

**‘Doing’ LGBT+ research:
Reflections from our research on the topic of
transgender and non-binary workplace inclusion**

UCU Equality Research Conference 17th May 2024

Dr Rosa Marvell (University of Portsmouth) and Dr Luke Fletcher (University of Bath)

Why LGBTQ+ workplace inclusion?

- Higher risk of being victims of hate crime, of dying by suicide, and of experiencing workplace conflict.
- Heteronormative and cisnormative culture and internalised homo/bi/trans-phobia
- Think manager, think (straight white) male
- Gendered occupations and engrained gender roles
- Stereotype threat
- Variation and history of legal protection, and increasing challenges e.g. GC beliefs, anti-LGBT bills etc. Not specific to UK but represents global challenges around inequalities and rising populism e.g., Hungary, Uganda, Nigeria, USA.
- Tokenism and corporate fads, pink washing etc,

To name just a few



About our work and why reflect now?



Over the past few years, we have engaged (together and separately/in other collaborations) in:

- traditional research (e.g., Fletcher & Marvell, 2023a)
- commissioned research with professional bodies/institutions (e.g., Fletcher & Marvell, 2023b), and
- broader public engagement work, such as writing blogs (e.g., Fletcher & Marvell, 2022; Marvell & Fletcher, 2024)

on the topic of LGBTQ+ (and more specifically trans and non-binary) workplace inclusion.

We have witnessed an increasingly hostile and challenging environment to do ‘effective’ research within.

We also come from different disciplines with different norms and research philosophies – it has also challenged us as collaborators, colleagues, and friends.

We thought that taking the time to take stock and reflect together may help us clarify future next steps.

Models of Reflective/Reflexive Practice



Gibb's (1988) reflective cycle

Ashwin's (2015) river of life

Iwama et al's (2009) Kawa model

Hibbert's (2021) levels of reflexive practice

Using Hibbert's model of reflexivity

Level	Overview
Embodied	How our bodies interact with and respond to the interaction the (changing) environment. Awareness of bodily sensations and their effects e.g. racing heart, butterflies, pain.
Emotional	How our emotional states and affective responses (e.g., anger, sadness, joy, excitement) to situations and the environment precede rational engagement. Focus is on perception of these feelings and their effects.
Rational	When experience is raised to awareness, it is contextualized to the person's past experience, and examined through rational, critical thought in relation to what is already known. The focus is on finding forms of expression and generating plausible ideas to explain events.
Relational	Experiences lead to insights via communicating with and interacting with others. Focus is on words or actions that interrupt 'comfortable thought or practice. In other words, encountering different perspectives and entertaining new ideas through relational encounters.

Key Insight	Positives / Benefits	Negatives or Concerns to Consider
<p>1. We became highly sensitized to the wider socio-political environment that our participants were facing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to empathise and relate to participants • Learnt more about ourselves and coping responses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling of inadequacy and hopelessness • Question ability to make a meaningful difference
<p>2. Stronger awareness of our ‘insider-outsider’ status (as members of LGBTQ+ community, yet both cisgender and acting as researchers)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger focus on being responsible and ethical as researchers • Learnt about our shared values and our ‘red lines’ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging power dynamics and navigating privilege • Balancing institutional and funding requirements with participant expectations.
<p>3. Evolving understanding about allyship, advocacy, and activism, and our ability/role to do these things.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety of ways and forms to do these things • Confidence in building community and solidarity (and bridges) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to tread carefully – could lead to negative consequences • How to not get ‘sucked in’ to culture wars
<p>4. Deeper (less naïve?) understanding about relationships with participants and with wider stakeholders of research</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed deeper collaborative relationships with participants • Unexpected allyship, understanding how to leverage allies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly volatile and sensitive to socio-political ‘shocks’ • Very labour and time intensive, needs a lot of soft skills



Our main take home recommendations

- **Try to move away from doing research ‘on’ LGBTQ+ workers to doing research ‘with’ them;** can involve participatory or co-production but could also involve more subtle, smaller changes
- **Try to move beyond meeting ‘institutional ethics’,** thinking more about care and respect, rather than simply about informed consent etc.
- **Be clear about terms and their usage,** for example using ‘LGBT’, ‘trans’, ‘transgender’, ‘queer’ etc. Also, probe your own feelings and reactions.
- **Think about the sustainable impact you want to have** rather than just specific outputs, and understand the practical limits
- **Try to reflect on your own positionality and the socio-political dynamics at play,** and how these may shift throughout (and after) projects
- **Put in place personal (and institutional) strategies to protect researchers’ wellbeing** as well as participants

