclusive workforce and obtaining competitive advantage amongst their competitors (Pichler *et al*., 2010). Yet even though procedures exist at both a national legislative and corporation level to break the glass ceiling (Jones, 2019),

empirical observations have suggested that it is still very much in existence (Bukodi *et al*., 2012; Manning & Swaffield, 2008), fanning the flames of a gender-based leadership divide in organisations.

This divide cannot fully be explained on the basis of human capital factors and differences in qualifications, work history and experience (Cox & Harquail, 1991; Wood & Grossman, 1993). For example, women leaders feel more isolation and higher degree of stress than their male counterparts, with such kinds of pressure manifesting in issues such as lack of self-confidence and feelings of inferiority (Cox & Harquail, 1991). Manning and Swaffield (2008) also offer similar explanations of the career mobility gap based on gender differences in psychological attitudes which can promote occupational attainment, e.g., attitudes towards risk taking, competition and self-esteem, with women leaders noted as displaying more considered amounts of these qualities. More recently, Bukodi *et al*. (2012) suggest that whilst, overall, women's career advancement has become more similar to men over time, this gender divide has deepened. They attribute this to an increasing polarisation of employment and occupational structures coupled with uncertainties about labour market conditions. They note that such barriers can further exacerbate the effects of the differences in psychological attributes, impacting on an individual's self-efficacy (Gascoigne & Kelliher, 2018), motivation (Nirwana & Prasojo, 2021) and ambition (Nelson, 2014).

These observations have informed a growing area of interest in women-only leadership development programmes (WLDPs, Lanaj & Hollenbeck, 2015). Despite this, there has been no synthesis that seeks to bring together and conceptualise the programmes aimed at advancing women in leadership within organisations. This systematic review aims to consider the facets

of WLDPs that make them successful, and to understand how they have benefited participants on their journey to leadership through the synthesis of the most contemporary and pertinent research.

3.2.1 What is 'leadership development'?

There is a lack of universal definitions of both "leadership" and "development", as well as the term "leadership development" which unites these concepts. Kaye Hart *et al*. (2008) offer a view which extrapolates the meaning in the literature, whereby leadership development "involves expanding an organisation's capacity to generate leadership" through "development at an individual level" (p.633). This positions leadership development programmes (LDPs) as an interaction between the individual attending the programme and the larger organisational environment and strategic intent, where there is emphasis on a coordinated, methodical effort by both parties directed toward leader improvement.

The consensus regarding the content of LDPs appears to be clearer, with four overarching domains being observed in the literature (Conger, 1992). These include personal growth (Amagoh, 2009), conceptual understanding (Mezirow, 2000), skills building (Kaye Hart *et al*., 2008), and feedback (Boyce *et al*., 2010). Those programmes which combine these domains have been observed to be fruitful in terms of perceived utility and applicability by the participants (Frawley, *et al*., 2018; Goldman *et al*., 2021). However, there appears to be two factors which promote the effective transfer of learning: those which are in place before the learning (antecedents) and those which are in place after the learning (sustainability practices) (Collins & Holton, 2004).

3.2.2 Antecedents and sustainability practices

Baldwin and Ford (1988) summarise these antecedents and sustainability practices into three domains; internal characteristics of the participant, the design and instructional methodologies of the programme, and a favourable work environment and learning climate. Internal characteristics of the participant refers to the desire and motivation to learn, with higher levels observed to positively impact participation and learning outcomes (Avolio *et al*., 2010; Genrty & Martineau, 2010; Harris & Cole, 2007; Ladyshewsky, 2007). Personality constellations, and those possessing high levels of *openness to experience*, *extraversion* and *conscientiousness,* have also been noted to positively impact learning outcomes (Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Colguitt *et al*., 2000). LDPs which incorporate a range of design and instructional methodologies have been seen to be fruitful in enhancing the application of learning (Frawley, *et al*., 2018; Goldman *et al*., 2021; McAlearney, 2006; Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2000). For example, content surrounding goal setting, journaling and peer coaching and feedback has been noted to enhance the implementation and sustainability of learning (Boud, 1988; Boud & Edwards, 1999; Schwartz, 1991). In terms of work environment and learning climate, support from supervisors and peers (Day *et al*., 2014; Hillman *et al*., 1990), as well as the opportunity to deploy newly acquired knowledge (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Cromwell & Kolb, 2004), appears to be key in the sustainability of learning outcomes.

3.2.3 Outcomes of leadership development programmes

A comprehensive analysis of outcomes of LDPs is lacking due to the unique nature of each programme aim and content, as well as the strategic intent of the organisation in which they are deployed (Day, 2000; Hall & Seibert, 1992; Latham & Seijts, 1999). It is possible,

however, to draw some parallels from this literature, and separate these outcomes into two domains: human capital and social capital (Day, 2000).

Human capital refers to a focus on intrapersonal competence, enabling participants to think and act in new ways (Coleman, 1988) and to engage with productive behaviours (such as self-control, adaptability and confidence) through an enhanced self-view and leadership identity formation (Hall & Seibert, 1992). *Social capital* refers to the personal relationships and partnerships that a leader has within an organisation (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998), to enhance cooperation, knowledge sharing and resource exchanges (Bouty, 2000).

3.2.4 Women in leadership

Women have less ability to develop both human capital and social capital due to powerful yet subtle forms of bias: those which arise from prevailing cultural beliefs regarding gender, workplace barriers and patterns favouring men (Calás & Smircich, 2009; Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Kolb & McGinn, 2009; Sturm, 2004). Organisational hierarchies in which men dominate, along with practices and beliefs which identify leadership behaviours to masculine characteristics, is one such example. Although these may appear innocuous and be unintentional, they unwittingly communicate that women are less suited to positions of authority (Hopkins *et al*., 2008). Additionally, those hierarchies in which men dominate mean that there is a heightened risk of the natural inclination of people to drift towards and advocate for those who are similar to themselves. This, in turn, causes these powerful men to champion other men when leadership positions arise (Eagly & Carli, 2007). The result is that there is less opportunity and a hindered ability for women leaders to participate in leadership identity

formation and develop their *human* capital, and build the relationships and networks which cultivate political support and which strengthen their *social* capital (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Ibarra *et al*., 2010; Lord & Hall, 2005). The result, it seems, is one of perpetuation: women's underrepresentation in leadership positions reinforces entrenched societal systems and biases that affirm men's legitimacy for these positions, which in turn maintains these prevailing norms.

3.2.5 Women-only leadership development programmes

This perspective on the interaction between gender and leadership has prompted a focus on women-only leadership development programmes (WLDPs), aimed at supporting women in and aspiring to positions of seniority (Lanaj & Hollenbeck, 2015). Previous scholarship has noted, however, that these programmes fail to fully appreciate the invisible barriers women face on the path to leadership, and lack a comprehensive framework or theoretical stance to underpin the design and delivery. For example, many programmes adopt an "add-women-and stir" methodology (Martin & Meyerson, 1998, p.312) and deliver the same content as that which is delivered to men, failing to appreciate the role that gender has in leadership. Other programmes adopt a "fix-the-women" methodology (Ely & Meyerson, 2000), which assumes that gender within leadership does matter, yet places the women at the root of the issue. Such programmes posit that women need to be taught the skills and characteristics which their male counterparts demonstrate. Whilst these two approaches may relay some useful tactics, particularly in skill growth surrounding *social* capital, neither competently address the realities that of leadership nor are they likely to support in developing a leadership identity and the growth of *human* capital (Ely *et al*., 2011).

3.2.6 The present review

As outlined, women face unique challenges on the path to leadership (Ely *et al*., 2011; Kiamba, 2008), and this demands a more nuanced approach to their leadership development (Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Martin & Meyerson, 1998). Historically, women have less access to such development (Hopkins *et al*., 2008) due to the factors already outlined. Therefore, it is vital to understand the selection and recruitment mechanisms of development programmes to ensure they do not create a further barrier. Furthermore, the underlying design theories, instructional methods and content (i.e., skills, knowledge and abilities developed) of these programmes need to competently address challenges women face, as well as support them in navigating effectively through leadership identity formation (Ely *et al*., 2011; Vinnicombe & Singh, 2003). There is also a need to understand the outcomes of WLDPs and the measurement of these. This is particularly salient in light of the emphasis on *human* capital and leadership identity formation, as more traditional methods of evaluation (i.e., surveys and questionnaires) are likely to be inappropriate in capturing the richness of such outcomes (Ely *et al*., 2011; Vinnicombe & Singh, 2003).

To the best of the author's knowledge, there are no previous reviews which seek to understand these areas of WLDPs specifically, and this review looks to bridge this dearth. This will allow the opportunity to provide guidance and recommendations for subsequent programmes aimed at developing and supporting women leaders, as well as future empirical research.

3.2.7 Statement of primary objectives

This review aims to examine how leadership development programmes contribute to leadership development in women leaders, by posing the question: What is known about leadership development programmes designed to develop women leaders?

Specifically, this review looks to understand:

i. Who is recruited to WLDPs and how does this recruitment take place?
ii. What design and instructional methodologies are employed?
iii. What are the skills, knowledge and abilities developed?
iv. What are the outcomes of programmes and how are these measured?

3.3 Method

3.3.1 Search strategy

In June 2022, a computerised search of the literature was performed using the databases Business Source Premier (EBSCO), PsycINFO and SCOPUS. These were chosen as they were likely to have the greatest coverage combined with functionality and full article access. The search included any type of study set in the context of women leadership development programmes and published from 2000 until 2022. This timeframe reflects a shift in the global agenda for gender equality, following the release of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals in 2000.

The search terms offered by Mousa *et al*. (2021) were used to explore the population of interest, namely (“lead*” OR “Manager*” OR “supervis*) AND (“women” OR “female”

OR “women”), where “lead*” enables broader inclusion of “leads”, “leader(s)”, “leading”, and “leadership”, and where “supervis*” enables broader inclusion of for “supervises”, “supervisor(s)”, and “supervisory”. As LDPs are synonymous with a variety of terminologies, the search terms used for the intervention were based on previous literature reviews which explored LDPs (Frich *et al*., 2015; Kirchner & Akdere, 2014; Rosenman *et al*., 2015; Straus *et al*., 2013), namely (“leadership development*” OR “development program*” OR “development train*”), where “leadership development*” enables broader inclusion of “leadership development program or programme”; where “development program*” enables broader inclusion for “development programme(s)”; and where “development train*” enables broader inclusion for “development training(s)”. Particular delivery methodologies (i.e., mentoring and coaching) were not included in the search terms as these methods often form part of leadership development programmes (Kirchner & Akdere, 2014). Finally, as WLDPs are deployed by a variety of institutions and workplaces, it was decided not to include terms relating to the setting as this may reduce the inclusiveness of the search.

3.3.2 Review strategy

Upon completion of the initial searches, the outputs were transferred to Zotero, a research and reference collation tool. After duplicates were removed, the records were subject to a title sift undertaken by the author and a second researcher, achieving a strong Cohen’s Kappa ($k = 0.75$), with disagreements resolved via discussion. Titles were preserved if WLDPs appeared to be the focus, and a conservative approach was taken, meaning the record was kept for further screening if this was unclear.

Following this, the author and their supervisor independently conducted an abstract sift, achieving a strong Cohen's Kappa (k = 0.87). As before, disagreements were resolved via discussion. A number of records were discarded as they did not meet the inclusion criteria (i.e., not empirical studies or included non-work samples). The author then conducted a full record sift independently, discarding articles which did not meet the inclusion criteria. A full view of the process is represented in Figure 1.

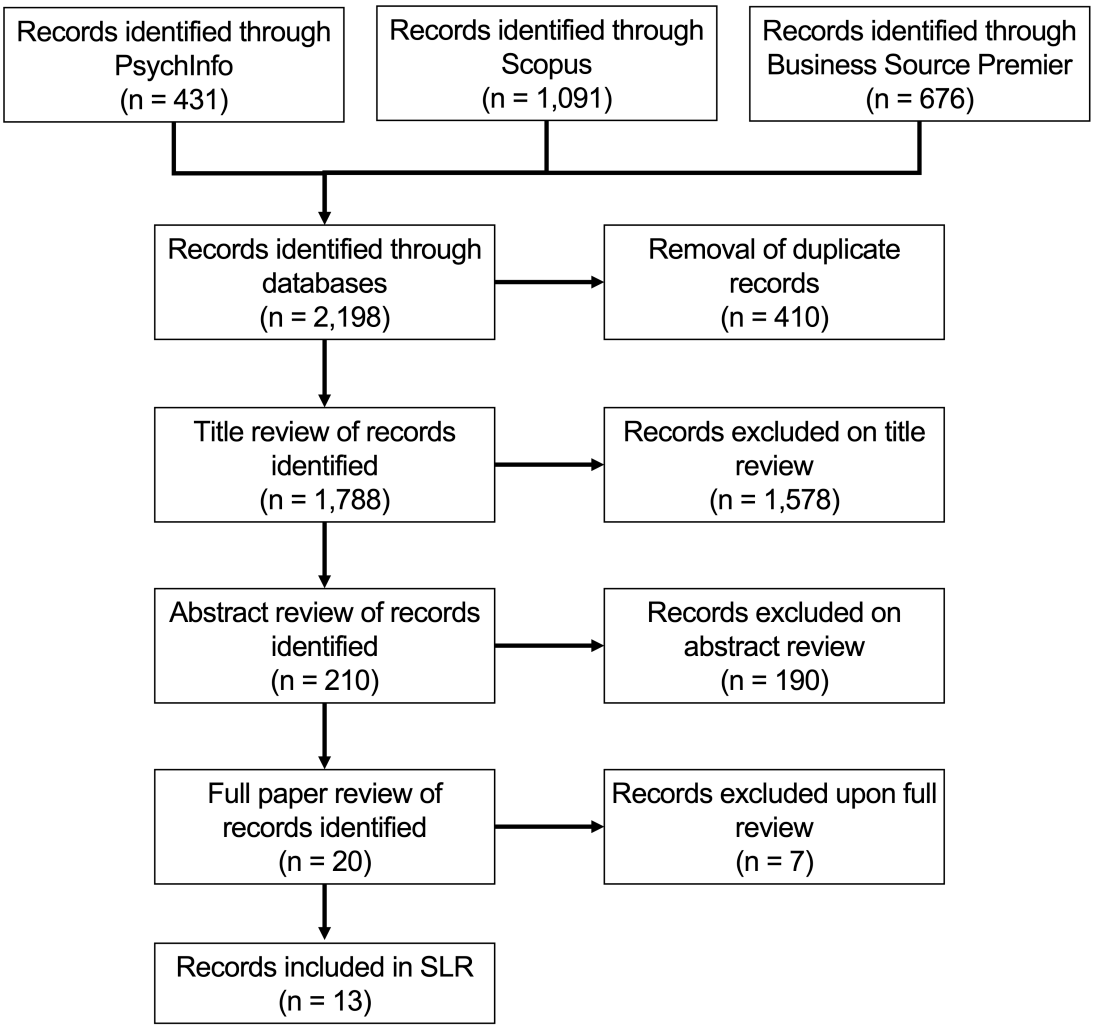

Figure 1. Review strategy and process

3.3.3 Selection of papers for inclusion

The SPIO framework (study design, participant population, interventions, outcomes) a variation on PICO (Population, Interventions, Comparison, and Outcomes; Richardson *et al*., 1995) was utilised. At each stage of the screening process, all records were evaluated against these criteria. Table 1 provides an overview of the criteria used.

3.3.4 Data extraction

An extraction tool was developed and used a modified 'matrix method' offered by Garrard (2004), which followed the SPIO framework to capture the required data systematically (Klopper *et al*., 2007). The data was extracted and populated by the lead author, with the second researcher reviewing the extraction tool for consistency.

3.3.5 Data synthesis

In employing a narrative approach, the author of this review attempts to bring together "the findings from the set of included studies in order to draw conclusions based on the body of evidence" (Popay *et al*., 2006, p.10.) and build a tessellation of findings. The flexibility of this approach allows the author to focus on a wide range of questions, not only those which focus on the effectiveness of an intervention (Briner & Denyer, 2012).

3.3.6 Quality assessment

A quality assessment was conducted and the checklists offered by Snape *et al*. (2017) were used. These allow for the analysis of qualitative, quantitative and mixed method studies. Each study was assigned an overall evaluation according to a pre-defined scoring system based

on the number of 'yes' responses: <10 - very low, 10-14 - lower low, 15-19 - low, 20-24 – upper low, >25 – moderate. The data was assessed by the author with their supervisor reviewing for consistency, with discrepancies resolved through discussion. Tables were then produced by the author representing the results of the quality assessment (Table 6 for qualitative results and Table 7 for quantitative results).

Table 1. SPIO inclusion and exclusion criteria

	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Study design	All empirical research both quantitative and qualitative reported in peer reviewed journals	Non empirical studies (purely theoretical or descriptive) Non-intervention studies Books or conference proceedings Not published in peer reviewed journals
Participant population	Any sector or country Adult population (age 18+)	Non-work samples
Intervention	Any programme designed and delivered with the purpose of developing female leaders	Not specifically aiming to develop female leaders
Outcomes	All outcome measure which measure the efficacy of the programme/s aimed in developing female leaders	Only provides a process evaluation

3.4 Results

3.4.1 Search and screening results

The initial search of the databases retrieved 2,198 records. Following a screening procedure (see Figure 1), thirteen records remained: Clarke, 2011; Dannels *et al.*, 2008; Ford *et al*., 2021; Harris and Leberman, 2012; Helitzer *et al*., 2014; Kvach *et al*., 2017; Martínez-Martínez *et al*., 2021; Nash and Moore, 2018; Nash and Moore, 2021; O'Brien and Allin, 2022; Parker *et al*, 2018; Peterson, 2019; and Selzer *et al*., 2017.

3.4.2 Study characteristics

The thirteen studies originated from eight countries. Four were from the United States, with another being a collaboration between scholars in the United States and Ethiopia. Three studies originated in Australia, and one study each from New Zealand, South Africa, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Only one study (Dannels *et al*., 2008) conducted non-randomised controlled trials (CT) of a WLDP, with the remaining studies reporting on WLDPs without control groups. No studies employed a randomised controlled trial approach.

As shown in Table 2, the predominant data collection methodology was qualitative, with nine studies using a qualitative approach. Seven studies used post-WLDP interviews, and another supplemented this with an open-question survey, again administered after the WLDP. One study (Selzer *et al*., 2017) used an autoethnographical methodology, where the authors reflected on their experiences post-completion. The remaining four studies employed a quantitative approach. Two studies (Helitzer *et al*., 2014; Parker *et al*., 2018) used a cross-sectional approach. Helitzer *et al*. (2014) used a post-WLDP survey to understand perceptions of participants. Parker and colleagues (2018) conducted two surveys: one to explore differences in participants versus non-participants of a WLDP, and another administered to participants only, to gather perceptions and anecdotal feedback. The remaining two studies (Dannels *et al*., 2008; Ford *et al*., 2021) used a longitudinal approach.

Dannels and colleagues (2008) used a pre- and post-WLDP measure, surveying the participants of two WLDPs and comparing these to non-attendees. Ford *et al*. (2021) used an

adapted version of the Leadership Learning and Career Development survey (LLCD, McDade *et al*., 2004) which was administered at three timepoints: at the start of the WLDP, upon graduation and two-years post completion. .

3.4.3 Participant characteristics

Across the thirteen studies, there were a total of 1,977 participants. Participant age ranged from 20 to 67 in the six studies that reported this information. As per the inclusion criteria, these studies focused on WLDPs and, as such, the gender of the participants was female only.

Of the four studies (Helitzer *et al*., 2014; Kvach *et al*., 2017; Nash & Moore, 2021; Selzer *et al*., 2017) which reported the ethnicity of participants, 733 participants were White, 58 were Asian, 39 were Black, 25 were Hispanic, 6 were American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 4 were Hawaiian of Pacific Islander, signifying an ethnicity bias across the studies.

The setting of the studies was relatively homogenous, with ten of the studies occurring within Academia, and the occupation of the participants were listed as academic educators and leaders. One study (Clarke, 2011) focused on the public sector, though the precise occupations are not reported. One study (O'Brien & Allin, 2022) centred around leaders within the outdoor sector with participants listed as being in a variety of professional roles. One study (Martínez-Martínez *et al*., 2021) reported on a WLDP that was open to a broad range of roles and sectors, with the participants belonging to eighteen different industries (namely automotive, healthcare, insurance, consulting, IT, banking, real estate, furniture retailing, catering, travel, law, advertising, electric, oil and gas, NGO, building, manufacturing, and delivery).

As reported in Table 2, nine studies reported the seniority of the participants, with five focused on senior-level leaders (Dannels *et al*., 2008; Fort *et al*., 2021; Kvach *et al*., 2017; Parker *et al*., 2018; Selzer *et al*., 2017), two on mid-level leaders (Clarke, 2011; Harris & Leberman, 2012), one explored three separate WLDPs aligned each geared a particular level of leadership (junior, mid-level and senior Level, Helitzer *et al*., 2014), and one using a sample of participants across junior, mid and senior-level (Nash & Moore, 2018). This suggests a bias towards mid to senior level leadership. Four studies (Martínez-Martínez *et al*., 2021; Nash & Moore, 2021; O'Brien & Allin, 2022; Peterson, 2019) provided no information on the seniority of their participants. An overview of the participant characteristics can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Study and participant characteristics

Author/date	Country	Sample	Age	Ethnicity	Sector	Occcupation	Seniority	Design (quant only)			Data collection
								RCT	CT	T	
Clarke (2011)	South Africa	n = 17	25-45	Not reported	Public Sector	Not reported	Mid				Qual: Post-intervention interviews
Dannels et al. (2008)	USA	n = 609	Not reported	Not reported	Academia	Health care educator	Senior		✓		Quant: Pre- and post survey, comparing responses to non-attendees
Ford et al. (2021)	USA	n = 197	Not reported	Not reported	Academia	Health care educator	Senior			✓	Quant: Pre-, graduation and post-intervention Leadership Learning Career Development Survey
Harris & Leberman (2012)	New Zealand	n = 172	Not reported	Not reported	Academia	Educator/leader in University	Mid				Qual: Post-intervention opened-ended survey and follow-up interviews
Helitzer et al. (2014)	USA	n = 845	Not reported	White = 712 Asian = 58 Black = 30 Hispanic = 25 American Indian/Alaskan Native = 6 Hawaiian or Pacific Islander = 4 Other = 10	Academia	Health care educator	Junior, Mid and Senior			✓	Quant: Post-intervention survey
Kvach et al. (2017)	USA and Ethiopia	n = 8	20s-40s	Black	Academia	Health care educator	Senior				Qual: Post-intervention interviews
Martínez-Martínez et al. (2021)	Spain	n = 32	Not reported	Not reported	Mixed	Mixed	Not reported				Qual: Post-intervention interviews
Nash & Moore (2018)	Australia	n = 25	24-60	Not reported	Academia	University educator	Junior, Mid and Senior				Qual: Post-intervention interviews
Nash & Moore (2021)	Australia	n = 19	24-60	White	Academia	University educator	Not reported				Qual: Post-intervention interviews
O'Brien & Allin (2022)	UK	n = 845	23-33	Not reported	Outdoor sector	Mixed	Not reported				Qual: Post-intervention interviews
Parker et al. (2018)	Australia	n = 47	57-67	Not reported	Academia	Educator/leader in University	Senior			✓	Quant: Survey to understand demographics and post-intervention survey sent to those that attended
Peterson (2019)	Sweden	n = 15	Not reported	Not reported	Academia	Educator/leader in University	Not reported				Qual: Post-intervention interviews
Selzer et al. (2017)	USA	n = 3	Not reported	White = 2 Black = 1	Academia	Academic staff	Senior				Qual: Post-intervention autoenthographical

3.4.4 Intervention characteristics

Participant selection process

Seven of the studies mention the participant selection process, but with varying degrees of detail surrounding the processes employed. Six of the studies mention that participants were selected and sponsored by senior management, but precise detail around this selection process is not included. Four of these mention that selection was open to those with a certain academic rank, tenure and academic achievement, one mentions selection is based on previously displayed leadership characteristics but offers no details surrounding these, and one mentions selection via senior management. Another study mentions an application process and selection day, but the specifics are not reported.

Design and delivery

Where reported, the length of the WLDPs ranged from one week (Harris & Leberman, 2012) to twelve-months (Nash & Moore, 2018; Nash & Moore, 2021; Parker *et al*., 2018). WLDPs were also delivered over two-weeks (Kvach *et al*. 2017), three-weeks (Martínez-Martínez *et al*. 2021), ten-weeks (O'Brien & Allin, 2022) and seven-months (Clarke, 2011; Selzer *et al*, 2017).

Eight of the studies mention the design stages of the WLDPs, though detailed reporting is lacking. Two studies (Clarke, 2011; Harris & Leberman, 2012) mention the WLDP being designed by women for women, but with no elaboration. One of these (Harris & Leberman, 2012) does mention that the design is linked to business strategy and the context of the institution, as well as balancing this with more personal and individual aspects of leadership development. Three studies (Dannels *et al*., 2008; Nash & Moore, 2018; Parker *et al*., 2018)

mention that the design supports women in navigating barriers. Kvach and colleagues (2017) mention a "pre-fellowship needs assessment of fellows in order to guide curricular objectives and content", though the specifics of this assessment are not mentioned. Martínez-Martínez *et al*. (2021) and O'Brien and Allin (2022) offer the most comprehensive overview. The designers of the WLDP explored in O'Brien and Allin (2022) created a curriculum which has similarities to the domains offered by Conger (1992), with a focus on enhancing authenticity and self-confidence. Similarly, Martínez-Martínez *et al*. (2021) explore an WLDP aimed at enhancing Authentic Leadership (Shamir & Eilam, 2005).

Only two studies reported the credentials of the WLDP facilitators. O'Brien and Allin (2022) mention facilitation by those with a background in psychology and the outdoor sector. Parker and colleagues (2018) mention facilitators being a female academic and external female organisational leadership trainer. Eight of the studies mentioned the importance of a safe and secure environment as a key aspect (Clarke, 2011; Kvach *et al*., 2017; Martínez-Martínez *et al*., 2021; Nash & Moore, 2018; Nash & Moore, 2021; O'Brien & Allin, 2022; Parker *et al*., 2018; Selzer *et al*., 2017), and the facilitator playing a key role in nurturing this. One study (Nash & Moore, 2018) reported the negative perceptions of where this safety was absent, capturing participant feedback that it can lead to scepticism surrounding the facilitator and the WLDP itself.

Three studies (Nash & Moore, 2018; Nash & Moore, 2021; Parker *et al*., 2018) highlighted the gender of the facilitators, those being one male and one female (Nash & Moore, 2018; Nash & Moore, 2021) and female only (Parker *et al*., 2018). None of the studies report on the perceptions of the participants – either positive or negative – regarding any impact of

the gender of the WLDP facilitator on the effectiveness of the WLDP or the outcomes they experienced.

The delivery methods are also not widely reported or explicit. Where this has been reported, group-based discussions (Kvach *et al*. 2017; Nash & Moore, 2018; Nash & Moore, 2021; O'Brien & Allin, 2022; Parker *et al*., 2018), delivered either virtually or face-to-face, have been employed.

Content

The content of the WLDPs mirrors the suggestions of Conger (1992) and the four domains of personal growth, conceptual understanding, skills building and feedback.

1. Personal growth

Eleven studies explored WLDPs where the topic of personal growth is incorporated, with varying degrees as to the detail surrounding these areas. However, six studies mention this in some detail. Five of these (Clarke, 2011; O'Brien & Allin, 2022; Parker *et al*., 2018; Peterson, 2019; Selzer *et al*., 2017) focus on the growth of awareness of the intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) of the participant's multiple identities, as well as the impact this has on their leadership identity construction. Intersectionality has been observed to have some conceptual link to Authentic Leadership (Leroy *et al*., 2012) and whilst only Martínez-Martínez *et al*. (2021) explicitly refers to this concept as the framework which underpins the WLDP in their study, it is also mentioned in three other studies as a pertinent addition (O'Brien & Allin, 2021; Parker *et al*., 2018; Selzer *et al*., 2017).

2. Conceptual understanding

Eight of the studies highlight leadership theories as part of the WLDP content, with varying degrees of reporting about concepts covered. Four of these mention the core theories in some detail. Nash and More (2018) and Nash and Moore (2021) focus on the concept of Transformational Leadership, with a focus on the growth of collaboration, teamwork and the use of authenticity to harness the motivation of the followers of the participants. Authentic Leadership (Leroy *et al*., 2012) is the predominant conceptual framework underpinning the WLDP explored by Martínez-Martínez *et al*. (2021), supporting the participants in developing their sense of self and, in turn, a greater sense of their leadership identity. The concept of Strengths-based Leadership (Linley *et al*., 2007; Rath & Conchie, 2008) underpins the WLDP explored in Parker *et al*. (2018), with the onus on "accentuating strengths to enhance personal leadership" (p.4).

3. Skills building

All studies, apart from one (O'Brien & Allin, 2021), report on skill building elements, with variability in the reporting as to why these skills were selected, explored and developed. Ten studies (Clarke, 2011; Dannels *et al*., 2008; Harris & Leberman, 2012; Kvach *et al*., 2017; Martínez-Martínez *et al*., 2021; Nash & Moore, 2018; Nash & Moore, 2021; Parker *et al*., 2018; Peterson, 2019; Selzter *et al*., 2017) incorporated networking and the growth of connections. Clarke (2011) offers some rationale for its inclusion, with the metaphor of a "labyrinth" (p.501) and advocates that networks are required in order to navigate this effectively. Harris and Leberman (2012) and Nash and Moore (2021) also cite the use of multiple developmental relationships in enhancing outcomes for individuals (Higgins & Kram,

2001; Higgins & Thomas, 2001). Six studies (Clarke, 2011; Dannels *et al*., 2008; Ford *et al*., 2021; Harris & Leberman, 2012; Helitzer *et al*., 2014; Selzter *et al*., 2017) reported the inclusion of conflict management, though do not offer rationale as to why it was deemed an appropriate area to include. Six studies (Clarke, 2011; Harris & Leberman, 2012; Helitzer *et al*., 2014; Martínez-Martínez *et al*., 2021; Parker *et al*., 2018; Selzter *et al*., 2017) reported the inclusion of career planning, though the rationale for its inclusion is limited. Martínez-Martínez *et al*. (2021) do offer an explanation, identifying the role of prevailing norms and ideologies contributing to potentially lower levels of career agency in women (Eagly & Carli, 2003).

4. Feedback

Eight studies incorporated a feedback element, which includes coaching, mentoring and psychometric assessments. Five studies mention coaching in some capacity, with three mentioning individual coaching (Clarke, 2011; Ford *et al*., 2021; Nash & Moore, 2021), two mentioning peer coaching (Parker *et al*., 2018; Peterson, 2019) and one mentioning group coaching (Nash & Moore, 2021). However, there is no mention of any contracting via tripartite meetings, cadence of coaching sessions or the position of the sessions in the programme journey (i.e., during or post-WLDP). Additionally, there is limited reporting in relation to the perceived impact from participants on these interventions, though in the only study where this is noted (Parker *et al*., 2018) it appears to be mixed, with 62% of participants finding it either quite beneficial or extremely beneficial.

Two studies (O'Brien & Allin, 2022; Parker *et al*., 2018) mention mentoring, though there is limited reporting as to the perceived impact. Only one study (Parker *et al*., 2018)

reports this, and the perceived usefulness is mixed, with 55% of participants finding it either quite beneficial or extremely beneficial. However, two studies (Clarke, 2021; Selzer *et al*., 2017) mention in their recommendations that a mentoring relationship or guidance on how to secure a mentor would be a useful addition to the content. As coaching, there is no mention of how these mentoring sessions were arranged, who was involved in the implementation or monitoring, the cadence of sessions or the position of the sessions in the programme journey.

Two studies (Nash & Moore, 2021; Selzer *et al*., 2017) mention the use of psychometric instruments. Prior research has found the use of such tools most effective when linked to the LDP content and future development planning as, without this, the application of insights and the return on investment is likely to be minimal (Kaye Hart *et al*., 2008). These observations are mirrored by Selzer *et al*. (2017), with the results of the StrengthsFinder (Asplund *et al*., 2007) being discussed only "at the first meeting" (p.5). A more beneficial experience is reported by Nash and Moore (2021) with the use of the Mayer Salovey Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT, Mayer *et al*., 2002). The authors note that the WLDP had a continual focus on emotional intelligence throughout and this alignment with the MSCEIT had a positive impact on the participants and their ability to "enhance their effectiveness as leaders by leveraging emotions" (p.370).

360-feedback is reported in two studies (Ford *et al*., 2021; Martínez-Martínez *et al*., 2021), but with no information regarding the behaviours explored or the perceived value from the participants. Ford *et al*. (2021) does mention that the findings are integrated to form personal and professional development plans. An overview of the design and delivery characteristics can be found in Table 3.

Table 3. WLDP design and delivery characteristics

Author/date	Selection procedure of intervention participants	Intervention length	Design method	Facilitator credentials	Facilitator gender	Delivery method		Content of interventions			
						Virtual or f2f	Type of delivery	Personal Growth	Conceptual Understanding	Skill Building	Feedback
Clarke (2011)	Selected by senior management	7 months	Designed by women for women	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	✓	Not reported	✓	✓
Dannels et al. (2008)	Not reported	Not reported	To enable female leaders to navigate barriers	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	✓	✓	✓	Not reported
Ford et al. (2021)	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	✓	✓	✓	✓
Harris & Leberman (2012)	Not reported	1 week	Designed by women for women	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	✓	Not reported
Helitzer et al. (2014)	Selected by senior management, with a focus on rank, experience or tenure	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	✓	Not reported
Kvach et al. (2017)	Selected by senior management, with a focus on previously demonstrated leadership characteristics	2-week	Needs assessment of the participants	Not reported	Not reported	Face-to-face	Group-based discussion	✓	✓	✓	Not reported
Martínez-Martínez et al. (2021)	Selected by senior management, with a focus on rank, experience or tenure	3-weeks	Authentic Leadership	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nash & Moore (2018)	Not reported	12-months	To enable female leaders to navigate barriers	Not reported	Male and Female	Virtual, apart from 3-week voyage to Antarctica	Group-based discussion	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nash & Moore (2021)	Not reported	12-months	Not reported	Not reported	Male and Female	Virtual, apart from 3-week voyage to Antarctica	Group-based discussion	✓	✓	✓	✓
O'Brien & Allin (2022)	Selection day	10-week	Based on previous research on key constraints in the outdoor industry	Background in psychology and outdoor education	Not reported	Face-to-face	Group-based discussion	✓	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported
Parker et al. (2018)	Selected by senior management, with a focus on rank, experience or tenure	12-months	To enable female leaders to navigate barriers	Female academics and leadership trainer	Female	Face-to-face	Group-based discussion	✓	✓	✓	✓
Peterson (2019)	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	✓	Not reported	✓	✓
Selzer et al. (2017)	Selected by senior management, with a focus on rank, experience or tenure	7 months	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	✓	✓	✓	✓

3.4.5 Outcome characteristics

Measurement

As reported in the Data Collection section, nine studies used a qualitative approach to the capturing of outcomes, incorporating post-WLDP interviews, open-question surveys and an autoethnographical approach as a means to reflect on the authors' own experiences. The remaining four studies employed a quantitative approach to data collection, incorporating post-WLDP surveys to understand perceptions of participants, pre- and post-WLDP measures constructed around the main themes of the WLDP and comparing these to non-attendees (Dannels *et al*., 2008), and the LLCD (McDade *et al*., 2004) administered before, after and two years post-completion.

Outcomes

Using Day's (2000) dichotomy of outcomes as a framework, the researcher of the present review categorised the outcomes under human and social capital.

Human capital:

1. *Intersectionality and authenticity*

Unsurprisingly, all of six studies which reported this outcome employed a qualitative approach to data collection, allowing for a more intimate exploration of individual conceptualisations and the experiences of identity development. All six studies reported perceived utility from the participants, with improved self-knowledge, enhanced awareness and deeper confidence in their authentic self, as well as an improved understanding and empathy with others described. Nash and Moore (2021) note that the omission of these lenses

had ramifications regarding the impact of the programme, observing that this felt akin to "deleting" (p.357) the other intersecting identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, class and sexuality) which culminate in a unique array of challenges and obstacles to leadership identity development. This is echoed by Selzer *et al*. (2017, p.12) who highlighted the need for WLDPs to incorporate space for reflection and exploration of complex and nuanced identity intersections as "authentic leadership requires that we bring more of who we are to the table more often".

2. Career planning

Six studies reported enhanced comfort in career planning as an outcome. The four studies which employed a qualitative approach (Clarke, 2011; Harris & Leberman, 2012; Martínez-Martínez *et al*., 2021; Selzer *et al*., 2017) reported enhanced clarity and confidence in their career direction, as well as stronger comfort in explaining the path of their careers. From a quantitative perspective, Helitzer *et al*. (2014) also found positive improvements in two areas of planning for promotion and planning for the next career stage. Skill increases were reported across the three programmes: junior-level = 49% and 43%, mid-level = 31% and 41% and senior-level = 23% and 55% respectively. Additionally, Parker *et al*. (2018) observed perceived usefulness from participants, with 83% of participants finding the review of their career plans either beneficial or extremely beneficial.

Social capital

1. Networking

Ten studies reported increased confidence or comfort in networking as an outcome. The eight studies which employed a qualitative approach (Clarke, 2011; Dannels *et al*., 2008;

Harris & Leberman, 2012; Kvach *et al*., 2017; Martínez-Martínez *et al*., 2021; Nash & Moore, 2021; Parker *et al*., 2018; Selzer *et al*., 2017) reported perceived utility, enhanced confidence and learning in this area, captured via their interviews. From a quantitative perspective, Helitzer *et al*. (2014) reported perceived confidence increases in this skill across the three WLDPs in their study (junior-level = 50%, mid-level = 48% and senior-level = 78%). Ford *et al*. (2020) also reported sustained increases in confidence across three time points in leveraging Communities of Leadership Practice skills, which has a focus on networking (F(1.899, 328.507), p = 0.00).

2. Conflict management

Six studies reported a perceived increase in comfort in using conflict management techniques. The participants of the WLDPs explored by Harris and Leberman (2012), Kvach *et al*. (2017) and O'Brien and Allin (2022) mentioned via the post-WLDP interviews that they felt more comfortable and confident in difficult discussions. Ford *et al*. (2020) reported sustained increases across three time points in confidence in leveraging Personal and Professional Leadership Skills, which has a focus on conflict management (F(1.876, 313.362) = 81.458, p = 0.00). Helitzer *et al*. (2014) observed increases in participant perceptions in this area via their employed measures (junior-level = 35%, mid-level = 38% and senior-level = 67%). Dannels *et al*. (2008) saw a statistically significant increase in this area in the two programmes in comparison to the control group (F(2,229) = 3.637, p = 0.05). Table 4 provides an overview of the WLDP outcome characteristics.

Table 4. WDLP outcome characteristics

Author/date	Outcomes			
	Human		Social	
	Intersectionality and Identity Dynamics	Career Planning	Networking	Conflict Management
Clarke (2011)	✓	✓	✓	-
Dannels et al. (2008)	-	-	✓	✓
Ford et al. (2021)	-	-	✓	✓
Harris & Leberman (2012)	-	✓	✓	✓
Helitzer et al. (2014)	-	✓	✓	✓
Kvach et al. (2017)	-	-	✓	✓
Martínez-Martínez et al. (2021)	✓	✓	✓	-
Nash & Moore (2018)	-	-	-	-
Nash & Moore (2021)	-	-	✓	-
O'Brien & Allin (2022)	✓	-	-	✓
Parker et al. (2018)	✓	✓	✓	
Peterson (2019)	✓	-	-	-
Selzer et al. (2017)	✓	✓	✓	-

3.4.6 Quality ratings and evidence statements

Using the checklists offered by Snape and Colleagues (2017), a quality rating was allocated to each of the studies. Of the nine qualitative studies, one was of moderate quality, four were of upper low quality, and four of low quality. For those assigned low or very low ratings, it was largely attributed to the lack of discussion of evidence for and against the researcher's arguments, the lack of explanation regarding modifications during the research, the rationale of participant selection, the lack of explanation regarding the analysis technique used, the acknowledgement of the researchers relationship with the participant and the explicit consideration of ethical issues. Of the four quantitative studies, one was of upper low quality, two of low quality and one of very low quality . Low or very low-quality ratings were largely attributed to lack of consistency in completion of pre/post measures, the lack of control groups, the use of only self-report measures, and the lack of explicit consideration of ethical issues and the consequences of these.

Evidence statements using the pre-defined research questions for this review have been created, as seen in Table 5. These were assigned a quality rating using the GRADE-CERQual table adapted from Snape *et al*. (2017).

Table 5. Evidence statements

Evidence statement	Quality rating	Reasoning	In which studies
Female leaders are recruited into WLDPs via…			
Selection procedures based on tenure, rank and academic achievements	Initial evidence	There are four studies, ranging from low quality to moderate quality	Helitzer *et al.,* 2014; Martínez-Martínez *et al* ., 2021, Parker *et al* ., 2018; Selzer *et al* ., 2017
An application process and selection day	Unclear evidence	There is a single study of low quality	O'Brien & Allin, 2022
The design of WLDPs incorporates…			
Women-only designers	Unclear evidence	There are two studies, both of low quality	Clarke 2011; Harris & Leberman, 2012
A participant needs assessment	Unclear evidence	There is a single study of low quality	Kvach *et al* ., 2017
A focus on navigating gender bias	Unclear evidence	There are three studies, all of which are low quality	Dannels *et al.,* 2008; Nash & Moore, 2018; Parker *et al.,* 2018
Positive leadership theories	Unclear evidence	There are two studies, both of low quality	Martínez-Martínez *et al* ., 2021; O'Brien & Allin, 2022
The delivery of WLDPs incorporates…			
A supportive environment	Promising evidence	There are multiple studies, ranging from low quality to moderate quality	Clarke, 2011; Kvach *et al* ., 2017; Martínez-Martínez *et al* ., 2021; Nash & Moore, 2018; Nash & Moore, 2021; O'Brien & Allin, 2022; Parker *et al* ., 2018; Selzer *et al* ., 2017
Group-based discussions (either virtual or fact-to-face)	Initial evidence	There are five studies, all of which are low quality	Kvach *et al* ., 2017; Nash & Moore, 2018; Nash & Moore, 2021; O'Brien & Allin, 2022; Parker *et al* ., 2018
Female-only facilitators	Unclear evidence	There is a single study with some limitations	Parker *et al* ., 2018
The content of WLDPs includes topics surrounding…			
Personal growth	Promising evidence	There are multiple studies, ranging from low quality to moderate quality	Clarke, 2011; Dannels *et al* ., 2008; Ford *et al* ., 2021; Kvach *et al* ., 2017; Martínez-Martínez *et al* ., 2021; Nash & Moore, 2018; Nash & Moore, 2021; O'Brien & Allin, 2022; Parker *et al* ., 2018; Peterson, 2019; Selzer *et al* ., 2017
Conceptual understanding	Promising evidence	There are multiple studies, ranging from low quality to moderate quality	Dannels *et al* ., 2008; Ford *et al* ., 2021; Kvach *et al* ., 2017; Martínez-Martínez *et al* ., 2021; Nash & Moore, 2018; Nash & Moore, 2021; Parker *et al* ., 2018; Selzer *et al* ., 2017
Skills building	Promising evidence	There are multiple studies, ranging from low quality to moderate quality	Clarke, 2011; Dannels *et al* ., 2008; Ford *et al* ., 2021; Harris & Leberman, 2012; Helitzer *et al* ., 2014; Kvach *et al* ., 2017; Martínez-Martínez *et al* ., 2021; Nash & Moore, 2021; Parker *et al* ., 2018; Peterson, 2019; Selzter *et al* ., 2017
Feedback	Promising evidence	There are multiple studies, ranging from low quality to moderate quality	Clarke, 2011; Ford *et al* ., 2021; Martínez-Martínez *et al* ., 2021; Nash & Moore, 2021; O'Brien & Allin, 2022; Parker *et al* ., 2018; Peterson, 2019; Selzer *et al* ., 2017
WLDPs influence outcomes of…			
Human capital	Promising evidence	There are multiple studies, ranging from low quality to moderate quality	Clarke, 2011; Harris & Leberman, 2012; Helitzer *et al* ., 2014; Martínez-Martínez *et al* ., 2021; Nash & Moore, 2021; O'Brien & Allin, 2022; Parker *et al* ., 2018; Peterson, 2019; Selzer *et al* ., 2017
Social capital	Promising evidence	There are multiple studies, ranging from low quality to moderate quality	Clarke, 2011; Dannels *et al* ., 2008; Ford et al., 2021; Harris & Leberman, 2012; Helitzer *et al* ., 2014; Kvach *et al* ., 2017; Martínez-Martínez *et al* ., 2021; Nash & Moore, 2021; O'Brien & Allin, 2022; Parker *et al* ., 2018; Selzter *et al* ., 2017

3.5 Discussion

This review is the first to synthesise current research on WLDPs. The key aims were to understand the selection process of participants, the design and instructional methodologies used, the skills, knowledge and abilities developed, and the exploration of outcomes as well as the measurement of these.

3.5.1 Who is recruited to WLDPs and how does this recruitment take place?

A lack of clear reporting is observed in the reviewed studies surrounding how participants are selected and, as a result, have access to WLDPs. Experience, rank and academic achievement/education are key components of selection. When viewed in comparison to predictive validity estimates in a selection and hiring context, Schmidt and Hunter (1998) estimate that these areas have relatively weak predictive power, with estimates ranging between 0.10 – 0.18, with an even more recent review of selection methods finding weaker variations (Sackett *et al*., 2022). Specifically in relation to proficiency of learning, Hunter (1980) found that these areas were not useful in predicting outcomes and the application of learning. There is also no reference to the antecedents of individual characteristics being understood as part of the selection processes, which is surprising given that such characteristics have been observed to support learning outcomes and application (Colquitt *et al*., 2000; Gentry & Martineau, 2010). There is evidence of organisational sponsorship, a factor in effective learning transfer (Day *et al*., 2014; Hillman *et al*., 1990; London & Mone, 1987), in the form of the nomination and selection of participants by senior management. This nomination, however, appears to be used as a *gateway* to access, rather than the support *following* access. Viewing these observations holistically, there appears to be scope for more transparent and robust selection processes to be utilised in the selection of participants. Furthermore, a

consequence of the incorporation of selection methods into the participant selection process means that these WLDPs are not accessible for all. This is particularly concerning when viewed with the use of criteria which has limited predictive power in the assessment of individuals to have access to such programmes. This poses an issue and could be viewed as favouring privilege and socioeconomic status over capability and potential; the apparent focus which these programmes look to nurture. From a critical feminist perspective, these selection processes further perpetuate exclusivity and reinforce power dynamics, with access to WLDPs remaining limited and laden with blockades. These selection methods, and those which prioritise traditional yet bias-prone indicators of success, further hinder the advancement of women who possess the capability and capacity to occupy leadership positions. Not only do they overlook and ignore the barriers faced by women, they fortify systemic inequalities which ultimately undermine the inclusive objectives of WLDPs.

3.5.2 What design and instructional methodologies are employed?

A lack of clear reporting is observed in the reviewed studies regarding the design methodologies used. Whilst some of this obscurity may, in part, be put down to the protection of intellectual property, particularly in relation to those studies which use WLDPs designed by management consultants (Nash & Moore, 2018; Nash & Moore, 2021; Peterson, 2019), the findings of this review indicate a dearth in relation to the sharing of knowledge of salient design methodologies and content. From a critical feminist perspective, this lack of transparent reporting hampers the dissemination of valuable understanding and best practices that could empower and develop women leaders. Enhancing the transparency of reporting may not only foster greater knowledge-sharing between academics and practitioners, but it may also expedite the critical discussions required to inform best practice gender-inclusive design principals and instructional methods. In summary, transparency breeds potency, allowing for WLDPs to

better address the needs and challenges faced by women and support in advancing equity in leadership positions.

Most salient among the instructional methodologies was the highlighted role of the facilitator(s), and the need to create a safe and secure environment. Such an environment was observed to create optimum conditions for exploration and learning. Where this environment was not created and protected by the facilitator, captured in the observations made by Nash and Moore (2018), it may have the potential to undermine the security of the environment and, in turn, erode the impact of the WLDP. These observations highlight the importance of the skills of the facilitators, as well as how they must remain finely attuned to the sensitivities of the group. Interestingly, the gender of the facilitator(s) is not widely reported, and no studies highlighted the impact of the gender as having an impact – either positive or negative – on the delivery and outcomes of the WLDP. Finally, neither the delivery medium (i.e., face-to-face or virtual) nor time commitment and length of the WLDP have been evaluated, and these components present an opportunity to deepen knowledge and are worthy of future exploration to understand any effects.

3.5.3 What are the skills, knowledge and abilities developed?

In terms of skills, knowledge and abilities developed, the four overarching domains offered by Conger (1992) provide a useful framework for the consolidation of focus areas. For *personal growth*, the observations from this review suggest that intersectionality, and guided reflection surrounding the interplays among an individual's identities, may be a prerequisite for enhanced growth in the areas of self-awareness, clarity of purpose and, in turn, enhanced feelings of authenticity. Previous scholarship (Debebe *et al*., 2016) has recommended WLDPs

employ intersectionality as a theoretical lens in order to prompt and support participants to examine their own leadership identities and narratives, and this lens should transcend single-identity-based (i.e., gender) exploration in favour of broader, more complex intersecting identities (Atewologun *et al*., 2016; Debebe & Reinert, 2014). This may, in turn, support participants in the creation of "identity-specific strategies" to navigate the complexities of their unique organisational context (Atewologun *et al*., 2016, p.227). The observations captured in this review regarding the positive response when an intersectional lens is incorporated, as well as the critique at its omission, suggest that it may provide fruitful and reflective ground in WLDPs. By centring intersectionality in programme content and activities, WLDPs may provide a more inclusive and empowering environment for all participants. From a critical feminist lens, this approach not only acknowledges the intersecting identities of women leaders but also fosters a deeper understanding of the systemic barriers they face in organizational contexts. Being equipped with this understanding may help women leaders to navigate these barriers more easily.

In relation to *conceptual understanding*, the topics of Transformational Leadership, Authentic Leadership and Strengths-based Leadership are most salient. These areas are firmly rooted in disciplines of Positive Psychology and forms of positive leadership (Banks *et al*., 2016), aimed at supporting women leaders in accentuating their areas of strengths and moving towards an authentic representation of themselves. These observations highlight synergies with those findings outlined above regarding intersectionality and identity dynamics, suggesting that WLDPs which incorporate Positive Psychology theory may help to prompt exploration and enhance clarity of an individual's leadership 'self'. Adopting a critical feminist lens makes it clear that WLDPs need to go beyond conventional leadership frameworks which fail to appreciate the role that gender has in leadership. The exploration of the alternative

leadership models included in the studies in this review prioritise inclusivity and authenticity, and aim to strengthen resilience and wellbeing. These may support participants in navigating and confronting the gendered power dynamics they face in their organisations and broader social contexts.

In the Skill building domain, three salient topic areas were identified: networking, conflict management and career planning. Previous scholars exploring access to networks note that these are limited for women leaders. This is, in part, due to the small number of suitable connections and their exclusion from networks which are male dominated (Gibson, 2008; Ibarra, 1993). These observations, as well as the positive outcomes reported in this review, suggest that content and support in widening these developmental connections is a useful addition. Although the rationale for including conflict management was not disclosed, the observed advantages in terms of perceived usefulness and improved comfort were highlighted. Previous research (Chen, 2002; Munduate *et al*., 1999) has suggested that women may often adopt conflict management styles involving ingratiation (Canary *et al*., 1995), avoidance (Chen, 2002) and compromise (Conrad & Poole, 2012) as a means to protect interpersonal relations (Harris, 2002). Given these observations, and the outcomes reported in this review, the incorporation of conflict management techniques appears to be a useful addition to support women in feeling comfortable in harnessing a broader range of conflict management techniques. Women are also susceptible to experiencing lower levels of career agency and control, due to the traditional gender role ideology that these assumptions and norms fortify (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Ibarra *et al*., 2013). With these observations and the positive perceptions reported in this review, the inclusion of career planning may be a prudent addition to WLDPs. By providing women with the tools and resources to navigate these challenges, WLDPs can

play a crucial role in supporting women to advance their careers and challenge gender norms within organisational and broader social settings.

In relation to the *feedback* domain, the mechanisms employed in the studies received mixed levels of reporting regarding utility. Where impact has been made explicit, there were mixed perceptions from participants about the usefulness and value of the psychometric tools used. A further avenue of research presents itself regarding the effective inclusion of feedback mechanisms in WLDPs, as well as value and perceived benefits on the participant.

3.5.4 What are the outcomes of programmes and how are these measured?

The outcomes of WLDPs can be categorised into *human* and *social* capital domains. For *human* capital, participants reported a heightened sense of awareness of their identities using an intersectional lens, an increased sense of authenticity and enhanced clarity about the direction of their careers. For *social* capital, participants reported perceived comfort in networking and conflict management techniques.

These outcomes and the methodology by which they are captured are congruous; those which focus on *human* capital, anchored within the intrapersonal and the enablement of participants to think and act in new ways (Coleman, 1988), employ a qualitative approach to capturing outcomes. Those studies which focus on the shift of behaviour, effectiveness of the WLDP, or comfort in leveraging a particular skill, employ a quantitative approach. *Social* capital can be measured either qualitatively (i.e., via interviews to capture perspectives about networking) or quantitively (i.e., via surveys capturing before and after WLDP levels of

participant comfort in using these skills). This is in line with previous literature observations (e.g., Datta, 1994).

3.5.5 Limitations of the research

Five limitations of the research have been identified in this review. First, our understanding of WLDPs is limited due to the quality of research completed. For example, only one study in this review (Selzer *et al*., 2017) achieved a moderate quality rating. Therefore, there is an urgent need for researchers to improve the quality and transparency of their scholarship in the area of WLDP research. Whilst there is promising evidence in some of the areas this review explores, namely the content and outcomes of WLDPs, more stringency is required in the areas of selection and design methods. Without this, there is a risk that organisations and practitioners adopt less than ideal – or even counterproductive – methods of participant selection and programme creation.

Second, study design also presents a limitation. Only one quantitative study (Dannels *et al*., 2008) employed a CT design approach with a longitudinal method to understand the lasting impact of learning. Ford *et al*. (2021) use a longitudinal method without a control group and two studies (Helitzer *et al*., 2014; Parker *et al*., 2018) used a cross-sectional approach. Therefore, without enhanced rigour in study design, there is an inability to make causal inferences regarding the impact of the WLDP.

Third, researcher reflexivity is not adequately evidenced in the qualitative studies. Only one (Selzer *et al*., 2017), which uses autoethnography as a research methodology, reports on reflexivity. Also, no reference to the reflexivity of the facilitator delivering the sessions was

made in any of the studies. Reflexivity affords the opportunity to allow the researcher or facilitator to examine their beliefs and assumptions, as well as the influence these aspects wield on their work (Finley, 1998). The lack of explicit consideration and acknowledgement of the impact of facilitator or researcher actions and decisions on the experience under investigation means the quality of the evidence presented in this review is eroded.

The studies are lacking from a diversity perspective. This is particularly apparent with regard to ethnicity, with only 16% of participants being from ethnic minority backgrounds, and so an ethnicity bias can be inferred. This further accentuates the need to explore the impact of other intersecting identities in the creation of a leadership self-concept and ensure the nuances that arise from these identities are considered and supported.

The homogeneity of the setting of the studies also creates an issue, with 77% of the studies taking place in the realm of academia. Previous scholarship has noted a number of factors which may impede the advancement of women to leadership positions in this sector, and these may explain why this sector has dominated the research in this review. Specifically, women tend to experience a lag in the research aspect of their careers in comparison to their male counterparts (Gardiner *et al*., 2007). Research is reported to be a key aspect of promotion criteria and, as such, the inability to complete such scholarship due to parenting responsibilities may slow career advancement (McCall *et al*., 2000). Additionally, there may also be cultural factors at play that inhibit the furthering of women. University faculties may be difficult to enter due to entrenched 'boys' club' traditions (McCall *et al*., 2000), and these further erode the ability to gain access to important networks and developmental relationships (Mousa, *et al*., 2021). However, whilst there is a compelling case for the domination of academia in the

reviewed literature, the lack of heterogeneity in this sector prompts the need for further research outside of this setting.

3.5.6 Implications for theory and future research

Whilst the heightened recognition of the challenges women face on the path to leadership has prompted a growth in literature surrounding WLDPs, this review highlights that there continues to be a need to explore these further and with greater transparency of reporting to further both academic and practitioner knowledge (Mousa *et al*., 2021). This review also highlights the apparent disconnect between participant selection and the principal advantages of the deployment of such WLDPs, that being the growth of women and access to leadership positions. With the focus of such selection procedures being predominantly based on experience, tenure or academic achievements, they are lacking a comprehensive and robust structure. Future avenues of research could look to understand the place of selection methods in such programmes, with guidance created to inform their use and application.

This review highlights that more attention needs to be paid to women leaders from ethnic minority backgrounds in WLDP research. This review found a bias towards White women, meaning the applicability of the findings for other ethnicities may be limited. There is also a need to explore workplace settings outside of academia and to create an enhanced view of WLDPs outside of this setting.

The favourable responses and reported outcomes regarding the inclusion of content exploring intersectionality and identity dynamics provides fertile ground to explore identities outside of gender. Indeed, two of the included studies (Nash & Moore, 2021; Selzer *et al*.,

2017) also advocate for such research, with specific recommendations surrounding focus areas of sexuality, race, class, religion, age and disability. Indeed, leadership development has been previously positioned as "identity work" (Ely *et al*., 201, p.2), and this provides an opportunity to deepen understanding of the processes in which individuals construct their leadership identity (Avolio *et al*., 2010; Day, 2000). Exploration of multiple identities and their intersection with leadership is required, as gender may be too narrow a lens through which to view identity development. There is scope for future research to address this and strengthen understanding regarding leadership identity development of those in possession of other underrepresented identities (i.e., sexuality, race, class, religion, age and disability); ensuring that those in possession are supported, not erased.

3.5.7 Implications for practice

Four implications for practice can be identified following this systematic review of the literature. The first implication underlines the importance of sharing and publication of knowledge in WLDP research, and to report findings with greater transparency. This review highlights the obscurities that exist, and this presents a potential conflict between the desire to grow female talent and making leadership accessible.

The second implication, pertinent to practitioners and organisations, concerns the integration of selection methods with the theoretical foundations of the WLDPs they are implementing. Many of the WLDPs examined in this review are firmly rooted in Positive Psychology and various forms of positive leadership. A fundamental principle of such theories is for individuals to maximize their resources and strengths (Super, 1955). However, when

selection methods are employed, access to the WLDP is restricted. This presents a contradictory message.

The third implication of this review reinforces previous observations in the literature surrounding the inclusion of networking, conflict management and career planning. By developing networks and networking skills, women may be able to "disrupt the patterns of social connectivity at work that have for so long privileged men, and in so doing provide a new way to alter the balance of power between the sexes" (McCarthy, 2004, p.11). Biases and societal expectations may contribute to and reinforce stereotypes which identify women with the domestic sphere (Acker, 2006; O'Connor, 2019). This highlights the need to equip women leaders with the skills of conflict management and career planning to challenge these prevailing views (Ely & Rhode, 2010).

The fourth implication highlights the utility of incorporating an intersectional lens into WLDPs. By incorporating an intersectional lens and guided reflection surrounding the convergence and divergence of an individual's identities, participants may be supported in creating and being comfortable in internalising their leadership 'self' (Selzer *et al*., 2017) and leading with an enhanced understanding of their purpose (Quinn, 2004).

3.5.8 Limitations of this review

There are a few notable limitations to this review. First, and driven by the overarching objective, this review was purposefully narrow in scope. Grey material was not included, and the inclusion of such material may have enhanced the evidence from practice that could have added to the insights and findings. Second, it is recognised that the narrow focus of the search

terms employed may have inadvertently excluded pertinent research that may have been useful to this review. Third, researcher bias is also a consideration, though this may have been somewhat mitigated by the involvement of additional researchers and the high coefficients in relation to interrater reliability. Finally, as highlighted in the Methodology in Chapter 2 of this thesis, there is an ongoing debate regarding the misalignment between the positivist nature of SLRs and the ontological and epistemological variances (e.g. constructivism, interpretivism and subjectivism) that exist within psychology and the social sciences. As described in the Methodology, the researcher has attempted to mitigate this misalignment by following the positivist conventions of the SLR and discussing the impact of the results with a critical feminist lens.

3.5.9 Concluding remarks

The "glass ceiling", though not a modern metaphor, is a prevailing issue. The introduction of WLDPs highlights a recognition of this predicament. This review endeavoured to identify the selection processes, design methodologies, delivery mechanisms, the salient content and the reporting of outcomes through the extrapolation of the most recent research. In doing so, it reveals some troubling findings. There is a concerning lack of consistent reporting, transparent sharing of knowledge and alarming processes concerning the selection of participants and, as a consequence, this review poses more questions than it has answered. These questions are necessary, as the opaqueness uncovered is likely to hinder individuals in their leadership journey. Developing a more rigorous and consistent approach in the reporting of these areas will strengthen the ability of organisations to support their leaders. This review advocates for the inclusion of an intersectional lens to support leadership identity development. This lens provides fertile ground to explore leadership identity development through the perspectives of those in possession of other underrepresented identities (i.e., ethnic minorities,

those with disabilities and LGBTQ+ individuals). The findings of these explorations could inform other leadership development initiatives and, in turn, accelerate the sustainable representation of diversity in leadership roles.

Table 6. Quality assessment for qualitative studies

Study	1. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?		2. Is the research design appropriate for addressing the aims of the research?	3. Is there a clear statement of findings?				4. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?						5. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research				6. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?								7. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?		8. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration				9. Contribution of the reearch	Total score
	Research seeks to interpret or illuminate actions and/or subjective experiences	Qualitative methodology addresses research goal	Researcher justified research design	Findings made explicit	Discussion of evidence for and against researcher's arguments	Discussion of credibility of findings	Discussion of findings in relation to research question	Justified setting for data collection	Clear methods for data collection	Justification of methods chosen	Explicit process of data collection	Explanation of any modifications during study	Form of data clear	Explanation of how participants were selected	Explanation of why participants selected were the most appropriate	Discussion around recruitment and potential bias	Selection theoretically justified	In-depth description of analysis process	For thematic analysis, clear how categories/themes were derived from the data	Explanation of how data presented were selected to demonstrate analysis process	Sufficient data presented to support findings	Findings grounded in/supported by data	Good breadth and/or depth in findings	Contradictory data taken into account	Data appropriately referenced	Researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence	Researcher responded to events during the study and implications	Sufficient details of how research explained to participants	Researcher discussed issues raised by study	Adequate discussion of issues such as informed consent and anonymity	Consequences of research considered	Approval from an ethics committee	Contribution to existing knowledge or understanding	
1	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓			✓						✓	✓	21
4	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓			✓						✓	✓	16
6	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓		✓					✓	✓	✓	17
7	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	23
8	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓					✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓						✓	✓	18
9	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓				✓		✓	✓	21
10	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓						✓	✓	21
12	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓					✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓						✓	✓	17
13	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	26

Table 7. Quality assessment for quantitative studies

Study	1. Was the evaluation well-designed?							2. Was the study carried out appropriately?									3. Was analysis appropriate?		4. Is the evidence consistent?				8. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration					9. Contribution of the reearch	Total score
	Fidelity - extent to which the intervention was delivered with fidelity is clear	Measurement - measures are appropriate for outcomes and population	Measurement - participants completed same measures before and after	Measurement - all participants took pre/post measures	Counterfactual - assignment to treatment and comparison was at appropriate level	Counterfactual - comparison condition provides appropriate comparison to treatment - random assignment	Counterfactual - comparison condition provides appropriate comparison to tratement - thoroughly described	Representative sample for target population	Representative in terms of baseline equivalence between treatment and comparison groups	Sample size - sufficiently large to test for desired impact	Attrition - minimum of 35% completed pre/post measures	Attrition - clear processes for determining and reporting drop-out and dose	Attrition - assessed and reported overall and differential attrition	Equivalence - risks for contamination of comparison group and other confounding factors taken into account and	Equivalence - consistent and equivalent measurement of treatment and control	Measures - valid and reliable	Measures - independent of those used as part of intervention	Measures - independent information not just self-report	Analysis methods appropriate	Missing data appropriately treated	Findings made explicit	Discussion of evidence for and against researcher's arguments	Discussion of credibility of findings	Discussion of findings in relation to research question	Sufficient details of how research explained to participants	Researcher discussed issues raised by study	Adequate discussion of issues such as informed consent and anonymity	Consequences of research considered	Approval from an ethics committee	Contribution to existing knowledge or understanding	
2	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓	20
3	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓		✓	✓	✓				✓	✓			✓	✓			✓			✓		✓	✓	15
5	✓	✓						✓		✓		✓				✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	15
11	✓	✓						✓												✓	✓			✓						✓	7

1 = Clarke (2011); 2 = Dannels, Yamagat, McDade, Chuang, Gleason, McLaughlin, Richman & Morahan (2008); 3 = Ford, Dannels, Morahan & Magrane (2021); 4 = Harris & Leberman (2012); 5 = Helitzer, Newbill, Morahan, Magrane, Cardinali, Wu & Chang (2014); 6 = Kvach, Yesehak, Abebaw, Conniff, Busse & Haq (2017); 7 = Martínez-Martínez, Moline-López, Mateos de Cabo, Gabaldón, González-Pérez & Izquierdo (2021); 8 = Nash & Moore (2018); 9 = Nash & Moore (2021); 10 = O'Brien & Allin (2022); 11 = Parker, Hewitt, Witheriff & Cooper (2018); 12 = Peterson (2019); 13 = Selzer, Howton & Wallace (2017)

Chapter 4: When identities collide: exploring leadership identity development of LGBTQ+ leaders

4.1 Abstract

Previous scholarship has noted that leadership development initiatives need to evolve and be positioned as "identity work" (Ely *et al*., 2011; p. 2). This provides the space for participants to explore the impact of various identities in their possession on the formation and development of their leadership 'self'. Whilst prior work has explored majority heteronormative and cisgender perspectives, little is known about the lived experience of those leaders with an LGBTQ+ identity and how this interacts and collides with their leadership identity. This study aims to explore these experiences and unearth the nuances faced by this population of leaders. Seven LGBTQ+ leaders were interviewed to explore their lived experiences, with the data then reviewed and analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. This led to the development of three superordinate themes, each with three underpinning subordinate themes: 'Reconciliation of the Collision', with the subordinate themes being 'Obligations', 'Independence' and 'Insulation'; 'Strengths Resulting from the Collision', with the subordinate themes being 'Ambition', 'Resilience' and 'Empathy'; and finally, 'Protagonist Identities formed from the Collision', with the subordinate themes of 'Supporter', 'Advancer' and 'Protector'. The study provides new insights regarding LGBTQ+ leader identity formation and development. Implications for both theory and practice are discussed.

4.2 Introduction

The number of those who identify as LGBTQ+ is steadily rising in the UK population. The Office of National Statistics (ONS, 2021) estimates that 0.5% of the population are transgender and have a different gender identity to that assigned at birth. A further 3.2% identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual (ONS, 2021), a statistic which has risen by half by 50% since 2014. These rises are particularly striking for those individuals mid-career, classed as 'Millennials', and those entering the workforce, classed as 'Gen Z' (Stonewall, 2022). Together, this suggests that the number of LGBTQ+ individuals in the workplace is climbing at an exponential rate. In light of this, it is unsurprising that in a climate depicted by a war for talent (Michaels *et al*., 2001), organisations are taking steps to ensure they are attractive to external individuals who may be exploring new roles, as well as ensuring those within the organisation are supported and represented at work.

Those practices employed to attract external diverse populations are predominantly related, but not limited to, recruitment processes. For LGBTQ+ potential candidates, this is particularly noticeable during Pride and LGBT History Month, where rainbow-clad logos fill the feeds of social networking and recruitment platforms to show visible support (Jaquez, 2021). Advertisements, branding and photographs of diverse populations aim to enhance the 'diversity image' of the organisation, which has been noted to be an important factor for minority candidates in their decisions to apply and join an organisation (Avery & McKay, 2006).

Similarly, to ensure the maintenance of diversity within organisations, mechanisms with the intent to show visible support and commitment to inclusion are also prolific (Carter *et*

al., 2020; Dobbin & Kalev, 2018; Sanyal *et al*., 2015). These mechanisms aim to provide access to the tools and valuable resources that are not as available to those who are not part of the majority (i.e., white, cisgender and heterosexual; Eagly & Chin, 2010). Networking groups (Clutterbuck *et al*., 2012; Clutterbuck & Ragins, 2002), diversity and bias training (Alhejji *et al*., 2016; Carter *et al*., 2020), as well as mentoring programmes (Moore, 2021) are three such mechanisms employed. These provide targeted support to LGBTQ+ individuals, with the ambition to grant access to important assets, such as influential networks, stakeholders and platforms for career advancement; it is assumed these are less available to this group than to members of more privileged groups (Clutterbuck *et al*., 2012). In turn, for the organisation, these initiatives support the maintenance of sexual orientation and gender identity diversity within it, and can help to harness worker engagement, improve productivity and, in turn, increase competitive advantage over and above an organisation's competitors (Pichler *et al*., 2010).

Leadership development programmes (LDPs) are another such mechanism. Defined as a symbiotic relationship by which an organisation improves its "capacity to generate leadership" through "development at an individual level" (Allen *et al*., 2008, p.633), LDPs are an interaction between the individual attending the programme and the larger organisational environment and strategic intent. It is a coordinated, methodical effort by both parties directed toward leader improvement. In the UK alone, £42bn is invested annually by organisations into these types of initiatives which support leaders on their path to leadership (Campaign for Learning, 2023). Employed as a means to create a strong pipeline of leadership capability, they focus on key aspects of development with four overarching areas being commonplace: personal growth, conceptual understanding, skills building and feedback (Conger, 1992). They aim to support individuals in looking inward to aid in the construction of their leadership

identity (personal growth) as well as understand key leadership theories (conceptual understanding), before putting these into practice with others critiquing their performance and efforts (skills building and feedback).

The use of these programmes to aid the development of underrepresented groups in leadership has gathered momentum in recent years. For instance, top business schools and universities such as INSEAD, The University of Oxford, Saïd Business School and the University of St. Andrews offer LDPs aimed at women and those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds (Ely *et al*., 2011). These have been informed by the same overarching areas offered by Conger but incorporate lenses of intersectionality and identity dynamics (Crenshaw, 1989) as key components of the personal growth aspect of the programmes. Indeed, the systematic literature review (SLR) in Chapter 3, which focused on women-only LDPs (WLDPs), highlighted the positive impact of these lenses on participants. The inclusion of these lenses into the curriculum supported perceived growth in the areas of self-awareness, clarity of purpose and, in turn, enhanced feelings of authenticity and confidence. This aided the participants in their path to leadership.

The scholarship regarding women and those with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds in leadership, as well as the landscape of LDPs created to support their development, is more advanced in comparison to research focused on LGBTQ+ individuals in leadership. Whilst programmes do exist to support this group of leaders, it is worrying that scholarship has largely ignored the journey of LGBTQ+ leaders and, therefore, the evidence-base which informs these programmes is under-developed. To the authors knowledge, no published research examines LDPs which are geared towards the LGBTQ+ community. When viewing sexual minorities as members of a disadvantaged group in the workplace, similar to

that of those who are in possession of other protected characteristics (such as gender), programmes that are specifically aimed at developing women leaders may provide some foundations for the development of the evidence-base for LDPs aimed at supporting LGBTQ+ leaders. The SLR in Chapter 3, which examined 13 studies of women-only leadership development programmes, identified one such foundation: the concept of intersectionality and identity dynamics.

Whilst there are similarities in the journey to leadership between women and LGBTQ+ individuals, namely the navigation of stereotypes and discrimination (Fassinger *et al*., 2010; Garg & Sangwan, 2021; Ruggs *et al*., 2013), there are important and unique experiential and intersectional aspects faced by LGBTQ+ individuals to consider. For example, LGBTQ+ individuals face a nuanced navigation of complex personal and professional frontiers in the workplace, as well as experience anxiety surrounding the potential judgements regarding their personal identities (Grace & Benson, 2000). The anxiety that this nuanced navigation can induce, particularly by those in leadership roles, can cause the individual to feel obliged to conceal, 'mute' or reduce these personal facets at work (Gray *et al*., 2016). To support this concealment, those in possession of an LGBTQ+ identity will often attempt to conform to or imitate heteronormative and cisgender stereotypes to seek acceptance and open opportunities (Gray *et al*., 2016; Reimers, 2020). Therefore, exploring the experiences of LGBTQ+ leaders through an intersectional-queer lens is essential for understanding the multifaceted challenges they face in leadership identity formation, as well for the development of LDPs that support this formation.

Intersectionality and identity dynamics

Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) concept of intersectionality was developed as means to explore the intricacies of identity. It highlights that people navigate overlapping social categories and, particularly minority identities such as race, gender and sexuality, and the dynamics of which shape their unique lived experiences (McCall, 2005). In the present study, the researcher operationalises intersectionality theory to examine the dynamics of sexual and gender identity with that of leadership identity, to understand how these identities collide and interact. It poses the question: How do LGBTQ+ individuals experience the intersection of their LGBTQ+ identity with that of their leadership identity? By considering the lived experiences, compromises and negotiations of this under-researched group, the answers to this research question may reveal noteworthy opportunities for employers to support members of this community in establishing and maintaining their leadership identities.

There are two compelling rationales for incorporating intersectionality theory into the scholarship of leadership. First, intersectionality seeks to uncover the various identities of individuals, uncovering the interconnections between them. Second, it advocates against reducing the complexities in which these interconnections operate, emphasising a focus on the distinct experiences resulting from the interaction between these identities. Together, intersectionality provides a framework through which to explore an individual's multiple identities, focusing on the interactions at the nucleus of where they collide (McCall, 2005).

Queer theory

Similar to intersectionality theory, queer theory is a body of resources which seeks to question dominant societal power structures that exist (i.e., heteronormativity), as well as the

constraints that they impose on individuals that deviate from these structures in building meaningful identities (Bersani, 1995; Halley & Parker, 2011). In organisational research, and particularly leadership scholarship, the use of queer theory affords researchers the opportunity to explore and challenge these structures in three key ways. First, queer theory encourages the decolonisation of prevailing heteronormative understandings of gender and sexuality in organisational contexts (Muhr & Sullivan, 2013). In doing so, it questions prevailing views of what leadership 'looks like', those being "white, heterosexual, male" (Joseph & Chin, 2019. p.1), and attempts to deconstruct the application of these views. Second, queer theory interrogates the power dynamics that exist within organisations. Consequently, it can support those with limited power in reclaiming their 'voice' and their identities which, in heteronormative organisational contexts, can be lost (Ferry, 2018). Finally, by focusing on the experiences and marginalised individuals (i.e., LGBTQ+ individuals), queer theory encourages organisations to recognise and affirm the significance of the LGBTQ+ identity in its practices, creating environments where LGBTQ+ individuals can develop, grow and thrive without fear of discrimination (Ferry, 2018). Therefore, queer theory offers a critical lens through which to explore and understand the complexities of identity in organisational contexts, illuminating the ways in which heteronormativity operates and how individuals who deviate from this norm navigate and confront it (Muhr & Sullivan, 2013; Rumens, 2017).

In the present study, the researcher aligns intersectionality theory with queer theory to deepen the analysis of the dynamics between sexual and gender identity with that of leadership identity. The researcher builds on the foundational insights provided by the intersectional exploration of these identities, incorporating queer theory as a complementary framework to dismantle and challenge heteronormative assumptions regarding sexuality, gender and leadership. This approach aligns with the broader goal of intersectional and queer scholarship,

which seeks to destabilise hegemonic narratives and augment marginalised voices (Ferry, 2018; Gamboa *et al*., 2021; McCall, 2005).

4.3 Key literature

The scholarship surrounding the lived experience of LGBTQ+ leaders is under-developed. The area of leadership identity construction provides a useful lens through which to explore the experiences which may contribute to leadership identity formation and development in LGBTQ+ leaders. Though a significant body of research exists in relation leadership identity formation and development using Leadership Identity Development Theory (LID, Komives *et al*., 1998), this research is focused on student populations and is located outside of workplace environments (i.e., Renn, 2007, Zaar *et al*., 2020). As such, caution must be exercised when attempting to extend any relationship found using student populations to a non-student (adult) population. Further, a key tenet of LID is its sequential, six-stage process of identity formation, and this has been widely criticised as it simplifies the iterative and dynamic process of leadership identity formation and development (Day & Liu, 2019; Liu *et al*., 2021; Murphy, 2019; Murphy & Johnson, 2011). In contrast, Leadership Identity Formation Theory (LIFT; Skinner, 2014) was developed using populations of leaders in workplace settings and proposes a dynamic formation process where each leaders' unique history and life experiences inform the development of a leadership identity.

Leader Identity Formation Theory (LIFT)

LIFT describes the intrapersonal process through which individuals come to acknowledge themselves as a leader. Like personal identity construction and "the various meanings attached to oneself by self" (Gecas & Burke, 1995, p.42), LIFT advocates for an

ongoing internalisation of a person's demographic characteristics, social memberships, and the past and current experiences of their life. This internalisation is dynamic and evolves based on the subjective meanings an individual applied to oneself based on their experiences through the life domains of family, community and work. No literature could be found that explores LIFT through the lens of LGBTQ+ leadership. However, its view that an individual's leadership 'self' is based upon a number of interactions between these environments, and the meaning one applies to the experiences within these environments, provides a foundation by which to explore these subjective experiences.

Family domain

Several scholars have noted that the formation of a leadership identity begins in childhood, with influences including family origin and an individual's attachment to caregivers (Clapp-Smith *et al*., 2019; Hammond *et al*., 2017; Liu *et al*., 2019; Murphy & Johnson, 2011). These perspectives trigger the establishment of schemas and ideas of 'what good looks like', as well as how ambitious and resolute an individual is in taking steps to achieve these schemas. These aspects are illustrated by observations made initially by Andrew Tobias in his 1976 memoir "The Best Little Boy in the World". Tobias described his experiences of his adolescence and growing up gay in the middle of the 20th century. He articulated his attempts to navigate the negative impact of his sexuality, including the rejection he could face from his family if discovered, by striving for achievement and success. This culminated in enhanced feelings of self-esteem, self-worth and value. These anecdotes were empirically validated by Pachankis and Hatzenbuehler (2013), where similar stigma-based unease was a source of betterment in young gay men. These findings were extended further to lesbians and bisexuals by Blankenship and Stewart (2022), culminating in the renaming of the hypothesis from the 'Best Little Boy in the World' to 'Best Little Kid in the World', with recommendations that

research could be further deepened via the exploration of transgender persons and other identities which form the LGBTQ+ acronym.

In summary, from a leadership identity formation and development perspective, there is evidence that compensation strategies are implemented stemming from experiences in early childhood. These appear to serve the individual by cementing an achievement orientation whilst also mitigating the potential negative feelings of being in possession of a sexual identity which conflicts with traditional societal categories and expectations.

Community domain

As a community, LGBTQ+ individuals participate in a common experience of gender transgression (Fassinger & Arseneau, 2007). This is to say that they are defying societal norms of what is deemed 'acceptable' behaviour based on prevailing societal views of gender. Membership of a group where this experience is shared may support an individual in navigating these non-traditional societal categories. Through the membership of a group, LGBTQ+ individuals have reported a sense of safety (Anderson & Knee, 2021; Krane *et al*., 2002). In turn, this produces enhanced levels of self-esteem (Krane *et al*., 2002), positivity in their identity (Jellison *et al*., 2004) and self-worth (Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990).

For the transgender person, defined as those whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth (GLAAD, n.d.), such membership may hold even more substantial importance (Nadal, 2019; Swenson *et al*., 2022). Societal attitudes towards transgender persons are often more belligerent than those towards LGB individuals, resulting in more severe consequences (Kwon, 2013, Ozturk, 2011). These include being the target of confusion

and tension as transgender employees do not readily fit into prevailing views of gender categories (Ozturk, 2011).

However, such membership has been noted to produce feelings of tension that conflict with this apparent 'strength in numbers' outlook. Simultaneously, as individuals become members of a group, they may lose aspects of their individuality. Self-categorisation Theory (Turner *et al*., 1987) posits that as individuals form connections and build their membership of a social group, their uniqueness evolves and lessens as they begin to demonstrate the typical characteristics and behaviours of membership. Through this perpetuation of behaviour, stereotypes form. Individuals, both internal members of the group and external observers, recognise similarities and differences between members and non-members (Brown, 2000). These observations support Stigma Theory (Crocker *et al*., 1998). This theory suggests that the stigma experienced by minority social groups, formed through social categorisation, contributes to the formation and maintenance of stereotyping which, in turn, can lead to negativity directed towards these groups and the loss of an individual's uniqueness (Cole, 2009). Group membership has also been observed to create pressures of conformity. Indeed, some scholars have noted that intra-community pressure, through an 'unspoken' obligation of an individual to remain authentic to these characteristics, exists (Brotman & Kraniou, 1999; Tabatabai, 2010). When this obligation is not fulfilled, observations have suggested that this may be seen as a group betrayal and expulsion (Ghabrial, 2016). These interactions can result in a loss of individuality and authenticity, defined as the essence of an individual which they are driven to project and adhere to (Gergen, 1991).

To summarise, for the LGBTQ+ individual, a 'push and pull' structure may be experienced which impacts their leadership identity formation and development. On one hand, alignment with a group may produce feelings of security which are beneficial and valuable. On the other, membership may also create internal tension when their LGBTQ+ identity is seen as "totalising and determinative, as trumping all others" (Cole, 2009, p.175), and their uniqueness lost.

Work domain

In workplaces, a similar experience has been observed, whereby LGBTQ+ individuals may 'soften' aspects of their identities in order to avoid being aligned with a stereotype. Stereotype threat is described as a "social-psychological predicament that can arise from widely-known negative stereotypes about one's group... the existence of such a stereotype means that anything one does or any of one's features that conform to it make the stereotype more plausible as a self-characterisation in the eyes of others, and perhaps even in one's own eyes" (Steele & Aronon, 1995, p.797). Therefore, LGBTQ+ individuals may partake in impression management and the 'muting' of their LGBTQ+ identity in order to avoid the potential of negative and disruptive effects (Bosson et al., 2003). To support this concealment, those in possession of these identities will often attempt to conform to or imitate heteronormative and cisgender stereotypes to seek acceptance (Gray et al., 2016; Reimers, 2017).

This 'muting' has also been shown to promote an imbalance in healthy psychological functioning. Miller and Malloy (2003) found that some gay men display enhanced levels of positive verbal and non-verbal behaviour in an effort to navigate threats in their surrounding

work environment. Concerningly, they found that those who demonstrated the highest levels of positive behaviour suffered from a larger number of negative personal experiences because of identity 'muting'. This dissonance between their behaviour and orientation fuelled a complex dual identity management process that was challenging to navigate and, in turn, caused distress.

Further, a general experience of fear and mistrust regarding the concealment of an individual's identity in a dominant culture can manifest in hypervigilance in the minority person, defined as the excessive monitoring of the environment for potential threats to physical and psychological harm (Meyer, 1995). Several studies suggest that LGBTQ+ individuals partake in this risk-averse, vigilant processing style (Boatwright et al., 1996; Carroll & Gilroy, 2002; Meyer, 1995, 2003). This constant monitoring of the environment and the regulation of behaviour has some positives, given that this vigilance can support the individual in understanding implicit social cues and enhance their perceptual accuracy (Carroll & Gilroy, 2002). However, this can also prompt negative consequences which outweigh the benefits, culminating in social withdrawal, exhaustion, and the erosion of relationships (Rostosky et al., 2022).

Simply put, workplaces have the potential to be a breeding ground for dissonance and the negative psychological consequences which it can encourage. Repeated exposure to these coping strategies can lead to persistent and maladaptive cognitions (Alisic et al., 2011; Pflugradt & Allen, 2010). Given that personal identity is intertwined with a leadership identity (Ibarra, 1999), the risk these persistent and maladaptive cognitions pose to leadership identity development appears plausible.

The above considerations provide some insight into the complexities, dynamics, conflicts and negotiations that LGBTQ+ individuals face in the construction of their leadership identity. Despite these observations, there is a distinct lack of scholarship which focuses on the lived experiences of this group of leaders. In turn, the understanding of the meaning- and sense-making of these aspects is under-developed. This research looks to advance this understanding and explore these facets on an intimate level, before pursuing how these observations transcend the individual experience and form a cumulative and common experience.

4.4 Method

The entrenched and deep-rooted aspects of individual identity, along with the methods of sense- and meaning-making individuals employ in its construction and navigation of dynamics, is rooted in the constructivist paradigm. From an ontological frame of reference, there is no single reality applicable to all as individuals create this themselves. From an epistemological stance, this reality needs to be interpreted through the exploration of individual and personal experiences. This necessitates a qualitative research approach, uncovering and illuminating deeper meaning to create understanding; this is a substantial benefit of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) as a research methodology.

From a philosophical perspective, the characteristics of IPA are phenomenological, hermeneutical and idiographic. It is phenomenological in exploring the lived experiences of those pertinent to the research, how they are reconciling these experiences through the application of meaning (Smith & Osborn, 2008). It is hermeneutical as the researcher himself takes a participative role in the sense- and meaning-making process (Nizza *et al*., 2021). This

'double hermeneutic' perspective means that different researchers will interpret the participants' experiences in unique ways as they, themselves, are making sense of the experiences (Smith, 1995; Smith & Osborn, 2008). Finally, IPA employs an idiographic approach focusing on "the particular" (Smith *et al*., 2009, p.29). This means that the researcher meticulously explores how the participant has made sense of their experience, on a deep and intimate level.

The richness of the data captured, as well as the intimacy by which the data is explored, means that sample sizes in IPA research are consistently smaller than other research methodologies. In the case of Professional Doctorate research, sample sizes of seven and above have been noted to be adequate (Smith *et al*., 2009). The present study uses a sample size of seven.

Prior to the recruitment of participants and given the potentially intrusive and sensitive nature of the investigation, ethical approval from the Birkbeck Ethics Committee was obtained. Participants were recruited using a combination of snowball, purposive and volunteer sampling, instigated by leveraging the researcher's professional contacts as well as a recruitment poster distributed via LinkedIn. This invited individuals who met the participation criteria to contact the researcher via email. As the current research focuses on LGBTQ+ leadership identity formation and development, the criteria for participation reflected this: identify as LGBTQ+ and employed in a senior leadership or executive-level position in a UK organisation. After potential participants contacted the researcher, and to ensure they met the inclusion criteria, a Demographic Sheet was emailed for completion by potential subjects. Additionally, this Demographic She*et al*so served as a means to capture their Student and/or

Staff Member membership of Birkbeck. If these questions were positively endorsed, and they were part of the Birkbeck community in these guises, then they were excluded as a participant. If the prospective participant met the inclusion criteria, they were provided with the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 2) and Consent Form (Appendix 3). These documents provided an overview of the purpose of the research, a comprehensive outline of what individuals would experience as a participant, how their data would be stored and used, and an explanation of their right to withdraw up to one month after the interview. Upon receipt of the signed copy of the Consent Form, each participant was allocated a pseudonym to protect anonymity. An overview of the participants can be seen in Table 8. Interviews were then arranged and delivered through the researcher's MS Teams account offered via Birkbeck. Interviews were recorded and automatically transcribed using the function within the MS Teams application.

Table 8. Study participants

Participant Pseudonym	**Age**	**Gender**	**LGBTQ+ Identity**	**Ethnicity**	**Organisational Sector**
Trevor	43	Male	Gay	White	Retail
Jane	40	Female	Lesbian	White	Education
Arjun	38	Male	Gay	South Asian	Professional Services
James	37	Male	Gay	White	Education
Peter	32	Male	Gay	White	Technology
Christine	41	Female	Lesbian	White	Manufacturing
Karen	46	Female	Transgender, Lesbian	White	Education

4.4.1 Data collection

As the research question focused on the lived experiences, and the meaning- and sense-making of the participants of these experiences, semi-structured interviews were used. This data collection method is the recommended approach for IPA research (Smith & Osborn, 2003), permitting the research to explore and capture an enhanced level of richness that other qualitative methods do not afford. The flexibility of the semi-structured nature of the interview aims to support the researcher in developing a view of the individual's experiences; an 'insider's' viewpoint.

Through their current work as a Business Consultant and registered Occupational Psychologist through the Health and Care Practitioners Council, the researcher has comprehensive experience in conducting interviews of a sensitive nature. During the interviews, each lasting between 45-50 minutes, the researcher was attuned to emotional signals and cues (such as facial expressions, excessive perspiring, vocal tone and expressions, appearing agitated, anger and/or emotional volatility, displaying panic). No such signals were detected. After the interview concluded, each participant was sent a Post-Interview Summary. This document revisited the purpose of the research, thanking participants for their time and outlining the next steps of the research. This document also reinforced their right to withdraw. Additionally, it included the contact details of both the researcher and their supervisor, as well as contact information for mental health and wellbeing support charities (e.g., MindOut, Mind and ReThink), should participants wish to explore their experiences further with suitably qualified professionals.

4.4.2 Analysis

IPA begins with a single-case analysis, with each of the participant's narratives explored in the context of their own unique experiences. This began with the researcher becoming immersed in the transcripts. The researcher listened to the recording whilst following the transcription. This advanced the researcher's familiarity with the participant. Transcriptions were formatted electronically into a table with margins either side of the interview body. The researcher began making notes in the right-hand margin of salient points of interest from the account of the participant. These initial observations focused on the researcher's interpretation of the account, with attention paid to language used, vocal intonations, physical sensations, and sense-making methods. These comments led the researcher to populate the left-hand margin with experiential themes which summarise the meaning of the extract. These captured the essence of these observations succinctly, creating themes within the case. These steps were taken with each of the recordings and transcripts before themes were explored across the cases. In order to create a coherent group of themes, the researcher used an inductive and iterative process. All experiential themes were printed on paper and pinned to a noticeboard. This allowed the researcher to view all the identified themes and, through a process of abstraction (Smith *et al*., 2009), form patterns and associations by grouping themes together. This process involved the reconfiguration of individual themes, the revisiting of theme labels and returning to the original transcripts to ensure the unique idiosyncrasies of cases reflected the shared aspects of the experience. This created superordinate themes - those that emerged at a higher level as a consequence of the associations between emergent themes.

The duality of the researcher's role in IPA research, both as an analyser of the data and as an instrument of sense- and meaning-making (Engward & Goldspink, 2020), calls for an

understanding of reflexivity. This is the process of 'being aware' and brings into sharp and transparent focus the influences and assumptions a researcher may bring to their roles (Peat *et al*., 2019). The double hermeneutic dynamic of IPA is of particular importance when considering these beliefs, thoughts and attitudes of the researcher. As both a leader and a member of the LGBTQ+ community, the researcher recognised that these converging identities provide him with a percipient perspective into the phenomena of focus. This supported the researcher in engaging in the hermeneutic 'loop' involved in IPA. However, as much as these experiences enhanced this interpretation, there is also potential for these experiences to hinder the relationship between the researcher and the researched. For example, the commonalities and disparities between the participants' experiences and the researcher's may influence the analysis of the accounts (Peat *et al*., 2019). To support the researcher in his reflexive practice, a journal was kept capturing and acknowledging these musings, as recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

4.5 Results

The interpretation of the transcripts led to three superordinate themes regarding the collision and interaction between the participants' LGBTQ+ identity and their leadership identity: 'Reconciliation of the Collision', 'Strengths Resulting from the Collision' and 'Protagonist Identities formed from the Collision', each with three associated subordinate themes (see Figure 2.).

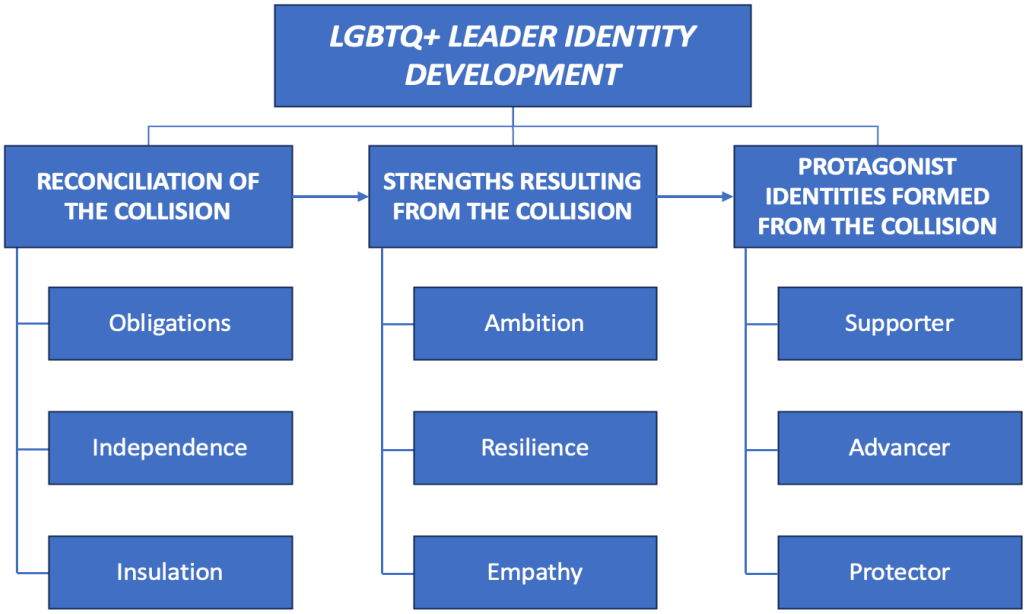

Figure 2. LGBTQ+ Leader Identity Development Thematic Map

Throughout the narratives, a journey of leadership identity formation was apparent, and the catalyst for this was the collision between the participant's leadership and LGBTQ+ identities. 'Reconciliation of the Collision' describes the thoughts and feelings surrounding the complex interaction of an individual's LGBTQ+ and leadership identities. All participants described their attempts to come to terms with their feelings of difference as a minority group. As part of this resolution, they described certain responsibilities, either welcomed or unwelcomed, which formed the 'Obligations' of their role as an LGBTQ+ leader. This reconciliation felt liberating and granted them 'Independence' and freedom to see themselves as a leader without fear of consequence. However, despite this reconciliation, they also described the need to have some form of protection and 'Insulation'. They recognised that, in each workplace they joined along their careers, there was a period where 'Reconciliation of the Collision' was revisited, and a certain amount of vigilance and defence was required in order to navigate this effectively.

The reconciliation of these aspects appeared to be the avenue by which to unlock 'Strengths Resulting from the Collision'. All participants described the drive and 'Ambition' they apply in their work as a leader and their lives more broadly. This added to their levels of 'Resilience' in the face of adversity and challenge, with all participants describing the perception of higher levels of durability. They also felt that their experiences gave them enhanced levels of insight and sensitivity when dealing with others, culminating in higher levels of interpersonal shrewdness and 'Empathy'.

The channelling of these strengths allowed them to enact 'Protagonist Identities form from the Collision' as a LGBTQ+ leader. Reoccurring narratives regarding their focus on people and being an 'Supporter' of others, particularly those who felt they were unable to speak for themselves or were uncomfortable doing so, was prolific. 'Advancer' describes the desire of these individuals to support others via the creation of opportunities, particularly those who are marginalised. This same focus is captured via the role as a 'Protector' of justice and fairness, challenging and confronting immorality and malfeasance when observed.

'Reconciliation of the Collision'. Collectively, the participants described the realisation of a self-imposed moral obligation and responsibility to other LGBTQ+ individuals. In the following extract, Peter illustrates the duty at hand and how being visible to others about his LGBTQ+ identity is central to his leadership identity. Within this interaction, showing his sexuality at work is a means to fully embody the subordinate theme of the 'Obligations' that membership to the LGBTQ+ community demands, but also what his leadership identity demands. Central to his account is the significance of those who, like him, have no role model

to aspire to, and the responsibility he has as a leader to support those aspiring to grow and develop:

> *I kind of realised that part of my role is for those people who were me 10 years ago, struggling with companies or not feeling like they were looking up, saying "I wanna progress here, but nobody looks or acts like me"... Really, it's this almost self-realisation that there is a lot of good I can do for a lot of people just by trying to be more open about my identity and my struggles and my insecurities, and even if it makes me feel a little bit weird, for others it might actually be exactly what they needed to hear.*

The use of the phrase *"my role"* reveals that Peter feels that this is his responsibility alone, not the responsibility of the collective leadership population within his organisation, to set this example for others. This dawns on him via a *"self-realisation"* that only he can be vulnerable about sharing *"my identity and my struggles and my insecurities"*; no-one else can support him in sharing these aspects, and so it rests with him, and him alone, to take on this responsibility. Christine has similar reflections, but also recognises the feelings of shame that can manifest if she does not choose to enact the duties which come with her 'Obligations':

> *I am acutely aware that you actually have a responsibility as an older member of the LGBT community to be the role model that you, you didn't have yourself. And so that played into it as well, the kind of, as I say, the cementing of "if, if, if I don't just get really honest about this and authentic about this right now with everyone and just have*

a real level with myself on this then I'm actually also doing a disservice to the young LGBTQ people in my organisation, and outside of it.

Like the other participants, Christine feels the weight of this implicit, self-imposed responsibility, and feels the force of the *"guilt"* and *"disservice"* she is doing to others if she does not partake in enacting this responsibility as a LGBTQ+ leader. The reconciliation of this appears to demonstrate the "cementing" of her responsibility to be authentic in her leadership identity, which then allows others the chance to be authentic in a way that she *"didn't have herself"*. Whilst these responsibilities were interpreted as being welcome and embraced, only Jane approached these with caution and scepticism. In speaking about a request from her leadership team to chair a Pride network in her organisation, her caution was visible:

And I was like, "no, hang on a minute". Again so, I'm trying to be on the women's network, fine to lead the women's network, fine, I guess to say that I led, would lead them the LGBT one, but it was because I identified as the, as obviously, a member of the community, I suddenly then thought that anyone thinking that I, you know, I would, I would be given the label and that was something I really struggle with.

Jane's reluctance to take on this responsibility is triggered by the realisation that she was only approached because of her LGBTQ+ identity. Her caution about enacting this responsibility is born from the *"label"* that could be applied to her. Later she revisits this loss of uniqueness, reflecting on how being a member of the LGBTQ+ community means she is automatically categorised and told *"you go over there now"*. The use of *"you"* summons a sense of forced depersonalisation; she is no longer seen as Jane and the uniqueness she brings.

The *"over there"* describes a nondescript and separate place away from others. Together, these small yet loaded extracts evoke a sense of loss; loss at being stripped of uniqueness and being sent to an obscure place because of her LGBTQ+ *"label'*. For Jane, this implicit responsibility that comes with her 'Obligations' as a LGBTQ+ leader is not one that she has asked for, feeling that it is confining rather than liberating.

For Jane, it seems that in standing fast against these implicit responsibilities she is asserting her 'Independence', mentioning that *"I don't believe there's any reason I should have to change"*. For the other participants, this subordinate theme encapsulates their freedom from having to actively manage the convergence of their LGBTQ+ and leadership identities. For Arjun, this freedom and the 'Independence' that stems from it means that he is liberated to be himself and display his LGBTQ+ identity in his leadership without having to *"give it a second thought"*. For him, this ease lessens the cognitive load that comes with having to manage how the two identities interact. This is captured vividly by Linda, and how embracing her transgender identity brings a sense of release:

> *So, you know, I am post-operative male-to-female transgender. I probably spent the first 33 years of my life, um, pretending that I wasn't. And that had a definite impact on my attitude as a leader and in general, so lots of walls up, ... but coming out at work has enabled me to be happier in the workplace. And by being happier in the workplace, I'm more effective at my job. And I, you know, I'm more bothered about how well my team do than how well I hide what I'm hiding.*

Linda describes the happiness she feels at no longer *"pretending"* and recognises the impact this has on her ability to be *"more effective in my job"*. The removal of this façade and the sense of relief experienced without its inhibiting weight, measured by the time she has had to carry it, creates the 'Independence' she has craved for so long. James also describes a similar level of relief, using the analogy of an unpainted wall in his home to describe the liberating feelings that come with not having to constantly withhold his LGBTQ+ identity. In the past, he would have consciously *"blurred the background"* to create a façade and to carefully manage the impression his is projecting. Now, however, he feels a sense of liberation in being visible:

> *I think because I've created this space for myself to be confidently 'me' now as a result of all of those things and I don't care about that wall and who sees it.*

He is resolute in his position in allowing others to see his LGBTQ+ identity, or the metaphorical 'unpainted wall' that it represents. He is not tethered to a particular image, nor is he feeling the desire to consciously obscure himself. He is enacting his 'Independence' by remaining true to *"'me'"*.

Despite the untethering that the above extracts convey, all of the participants highlighted the need to have adequate protection from the potential negative consequences of their LGBTQ+ identity. The subordinate theme of 'Insulation' encases these considerations from the narratives. As Peter observed *"I think there's a misunderstanding that you come out once in your life, but actually in the workplace, you're coming out every single day"*. This was recognised by the other participants also, and the need to adopt practices which supported them

in this daily endeavour. Trevor reflected on his experiences and his use of tactics to prevent future and potentially disruptive ramifications of his sexuality:

You, you adopt different personas to disarm different people in different ways.

The use of the word *"disarm"* evokes imagery around the removal of ammunition that others possess that could create these negative ramifications. Trevor's narrative also displays a vigilance and a premeditated intent to adjust his style in order to achieve this successfully. These two aspects appear to be giving Trevor control over the situation, or at least make the 'battlefield' a far easier place to navigate. Additionally, there is a cunning and deliberate attempt to use his interpersonal prowess to protect himself from harm, equipping himself with the 'Insulation' he needs to navigate situations and people with comfort. James also reflects on this astuteness about people and situations, and where this stems from:

It's the fear of [your sexuality] being held against you in some conscious or even unconscious way. Because it had been on so many occasions before. And I can, I can suss [people] within seconds now of meeting them, and then they might not even be aware of their own biases. But I can see them.

And then later:

I think as a gay man and your senses are, are alert to it. And so, it's, it is the hyperconsciousness is definitely the fear of prejudice

In these extracts, James describes his 'Insulation' as a *"hyperconsciousness",* evoking a sense of intensity in his shrewdness in reading people and situations. Indeed, his ability to *"suss"* others almost instantaneously, as well as the self-proclaimed insight into their own thoughts before the individual concerned has an opportunity to reflect on them, has 'super-human' connotations. This superpower indicates the strength of desire to protect oneself; 'normal' human abilities will not meet the demands of the 'Insulation' James requires to pre-empt contentious situations and navigate the potential consequences with deftness.

These excerpts display the interactions and realisations that the participants experience when their LGBTQ+ and leadership identities collide, causing them to partake in Reconciliation of the Collision' in order to move forward. There is a recognition that, with their dual identities of leadership and as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, that certain responsibilities may accompany this duality. Whilst most of the participants answered calls to fulfil these 'Obligations', there is also a fierceness apparent in questioning 'why' these obligations are necessary. This same fierceness could also be applied to the desire for 'Independence', with all participants wanting to take steps to protect their freedom of expression. For most, this means enjoying the release that comes without having to consciously manage their impression, and for one it means standing firm in their view that their LGBTQ+ identity is not the totality of who she is or wants to be known for. Finally, there is acknowledgement that this process of resolution is a journey, not a destination. Therefore, taking steps to ensure the appropriate armour and 'Insulation' to navigate the obstacles this voyage may awaken is recognised. In working through these aspects, glimpses of the strengths that they unlocked were revealed. All participants recognised that their LGBTQ+ identity gave them access to particular faculties that were beneficial components of their leadership identity.

‘Strengths Resulting from the Collision’ describes the recognition, use and incorporation of these abilities into their leadership identity.

‘Strengths Resulting from the Collision’. All participants recognised that there were inherent strengths that came with their LGBTQ+ identity, reflecting on how these have shaped their identity as a leader. In the extract that follows, Jane reflects on an observed link between her childhood experiences of being a lesbian and how they manifest in her work in heightened levels of ‘Ambition’ and drive:

> *I wasn’t aware of what being good at something actually meant, until I went to secondary school, and then, of course had a massive crush on one of the girls in the class, who would only like really speak to me because I was actually, when she realised I was actually quite good at [certain school subjects] and I could help her…I learned that actually being quite good at these things meant that I could be in the most popular girls’ group, you know, and not actually be there for another reason…I just I, I hold this particular girl, like I’m so grateful because it’s done me so well. Oh, being you know, having these standards and being a bit competitive and like you know, just exploiting your strengths really can do for you.*

Even at this young age, Jane appears to recognise that her strengths can serve her and others well and can be leveraged to ingratiate herself with others. In these reflections, there is a lack of naivety that often comes with adolescence. Jane is aware that she may have been manipulated and exploited for her strengths but allows this for a chance to be admitted into the *“popular girls’ group”*. In essence, a reciprocal relationship is apparent: Jane is able to be

viewed as popular, and those around her leverage her strengths. This also appears to have shaped her in later life and her role as a leader, providing her with a competitive edge and high standards, as well as a comfort in *"exploiting"* these. Arjun also recognises the 'Ambition' that comes with his LGBTQ+ identity. Reflecting on the trauma he has experienced, both personally and the inherited trauma as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, he recognises that it comes with a drive to improve his performance and extend his capability:

> *So, you know, you kind of hold it to, to an extent in your heart…So, it's like, you know, it's just, it's just there's always for me, there's always been something that's held me back, and I, I continue to see, try and push myself out of my comfort zone to, to push my boundaries.*

In this case, Arjun is repurposing the trauma experienced into something positive, manifesting in his 'Ambition' to evolve and grow. The use of the word *"heart"* evokes imagery of deep emotional importance. Symbolically, it seems that this collective trauma is held close to the centre of Arjun's being, as well as fuelling his growth. James has similar reflections on this trauma. With a background in psychology himself, he repeated the phrase *"post-traumatic growth"* throughout his interview. In the extracts that follow, he highlights how the mark of this trauma has been repurposed:

> *I, I think I think you realise you've got it and learn how to play with it because of post-traumatic growth… And that that comes from, I think as a gay man, I grew up believing I had to be ten times better than the straight men and the straight women to get a say.*

Through his trauma comes a sense of realisation that these strengths exist, as well as an awareness of how to use them. The use of the words *"play with it"* has connotations of manipulation and enjoyment, suggesting that he is using them in a way that is self-serving. This particular strength of 'Ambition' stems from his adolescence and the belief that he has to exert additional effort in order to compete with his heterosexual counterparts.

With this drive, comes the second area of strength. The subordinate theme of 'Resilience' speaks to the unwavering durability that all the participants mentioned. In the excerpt that follows, Trevor reflects on a challenging situation where he managed poor performance. He compares his approach to a straight male colleague to emphasise the difference between their methods:

> *A very much older male store manager, straight male store manager, dealing with a woman that's having a problem, his way of dealing with it is to back away because it's a woman and, and how, you know, "how, how do you deal with this?" And, and mine was the opposite. It was like, "Sorry, what are you talking about? No, your, your attitude is wrong" or "no, sorry you can't speak to it like that." And all of those things suddenly brought a load of the barriers down.*

Trevor's narrative displays his resilience in this situation and how he appears unafraid in standing his ground and delivering a contentious message. The comparison he makes with a straight male colleague emphasises the strength he possesses born from his LGBTQ+ identity. This manifests in a fiercely resilient and dauntless leadership identity, and one which removed the barriers the underperforming employee was demonstrating. Linda reflects on this also,

discussing how her various experiences have made her more resilient and steadier in the face of challenge:

> *Because I don't have that cloud over me. Hey, I deal with that cloud better, right? I deal with the other cloud better because, because it, you know, too many clouds and it and, you know, you, you've been completely snowed under. So, so it gives you that ability to face any obstacle, any challenge with a greater equanimity of spirit.*

Her metaphor of a *"cloud"* acknowledges the denseness and obscurity that accompanies the management of her transgender identity in the workplace. Once this management is no longer required, the cloud shifts. This shift affords her with the skills to navigate challenges with enhanced levels of 'Resilience' and with greater equilibrium as a leader. Christine's narrative also emphasises this strength of resilience, and depicts a clear link between her experiences and the impact this has had on equipping her as a leader:

> *So in terms of equipping absolutely, so I think the kind of battles I had in my in my teens, particularly around, you know, being open and honest about, you know, sexuality amongst friends and family, was really, really hard at the time, but it's one of the things that, it's one of the things, one of the key elements in my, shall we say, most formative years, that has made me very, very resilient…Psychologically and emotionally robust.*

Christine's use of the word *"battle"* provides a telling glimpse of the struggles she has endured, yet also speaks to the tenacity and resilience she employs to navigate them effectively. These experiences are *"one of the key elements"* in her life and form the foundation of her

fortitude as a leader. Her use of the word *"robust"* gives a further indication of the buttressing effect of her experiences, providing her with a coating that is difficult to penetrate.

Though the participants all referred to this resilience and the protective coating it provides, this did not interfere with their perceived sensitivity to those around them. The subordinate theme of 'Empathy' captures this belief. In the extract that follows, Peter reflects on how his experiences as a gay man support him in displaying heightened levels of appreciation of others' perspectives:

> *When I do get to work with either in my team or outside of my team, those people who have different lived experiences to mine, but with some similarities, either feeling excluded or feeling like it's impacting their ability to do their job or some of the anxieties they go through because of that part of their identity, I think helps me empathise to a slightly different level. It influences my leadership because I think it's given me some 'groundedness' in understanding the value of lived experience and the empathy needed to appreciate how it affects that individual.*

With his experience as a gay man, and the introspection this prompts, Peter feels more equipped in empathising with others on a *"different level"*. Though he recognises that the experiences of others are likely to be different than his own, the degree to which he can relate to these is enhanced. The use of the word *"'groundedness'"* supports this, suggesting that he does so with an unostentatious demeanour and with the sensitivity that these experiences demand. Arjun also recognises this strength of 'Empathy', observing that it provides him with beneficial curiosity and insight into the perspectives of others:

What I pride myself on having is being an open-minded person, understanding various perspectives when I come into conversations with stakeholders and my day-to-day world and, but also being able to encourage and hopefully motivate others to be the best versions of themselves whenever I come into contact with them, if I'm working on something with them. You know we, you know, that's just, that's just how I, that's my vibe.

Arjun's LGBTQ+ identity enabled him to view himself as an *"open-minded"* person and equips him with an openness to the views and desires of others. Further, channelling this sensitivity into understanding how best to encourage and motivate those around him gives him a sense of *"pride"*. This emphasises the deep enjoyment, satisfaction and confidence that deploying this strength creates. The use of the word *"vibe"* is quite striking, and given it is an abbreviation of 'vibration', evokes a sense of the enjoyment Arjun experiences, as well as a 'buzz' that permeates and positively impacts others.

Whilst Jane sees the positives that come with increased 'Empathy', she also recognises that it comes with potential pitfalls. In the extract that follows, she reflects on an interaction that displays her self-talk fuelled by the counterproductive effects of this sensitivity:

"Will you actually like me?", that kind of stuff that, that, you know, and, and particularly like a promotion thing, you know, I'm I, I "are you gonna see this" and you think "oh she's not like you, you know I'm, are you going to give me the time of day?", kind of thing.

When applying for a promotion, Jane experiences a degree of scepticism regarding the thoughts and reactions of others. This fear is born from the perception that the other individual is *"gonna see"* her LGBTQ+ identity and *"not going to give her the time of day"* and see her capability to lead. Here we can see Jane's 'Empathy' being overused and 'derailing' her logical thinking. In essence, her astuteness is in overdrive and, as a consequence, she recognises that she may be 'seeing shadows' where they may not be present.

Together, these extracts show a heightened degree of awareness of the 'Strengths Resulting from the Collision' that may enhance or, as seen in the final example, hinder their leadership identity. In the sense-making of early experiences, the participants recognised how this fuels their drive and the 'Ambition' they apply to their roles as leaders. This same reconciliation and meaning-making also equips the participants with heightened levels of durability and 'Resilience', which allows them to navigate the challenges of leadership with a coating of figurative armour. Finally, and despite the reinforcement that comes with this armour, the participants recognised that that their LGBTQ+ identity provided them with augmented degrees of 'Empathy' and sensitivity. This allows them to strengthen the connections they had with others and enter conversations with openness, culminating in sentiments of personal worth. The 'double-edged sword' of the overused application of this strength was also clear for one individual, with the recognition that its excessive use can cause tension. However, all the participants reflected on the positive use of these strengths, and how they enabled them to enact 'Protagonist Identities formed from the Collision' as a leader.

'Protagonist Identities formed from the Collision'. All participants reflected, to some degree, on how these areas contributed to their identity as a leader. The subordinate

theme of ‘Supporter’ is the first of these protagonist identities performed. In the extract that follows, Christine speaks about the platform and the encouragement she attempts to give others, and how her LGBTQ+ identity fuels this behaviour:

> *I think people would probably say that, I'm somebody that will, you know, supports, you know, support the minority voice, shall we say, in the organisation and I’ll get behind and, and sort of support and encourage people to think differently and, and do differently. And if someone’s coming in with an idea that nine other people in the room think is a bit edgy or strange or whatever, I’ll very often be the person that, you know, will go “hang on a minute, let’s listen to what that person has got to say”, because I genuinely believe that, you know, sometimes the, the, the off-piste ideas and solutions are where the magic happens.*

In having membership in a minority community, the LGBTQ+ community, this sense of responsibility manifests in Christine wanting to support those who do not have as strong a voice as the majority. Her words also highlight that diversity of thought and *“off-piste ideas”* need to be celebrated and heard. Her use of the phrase *“where the magic happens”* evokes imagery of creativity taking place in not always visible locations or where those creating are ‘behind-the-scenes’ of the more conspicuous action taking place on the ‘stage’. With Christine, she feels it is her duty to extend the ‘spotlight’ to those who are less visible, but who are equally as important. Peter reflects on this further and how his LGBTQ+ identity, and the openness he has around it, creates spaces for others to bring as much of themselves to the workplace as they feel comfortable:

To give people that almost psychological safety that this was a place where you could choose to be, however, much of your identity as you wanted to, and what you have for me will be, not just acceptance, but you know curiosity and I will explore what that means to you in the workplace, and I will explore what I can do better as a leader to work with you.

In sharing his LGBTQ+ identity with others, Peter strives to create a climate of sharing and vulnerability. He mentions the concept of *"psychological safety"* to reinforce this, and where his own sharing signifies to others that they have the safety and protection to speak up and bring as much of their own identities without fear of retribution or ridicule. He also uses this as a catalyst to strengthen his understanding of the individual and how best he can be a 'Supporter' for them. Linda also explores the concept of psychological safety in her work as a leader. In the extracts that follow, she speaks about the trust she creates with others in being open about her transgender identity, and then links this to her leadership style of safety:

People straight away are like "hey, you're someone I can trust to talk to it because you just told me, you've opened up to me about this wide range of, of, of things, and you don't worry about any of them."

And then later:

Because, you know my job, ultimately the way, the way I sort of put to, to my, my management team, is "my job is to catch the balls you drop, alright, my job, my job is for you to go out there, fearless, because when you do make a mistake, I'm here to pick

it up for you. If you made the same mistake several times, right, then there's a different conversation, but if you're doing something with the right intent, right, and you're doing your best, then I'm there."

In being candid, Linda signifies to others that there is mutual trust in the relationship. This allows her to create an atmosphere of safety when mistakes are made. Her phrase *"my job is to catch the balls you drop"* creates a sense of the 'safety net' role that she plays as a leader and, in turn, signifies to others that mistakes are natural and not going to culminate in punishment. This is echoed in *"my job is for you to go out there, fearless"*, where she is advocating for them and extending permission for them to do their work valiantly and be brave, in the same way that she does with her transgender identity.

These aspects of encouragement, vulnerability and trust provide those around the participants a sense of ease in exploring new ways of working and to broaden their contribution. This leads to the second subordinate theme of 'Advancer'. This describes the leadership identity of creating opportunities for those around them, as well as offering aid to help individuals advance towards these opportunities. Trevor describes an experience where he created such an opportunity, and the positive effects of doing so:

I promoted somebody that was languishing in a very, very menial job in our post room. She suffers from ADHD. She couldn't get a break from anyone. So, I interviewed her for a, an administrative job, which she had no experience and gave her the job. And we've had to make a load of alterations to how we do things and why we do things and a line manager needed to be developed to make sure that he understood her individual

requirements, but given her a chance and bloody hell, it's worked. And so, channelling her ADHD, the hyperfocus that she can deploy into something, is awesome, and it's solved a load of problems for us as well.

Trevor's phrasing, particularly the use of words *"languishing"* and *"couldn't get a break from anyone"*, has connotations of a 'saviour'. Only he, through his experiences as a gay man, has the ability to see the unsung strengths of this individual, given they have been ignored by so many others in the past. Despite all the challenges faced and the adjustments made, the *"chance"* he has granted her through his leadership identity as an 'Advancer' has seen her excel and advance in her career, and unlocked her value to the organisation. Whilst James has similar reflections about the opportunities he creates for others, he also recognises the intolerance and impatience that can manifest when dealing with others who do not share his ambition or drive:

I find it really hard to be around, or work with people, or just understand people that aren't high in hopefulness, aren't, don't feel very resilient, who don't have like a, a sense of self-efficacy…. I do some private coaching on the, on the side, but I spend a good hour, free of charge, just working out is this person going to make me feel frustrated or is my curiosity going to reign, and if it's the, if it's the latter, then I'll work with them, if it's the former, I'll finish it in 15 minutes.

Coaching is, as James mentions earlier in his narrative, a *"great tool for me to help me in my pursuit of making organisations great, person by person."* However, for James, he sees the time he spends with others as a precious premium, indicated by the mentioning of monetary

considerations. If James feels the relationship is worth investing in, gauged by the levels of hopefulness, resilience and self-efficacy he expects, her will continue with the coaching journey. If not, as he abruptly states, he'll finish the engagement *"in 15 minutes."* Therefore, for James, there needs to be mutual commitment and accountability in a relationship and, when this is present, he will gladly assume the identity of the 'Advancer'. When absent, there is likely to be a 'sharper' edge to his demeanour, underpinned by exasperation and frustration.

This same indignation is present in the third subordinate theme and the leadership identity of the 'Protector'. This captures the protagonist identity of searching for justice and fairness, underpinned by the perception of an enhanced moral compass. Jane's narrative captures this and her awareness of 'right' and 'wrong'. In the extract that follows, she speaks about taking part in this research and a colleague's suggestion of publicising her participation so that the organisation is viewed as supportive of minoritized groups:

> *But when [colleague's name] said, after we were talking about this, that you know "this would be great, we could publicise this in [organisation's name] as being part of this sort of research." And then I was like "this might be going on LinkedIn! Shit, hang on a minute. Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. That is not right and it doesn't, that doesn't feel right."*

For Jane, she recognises and is fearful of the exposure that publicising her participation on social media could bring. She also feels comfortable in questioning this suggestion made by her colleague, showing courage in holding her ground to ensure the moral and ethical aspects of this suggestion have been tabled. In enacting her identity as the 'Protector', Jane is

the arbiter of morality. Arjun had similar reflections. In this extract, he outlines how his LGBTQ+ identity and experiences have enabled him to have enhanced levels of moral awareness:

> *You can, you know, you can, you can pick out things that aren't quite right, so for example, I was involved in a project a few years ago and it involved several white men and there were no, there were no, there was no other genders, there were no other genders involved in that project and I mean, but I was just aware that, that wasn't, that we needed more representation of other genders to be part of that project. I think, because I've been through stuff in my world and in my life, like you just pick up things and you're more aware of situations.*

Later, Arjun refers to a particular example of where his enhanced levels of moral awareness gave him the impetus to question his organisational stakeholders in response to the murder of George Floyd in 2020:

> *And but, you know, it was important for me to have that conversation with them because they were coming, they were thinking from a corporate brand protective perspective, but I was thinking about it from a people perspective.*

Through the richness of his experiences, Arjun feels more attuned to aspects of diversity and representation of minority groups in conversations. This heightened instinct is deployed in 'calling out' matters of injustice and oppression, manifesting in Arjun acting as the 'Protector' of equity. In the extract that follows, Trevor explores a recent example of this

'Protector' behaviour. Whilst not set in the workplace, this scenario captures the sense of responsibility he has to fairness and the outrage that he experiences when it is absent:

> *I saw a guy having a, in Sainsbury's of all places, and I saw a guy and his wife having an argument, walking up and down an aisle and he grabbed hold of her by the arm and basically, it wasn't, it wasn't, just like it was like a shove. And then he walked off. And I, I, I can't tell you the reaction. And I went up to her to make sure she was where I was, like, "my darling, are you OK? Do you do you wanna get out of here?" And she was, she was absolutely fine if like, "Oh no, he's just in the mood he's a dick, blah, blah, blah, blah." And as he came back around the corner, I literally stood in the middle of the aisle and was like, "you do not treat another human being like that." [Trevor visibly angry, pointing his finger). It's the whole confrontation thing. So, I don't, I'm not a confrontational person, this is going to literally contradict something, so I am not a confrontational person. There are certain things that, I, I it just takes over, and I'm like "no, absolutely fucking not."*

His use of the word *"darling"* to the assailed individual shows compassion, but also familiarity and intimacy. He uses it to project a sense of safety and assurance. Additionally, it signifies a deeper sense of understanding of the predicament and the emotions it can cause, which Trevor himself has experienced in his life. His final words, a seeming contradiction, reinforce this, with the acknowledgement that *"certain things"* may 'trigger' him and give way to the visible manifestation of his indignation. This culminates in him enacting the identity of the 'Protector', safeguarding the rights and dignity of others.

These extracts display how the participants enact certain protagonist identities as a result of the collision of their LGBTQ+ and leadership identities. For these participants, this manifests as three identities. The 'Supporter' encompasses the empowerment of others, enhancing voices of the often unheard and extending permission for others to live their lives without fear. The 'Advancer' focuses on the creation of opportunities for those who are ambitious but who may have been previously overlooked. Finally, the 'Protector' is the arbiter of morality, representation and dignity of others, fuelled by previous experiences which heighten the desire to enact these protective duties. Together, these 'Protagonist Identities formed from the Collision' are at the heart of the participants' leadership approaches, allowing them to enhance the contribution they make to others and to the organisations they are part of.

4.6 Discussion

This study set out to explore the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ leaders, in the UK, and enhance understanding regarding how their LGBTQ+ identities collided with their leader identities. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, these findings contribute the first detailed exploration of LGBTQ+ leadership identity development. The personal accounts highlight three superordinate themes central to this experience and constitute a process model of LGBTQ+ leader identity development. This process is formed by three connected stages: 'Reconciliation of the Collision' surrounds the reconciliation of participants' LGBTQ+ identities and their leadership identities. This entails understanding and navigating the implicit duties that come with the collision of these identities. 'Strengths Resulting from the Collision' focuses on the heightened awareness and use of the strengths in leaders' possession born from this collision. For these participants, there is alignment surrounding the areas of drive, resilience and interpersonal sensitivity. There was also acknowledgment surrounding the potential for the overuse of these areas, and how the excessive use may cause tension. Finally,

'Protagonist Identities formed from the Collision' describes the leadership identities created as a result of the collision. These focused on giving those less visible a platform, the creation of opportunities for others and the protection of morality, representation and dignity. The process map may inform the support and development initiatives provided to these leaders by organisations, aiding in the conscious effort of creating more sexual orientation and gender identity diversity in senior positions.

'Reconciliation of the Collision'

It became evident that the participants felt a responsibility to the LGBTQ+ community. This responsibility centred around visibility, service and authenticity, culminating in the first subordinate theme of 'Obligations'. These observations are in line with the literature exploring LGBTQ+ intra-community pressure to fulfil responsibilities (Brotman & Kraniou, 1999; Tabatabai, 2010). Whilst these obligations were, in the main, met with positivity by the participants, a sense of guilt and disservice was evident if these obligations were shunned. Once more, these observations mirror those in the literature, where feelings of betrayal and shame can manifest when LGBTQ+ individuals do not embrace and enact these responsibilities of visibility, service and authenticity (Ghabrial, 2016). Additionally, there was some recognition that accepting these responsibilities meant that others would see only the LGBTQ+ identity and, in turn, the other aspects that make an individual unique would pale in significance. This supports the observations by Cole (2009) where an LGBTQ+ identity can be "totalising and determinative, as trumping all others" (p.175).

For many of the participants, embracing the duties which come with the 'Obligations' was an intrinsic part of achieving 'Independence'. This subordinate theme captured the essence

of authenticity and the release at no longer 'muting' their LGBTQ+ identity. This same release also created greater balance and greater psychological functioning, allowing the effort that was previously channelled into this 'muting' to be dispersed into other, more beneficial ways of operating. These observations are congruent with the literature, where surfacing above a managed façade created greater levels of contentment and psychological wellbeing (Alisic *et al*., 2011; Pflugradt & Allen, 2010; Rostosky *et al*., 2022).

Recognition from the participants also highlighted that the journey to leadership identity formation and development was dynamic and iterative, with a destination never truly reached. This manifested in the third subordinate theme and the participants employing 'Insulation' strategies to navigate this continuous journey. Conscious and deliberate attention was given to vigilance and interpersonal prowess, which 'coated' the participants in a form of protective armour. This is congruent with the literature, where the monitoring of the environment and regulation of behaviour supported LGBTQ+ leaders with enhanced perceptual accuracy (Boatwright *et al*., 1996; Carroll & Gilroy, 2002; Meyer, 2003). However, not explored in the literature was the need to employ these strategies when 'Independence' was achieved, or where 'muting' was perceived to be unnecessary. These findings indicate that LGBTQ+ leaders may feel the need to be constantly equipped with preventative strategies to protect themselves, even in safe environments and where their LGBTQ+ identity is known, embraced and championed by the organisation and those around them.

With a queer theory perspective, the participants' journey towards reconciling the collision between their LGBTQ+ and leadership identities could be viewed as a strategic effort to rebalance the power dynamics which heteronormativity perpetuates. By openly embracing or, in the case of one participant, questioning the 'Obligations' that are bestowed upon them,

the participants of this study are reclaiming their own narrative, achieving 'Independence' and personal empowerment by doing so. Furthermore, the need for 'Insulation' highlights the enduring impact of heteronormative pressures, and the ongoing demand of self-protection in a society which perpetuates heteronormativity, as well as reprimanding those who possess identities which challenge or deviate from it. In summary, in reclaiming their narratives and reconciling the collision between their LGBTQ+ and leadership identities, and doing so on their own terms, the participants of this study are then able to embrace and leverage the strengths that emerge.

'Strengths Resulting from the Collision'

All participants reflected on the inherent strengths which manifested from their LGBTQ+ identity, and which shaped their identity as a leader. Drive, competitiveness and the exertion of these formed the subordinate theme of 'Ambition'. As LIFT suggests, for the participants this intensity of spirit was ignited in adolescence (Skinner, 2004), and manifested as an unwavering commitment to see things through in order to prove oneself. This supports previous observations from the literature and the 'Best Little Kid in the World' hypothesis (Blankenship & Stewart, 2022). The participants reflected that this 'Ambition' was born from their childhood experiences and in growing up, they were aware that they did not meet conventional moulds. As a consequence, there was recognition that an achievement orientation has been cemented within them in adulthood. Further, also in line with the literature, was an awareness and 'weight' of the struggles and strides from those who came before the participants. This collective trauma (Kelly *et al*., 2020) appeared to fuel their commitment to growth and provided them with an avenue by which to pay respect to those who fought before them.

Linked to this drive is the second subordinate theme of 'Resilience'. This encapsulates the participants' perceived levels of durability and tendency to confront challenges. This was born through their experiences and the navigation of complexity they faced, and which added to their levels of tolerance in the face of obstacles. The third subordinate theme also captures another perceived strength, focusing on interpersonal sensitivity and astuteness. Enhanced levels of 'Empathy' were reported, supporting the participants in strengthening their relationship through heightened levels of appreciation, curiosity and openness. As both 'Resilience' and 'Empathy' have been observed in LGBTQ+ leaders previously (Polavarapu *et al*., 2021), the occurrence here is somewhat unsurprising.

The concept of post-traumatic growth (PTG, Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004) appeared to support the realisation and application of these strengths. PTG is defined as "the experience of positive change that occurs as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life crises" (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004, p.1). Whilst it can manifest in a variety of ways, an increased sense of personal strength is known to be a fundamental facet. Though the definition of "highly challenging life crises" is less concrete, common threads involve the threatening of emotional and physical wellbeing. These threads appear synergistic with the observations in this study. No previous organisational research surrounding post-traumatic growth in LGBTQ+ leaders could be found. This provides fruitful ground for such exploration, and could inform interventions to support the growth of a leadership identity and the awareness of strengths which manifest from PTG. Indeed, the SLR focusing on women-only development programmes found that those which incorporate disciplines of Positive Psychology and forms of positive leadership (Banks *et al*., 2016), which advocates for understanding and accentuating strengths, may help to prompt exploration and enhance clarity of an individual's leadership

'self'. Therefore, there appears to be a synergy between these underrepresented groups on their path to leadership identity formation and development.

These qualities are indicative of the negotiation these LGBTQ+ leaders have faced, and continue to face, in navigating a heteronormative society. The subordinate theme of 'Ambition', characterised by drive and competitiveness, appears deeply rooted in the participants' experiences of not conforming to heteronormative norms. 'Resilience' and 'Empathy' are indicative of the durability and emotional intelligence cultivated through the possession of an identity which challenges traditional and binary views of gender and sexuality. However, once again, the participants appear to be reclaiming their own narratives, transforming their experiences of adversity and trauma born from the weight of heteronormative expectations into sources of strength. This, in turn, empowers them to self-author and embody new identities which are free from external pressures and societal norms.

'Protagonist Identities formed from the Collision'

The application of these strengths culminated in the participants creating three protagonist identities. The first focuses on the encouragement of others and the platform they provide to ensure underrepresented voices are heard. The 'Supporter' channels the participant's membership of the LGBTQ+ community, a minority 'voice', into providing others with the encouragement and visibility that may not be forthcoming or easy for them to attain. Entrenched within this subordinate theme is the concept of psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999). Defined as the belief of safety for "interpersonal risk taking" (p.350), the participants described their efforts to promote this through their LGBTQ+ identity and own vulnerability. As seen in the reviewed literature and in the narratives of participants, operating

in a psychologically unsafe environment can create adverse psychological states (Boatwright *et al*., 1996; Carroll & Gilroy, 2002; Meyer, 2003). It appears that the participants of this study want to protect others from experiencing similar sentiments, and so attempt to accelerate a safe environment through the demonstration of their vulnerability.

Fuelled by interpersonal strengths, the participants of this study felt they had enhanced levels of insight into the strengths and desires of others. The second subordinate theme and protagonist identity of the 'Advancer' captures this and focuses on the deployment of these untapped strengths through the creation of opportunities. As the reviewed literature suggests, LGBTQ+ individuals may demonstrate a heightened awareness of implicit or undeclared desires in others (Carroll & Gilroy, 2002). This, together with the career drive that these participants demonstrate, seemingly results in an identity focused to support and drive the growth of others, and particularly those who may have been overlooked or deemed to be of an underrepresented group.

Finally, the same focus on fairness and morality appears to propel the LGBTQ+ individual towards the identity of the 'Protector'. With it comes a fierceness in engaging in protective duties, fuelled by their own exposure to societal norms, which impact them in a detrimental way (Fassinger & Arseneau, 2007). This manifests in a firmness in their position of right and wrong, as well as a courage in asserting their views when these engrained moral mandates have been ruptured, even in the face of prevailing perspectives from the majority.

These identities, born from their LGBTQ+ identity and incorporated into their leadership identity, support the participant in challenging dominant power structures in distinct ways. The 'Supporter' leverages the participants' LGBTQ+ identity to provide a platform for

underrepresented voices and support the participants in challenging the hegemonic power dynamics that silence marginalised perspectives. The 'Advancer' harnesses interpersonal strengths to identify and create opportunities for others and particularly those from underrepresented groups who face systemic barriers, similar to those experienced by the participants from imposed heteronormative norms. Lastly, the 'Protector' identity unfolds into a commitment to challenging power imbalances. Driven by experiences of heteronormative standards and resulting injustices, this identity embodies a steadfast dedication to challenging prevailing norms and restructuring organisational dynamics for fairness and equity, even amidst opposition.

Together, the dual identification of strengths and the leadership roles through which they can be enacted may support the LGBTQ+ individual in igniting their curiosity regarding what they want to be known for. As this is a key part of leadership identity formation and development (Skinner, 2014), supporting LGBTQ+ individuals in this introspection could be a useful lens to harness in their development.

4.6.1 Implications for theory

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no research currently exists that focuses on the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals and their journey to leadership identity formation. This study makes three contributions. First, it provides new insight into LGBTQ+ leadership identity formation and development and in doing so, it answers calls from several other researchers to give this population of leaders 'a voice' (Beauregard *et al*., 2018; Fletcher & Everly, 2021; Liberman & Golom 2015; Morton 2017; Niedlich & Steffens 2015; Polavarapu *et al*., 2020). Second, it extends the exploration of leadership identity formation and

development outside the realms of gender (Nash & Moore, 2021; Selzer *et al*., 2017). In doing so, it suggests a process model of LGBTQ+ leader identity development. Third, it emphasises the need to create space to explore the intersectionality of the participant's multiple identities, as well as the impact this has on their leadership identity formation and development.

4.6.2 Implications for practice

Whilst the applicability of these findings to others should be made with caution, they provide some considerations for organisations and practitioners working with members of the LGBTQ+ community and how they support these individuals on their leadership journey.

For organisations, the key consideration lies in the approach they take to LGBTQ+ leadership development. Traditional development approaches, those which seek to provide leaders with particular competencies required to complete tasks and manage functions, are likely to assume that sexual and gender identity have no significance. However, this study calls attention to the need to take a nuanced approach to LGBTQ+ leader development, highlighting that the intersection of identities has considerable significance. Leadership development programmes and interventions aimed at supporting LGBTQ+ leaders should incorporate this significance into curricula, and support leaders in the exploration of the interaction between their LGBTQ+ and leadership identities. Doing so will likely signify to the LGBTQ+ participant of the programme or intervention that their LGBTQ+ identity is not being erased or deleted. Additionally, it may demonstrate acknowledgment from the sponsoring organisation that stereotype-based, diversity-related biases may exist within it, whilst also exhibiting commitment to confront these challenges to enhance the balance of diversity in their leadership populations. Further, incorporating tenets of intersectionality, identity dynamics and queer theory into the curricula may support participants to recognise

strengths in their possession, and these are likely to be useful in confronting dominant power structures with enhanced levels of ease and resilience. In summary, the findings from this study implore organisational stakeholders to explore and support these interactions, allowing the organisation and, most importantly, the LGBTQ+ leader the chance to reap the benefits that manifest from them.

For practitioners, there are three key considerations for leadership development programmes and interventions. First, developmental content can be created which supports individuals in the guided reflection of the implicit or self-imposed responsibilities that come with being an LGBTQ+ leader. This could also take the form of group discussion and allow individuals to learn from each other about what these obligations mean to them. Second, such development could also support in highlighting the potential needs for the creation of insulation, and the network that group development programmes create may form one of these mechanisms. Third, in line with the findings from the SLR in Chapter 3, incorporating the lens of Positive Psychology may also be useful to LGBTQ+ leadership populations. This may support individuals in understanding their strengths and the contribution they can add in effectively deploying them. Together, these practical implications are likely to advance the LGBTQ+ leader in improving their self-knowledge, enhancing their awareness and deepening their confidence in their authentic self. In turn, these elements may support the LGBTQ+ leader in navigating and confronting the structures and schemas which put them at a disadvantage.

4.6.2 Limitations

In considering the limitations, every effort was made to ensure the researcher paid close attention to the narratives of these individuals. The analysis and findings are based on the

researcher's interpretation, and so steps were taken to mitigate one's own assumptions and biases. This has been through a combination of a reflexive journal, peer group working and doctoral supervisors, which supported the researcher in challenging and being challenged on the rationale for the inclusion and exclusion of data, as well as the themes that emerged from it.

The researcher also recognises that that the term 'LGBTQ+' may be viewed as a 'catch-all' appellation. The very nature of this means that the individual experiences of each character within this acronym may be lost or eroded. This is an important element to declare and is a limitation of this study. With a practical lens however, organisations will be unlikely to invest in programmes and mechanisms which attempt to support each character of the LGBTQ+ acronym in a singular way. That is to say that separate programmes which support Lesbian leaders, Gay leaders, Bisexual leaders, Transgender leaders, Queer/Questioning leaders and '+' leaders are unlikely to be seen as a priority investment when financial resources are already at a premium. Whilst not ideal, this study attempts to see the LGBTQ+ acronym as a unifier; meaning that it highlights the shared experiences of this community as whole.

Further, the researcher also acknowledges that the sample includes only individuals from the 'L', 'G' and 'T' components of the LGBTQ+ acronym. Individuals who identify as Bisexual ('B'), Queer/Questioning ('Q') and those who are sexuality and gender diverse ('+') have previously been observed to feel enhanced levels of stigma both within and outside the LGBTQ+ community (Brewster & Moradi, 2010; Dyar & Feinstein, 2018; Hayfield *et al*., 2014; Worthen, 2013). As the sampling methodology uses a volunteer sampling approach, these feelings of stigma may have impacted the willingness of 'B', 'Q' and '+'-identifying

individuals to come forward and offer their 'voice' to the research. Therefore, whilst this research offers original insights into leadership identity development of this underrepresented group, there is scope for future investigations to explore the LGBTQ+ acronym more comprehensively.

Additionally, only the interaction between the participants' LGBTQ+ and leadership identities were explored. Whilst this revealed original insights into these dynamics, other identities (i.e., culture of country of residence, ethnicity, disability, neurodiversity etc.) were not investigated. These other identities may create additional dynamics to consider (McConnell *et al*., 2018; Rodríguez-Roldán, 2020).

Acknowledgement is given to the small sample sizes used in IPA research, as well as the findings outlined here as being particular to the participants of the study. As such, the applicability of the results to a wider population should be approached with vigilance (Flowers *et al*., 1997). This small sample, as well as the semi-structured interview methodology, afforded the researcher with the opportunity to capture an enhanced level of richness. The semi-structured interview methodology allowed the researcher to be flexible in their questioning, allowing for the further exploration of topics as they emerged. Further, the identities that the researcher possesses (being both a member of the LGBTQ+ community and a senior leader) extend this richness. Through this personal insight, the researcher was able to engage more deeply in the double hermeneutic 'loop' of IPA. This allowed them to surface deep-seated identity dynamics that may have been missed by researchers who did not possess these identities. Linked to this, the disclosure to the participants of these identities that the researcher possess may have supported the creation of a safe and judgement-free environment.

In doing so, the participants may have felt more comfortable in disclosing sensitive and challenging thoughts, and these may not have been shared to researchers who did not possess these identities.

4.6.3 Future research

More research on the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ leaders is required. This study was aimed at a particular seniority: senior leadership or executive-level positions. Whilst questions were posed to elicit reflections regarding their leadership journey, important meaning- and sense-making facets from earlier in the journey may not have been uncovered. Future research could, for example, explore the lived experiences of those early in their leadership journey. This has the potential to uncover whether similar themes arise on their path to leadership identity, or if unique features come to light.

As discussed in the previous section, this study uses the LGBTQ+ acronym as a 'unifier'. Despite this study revealing original insights, future research could explore the lived experiences of a homogeneous sample (e.g., a sample of only gay men). This may shed light on further dynamics at play that were not captured in this study because of the heterogeneity of the sample.

Additionally, exploring the interaction of other identities (i.e., culture of country of residence, ethnicity, disability, neurodiversity etc.) with those of the LGBTQ+ acronym may be beneficial. For instance, previous scholarship has noted that the intersection of an LGBTQ+ identity and an ethnic identity may result in unique challenges, such as the experiencing of "tension and separation of one identity from the other" (Tam, 2018). Therefore, the interaction

of these identities with the additional identity of 'leadership' may reveal further nuanced detail that could support individuals on the path to leadership.

4.7 Conclusion

To conclude, the LGBTQ+ leaders in this study described the collision of their LGBTQ+ identities and leadership identities as a dynamic journey with no real destination. The resolution of obligations was evident, along with the impact on their freedom of expression and the need for tactics to protect it. Through upheaval came opportunity, with strengths identified to elevate their leadership. The application of these culminated in specific leadership identities focused on the development of others and the conveyance of justice. The enhanced understanding this study provides has implications for how LGBTQ+ individuals are developed and supported on their path to leadership.

Chapter 5: Implications for theory, research and practice

This chapter aims to be a summation of the previous four chapters. The objectives of this chapter are to revisit the intent of this thesis and synthesise the findings from the two studies; explore the limitations and potential directions for future research; consider the practical application of the findings; consider the contribution to knowledge; and present the final conclusions.

5.1 Overarching aims and findings

The aim of this thesis was to illuminate the leadership development path for two underrepresented groups of leaders, namely women leaders and LGBTQ+ leaders. Diversity in leadership populations is becoming increasingly recognised as a means to create cultures of inclusion for minority groups, enhance thinking dexterity and decision-making, and prompt innovation, all of which support the attainment of competitive advantage (Maddux *et al*., 2008; Meeussen *et al*., 2014; Molinsky, 2007; Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 2006). Despite this recognition of importance, those from underrepresented groups still face challenges in the path to leadership as they challenge prevailing views of what leadership 'looks like', those being "white, heterosexual, male" (Joseph & Chin, 2019. p.1). Women leaders and LGBTQ+ leaders are two such underrepresented groups, and their respective journeys toward leadership are intertwined (Channing, 2020). Given their intertwined nature, important lessons could be extrapolated from women in leadership and could potentially be applied to LGBTQ+ leaders.

The first study, a systematic literature review (SLR), deepens understanding of one initiative employed by organisations to develop diverse leadership populations, namely

women-only leadership development programmes (WLDPs). The results of the SLR suggest that WLDPs that incorporate an awareness of identity dynamics, and the impact this has on the formation and development of their leadership 'self', is a key beneficial component. This lens provides fertile ground to explore leadership identity development through the perspectives of those in possession of other underrepresented identities (i.e., ethnic minorities, those with disabilities and LGBTQ+ individuals). Therefore, a study was designed with the aim to explore the lived experiences and uncover the nuances faced by LGBTQ+ leaders in leadership identity formation and development. The findings suggest that, for the LGBTQ+ leaders in this study, leadership identity formation and development is a dynamic and iterative journey and formed of three connected stages. The first stage, 'Reconciliation of the Collison', focuses on the reconciling the responsibilities that come with both LGBTQ+ membership and leadership. This, in turn, helps the participants in reclaiming their narratives and leadership identities, enabling them to embrace and leverage the strengths from this reclamation. The second stage, 'Strengths Resulting from the Collision', focuses on the understanding of strengths which manifest through the interaction of their LGBTQ+ and leadership identities. This, in turn, empowers the participants to self-construct and enact new identities which are free from external pressures and societal norms. Finally, the third stage, 'Protagonist Identities formed from the Collision, describes the utilisation of these strengths, manifesting in certain protagonist identities. These support the participants in challenging dominant power structures and empower others from underrepresented groups who face similar systemic barriers. Table 9 provides an overview of the purpose, findings and contribution of the two studies.

Table 9. Overview of two studies

	Study 1 – SLR	Study 2 – empirical study	Contribution of SLR and empirical study
Purpose	• What is known about leadership development programmes designed to develop women leaders? Specifically: i. Who and how are women leaders recruited into development programmes? ii. What design and instructional methodologies are employed? iii. What are the skills, knowledge and abilities developed? iv. What are the outcomes of programmes and how are these measured?	• How do LGBTQ+ individuals experience the intersection of their LGBTQ+ identity with that of their leadership identity?	• No previous review specifically focuses on WLDPs, therefore the SLR advances knowledge regarding the components of these programmes. • The empirical study research questions directly addresses recommendations in the SLR, by focusing on identities outside of gender. • Previous research was lacking a focus on the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ leaders, and the interaction between their LGBTQ+ and leadership identities
Key findings in relation to LDPs	• Selection: Experience, rank and academic achievement/education are key components • Design methods: Limited transparency in the design methods employed. • Instructional methods: Role of the facilitator(s), and the need to create a safe and secure environment. • Skills, knowledge and abilities developed: Identity dynamics, Positivity Psychology theories, networking, conflict management and career planning. • Outcomes: Awareness of their identities and the impact on leadership identity. Perceived comfort in networking and conflict management techniques	• Whilst not specifically explored, the findings revealed three considerations that could inform the development of LDPs aimed at LGBTQ+ leaders: i. Guided reflection of the implicit or self-imposed responsibilities that come with being an LGBTQ+ leader. ii. Support in understanding the need and creation of ongoing insulation. iii. Incorporating the lens of Positive Psychology, supporting individuals in understanding their strengths and the contribution they can add in the effective deployment of them.	• Selection criteria used may not be predictive of learning outcomes. Favours privilege and socioeconomic status over capability and potential, which contradicts the apparent focus which these programmes look to nurture. • More transparency is required regarding the design methodologies employed. • The facilitator(s) play a key role in creating the environment for exploration and discovery. Further research is required to explore the impact of the facilitator(s)' gender, as well as specific delivery methods. • There is promising evidence supporting the inclusion of identity dynamics and Positive psychology lenses which, together, may help to prompt exploration and enhance clarity of an individual's leadership 'self'. The development of networking, conflict management and career planning were also deemed useful. The use of feedback tools (namely coaching, mentoring and psychometric assessments), whilst prolific in the reviewed studies, received mixed levels of reporting regarding utility. More research regarding the feedback modalities employed, the rationale and the impact on the participant is required.

Key findings in relation to identity development	• Exploration of multiple identities and the intersection with leadership is a useful lens in WLDPs. • In incorporating an intersectional lens and guided reflection surrounding the convergence and divergence of an individual's identities, participants may be supported in creating and being comfortable in internalising their leadership 'self' and creating and leading with an enhanced understanding of their purpose. • Incorporating lenses of other underrepresented identities (i.e., sexuality, race, class, religion, age and disability) is recommended	• Reconciliation of their LGBTQ+ identities and their leadership identities. This entails understanding and navigating the implicit duties that come with the collision of these identities. • Heightened awareness and use of the strengths in their possession, namely drive, resilience and interpersonal sensitivity. There was also acknowledgment surrounding the potential for the overuse of these areas. • The protagonist leadership identities created as a result of their LQBTQ+ identity, focused on giving platforms to others, the creation of opportunities for others and the protector of morality, representation and dignity	• There is a need for leadership development initiatives to focus on leadership identity formation and development. This should consider the impact of other identities on the creation of an individual's leadership 'self'. • Positive Psychology theories appear to have a place in leadership development initiatives for underrepresented groups. This is aimed at supporting leaders in accentuating their areas of strengths and moving towards an authentic representation of themselves.

5.2 Overall strengths and limitations

There are strengths and limitations of this thesis that need to be acknowledged. Three key strengths will be discussed initially. Firstly, despite WLDPs being a growing area of interest in scholarship (Lanaj & Hollenbeck, 2015), there has been no previous synthesis which attempts to bring together the findings of this research. This thesis bridges this dearth, deepening understanding of the components of WLDPs that support leadership development. A second strength is that this thesis answers calls from previous scholars to give diverse leadership populations 'a voice' (Beauregard *et al*., 2018; Fletcher & Everly, 2021; Liberman & Golom 2015; Morton 2017; Niedlich & Steffens 2015; Polavarapu *et al*., 2020). The third strength of this thesis is in the practical implications it offers for organisations to support the development of underrepresented groups in leadership, discussed in section 5.6.

As with all research, this thesis has some limitations which need to be acknowledged. The conclusions drawn from the SLR are limited due to five key factors. First, the quality assessment found that only one study achieved a moderate quality rating, with the remaining achieving low quality. Second, study design also presents a limitation, and there is an inability to make causal inferences regarding the impact of the WLDPs. Third, the reflexive position of the research is not adequately evidenced. The lack of explicit consideration and acknowledgement of the impact of the researchers' actions and decisions means the quality of the evidence presented is eroded. Fourth, the homogeneity of the setting of the studies also creates an issue. The majority of the studies take place in the realm of academia, and the lack of heterogeneity in sector prompts the need for further research outside of this setting. Fifth, the studies are lacking from a diversity perspective, limiting the applicability of the findings to those from ethnic minority backgrounds. Finally, acknowledgement is given to the positivist nature of SLRs and the misalignment between the ontological and epistemological variances (e.g. constructivism, interpretivism and subjectivism) that exist within psychology and the social sciences. As described in the Methodology, the researcher has attempted to mitigate this misalignment by following the positivist conventions of the SLR and discussing the impact of the results with a critical feminist lens.

For the empirical study, there are two key limitations. Firstly, the expression 'LGBTQ+' has the potential to be viewed as too broad a term through which to view leadership identity formation. Whilst this term has been used as a 'unifier', recognition is given that the individual experiences of each character within this acronym may be lost or eroded. This is to say that in attempting to highlight the shared experiences of this community as whole, important aspects which are unique to Lesbian leaders, Gay leaders, Bisexual leaders, Transgender leaders, Queer/Questioning leaders and '+' leaders may not have been captured

or explored exhaustively. Second, and linked to this point, consideration is also given to the fact that only the interaction between the participants' LGBTQ+ and leadership identities are explored. Other identities are likely to insect, cause interactions and reflections (McConnell *et al*., 2018; Rodríguez-Roldán, 2020), and the findings within this thesis do not reflect these nuances.

5.3 Unique contributions

This thesis makes two unique contributions. Firstly, to the researcher's knowledge, the SLR in Chapter 3 is the first such review to comprehensively explore WLDPs. In doing so, it reveals important considerations for deploying these programmes in order to make them successful. For instance, the findings from this review highlights a disconnect between the aims of such programmes (i.e., the growth of female talent and access to leadership positions) and the transparency by which they are deployed. There is an urgent need to review and question the inclusion of selection processes of potential participants of WLDPs. This review highlights that those methods, namely experience, rank and academic achievements/education, have relatively weak predictive power in terms of learning transfer (Colquitt *et al*., 2000; Gentry & Martineau, 2010; Sackett *et al*., 2022). More broadly, the incorporation of any selection method means that WLDPs are not accessible for all. This directly contradicts the key tenets of Positive Psychology theories (Seligman *et al*., 2005; Super, 1955) which underpin many of the WLDPs in the review. Taken together, this review questions the use of selection methods in WLDPs. Additionally, the observations from the review advocate that WLDPs contain an intersectionality component, as well as guided reflections surrounding the interactions among an individual's identities. This can improve self-knowledge, enhance awareness and deepen confidence in an individual's authentic self (Atewologun *et al*., 2016, Avolio *et al*., 2010; Day, 2000). When absent from the WLDP curriculum, the negative effects

were felt by the participants. Omission of this lens was observed to create perceptions of "deleting" (Nash & Moore, 2021, p.357) the unique set of challenges and obstacles that came with the participants' identities, inhibiting the path to leadership identity development. Whilst previous scholarship (Debebe *et al*., 2016) has recommended WLDPs employ intersectionality as a theoretical lens, the utility of its inclusion from a participant perspective has been underexamined (Collins *et al*., 2017). This review bridges this shortfall, with participants finding that such a lens is a useful addition to the curriculum of WLDPs to support their leadership identity formation and development.

The second contribution lies in applying an intersectional-queer lens to broaden the understanding of leadership identity formation and development in another group of underrepresented in leadership – LGBTQ+ individuals. The empirical study explored the interaction between the participants' LGBTQ+ and leadership identities. This has been underexamined in scholarship. The findings suggest that leadership identity formation and development in LGBTQ+ leaders is a dynamic and iterative journey. The first part of this journey involves reconciliation of the implicit duties which come with both LGBTQ+ membership and leadership. This reconciliation, which involves the acceptance or questioning of these duties, allows individuals to move towards a more accurate and authentic representation of themselves and reclaim their own narratives. Despite this movement towards an authentic representation, the journey also involves identity-specific strategies that act as insultation against heteronormative obstacles and challenges that may arise. Together, the results of resolution allowed participants to recognise identity-specific strengths, cultivated through the possession of an identity which challenges traditional and binary views of gender and sexuality. For the participants of this study, this manifested in the perception of enhanced ambition, resilience and interpersonal prowess. The leveraging of these strengths culminated

in the creation of specific leadership identities, focused on challenging the hegemonic power dynamics that silence marginalised perspectives. This was cemented through encouraging others, creating opportunities for them and addressing injustice. Together, this journey has synergies with the findings of the SLR. In taking an intersectional lens to explore the interaction of various identities, the SLR revealed that participants of WLDPs may be supported in creating and being comfortable in internalising their leadership 'self' (Selzer *et al*., 2017). In doing so, they moved towards a more accurate representation of themselves (Parker *et al*., 2018; Selzer *et al*., 2017), understood and leveraged their strengths (Parker *et al*., 2018) and felt more equipped to bring more of themselves to their leadership role (Clarke, 2011; Martínez-Martínez *et al*., 2021; O'Brien & Allin, 2022; Parker *et al*., 2018, Peterson, 2019; Selzer *et al*., 2017). Through the growth in these areas, participants may experience enhanced levels of comfort in both confronting and disrupting the structures which favour men and schemas of traditional forms of leadership (Atewologun *et al*., 2016, Ely *et al*., 2011). Therefore, beneficial content from WLDPs (i.e., exploration of identity dynamics, Positive Psychology and Strengths-based Leadership lenses) may also support the development of LGBTQ+ leaders. With additional contextualisation and adjustments, such content could be repurposed to expedite and support leadership identity formation and development of those in possession of an LGBTQ+ identity, as well as enable them to confront and disrupt dominant heteronormative structures with enhanced levels of ease and resilience.

5.4 Implications for research and theory

Ely *et al*. (2011) position leadership development as "identity work" (p.2), advocating for the inclusion of identity dynamics in leadership development programmes (LDPs). The SLR in this thesis shows the utility of its inclusion from a participant perspective and, therefore, adds to the knowledge base of effective LDP components. However, it revealed a bias towards

White women, and so there is an opportunity to create greater balance in WLDP research by exploring other, non-majority ethnic identities. The empirical study illuminated the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ leaders, advancing the understanding of their 'identity work'. However, it uses the LGBTQ+ acronym as a 'unifier'. Therefore, future research could explore the lived experiences within a homogeneous sample and focus on specific characters within this acronym. This may shed light on further dynamics at play to further deepen knowledge and understanding.

The two studies predominantly focused on individuals in mid- and senior-level leadership roles. In the SLR in Chapter 3, seven of the 13 studies used this population, and the empirical study focused on senior or executive-level positions. An avenue of future research could, for example, explore the components of LDPs geared towards those early in their leadership journey. Additionally, exploration of the lived experiences of these individuals, as well as considering the interaction of the various identities in leadership identity development, will be useful. This will help to understand the utility of specific curriculum topics, as well as understand if similar themes arise in their path to leadership identity formation, or if unique features come to light.

Finally, whilst there is recognition regarding the challenges that underrepresented groups face on the path to leadership, research remains underdeveloped and that which does exist is lacking in transparent reporting. Specifically in the area of WLDP research, as explored in the SLR in Chapter 3, there is an urgent requirement of researchers to improve the quality of their work, to further both academic and practitioner knowledge. For LGBTQ+ leadership research, there is a concerning lack of understanding in this arena, and particularly that which

gives these group of underrepresented leaders a 'voice'. Without thought to these areas, scholars may be inadvertently adding to the challenges that these underrepresented groups face; reinforcing prevailing views of leadership which favour the privileged.

5.6 Implications for practice

This thesis highlights important considerations for practitioners, managers and organisations. First, as explored above, those charged with designing and deploying leadership development initiatives for underrepresented groups are encouraged to incorporate an intersectional lens into the curriculum. In creating this space, through particular exercises, group discussions or guided reflections, participants have the opportunity to enhance their understanding regarding the interaction between their personal and leadership identities. For women leaders, this appears to support enhanced self-awareness, clarity of purpose and, in turn, enhanced feelings of authenticity. The same can also be said for the LGBTQ+ leader, though some nuances are present. For example, the sense of obligation to implicit duties that come with the collision of their LGBTQ+ and leadership identities is one such nuance. Practitioners and leadership development professionals could create dialogues which surface and initiate the reconciliation of these implicit expectations, as well as support the LGBTQ+ leader in understanding how to navigate them.

Second, Positive Psychology and Strengths-based Leadership lenses may support in expediting self-knowledge, helping participants to explore their strengths which manifest as a result of the interaction between their personal and professional identities. This could be done through the use of psychometric tools to highlight such strengths and support in the elevated application of them. However as noted in the SLR findings, for these tools to have perceived

worth, they require embedding into the curriculum and to be continually revisited throughout the duration of the intervention.

Third, an understanding of the interactions at the intersection of personal and professional identities may support in the creation of "identity-specific strategies" to navigate the complexities of their unique organisational context (Atewologun *et al*., 2016, p.227). Insights gleaned from this intersectional exploration may reveal strength-based behaviours and constructive experiences which enable the individual to navigate these contexts, rather than focus on simply coping with unique disadvantage. For instance, in recognising the strengths that come with their LGBTQ+ identity, the participants of the second study demonstrated a flair for advocating for others, creating opportunities and protecting against injustice. In their view, this boosted their leadership success and the accelerated the contribution they made.

Finally, this thesis advocates for caution and consideration regarding the use of selection methods in programmes aimed at supporting the development of underrepresented groups. Restricting entry to such programmes may be perceived as a further barrier to accessing the valuable resources that are already difficult to acquire (Clutterbuck *et al*., 2012; Clutterbuck & Ragins, 2002).

5.7 Concluding remarks

Overall, this thesis enhances the knowledge of how leadership development programmes can support the development of leadership diversity by exploring two underrepresented groups – women leaders and LGBTQ+ leaders. It highlights the beneficial components of WLDPs, as well as offering important considerations regarding the deployment

of them. Further, using these learnings, it sheds light on the nuanced journey of leadership identity formation and development of LGBTQ+ leaders. In a climate where equity, diversity and inclusions are heightened, these insights could aid individuals from underrepresented groups as they progress towards leadership roles, and assist organisations in expediting the creation of diversity in leadership positions.

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Those with an asterisk denote those included in the systematic literature review itself.

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Appendix 1: Reflective assessment

Stage	Questions	Reflections
Stage 1: Scoping of research idea	What challenges did you face and how did you overcome them?	On reflection, though my non-academic work has had a differing area of focus (predominantly psychological assessment at work), my academic journey has always had a lens that focused on LGBTQ+ individuals in the workplace. My first MSc (in Occupational Psychology from Birkbeck) focused on the navigations of sexual identity disclosure in the workplace, and my second MSc (in Psychology from Northumbria University, completed in parallel to this professional doctorate) particularly focused on the navigation of these aspects to disclosure for those in leadership positions. In essence then, I felt that the scoping of my research area was not a challenge per se, but more of a natural and organic progression of my previous academic work. That being said, the main challenge I faced was (and still is) a tendency to be self-critical. I do experience nerves and worry about being 'good enough', which then causes me to throw myself into my work without taking a breath to quite the voice of self-doubt. My husband – who is also my rock and acts as someone who grounds me – has been a much-needed source of pragmatism and logic. Without him bolstering my spirits and giving me the positive reinforcement I needed, the voices would have got the better of me.
	Did your initial idea change during this	As mentioned, this felt like a natural and organic progression of my previous academic research. Additionally, in speaking to my professional network, there did appear to be a need to further

	stage? If so, how and why?	understand how organisations could support this population of leaders in a more practical way yet informed by evidence. Additionally, as a member of the LGBTQ+ community myself, I have a personal and invested interest in this area of research. I see this as somewhat of a 'double-edged sword' as, on the one hand, it fuels my motivation and dedication but, on the other, I need to be mindful about how this same energy and insight may 'cloud' my judgement or add a particular lens to the analysis that follows. To aid me in this reflection and using techniques that I found useful to 'call out' these thoughts, feelings and assumptions, I have a reflective journal. I found this invaluable during my previous studies as I felt as though that this helped to strengthen my critical thinking skills and, through calling out these feelings before immersing myself in the stories of others, felt I was able to 'park' my thoughts to let the participants' accounts shine through.
	How did this process differ from your expectations?	The guidance and upfront awareness of what was to come was exceptional. This allowed me to plan (something that I like doing!) my time well to meet the milestones required.
	What were your key learnings from this stage?	Trust the process. As I mentioned, I can often get caught in a vicious cycle of worry and self-doubt. So, giving myself amble space to reflect and consolidate my thoughts, rather than rushing in, was something that needed deliberate attention.
	What would you do differently if you were to go through this process again?	First, definitely to 'carve out' more down time. Having completed an MSc alongside Part 1 and the beginnings of Part 2, and in understanding my own personality traits, I recognise that I can often overcommit myself. This same ambition and drive then erodes my focus, which then produces a vicious cycle of

		self-doubt – which then only serves for me to push and commit myself further to 'silence' these thoughts. Second, try not to compare myself with others and the progress they have made. This only fuelled my anxiety. So, the learning here is to recognise that this is an individual journey, and comparison to others is not a healthy activity.
Stage 2: The systematic review: Developing a protocol	What challenges did you face and how did you overcome them?	The main challenge I experienced was the initial feelings of panic and being overwhelmed! A systematic literature review (SLR) protocol felt completely alien from anything I had encountered to date. The advice of Jo Yarker and Rachel Lewis was invaluable once again. The space to let things "marinade" (Jo's words) gave me the comfort that this isn't a race or something to rush; time is needed to let thoughts digest. Sticking to the guidance offered was invaluable in tempering the feelings of attempting something that, at the time, felt insurmountable.
	How did this process differ from your expectations/plan?	On reflection, after the initial panic, I found this element rather easy. I had already set out a clear rationale for the research and the criteria (with Jo Yarker commenting that it was "tight"), and I found it similar to my other academic research in terms of telling the story and 'funnelling' this through to the selection and rejection criteria.
	What were your key learnings from this stage?	My main learning at this stage was to, again, not panic (there is a clear theme developing here!). Developing a protocol requires time and thought, and whilst the step-by-step process played to my strengths, the initial feeling of being submerged was an uncomfortable feeling to experience.

	What would you do differently if you were to go about developing a protocol again?	If developing a protocol again, I see absolute merit in doing this in partnership with someone. Jo and Rachel were invaluable in challenging my thinking and ensuring I had considered the defensibility and rationale of my work. Therefore, getting another individual's perspective to do the same is paramount.

Stage 3: The systematic review: Conducting searches	How did you come to a decision on the keywords, databases and inclusion/exclusion criteria to use?	Pre-reading other SLRs in the space of my research area was also key in developing the terms, using this to inform my own. For instance, "Leadership development*" OR "development program*" OR "development train*" were the three key terms which derived the most responses via the databases, but my supervisors also challenged on my exclusion of "coaching" and "mentoring", two aspects which – in their experience – often form part of such development. This further supported my growth in being more targeted, as well as strengthening my ability to argue a case. Ultimately, these were excluded as the sub-questions also focused on the delivery methodologies employed, and these aspects were recognised by prior research as key methods of delivery of leadership development programmes. For the database selection, reviewing previous SLRs to see the common ones used was invaluable. Again, the advice of Jo and Rachel was invaluable here, and it prompted the inclusion of another database to ensure the search was as well-rounded as possible. The exclusion/inclusion criteria was another enjoyable element and helped me to be targeted. Again, reading other

		SLRs and protocols helped me to develop my own. I did remove the 'setting' aspect of the criteria (which was initially focused on programmes delivered in organisations using "organi*" as a search term). This was because initial searchers uncovered that these programmes aimed at developing women leaders can be employed by a plethora of institutions and workplaces, and including this term was likely to reduce the inclusiveness of the search.
	What challenges did you face and how did you overcome them?	My main challenge I experienced was feeling overwhelmed (again!) – this time at the number of articles the search returned. The process of sifting these also felt somewhat haphazard and uncomfortable as it felt I was judging the content of the article on the title alone ('judging a book by its cover' if you will). This made me question if I was vetoing potentially important insights by making judgements on the title alone. To overcome these elements, I reverted back to the guidance we were offered. That being that this is a process - it is both time-consuming and has its own limitations – and I took solace in this.
	How did this process differ from your expectations/plan?	I had thought that I would need to review each of the articles returned in the search more deeply, rather than using the title as an initial sift. Of course, this helped to expedite the process, but it also felt uncomfortable to remove those articles whereby the title did not give a sense of the content (and that content could be important).

	What were your key learnings from this stage?	The development of the search terms was fascinating, and the session by Aidan (librarian) was a real treat, and definitely helped in using the databases to full effect. The accurate use of search terms and the search string was another learning, and something that I now use regularly in my practice as a practitioner. Additionally, to be prepared to operate in a 'back and forth' manner with the terms and string, trying combinations and doing so in an iterative way to give the best possible return in the databases. This felt slightly haphazard but was a necessary task and one that I came to value. It also made me aware of the importance and conciseness of the titles of my own research. The process of the sift felt uncomfortable as I felt I may be missing important research in my review. So, ensuring that my research titles really encapsulate the focus of the research fully is another key learning.
	What would you do differently if you were to go about conducting systematic searches again?	Spend more time exploring and recognise that this will take time. Whilst it was straightforward, it was time consuming, so factoring this exploratory time in and not feeling overwhelmed by the results is something to incorporate in the process going forward. Whilst I would not do this differently, the support of a co-researcher/supervisor was invaluable. This helped to temper my self-doubt, particularly as in sifting the articles we achieved a high level of alignment regarding what should be and shouldn't be included. This gave me comfort that the process was rigorous. Therefore, going forward, leveraging

		the views of another researcher is something that I would absolutely do.
Stage 4: The systematic review: Assimilation and write up	How did you come to a decision on the way to cluster the data and tell the story? How did you make the choice of target journal?	Given that so little is known about women-only leadership development programmes (WLDPs), and after discussion with my supervisors, we agreed on the SPIO framework and narrative synthesis. The combination of both allowed me to dissect the included studies and tell a story regarding the study design, population, the aspects of the intervention delivered and how outcomes were measured. In relation to target journals, my thoughts are still evolving here. There are a few journals that predominately focus on equality, diversity and inclusion (namely Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal, and Gender in Management: An International Journal). However, my focus has been on finalising the thesis in its entirety, and then I aim to pursue publication next year.
	What challenges did you face and how did you overcome them?	Overarchingly, the main challenge has been time. I work full-time, in a commercially-led organisation, and there is a focus for me to 'bring in business' as part of my role. Also, my role as Head of Assessment means that I am supporting our markets in developing their own expertise, which often means I am working extended hours to cater for various time zones. Combined with this, and my tendency to panic, I know that I can become flustered if I feel time is my enemy. To counter all of these aspects, I channelled my enjoyment of planning. I purchased an academic diary, which helped me to plan my deliverables and acted as a self-contract when I wrote that time would be 'ring-fenced' to study. I did the same in

		my work calendar, so that this time was held. Together, this helped me to be disciplined and to 'chip away' at the assimilation and write-up in a way that allowed me to make progress, but also attend to my work commitments.
	How did this process differ from your expectations/plan?	The SPIO framework was a great framework for me. It kept me targeted and ensured I relayed the findings in a section concisely. I also enjoy writing, and the synthesis approach leveraged this strength in telling the story. Together then, even though 'doing' an SLR was an alien concept, I think the process channelled my natural areas of strength and enjoyment, and I'm proud of the result.
	What were your key learnings from this stage?	From this process I have three main learnings, with the first being to maintain discipline and boundaries. Setting time aside upfront, protecting this where I can, and ensuring others know that the time is ring-fenced allowed me to focus and 'reconnect' with my area of study after a day or so away from it. The second is the importance of reading widely (which may seem counter-intuitive to the above). This allowed me to deepen my knowledge and understanding beyond what was written in the 13 studies included in the SLR, and also helped me to analyse and synthesise the studies more concisely. Finally, 'chipping away', little and often worked well for me and allowed me to balance my commitments. That being said, I also learned that I need to practice self-compassion (something that is very hard for me to do as a traditional 'type A'). If I was unable to complete a section of my write-up on a day/time I had ring-fenced, I practiced giving myself the

		permission to move it to another day. This sounds so simple as I type it but it really wasn't. That is why I'm so thankful for this journey. Not only has it helped my professionally, but it's helped me to be kinder to myself. To recognise it is fine to take a break, to move my schedule about, and to spend time recuperating.
	What would you do differently if you were to go about writing up again?	The latter point above was something that took time to employ. I felt that sometimes I was too late in extending myself kindness and compassion. So, if I had the chance again, my focus would be to do this from the outset, and make time for the other, equally important aspects of my life. Without them, there is no joy. And the joy was certainly lacking in the early stages of the assimilation and write-up.

Stage 5: Research Study: Design	How did you come to a decision on the study/studies you were going to undertake?	The SLR highlighted that the concept of intersectionality of identities was a topic that was worthy of discussion and exploration in women-only programmes. Those programmes which covered this were deemed to be useful by the participants (and authors) and those which did not cover the interplays and dynamics of these intersections were still useful, but the authors reflected that this warranted inclusion. These identities, and the intersection of them, focused on motherhood, family life and ethnicity. Indeed, one researcher remarked that sexual orientation was a key avenue of research.
	Why did you decide to use the particular	Given that the focus on identity and the experiences of it, I immediately focused on interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). I already have a great deal of experience

	methodology/analytical process?	using IPA as a research technique, having used it in my previous studies, and so I was comfortable with the process. I was also thinking pragmatically too, given the time commitment and responsibilities outside of the doctorate. Therefore, IPA was an easy 'route' for me, and allowed me to ensure my sanity with this various other 'plates' was kept in check. Overarchingly though, my focus was in exploring the intersection of identities with that of leadership through the lived experience. The construction and navigation of these dynamics is rooted in the constructivist paradigm, where interpretation is needed to understand the reality that is constructed. Therefore, IPA was a natural 'fit' – both with the phenomena under exploration and my strengths.
	What challenges did you face in the design process and how did you overcome them?	Given my familiarity with the subject matter and the design process, I felt no strong concerns or experienced challenges. That being said, feedback from the upgrade presentation gave me pause for thought in two ways. First, my research questions were deemed to be too many, and these needed to be condensed. At first I thought that this reduction would not give me 'enough' to analyse but, having taken the advice, I was mistaken! Not only did it give me 'enough', but it also allowed me to really hone-in on the experiences and sense-making of the participants. The second was the diversity of the sample. I really wanted to focus on LGBTQ+ individuals and not 'single out' one letter of this acronym. This is because, in my experience, organisations are unlikely to development support that focuses on each character of the acronym (i.e., separate

		programmes which support Lesbian leaders, Gay leaders, Bisexual Leaders, Transgender Leaders, Queer/Questioning leaders and '+' leaders). However, in IPA research, it is important to have a homogenous sample, and so using participants from across the LGBTQ+ acronym may cause issues with the analysis and application of findings. Instead, I was given the idea by Lilith Whiley to use the acronym as a 'unifier', and this would help to shed light on the collective experience of the participants.
	How did this process differ from your expectations/plan?	Because of my familiarity with IPA as a method, there were no real 'surprises'. The comments above, however, did help me to strengthen my rationale, the defensibility of the work and the practical application of the findings.
	What were your key learnings from this stage?	My key learning from this stage was to heed the advice of others, namely around the number of research questions. I feel this paid-off massively and allowed me to truly to focus in on the experiences of my participants. I feel it made the research much more targeted and allowed me to delve deeper into how the participants made sense of experiences. Additional questions would have eroded the depth that I was able to unearth.
Stage 6: Research Study: Gathering data	How did you go about gathering data and accessing participants? Why did you choose this route?	Being familiar with IPA, I knew there was power in semi-structured interviews. Firstly, the creation of an interview schedule provide me with a framework and act as a prompt, ensuring I covered the key questions I wanted to pose. Secondly, the very nature of IPA means there is a deep focus on the individual experience, and semi-structured interviews

		give the researcher the permission to deviate from the schedule to explore things of interest. For participant recruitment, I used my personal and professional network, as well the distribution on LinkedIn of a recruitment poster. In the past, my experience has been that recruitment can be challenging and so I allowed 2-month for this process, with scope for this to be extended if required. Luckily, I had a strong response, which meant that I was able to move to the interview stage quickly (only, of course, if potential participants met the criteria, understood what was required of them and gave their consent).
	What challenges did you face when gathering data/accessing participants and how did you overcome them?	Despite the strong response, I was one individual away from reaching my sample number of seven participants. I flagged this to Rachel, asking if she felt this was an issue. Rachel felt that it may cause questions at viva stage, and so she put me in touch with an individual who was likely to meet the criteria (the power of networking!). Fortunately, this individual did meet the criteria and I was able to move forward.
	How did this process differ from your expectations/plan?	This process did not differ from my expectations or plan. I was very fortunate that every participant showed-up to their interview, were active in the discussions and engaged with the subject matter. I count myself quite lucky as this isn't often the case!
	What were your key learnings from this stage?	The main lesson from the data-gathering stage came from my own performance in the interviews. After rewatching the recordings, there were times when I noticed my engagement start to visibly drift. I seemed to catch myself in doing this, and 'come back' to the session relatively quickly. However,

		I was annoyed that I had done this, and particularly as conducting interviews is such a key part of my practice. An approach I employed was a relatively simple one, but a powerful one. I closed the blinds in my office and left my phone (which constantly 'pings' with work emails) in the living room, effectively removing all that could distract me from the environment. I now do this every time I have an important client meeting, presentation or interview. The power of networks was another key learning, and something that I will not underestimate in the future. When undertaking research again, there is real merit in asking for support from those I know. Thank you again, Rachel!
	What would you do differently if you were going to begin this stage again, and why?	I was really proud of this stage, and pleased with how the conversations with participants went. Two things do stick out for me. First, the need to be very 'tight' on the research question, and not to be frightened that this might limit the data captured. The second is the need for peace and removing distractions, and something I would do from the outset in the future.

Stage 7: Research Study: Analyzing data	How did you go about analyzing your data? Why did you choose this route?	I analysed the data using IPA and chose this as my research focused on the nuances of the lived experiences, identity dynamics and sense-making employed. Other qualitative approaches do not reveal the same level of richness that IPA produces. For instance, Grounded Theory can be complex to operationalise and may have no formal psychological focus. Thematic Analysis often treats all participants as one dataset

		from the outset and, in turn, loses the idiographic nature on the data.
	What challenges did you face when analyzing your data and how did you overcome them?	The main challenge was the sheer size of the transcripts and that was quite overwhelming. However, I reflected on how I felt in my previous studies and knew that, as soon as I was able to immerse myself in the data, these concerns would quickly disappear. And they did! In contrast with the SLR, 'chipping away' did not work for me here, as I wanted to 'get to grips' with each of the participant's narratives in one setting. So, I ring-fenced larger timeframes in my diary so that I could stay focused (removing distractions, of course), so that I could listen to the recording and the read the transcript in tandem. This really helped with getting 'close' to the data, what was being said and how participants made sense of their experiences. The second challenge was bringing together themes from across the narratives. I've used Nvivo previously and struggled with it, and so I opted to do this manually – the same method I have used in the past. However, with a larger sample size this was more challenging. However, through the printing out of individual themes and the use of a large noticeboard, I was able to bring themes together succinctly, albeit it took longer than I expected.
	How did this process differ from your expectations/plan?	I had built in a great deal of time in my planning for this stage as, after all, I wanted to do the data justice. However, it took a great deal longer than I had expected, and so my timelines needed to shift. At this point, whilst this shift frustrated me, I was more at peace with the change then perhaps I would have been a year or so ago.

	What were your key learnings from this stage?	In line with the above, the estimation of time was something to contend with. Therefore, building more contingency in the future is a key learning! Whilst there is something more tactile about doing analysis by hand, I would like to revisit Nvivo. The easy linkage of themes to excerpts in the transcripts would have saved time and energy, and so this is something for me to explore going forward. Finally, how much I enjoyed the process. Data analysis is something that I love, as well as crafting the narrative that pulls it together. I think my enjoyment of writing and my inquisitive nature really supported me here.
	What would you do differently if you were going to begin this stage again, and why?	Firstly, more time for the analysis. I would rather overestimate and have some time back, rather than underestimate. Secondly, the use of Nvivo or a similar package to help keep track of themes and related extracts. Though my process of noticeboards and Excel worked well, the relearning of Nvivo will help to expedite this process.
Stage 8: Research Study: Writing up	What challenges did you face when gathering writing up your study and how did you overcome them?	Not so much a challenge but more of a reflection, was to ensure that extracts selected really captured the essence of the sense-making taking place – both on an individual level, but also on a collective level. Though I feel I accomplished this well, there was so much more I wanted to include and, in not doing so, I kept asking myself if I was truly conveying the sense-making taking place. To lessen these concerns, I referred back to other IPA papers and guidance, and this was a really useful 'grounding' technique. I also needed to remain focused on the 'unifer' aspect – that being the LGBTQ+ identity. Other identity dynamics were

		mentioned, and part of me wanted to include this. However, in being targeted, I strived to answer the research questions at hand, 'parking' this additional insight and weaving it into the directions for future research.
	How did this process differ from your expectations/plan?	Given my exposure to IPA, I recognised that this process was going to be a challenge and, therefore, it did not differ from my expectations. Like in the SLR and the data-gathering, I was disciplined in the protection of my time, particularly in the write-up of each superordinate theme. Each of the themes were written-up in one sitting, as it helped me 'tell the story'. If I were to write and then come back to it at a later date, I feel my flow would have been interrupted, so I'm pleased I managed my boundaries to protect against this.
	What were your key learnings from this stage?	I had two key learnings from this stage. First, the importance of keeping accurate 'connections' between themes and extracts. I had learned my lesson from my previous studies, where I had to keep going back to the transcript. This time, and particularly given the larger sample size, I used Excel to keep track of this and it was invaluable. This is definitely something I will be doing again (or, as above, using Nvivio to support me further!). A colleague at work recommended that I keep a separate document of narrative I had written and discarded, as it may prove useful in the future – and it did. If I was unhappy with a section, it was moved to this document for me to revisit, and then could be used in other sections of the research (or, in some cases, the thesis), rather than starting from scratch. This is something I will be doing again.

	What would you do differently if you were going to begin this stage again, and why?	My reflection for this stage is to get things down ASAP after my analysis. With life commitments, I had to have a break between my analysis and write-up, and that did mean it took time to get back into the 'swing' of things. This could be in the form of some key bullets per section, or a very brief description of what I wanted to convey, but either approach would have supported me in getting back into the flow.

Stage 9: Overall Doctoral Process	Reflecting on your doctorate, how do you feel you have developed (e.g., technical expertise, theoretical knowledge)?	I've found this section the hardest to write. After five years in study, four of which on this doctorate, it took time for me to 'lift my head' and reflect. Firstly, my confidence as a practitioner has grown exponentially. I still feel, at times, that maybe I'm not good enough for this field, but these feelings have lessened. As a researcher, I'm more attuned to the weight I place on research, and more open to other pieces of evidence to inform my ideas. With this comes an enhanced critical eye, both of the research I'm reading but also my own assumptions as a researcher. This has absolutely had a benefit to my work, politely challenging clients on their thinking and the data/evidence they are using to inform it. Speaking from a personal perspective, it has taught me the importance of self-compassion and kindness. I don't need to have all the answers, and I don't need to reprimand myself if I 'draw a blank'.
	Can you see any changes in your	I would love to use the findings of this thesis to support the creation of a leadership development programme for LGBTQ+

	practices and/or professional plan as a result of undertaking this doctorate and associated learnings?	leaders. Whilst there is so much more to explore (as highlighted in the empirical study and the future direction), this doctorate is a key step in the process of making this a reality.
	What has been the most useful element of the process for you?	What a difficult question to throw in! I look back on where I was in 2019, having only just completed my first MSc, and then progressing to a doctorate. Unconfident, worrisome, not feeling like I 'belong'. Now, these feelings are still there, but this journey has allowed me to use these emotions positively. In some ways, it has been like therapy! For me though, the most useful element has been the camaraderie of the cohort – and that includes Jo, Rachel, Munazzah (my supervisor on part one) and Alex (my supervisor on part two). The support network, friendships and productive challenge that they have offered has been invaluable.
	What has been the most rewarding element of the process for you?	There are three key elements that I've found rewarding. The first, as above, are the relationships that I've built. The second, was completing part one and, alongside it, completing my MSc in Psychology at Northumbria. This then gave me Graduate Basis for Chartership (GBC) and my HCPC-registration. And finally, being able to contribute to the agenda for greater balance, representation and the development of women and LGBTQ+ leaders.

	What has been the most challenging element of the process for you?	One of the most rewarding elements has also been the most challenging. I knew that, as someone who didn't have GBC at the start of the doctorate, I wouldn't be eligible for Chartership once it had concluded. However, getting my doctorate wasn't enough – I needed that rubber-stamp from the BPS! So, if ever there was a lesson in resilience, composure, self-management and time-management, that was it. Was it a challenge? Yes. Has it made me stronger, both as a practitioner and as a person? Absolutely.
	What has been the most frustrating element of the process for you?	'Frustrating' is a strong word, so I'm going to reframe this to a 'mild irritation'. This has been the balancing of work and study, which I knew would be a 'mild irritation', particularly when I felt like I was in the flow of something and have to 'park' it to deliver on my work commitments. This was tempered somewhat by my planning and ring-fencing of my time, but the role I'm in means that there are often unpredictable elements that can't be avoided. One way I overcame this was to cancel our planned Summer vacation and repurpose the time to focus on my thesis write-up. Though disheartening, it was the correct call to make. My husband has been so supportive with that decision ("there will be plenty of time for Rhodes in the future – it's not going anywhere!"). So, my 'mild irritation' is his gain, and he's already planning a much grander vacation next year.
	What would you tell someone beginning this process? What are the key things they should	There are a few key things that I think may help others. Paramount is to fully leverage the support, guidance and energy of your supervisors. Jo, Rachel, Munazzah and Alex have been a source of all these things, and I don't think they truly know

	know/avoid/prepare for?	the impact they've had on me. (A part two to this point is to tell them the impact they've had – and to thank them!). Make peace with the fact that this journey is challenging, means that you need to sacrifice things and there will be, at times, when you feel like giving-up. Let the people around you know that there will be times you just need to vent, rant and have them listen. DO NOT COMPARE YOURSELF TO OTHERS (apologies for the use of capitals, but this point deserves it). This is your journey, nobody else's. Comparison will make you panic and lose focus, and you can get lost in the anxiety that swirls around you if you do. Focus on a research area that will hold your attention. You are going to spend a great deal of time with this topic, and so it has to mean something to you. It will make the journey ahead more engaging and less overwhelming.

Appendix 2: Participant information sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

When worlds collide: exploring leadership identity development of LGBTQ+ leaders through the lived experience

You are being invited to take part in this research project, which forms part of my Professional Doctorate in Organizational Psychology at Birkbeck, University of London. Before you decide to do so, it is important you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully, discuss it with others if you wish and please ask the researcher any questions should you have any. This research has received ethical approval.

Who is conducting this research?

The research is conducted by Mr Robert Sayers-Brown under the guidance of supervisor, Dr Alexandra Beauregard, Dr Jo Yarker and Dr Rachel Lewis, all of which are members of the faculty at Birkbeck, University of London.

What is the project's purpose?

An individual's leadership identity, defined as one's leadership 'self', is an extension of who they are. However, little is known about the experiential aspects of those with a social identity which opposes the societal norm in attempting to carve-out a leadership 'self'. This research seeks to shed light on the lived-experiences of those possessing such a social identity, LGBTQ+ individuals, whilst constructing and maintaining a leadership 'self'; focusing on the navigation, establishment, continuances and compromises that are experienced during negotiation and maintenance of a leadership identity.

Why have I been invited to take part?

I am inviting participants to voluntarily take part in this study if they meet the following criteria:

- Must be of working age (18+)
- Be employed in an organisational setting in the UK in a senior management or executive level position
- Identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be able to keep a copy of this information sheet and you should indicate your agreement by signing the attached consent form. You can withdraw at any time (and up to one month after the interview) and you do not have to give a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part and what type of information will be sought from me?

If you decide to voluntarily participate, you will be asked to first complete a short questionnaire which will include a few demographic questions, e.g., gender, age, ethnicity, LGBTQ+ identity and workplace role. The purpose of this questionnaire is to

ensure that participation is right for you. If so, you will be invited to take part in a 1:1 interview with the researcher mentioned above, lasting approximately 60-minutes to 90-minutes. The interview will focus on your experiences of building and maintaining a leadership identity and the extent to which your LGBTQ+ identity has, if at all, impacted on your ability to construct and maintain your leadership 'self'.

What do I have to do in the interview?

Answer the questions that the researcher poses to you as honestly as you can and in a way that makes you feel comfortable. An example question that could be posed to you is "Could you describe your experiences of any specific aspects of the interaction between your leadership identity and LGBTQ+ identity?"

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Whilst discussing your experiences, which is the focus of the research, you may experience some discomfort or distress. If this is the case, please let the researcher know. Additionally, if a particular topic or line of questioning causes visible distress, the researcher will request confirmation from you that you are happy to continue or if you would like to terminate the interview.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will have a beneficial impact on academic research where, historically, such exploration of the experiences of the LGBTQ+ community in constructing a leadership identity has been unexplored. Additionally, this research may make an important contribution to the enhancement of practices adopted by employers, over and above their written policies, to support such individuals in bringing their 'true' and uncensored selves to the workplace.

What if something goes wrong?

If you have any complaints about the project in the first instance you can contact any member of the research team. If you feel your complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction you can contact the researcher's supervisor (contact details can be found at the end of this document).

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All the information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified or identifiable in any reports or publications. Your organisation will also not be identified or identifiable. Any data collected about you in during the interview (digitally or non-digitally) will be stored and password-protected, accessible by the researcher only.

Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?

Digital video recordings will be made via Microsoft Teams and transferred to the researcher's laptop hard-drive, which will remain at the researcher's home address at all times. The digital file will be password protected and stored in a password protected folder. The title of each file will be a pseudonym of the participant and the 'real' name will only be known to me. Once these steps have been completed, the recording from will be destroyed.

The recordings will be transcribed verbatim and stored in a similar manner to the digital recordings outlined above. Printed copies of the transcriptions will only be viewed at the researcher's home address and kept in a locked draw when not being analysed; access to this will be restricted to the researcher only.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

Results of the research will be written-up and submitted to Birkbeck, University of London, as part of the researcher's dissertation to obtain a Professional Doctorate in Organizational Psychology. Additionally, there is the potential for the research to be published in academic journals. In both cases outlined above, you will not be identified in any report or publication. Your organisation will not be identified in any report or publication. If you wish to be given a copy of any reports resulting from the research, please let the researcher know.

Who is funding the research?

This project is not receiving funding.

Any further questions?

If you have any questions or require more information about this study before or during your participation, please contact either of:

Mr Robert Sayers-Brown
rsayer04@mail.bbk.ac.uk
Research Student

Dr Alexandra Beauregard, Dr Rachel Lewis and Dr Jo Yarker

Department of Organizational Psychology,
Birkbeck, University of London,
Clore Management Building,
Malet Street, Bloomsbury,
London.
WC1E 7HX
Shared email address: op-pdop@bbk.ac.uk

For information about Birkbeck's data protection policy please visit: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/about-us/policies/privacy#7

If you have concerns about this study, please contact the School's Ethics Officer at: BEI-ethics@bbk.ac.uk.
School Ethics Officer
School of Business, Economics and Informatics
Birkbeck, University of London
London WC1E 7HX

You also have the right to submit a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office https://ico.org.uk/

Appendix 3: Consent form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

When worlds collide: exploring leadership identity development of LGBTQ+ leaders through the lived experience

Please read the following items and tick the appropriate boxes to indicate whether you agree to take part in this study.

☐ I have read the Participant Information sheet in full, any questions I had have been answered, and I understand I may ask further questions at any time.

☐ I understand what is involved in participating, that it is voluntary, and that I may withdraw under conditions set out in the information sheet.

☐ I agree to take part in this study under the conditions set out in the information sheet.

☐ I agree to the interview being recorded using the Microsoft Teams function

☐ I understand that I have the right to ask for the recording to be turned off and/or stopped at any time during the interview

☐ I understand that personal identifiers (e.g., name of participant) will not be published

☐ I understand that demographic information (e.g., gender, organisational sector, ethnicity etc) in aggregate form will be published

Name _____

Signed _____ Dated: _____

Appendix 4: Semi-structured interview schedule

Interview Schedule

Introductions and welcomes, outlining experience, expertise and give participant the opportunity to do the same. Revisit content on Participant Information Sheet, opportunity to ask questions and consent to participate and record. Reiterate that researcher is interested in the participants unique lived experience.

(Notes: Proceed if satisfied that participant fully understands the requirements/ contents of the information sheet and voluntarily participates. Build rapport throughout and put participant at ease. Treat the interview as a conversation, using the most relevant follow up question, use silences and regular summaries and paraphrasing, no need to ask for an example for each question, immediately stop the interview at the first sign that the participant is becoming distressed/upset)

- How would you describe yourself?
    - *Prompt: What are your most important characteristics? What do you like / not like about yourself?*
- Tell me if you feel you are being your 'true self' at work
    - *Prompt: Why do you think this? What elements make up your 'true self'? Do you feel like you have ever compromised elements of your 'true self' at work?*
- Describe what your leadership identity means to you?
    - *Prompt: What is important to you? Why is this important to you?*
- Describe what does your LGBTQ+ identity mean to you?
    - *Prompt: What is important to you? Why is this important to you?*
- What's it like constructing your leadership self, whilst possessing your sexual identity?
    - *Prompt: What steps do you take during construction? And maintenance? Why do you think these are important? How do you make sense of this?*
- Could you describe your experiences of any specific aspects of the interaction of these two identities?
    - *Prompt: How do you feel about these aspects? What goes through your mind?*
- In what ways, if at all, has your LGBTQ+ identity shaped you as a leader?
    - *Prompt: How do you feel about this?*
- If at all, in what ways has your LGBTQ+ identity equipped you with certain strengths as a leader?
    - *Prompt: How do you feel about this? Can you give me some examples? Why did these examples come to mind?*
- If at all, in what ways has your LGBTQ+ identity hindered you as a leader?
    - *Prompt: How do you feel about this? Can you give me some examples? Why did these examples come to mind?*

Thank participant for their time and candour.
Invite the participant to give their thoughts/feelings/reactions.
Debrief, positioning the Debrief Sheet and the next steps you'll take, invite question